

RESOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE RIVONIA TRIAL, 11 OCTOBER 1963

E. S. Reddy

On 9 October 1963, when Nelson Mandela and his colleagues were first brought before the court and charged, the African Group at the United Nations held an urgent meeting to consider action.

The Special Political Committee of the General Assembly was meeting that afternoon to begin discussion of the item on apartheid. Diallo Telli of Guinea, Chairman of the Special Committee, referred to urgent need for action and on his proposal, the Committee immediately heard a statement by Oliver Tambo, Deputy President of the ANC, on the trial.

At the next meeting on 10 October afternoon, Diallo Telli introduced a resolution with 55 co-sponsors. As a general rule, the Committee does not vote on a resolution until a day after its introduction in order to give time to delegations to study it and consult their governments. The Committee decided in this case to vote immediately in view of the seriousness of the situation since the accused were threatened with death sentences. The resolution, with one revision, was adopted by 87 votes to 1, with 9 abstentions. The only negative vote was cast by Portugal; South Africa did not participate in the Committee. The countries abstaining were: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The Committee's resolution was taken up in the Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly the next morning. A roll call vote was requested and all the delegations which had abstained in the Committee announced, one by one, that they were voting in favour, to the cheers of the Assembly. The resolution [1881(XVIII)] read:

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 1761 (XVII) of 6 November 1962,

Recalling the Security Council resolution of 7 August 1963, which called upon the Government of the Republic of South Africa to liberate all persons imprisoned, interned or subjected to other restrictions for having opposed the policy of apartheid,

Taking note of the reports of the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, which stress the fact that the harsh repressive measures instituted by the Government of South Africa frustrate the possibilities for peaceful settlement, increase hostility among the racial groups and precipitate violent conflict,

Considering reports to the effect that the Government of South Africa is arranging the trial of a large number of political prisoners under arbitrary laws prescribing the death sentence,

Considering that such a trial will inevitably lead to a further deterioration of the already explosive situation in South Africa, thereby further disturbing international peace and security,

1. **Condemns** the Government of the Republic of South Africa for its failure to comply with the repeated resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council calling for an end to the repression of persons opposing apartheid;
2. **Requests** the Government of South Africa to abandon the arbitrary trial now in progress and forthwith to grant unconditional release to all political prisoners and to all persons imprisoned, interned or subjected to other restrictions for having opposed the policy of apartheid;
3. **Requests** all Member States to make all necessary efforts to induce the Government of South Africa to ensure that the provisions of paragraphs 2 above are put into effect immediately;
4. **Requests** the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly and the Security Council, as soon as possible during the eighteenth session, on the implementation of the present resolution.

The resolution was adopted by 106 votes with only South Africa voting against. (The delegation of Portugal left the Assembly Hall to avoid voting). The vote was as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Burundi, Byelorussian SSR, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Ceylon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Leopoldville), Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Dahomey, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Tanganyika, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian SSR, USSR, United Arab Republic, United Kingdom, United States, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia

Against: South Africa