

Before the voting on the draft resolution took place, the Iraqi delegate, Khalidy, announced his abstention since his delegation had long recognised that the “nationalistic clamour of the Ewes was not to be ignored as a danger to peace in West Africa.”³⁹⁶ Khalidy complained that the Council had failed to find a real solution and had given no satisfaction to the Ewes. The conclusions of the Visiting Mission’s report were therefore illogical, extraordinary, and baffling.

The final resolution was adopted by five to four votes, with three abstentions and resolved to transmit to the General Assembly the report “as representing not only an objective appraisal of the diverse aspect of this problem but also suggesting the soundest approach to its solution consonant with the present diversity of views of the inhabitants of the two Trust Territories concerned.”³⁹⁷

6.5.3 Securitising the French “Reign of Terror” (1952)

The securitisation of the Togoland unification issue reached its climax at General Assembly’s 7th Session (1952). When the Fourth Committee had received for the second time requests by the leadership of the unification movement to be heard, once again, the colonial powers sought not to have them appear before the Fourth Committee but insisted that petitioners should always be referred to the Council first,³⁹⁸ since the Council (unlike the Fourth Committee) already had established an official procedure for examining petitions.³⁹⁹ The anti-colonial members such as the Philippine representative, Victorio D. Carpio, objected to this procedure:

“the manner in which petitions were dealt with left much to be desired. Petitions were reaching the Trusteeship Council in such numbers that a great deal of the Council’s attention during recent sessions had been directed to the formulation of a procedure for dealing with them according to their importance. The Standing Committee on Petitions, [...] classified them; and petitions of a general nature were simply referred back to the Trusteeship Council, which usually decided that, as it had considered similar petitions in the past, no action was required. The chief reason why requests for oral hearings were being addressed to the Fourth Committee was the dissatisfaction of petitioners at the manner in which the Trusteeship Council dealt with petitions; they felt the General Assembly should know what was happening. The Philippine delegation, faithful to its consistent policy of championing the rights of the voiceless millions, would oppose any attempt to postpone the granting of a hearing [...] but the Council was dominated by the Administering Authorities. If the Trusteeship Council did not perform the functions vested in it by the Charter, the General Assembly should exercise some of those functions itself.”⁴⁰⁰

396 TCOR, “11th Session” (1952), p. 4.

397 See T/L.322 available at TCOR, 11th Session, Annexes (T/11S/Annexes).

398 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 14–16.

399 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 102.

400 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 101–2.

The British Council representative, Alan Burns, rebutted snidely that the “Fourth Committee should concern itself with the general progress of those Territories and support, rather than attack the principal organ established under the authority of the General Assembly.”⁴⁰¹ Yet, as Burns said himself, the Charter stipulated after all that the Council operated under the authority of the General Assembly, which had the primary right to receive and consider petitions. It was argued therefore that the General Assembly would not be trespassing on the competence of the Council. A Dominican-sponsored draft resolution tried to find a compromise by proposing the elaboration of an appropriate procedure for oral hearings in the Fourth Committee.⁴⁰² The British delegation was very comfortable with this proposal, informing the Governor Arden-Clarke that it might be “possible that policy restricting hearings in future will be adopted.”⁴⁰³ Yet, several anti-colonial delegations expressed serious doubts about the silencing effects such a procedure would have and the proposal was eventually withdrawn.⁴⁰⁴

When the news broke that the leadership of the unification movement had arrived, the Philippine delegate prophetically stated that “the Trusteeship Council continued to deal with petitions with so much deference to the views of the Administering Authorities and with so little concern for the petitioners that the Committee was about to see a veritable parade of dissatisfied spokesmen from almost every Trust Territory in Africa.”⁴⁰⁵ And so it happened.

When the leadership of the unification movement appeared before the Fourth Committee, Olympio stepped up his attacks on the French administration from the previous year by calling the Governor of French Togoland, Laurent Pécoux, a “*specialist of repression*” who allegedly has installed a “*veritable regime of terror*.”⁴⁰⁶ Allegedly the French administration resorted to intimidation, coercion, and arrests, while unificationists “had been beaten up by the police and gendarmes and others had been forced by threats to resign their membership in the party. Houses have been searched and petitions ready for dispatch to the Visiting Mission been seized.”⁴⁰⁷ Olympio claimed the French police forces had shielded the Visiting Mission from contact with the unificationists – the main reason why the report of the Visiting Mission denied repression. He criticised the institution of Visiting Missions, by questioning:

“what purpose such an inquiry [by Visiting Missions] served with meetings prohibited, acts of violence against demonstrators, closure of frontiers, and resort to force. He [Olympio] had been reminded in reading the Visiting Mission’s report of the usual report of the Trusteeship Council’s Standing Committee on Petitions. Any fact put forward by an African was an ‘allegation’; the denial made by the Administering Authority was the truth! If acts of violence and the prohibition of popular demonstrations were

401 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 202.

402 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 216.

403 TNA (London), FCO 141/5010, *Gold Coast: the Ewe and Togoland unification problem*, Saving Telegram N° 1126, Secretary of State to Governor, Gold Coast, 26 November 1952.

404 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 238.

405 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 209.

406 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 358.

407 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 358.

not to be investigated and if the Visiting Mission was merely to collect petitions and denials, what was the use of leaving New York and going to Togoland? The Mission [...] was a cross-section of the Trusteeship Council and everyone knew by that time the character of the Council."⁴⁰⁸

He declared, the people of Togoland were offended "by the failure of the Council to take their claims seriously, and the fact that it buried all petitions, whether relating to unification or any other matter."⁴⁰⁹ Olympio expressed doubts that French Togoland would ever gain independence as long as the final decision rested with the French National Assembly,⁴¹⁰ and proposed direct administration by the United Nations.⁴¹¹

Photo 13: Olympio & Antor conversing with Ralph Bunche (1 December 1952)⁴¹²



Source: UN Photo.

Finally, Olympio expressed his profound frustration to the Fourth Committee about how the Administering Authorities managed to silence the unification movement:

"Do you, the United Nations, mean business when you say that we are to have self-government or independence? Do you mean business when you tell us that we are to be allowed to work out our destinies in accordance with our freely expressed wishes? If you mean business, now is the time to show it to us. If you do not, what do you

408 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 359.

409 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 359.

410 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 359.

411 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 370.

412 Left to right: Benjamin Gerig, Ralph Bunche, Senyo G. Antor, and Sylvanus Olympio.

expect us to do? Shall we follow the examples of other peoples who have felt frustrated in their search for emancipation? For instance, shall we defy the laws, shall we let our hotheads make riots and disturbances? That is what they did in the Gold Coast in 1948 – and the result was that within two years they were making for themselves a constitution giving them something very close to self-government. Do you advise us to follow *that* example? Shall we take up policies of civil disobedience, simply going in our own ways and ignoring the very presence of those who govern us? They did that in other countries – and those countries are independent today. Is that the course of action you would advise for us? Do you expect us to take matters into our own hands, and present you with a *fait accompli* which you will formally recognize and accept? We have seen you do that for other countries, over and over again. But, Mr. Chairman, we in Togoland still put from our minds the thought of using violence to secure our legitimate aspirations. Heaven knows, we have been provoked, but we have kept our faith in the promises of the United Nations Charter perhaps longer than any other people on earth. But the time has come for you to tell us, frankly and honestly, where we stand. We cannot devote the rest of our lives to making these annual trips to New York. We cannot go on wasting away our money and energy in reaffirming the truth for your benefit whenever the Administering Powers try to blacken it.”⁴¹³

On a theoretical note, in his securitising effort to secure support from his audience, that is, the Fourth Committee, he strategically crafted a narrative to bolster legitimacy for the unification movement. He underscored the movement’s commitment to peace, emphasizing that any inclination towards violence should be seen as a lapse in judiciousness. Consequently, he argued that the responsibility and accountability for such actions ultimately rested with the UN, which must overcome the silencing attempts of the Administering Authorities. Alex Odame (Togoland Congress) struck the same chord, albeit less elaborately:

“During their journey through Togoland under French administration the members of the Mission had seen with their own eyes the *barbarism and brutality* with which the Administering Authority treated the indigenous inhabitants, even in their presence. [...] the people of Togoland were beginning to think that the United Nations was helpless to call a halt to the misrule in the Territories.”⁴¹⁴

Furthermore, the unificationists complained about the conduct of the Visiting Mission: Olympio expounded that the Mission had refused to attend AEC and CUT meetings to which it had been invited. Antor declared representatives of the unificationist movement had not been allowed to contact the Visiting Mission. When at Ho, a representative of the AEC wanted to address the Mission, whereupon the Australian Chairman of the Mission, Roy A. Peachy, had asked the representative of the British administration whether the petitioner should be heard. For Antor, such incidents proved that the Administering

413 Emphasis in original, as quoted in Padmore, *The Gold Coast revolution*, pp. 166–67. This direct quote corresponds to the summarized record at GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), 300th Meeting, p. 360, para. 20–24.

414 Emphasis added, GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 361–62.

Authorities had influenced the Visiting Mission.⁴¹⁵ In Togoland under French administration the arrival of the Visiting Mission had been announced only on the eve of that event. The announcement had contained no suggestion as to where petitions should be addressed or how petitioners should contact the Visiting Mission.

Antor continued, that under the terms of the British Trusteeship Agreement, the union with Gold Coast was supposed to be purely administrative, but in fact it has become economic and political, thereby threatening the independence of the trusteeship territory. Olympio therefore reiterated the previously made proposal to hold a plebiscite with the addition that in the meantime Togoland should be governed by a United Nations High Commissioner. The difference with the UCPN and PTP, which Olympio believed were parties created, supported, and maintained by the French authorities, was not the demand for independence but whether it should happen inside or outside the French Union. Olympio concluded his criticism of the Visiting Mission with the claim that “a group of honest, impartial and objective representatives could have realized the violence and intimidation practised against the people of Togoland.”⁴¹⁶

The three unificationists responded at length to questions from members of the Fourth Committee about the alleged repression as well as the electoral and administrative tactics of the Administering Authorities to render unification an impossibility. From the British point of view the Iraqi representative, Awni Khalidy, “asked a series of most malevolent questions.”⁴¹⁷ Olympio noted that the representative of France had on several occasions stated that the right of assembly was governed in Togoland by the same law as in France, namely the law of 1881. But under the provisions of the law of 1907, which was also supposed to apply in Togoland, public meetings could be held without prior notice. Yet, despite this legal provision, no meetings were allowed in French Togoland without prior notice. Even when notice had been given and permission received, “a meeting could not be held in a cafe or a cinema and always took place in the presence of armed police who tried to stir up trouble.”⁴¹⁸

The oral hearing had an impact and the subsequent debate in the Fourth Committee was heated. Yet, as before, through strategies of *illocutionary frustration* and *illocutionary disablement*, both Administering Authorities attempted to thwart the petitioners’ securitising moves by denying or dismissing the repression as greatly exaggerated, questioned the representativity of the petitioners and in turn accused the unificationists of “incidents often accompanied by bloodshed that had been provoked by that party, which did not hesitate at times to resort to the most violent reprisals against its opponents.”⁴¹⁹ The endeavour to enforce *illocutionary disablement*, namely the metaphorical transmission of distortion signals, was further manifested in the concerted efforts of both Administering Authorities to contest the representativeness of the petitioners. For example, the French

415 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 367.

416 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 359.

417 TNA (London), FO 371/101369, *Problems of Trust Territories of British and French Togoland*, 1952, Report on Debate [No° 107], 13th December 1952, para. 4. Khalidy’s questioning of the petitioners at GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 367–69.

418 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 368–69.

419 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 378–85.

representative, Pignon, voiced that he “did not understand how it was possible to gauge the popularity of a political party by the number of petitions its members presented.”⁴²⁰ The British representative, Alan Burns, accused the unificationists of refusing to participate in the work of the *Joint Council for Togoland Affairs* because they had no chance of finding a majority: “Instead of appealing to the people, they had appealed to the United Nations.”⁴²¹ He held that British Togoland had allegedly submitted written communications only on the instructions of the unification parties, “since their normal habit was to convey their ideas orally. Submission of written communications was a device resorted to most frequently by those who had studied the machinery of the United Nations with a view to *exploiting* it for their own political advantage.”⁴²² Last but not least, Burns protested the series of questions Khalidy had posed to the petitioners.⁴²³

Photo 14: Robert Ajavon addressing the 4th Committee (12 December 1952)



Source: UN Photo.

Robert Ajavon, himself a Togolander who was a member of the French delegation, said the report of the Visiting Mission accurately reflected the different trends of opinion in the area. He claimed that three quarters of the population in French-administered Togoland opposed the unification of the Ewe people and that the UN itself was partly responsible for delaying Togoland’s advancement towards independence and self-gov-

420 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 386.

421 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 379.

422 Emphasis added, GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 378.

423 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 379.

ernment. The agitation of the unificationists was artificial, short-lived, and designed to focus world public opinion on a few attention seekers.⁴²⁴

The French delegation was also able to mobilize Simon-Kangni Kpodar (PTP) as a counter-petitioner before the Fourth Committee. Despite several difficult and tendentious questions, Kpodar impressed the Committee by the quality of his statements. Although the *Joint Council for Togoland Affairs* had met only once and not even its entirety, Kpodar declared that its representatives could have raised any issues that they wished, including that of unification. He supported the proportional representation at the *Joint Council for Togoland Affairs* and denied that a different method of election in French Togoland would have produced a different result. Kpodar also described the CUT as a minority voice, but also clarified that the PTP was not fundamentally agitating against re-unification.⁴²⁵

Photo 15: Odame, Olympio & Kpodar before 4th Committee (15 December 1952)⁴²⁶



Source: UN Photo.

General Debate

During the general debate, the representatives of Poland⁴²⁷ and Yugoslavia⁴²⁸ strongly condemned the report of the Visiting Mission and the Administering Authorities, claiming that they “put their own interests before those of the indigenous inhabitants,”⁴²⁹ while the Guatemalan delegate found the petitioners’ proposal of direct trusteeship by

424 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 382–85.

425 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 383–400.

426 Left to right: Alex Odame (Togoland Congress), Rodolfo Muñoz (Chairman of the Fourth Committee), Sylvanus Olympio (AEC) and Simon Kpodar (PTP).

427 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), pp. 399–400.

428 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 411.

429 GAOR, “7th Session: 4th Committee” (1952), p. 409.

the United Nations worth considering.⁴³⁰ Most of the representatives of the anti-colonial states consistently argued that the overwhelming majority in the two trusteeship areas wanted unification.

The colonial powers vehemently denounced this as presumptuous, insisting that the entire population of the territories should be allowed to decide freely on a solution, for which the *Joint Council on Togoland Affairs* represented the appropriate body. The representative of United States blamed the UN for the failure of the *Joint Council* because it had been hastily set up only for the Visiting Mission to observe it at work.⁴³¹ Therefore, the US tabled a draft resolution calling on France and Britain to merely reconstitute the *Joint Council for Togoland Affairs*.⁴³²

Yet, after the hearing of Olympio, Antor and Odame, this proposal seemed too truncated for various anti-colonial delegations. The Iraqi representative, Awni Khalidy, made a speech which the Committee members had waited for several days. He criticized that the representatives of various Administering Authorities had protested against a number of the questions which had been put to the petitioners by the Forth Committee: "If such questions had to be approved by the Administering Authorities, the hearing of petitioners would lose all meaning."⁴³³ Khalidy repeated that the "nationalistic clamour of the Ewes was not to be ignored as a danger to peace in West Africa."⁴³⁴ As the chairperson of the 1949 Visiting Mission to West Africa, he had reported that the majority of Togolanders desired unification of the two trusteeship territories. However, surprisingly, the conclusions of the 1952 Visiting Mission seemed to precisely favour the position of the Administering Authorities on maintaining the status quo. He criticized that it was the 'bounden duty' of the Visiting Mission to attend rallies of the principal parties demanding unification. The argument put forward by the Mission concerning the maintenance of public order was valueless because the Visiting Mission had not heard the African point of view and thus had succumbed to the influence of the Administering Authority. He concluded that the Mission had failed in its duty: "If visiting missions did not fulfil the tasks entrusted to them within the framework of the Trusteeship System, the system should be abolished forthwith."⁴³⁵

Various anti-colonial delegations tabled a whole series of amendments to bring the American draft resolution more in line with their views. The amendment by the Guatemalan delegation stated that "the unification of the two Togolands is the manifest aspiration of the majority of the population of both Trust Territories," calling on France and Britain to negotiate a revision of the trusteeship agreements "to make possible the unification of the said territories under a single trusteeship administration."⁴³⁶ A ten-

430 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 409.

431 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 408.

432 A/C.4/L.256/Rev.1 available at GAOR, 7th Session, Annexes, (A/7/Annexes/Vol.1), *Agenda item 32: The Ewe and Togoland unification problem: special report of the Trusteeship Council*, p. 5.

433 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 410.

434 PRAAD (Ho), VRG/AD/1043, *Trusteeship Council and Togoland*, 1953, Saving Telegram 361, 25 November 1952.

435 GAOR, "7th Session: 4th Committee" (1952), p. 411.

436 A/C.4/L.258, available at GAOR, 7th Session, Annexes, (A/7/Annexes/Vol.1), *Agenda item 32: The Ewe and Togoland unification problem: special report of the Trusteeship Council*, p. 8.

power amendment recommended the re-establishment of the *Joint Council of Togoland Affairs* through “direct elections based on universal adult suffrage by secret ballot.”⁴³⁷ In a tedious paragraph-by-paragraph vote, both the draft resolution and the amendments were adopted by the Fourth Committee despite opposition from all Administering Authorities, including the US, which originally sponsored the draft resolution.

The French and British representatives made it clear that their governments would refuse to implement the Fourth Committee’s resolution in this form, even if it were adopted in plenary. Thus, in the spirit of compromise, during the plenary debate Argentina and Venezuela therefore proposed a slight amendment to the ten-power motion and a vote was taken on the controversial paragraph, sponsored by Guatemala, which requested France and Britain to enable the establishment of a single trusteeship administration.

Through hallway diplomacy the French and British delegation were able to secure some concessions before the vote was taken in the plenary. It’s regrettable for the securitisation historian that there are no records documenting these diplomatic hallway exchanges. Some delegations that had voted for the Guatemalan amendment during the session of the Fourth Committee were persuaded to abstain in plenary, while others that had abstained in the Fourth Committee were persuaded to vote against the amendment in plenary. Finally, the paragraph calling for the establishment of a single administration was rejected by a narrow majority of 22 votes to 18, with 18 abstentions.⁴³⁸ The thus-pruned resolution was adopted even without opposition from France and Britain, although it still contained the uncomfortable statement that “the unification of the two Togolands is the manifest aspiration of the majority of the population of both Trust Territories.”⁴³⁹

For the Administering Authorities, the results were better than one would normally have expected.⁴⁴⁰ The British and French were off the hook, as they could now argue that the deletion of the Guatemala-sponsored paragraph from the Fourth Committee resolution indicated that the General Assembly rejected the idea of an early unification of the two Togolands under a single administration. Nevertheless, the Venezuelan delegate, Victor Rivas, bolstered the case for unification by securitising the unificationists whilst presenting reunification as a measure to appease them:

“[...] the negative attitude of the Administering Authority concerned would prevent only a peaceful settlement, but not the solution of the problem itself. [...] the metropolitan government postpones recognition of the capacity of that people to assume full responsibility for self-government, the result is effective clandestine activity, and then violence to achieve what could not be achieved amicably. [...] What

437 A/C.4/L.260 sponsored by Brazil, Burma, Egypt, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia, Pakistan and Yugoslavia. Available at GAOR 7th Session, Annexes, (A/7/Annexes/Vol.1), *Agenda item 32: The Ewe and Togoland unification problem: special report of the Trusteeship Council*, p. 6.

438 GAOR, “7th Session: Plenary” (1952), pp. 459–60.

439 Resolution 652 (VII), *The Ewe and Togoland unification problem*, adopted on 20 December 1952.

440 ANOM (Aix-en-Provence), 1AFFPOL/3341/2, *Entretiens franco-britanniques sur le Togo-Cameroun*, without title [compte-rendue], 7 February 1953, p. 5.

should the United Nations do in the face of this threat, which is basically international in character, and in the face of this problem which affects collective security?"⁴⁴¹

Whilst the 1952 oral hearings of Olympio, Antor, and Odamé before the Fourth Committee certainly marked the climax of their efforts to securitise Togoland unification, the resolution adopted by the General Assembly most certainly did not go as far as they had hoped. But they expressed their frustration to such an extent that it was unequivocally heard by delegations from states of the Global South as well as the Eastern Bloc, who were more than content to denounce the colonial policies of the Western powers anyway. Although the two Administering Authorities of Togoland got off lightly, they had to fear that the unificationists now had the attention of the world public opinion altogether.

Thus, to limit future declarations, such as Olympio's "reign of terror"-speech before the Fourth Committee during the General Assembly's 7th Session (1952), the colonial powers sought to extend the Trusteeship Council's restrictive *rules of procedure* to the General Assembly. During Anglo-French conversations on colonial issues related to the United Nations on 4 and 5 February 1953, the French delegation argued forcibly that hearings of oral petitioners by the Fourth Committee represented...

"[...] a dangerous tendency, which should be resisted by all means. They [the French] pointed out that the hearing of witnesses by the Assembly encouraged extremist movements in the territories from which they came, inflated the petitioners' own importance in the territories, and established a most undesirable direct contact between vociferous agitators from the territories and certain delegations in New York. The British delegation while paying tribute to the efficacy of the French counter-petitioners at the 1952 Session, agreed that such hearings, if they became general practice, might be severely damaging to the prestige of the Administering Powers in the territories. M. Pignon^[442] regarded it as very important that these hearings should be brought under control in 1953, and that petitioners should be heard by the Fourth Committee only after preliminary examination of their petitions by the Trusteeship Council. [...] the United States Government might be persuaded to take the initiative in the matter. [...] hearing of petitioners from non-self-governing territories could in no circumstances be permitted, and the British delegation reaffirmed that this was one of our 'sticking points'."⁴⁴³

6.5.4 A Spectre haunts Africa – the Spectre of the "Red Menace" (1953)

Marc Michel summarizes the year 1953 as "a year of anticipation, preparation, and consultation with parties, associations, chiefs, and notables in both Togos regarding the eventual reconstitution of a [Joined] Council, this time elected by universal suffrage."⁴⁴⁴

441 GAOR, "7th Session: Plenary" (1952), p. 458.

442 Léon Pignon was the head of the political department in the Ministry of Overseas France.

443 TNA (London), CO 554/665, *Togoland*, Anglo/French Conversations on Colonial Questions in the United Nations: 4th and 5th February, 1953, p. 2.

444 Michel, "The Independence of Togo," p. 307.