

Waging Peace in the Cold War: The Non-Aligned Movement

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Theme: [History](#)

In the early 1950s most publications ignored the anti-colonial campaigns in progress around the world and focused almost exclusively on the East-West “superpower” struggle between the USA and the USSR. But not Toward Freedom, which debuted at the end of 1952 as a modest three-page newsletter. Defying conventional wisdom, it took on two daunting tasks – correcting distorted perceptions of world affairs and working for the peaceful elimination of colonialism.

The name was based on the title of a book by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian leader who was inspiring what became known as the non-aligned movement. Nehru had also inspired William B. Lloyd Jr, who met him during a visit to India. After a private conversation he said that Nehru’s “grasp of world history and clear leadership on behalf of the dispossessed was enormously impressive.



The encounter added new dimensions to Bill’s previous studies of Swiss neutrality and mediation. He’d explored these ideas in a book called *Waging Peace: The Swiss Experience*. As he later explained, “I thought of applying the Swiss idea to new nations as neutrals in the United Nations.”

Over the next three decades Lloyd followed independence movements, UN initiatives and contributions to world peace made by what were then called “third world” countries. His early collaborators included American Friends Service Committee organizer Robert Pickus, Unitarian minister Homer Jack, author Sid Lens, Roosevelt University President Edward Sparling, union activist Harold Snell, and Chicago area friends like Leon Despres and Ethel and Frank Untermeyer.

“As a result of talking to UN members, I became more interested in the people of the developing countries,” he explained, “in ways of improving living conditions and whether US aid was really beneficial. I was also excited about their resistance to military alliances.”

The first issue appeared on December 6, 1952, and included reports of Britain's response to the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, a defiance campaign against apartheid in South Africa, and an attempt by Asian and Arab nations to get the UN engaged in mediation between France and its African territories. Lloyd took note of recent UN actions on colonial issues, pointing out that the world body often voted with the colonial powers on questions like conflict resolution and independence. He also announced the formation of a Midwest Committee for Colonial Freedom, and plans for a series of classes on Africa at Roosevelt College to be offered by members of TF's evolving core group.

Spotlight on Colonialism

In Volume 2, Number 1, published in June, 1953 the editor asked a pointed question on the front page: Where does America Stand on Africa? Sixty years later do we know yet?

The issue featured a rundown of pending UN votes on Tunisia and Morocco – French protectorates at the time, and stories on a wildly unpopular federation plan for Rhodesia and recognition of "South-West Africa."

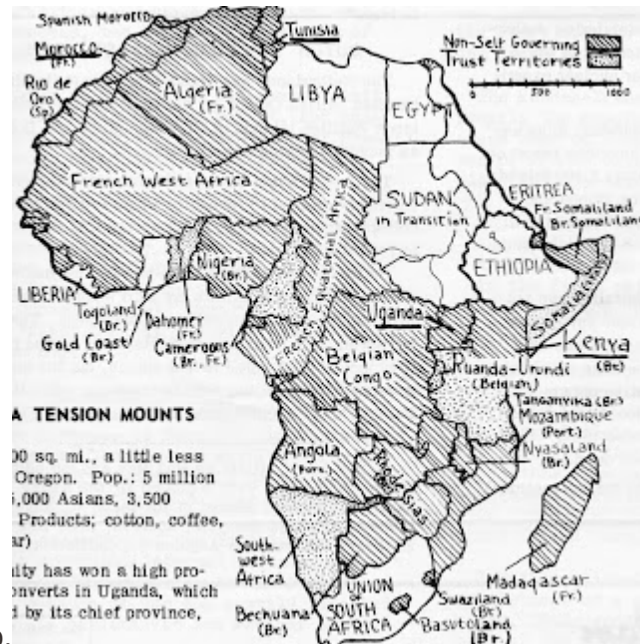
Tunisia was a special focus from the start. The June issue reported on a "virtual state of siege" and the fact that members of the opposition party were either in jail or exile. Nationalists were rejecting a voting scheme designed to keep the French in control. Pro-French Berber chiefs in Morocco were trying to get rid of the Sultan, who reportedly favored Arab nationalism and was being called "too modern."

Four and a half years later Bill met with the country's president at his home.

The June issue concluded with commentary on another question: What is self-government? The phrase was being used frequently in UN documents about colonial issues. Bill asked whether it included participation:

"For example, since Puerto Ricans have no part in electing US Congressmen or Presidents, but are nevertheless subject to military service in any US war, declared or undeclared, can they be said to enjoy complete self-government?"

He also proposed that Article 73 of the UN Charter be used to guarantee liberty. His argument was that the Charter obligated colonial powers to publicly report on their territories. But he noted that they "have promoted the fear that the General Assembly might prevent statehood for Hawaii or Alaska." In January Washington had followed suit by announcing, unilaterally, that no more information would be officially transmitted to the UN



on Puerto Rico.

Official language is often euphemistic. Collateral damage comes to mind. At the time a major euphemism was “non-self-governing territories.” (check out the 1954 map below)

TF provided context that exposed the real conditions and what these “territories” really were – colonies, former colonies, unrepresented nations, peoples and indigenous communities around the world, struggling and sometimes succeeding in claiming their names, land and rights.

In October Lloyd focused on Ghana, known as The Gold Coast and led by Kwame Nkrumah, who headed the government after the British released him from jail. Comparisons were made to India and Nehru. Bill saw Ghana as a “bright spot,” a place where decolonization might lead to what Nkrumah said he envisioned – “a new relationship based on mutual respect, trust and friendship.”

Four years later he also met Nkrumah. But when he asked about Ghana’s Interior Minister threatening political opponents with concentration camps the Prime Minister excused it as a trivial local scare tactic. A warning sign, to be sure.

The December issue was mainly devoted to an election in The Sudan, UN votes on “colonial changes” in Puerto Rico, Surinam and Netherlands Antilles, and an early essay by Rev. Homer Jack, who wrote about how protestants saw colonialism. Jack soon became a second major voice of the publication.

In October 1954 TF covered negotiations between mining companies and employees in Northern Rhodesia, including statements from two unions that called out the companies for discrimination based on color and social background.

The focus also returned to Tunisia, following up after a 451-122 vote for autonomy by the French National Assembly. Virtually alone among US publications *TF* reported on a series of 33 political executions during the year. Tunisia’s former Minister of Justice blamed them in part on the US for providing, as he put it, “the means of exterminating these people.”

Lloyd wrote bluntly that the situation had deteriorated into “an organized revolt, held in check only by reinforced military occupation.”

On the Road Toward Freedom: A Cold War Story, part one of six.

Next: The Larger Context & the Kennedy Connection

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