

36. NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

A resolution calling upon colonial powers to place under trusteeship those of their dependencies not yet ready for self-government was adopted by the Fourth Committee after lengthy debate by the narrow margin of 25 votes to 23. The resolution, sponsored by the Indian delegate and amended by the delegate of Cuba, was opposed by the colonial powers and eventually failed of adoption in the Assembly, where the vote was 24 to 24 with one abstention. Its adoption by the Assembly would have required the support of a two-thirds majority.

The proposal to place all dependent territories under trusteeship was defended on the ground that it provided a sure and quick way of enabling inhabitants of dependent territories to reach the goal of self-government or independence and all should therefore enjoy its benefits, particularly those territories where the population was backward or where racial discrimination existed. Opponents of the resolution argued that the proposal was an attempt to rewrite the Charter. At San Francisco it had been foreseen that many dependent territories would remain outside the trusteeship system and it was for the sake of these territories that a special declaration had been embodied in Chapter XI of the Charter. To insist now that all dependent territories should come under trusteeship agreements was, in their view, contrary to the provisions of Chapter XI. Representatives of this group stated that some 500,000,000 people had either achieved or were about to achieve independence in conformity with the principles of Chapter XI, while no people had yet achieved it under the trusteeship system. Many dependencies would resent transfer to the trusteeship system as a retrograde step. There was no legal obligation to make the transfer, yet if the proposed resolution were adopted, Members who failed to conform would be brought into disrepute, even if their policy served the best interests of the dependent territories in question.