

World news at a glance

by James Brennan



United Nations - Africa's disillusionment with the Western powers over what it sees as lukewarm opposition to South Africa has resulted in some sharp criticism in the UN General Assembly, by the current chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) President Bongo of Gabon.

Bongo questioned whether Britain and France should maintain their seats on the five-member UN Security Council since these two nations are no longer major powers in the world. Instead he called for the OAU to be given a place on the Council with full power of veto.

Yugoslavia - At the three month conference to review progress made since the signing in Helsinki two years ago of the Final Act of the European conference on security and co-operation, the Soviet Union has attempted to defend its record in the area of human rights. Although the Soviet delegate Yuly Vorontsov adopted a mild tone, his speech in closed session was the sharpest Soviet attack yet on the West and the United States in particular.

Vorontsov complained about US denials of entry visas to representatives of foreign trade unions. The Americans retorted that they had been aware of this flaw in their record and had recently changed their policy in this area.

Ethiopia - Guerrillas reported Saturday to have killed 300 Ethiopian soldiers and to have put hundreds more to flight in their push for the strategic mountain town of Harar. The Somali-backed Western Somali Liberation Front hopes to soon capture Harar and Dire Dawa, Ethiopia's last bastions in the east. Meanwhile thousands of refugees

have poured into newly independent Djibouti in order to escape the fighting in the nearby region of Ethiopia. Djibouti authorities say they are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the estimated 6,000 Ethiopian refugees.

Middle East - President Sadat of Egypt said Saturday that he is "very, very optimistic" about Middle East peace prospects because of the "unprecedented" position taken by President Carter on the Palestinian issue. Sadat said that Israel had received unlimited US support from the Truman to the Johnson administrations. "Carter said the Palestinians should have a national homeland and this is something totally new to the United States."

On the same day Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan insisted that Israel will not sit with the PLO "under any circumstances" but admitted there was no written agreement with the US on this issue. He maintained that Israel will walk out of a Geneva peace conference in which the PLO is represented.

South Africa - Controversy over the death of the Black Consciousness Movement leader Steven Biko, who died last month in police custody, continued last week. South Africa's Minister of Justice, Police and

Prisons, James Kruger, lodged a second protest with the Press Council following an editorial in *The World* newspaper which condemned the Press Council's former ruling.

The former ruling had censored the *Rand Daily Mail* for claiming that Biko had not died of a hunger strike as officially reported by Kruger. The paper said Biko had been slightly overweight when he died and had been seen to drink water only three days before his death.

Meanwhile in Washington, a group of 128 members of Congress have signed a letter to S.A. Ambassador Donald Sole calling for an independent investigation of South Africa's detention practices.

Sweden - Sweden announced last week it plans to cancel 240 million dollars owed by the governments of eight developing nations. Minister for International Development Ola Ullsten expressed the hope that other countries would take similar steps.

Sweden's actions follows Canada's recent announcement that it was writing off 254 million dollars in debts.

The United States however has said that it will not follow Sweden's example.

A State department spokesman

said Washington would be ready to take part in international efforts to help countries finance their debt repayments, but that it would not wipe out all debts. According to the

US, the Third World suffers from problems of development, not debt repayment.

However the spokesman did not make it clear what the difference is.

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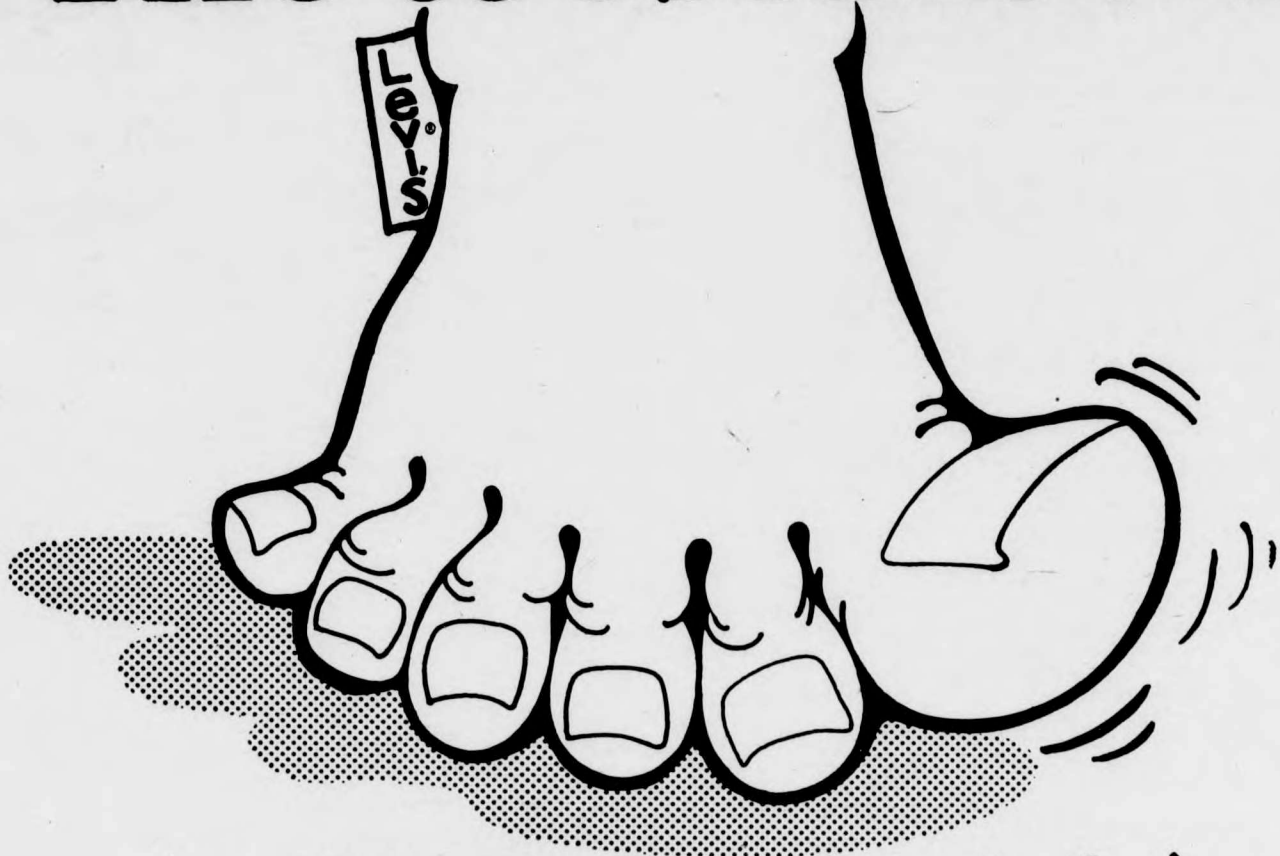
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