

It is of noteworthy importance that, due to the recent motion of the newly constituted ATT, the French authorities informed the Visiting Mission that they also intended to hold a consultation in a few years to clarify the termination of trusteeship and Togoland's potential incorporation into the French Union.⁶⁰⁴

6.6.4 Anglo-French Arrangements for the Togoland Referenda (1955)

On 14 November 1955, one week before the Trusteeship Council would meet for its 5th Special Session to consider the report of the Visiting Mission, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd and the French Overseas Minister, Henri Teitgen convened a meeting on the Visiting Mission's proposals and discussed how the proposed plebiscite in British Togoland could be favourable for both powers. Teitgen maintained that the procedure in British Togoland should be treated as an exception and not a "dangerous" and "regrettable"⁶⁰⁵ precedent for all remaining trusteeship territories and colonial possessions. Teitgen's concern that Togoland would set a dangerous precedent is understandable in light of international developments: from 18 to 24 April 1955, the Bandung Conference was held and gave new momentum to the tide of anti-colonialism. In the same year, it became clear that what had begun in Algeria in November 1954 had become a national revolutionary war. With the approaching independence of Morocco on 2 March 1956 and Tunisia on 20 March 1956, the definitive detachment of the Maghreb from the French grip seemed destined. Given these developments, what was to become of French *Afrique Noire*?

Thus, Teitgen stressed "the powers of the UNO [...] do not give it any right to organize a plebiscite in a territory under trusteeship, regardless whosever it is, but just to supervise it."⁶⁰⁶ Furthermore, Teitgen was against the establishment of the four voting districts that the Visiting Mission had recommended because they would "prejudge the results of the vote" and lead to the "balkanization of Africa."⁶⁰⁷ Eventually Lennox-Boyd and Teitgen agreed to organize two separate referenda in British and French Togoland, whereas the latter would decide upon French Togoland's permanent inclusion into the French Union.

The French were under time pressure: announcing the French referendum too early would risk the UN linking the future of British and French Togoland; announcing it too late would risk linking it with the Gold Coast's nearing independence, which would lead to a young independent African state, whose anticolonial voice would have great weight in the UN. In any case, Teitgen expressed concerns about Nkrumah's annexationist demeanour toward French Togoland. Thus, to thwart demands for equal treatment of both territories, it was agreed that the French would announce their plebiscite only after the

604 TCOR, "5th Special Session: Special Report on the Togoland Unification problem and the future of the Trust Territory of Togoland under British Administration" (1955), p. 17.

605 ANOM (Aix-en-Provence), 1AFFPOL/3340/1, *Entretiens franco-britanniques sur le Togo-Cameroun*, Note (without number), without date, p. 2

606 ANOM (Aix-en-Provence), 1AFFPOL/2182/2, *Royaume-Uni*, Procès-Verbal (without number), 14 November 1955, p. 1

607 ANOM (Aix-en-Provence), 1AFFPOL/2182/2, *Royaume-Uni*, Procès-Verbal (without number), 14 November 1955, p. 1

British referendum was over. Teitgen solicited the assurance from his British counterpart “that the questions asked during the plebiscite in British Togoland did not refer, even indirectly, to the fate of French Togoland.”⁶⁰⁸ A possible reference to Togoland reunification or independence outside the Commonwealth or the French Union had to be rejected at all costs.

As settled by Teitgen and Lennox-Boyd, at the Trusteeship Council’s 5th Special Session (1955) and the General Assembly’s 10th Session (1955), the British representative agreed with the main recommendation of the Visiting Mission to hold a plebiscite under the auspices of the UN but rejected the recommendation regarding the four voting districts because it would prejudice the results of the plebiscite itself:

“the will of the majority should determine the overall outcome, and the minority should loyally abide by the result, whatever it may be. [...] If there was to be a process of fragmentation whenever there was a test of public opinion under the United Nations similar to that now proposed for Togoland under British administration, the prospect was indeed disturbing.”⁶⁰⁹

General Assembly’s 10th Session (1955)

As was by now well established, the Fourth Committee’s 10th Session (1955) began with yet another debate whether to grant request for oral hearings by petitioners of trusteeship territories. Yet, this time it was the Israeli delegation that proposed to establish a five-member sub-committee to study merely the advisability of establishing procedures for the acceptance and examination of petitions by the Committee.⁶¹⁰ Besides Denmark, it was of course the Administering Authorities that lent approval to the proposal. Only the Belgian delegate, Pierre Ryckmans, went further in his opinion about oral representations before the Fourth Committee. He would vote even against the Israeli proposal because “he was convinced that an objective and impartial study could lead to only one conclusion: that it served no useful purpose for the Fourth Committee to hear oral petitions.”⁶¹¹

Most of the anti-colonial state representatives were apprehensive as well. The fear was stated that any recommended rules of procedure would effectively transfer any petitioner back to the Trusteeship Council. The most notorious comment came from the Indonesian representative saying, “any procedures advocated by the proposed sub-committee would be restrictive in effect and deprive the petitioners of their last court of appeal – the General Assembly.”⁶¹² After a US amendment had been accepted by Israel, the draft resolution, as amended, was rejected by 26 votes to 15, with 9 abstentions.⁶¹³

608 Ibid. Original : « il serait d'autre part préférable que les questions posées lors du plébiscite au Togo britannique ne se réfèrent pas, même indirectement, au sort du Togo français.”

609 TCOR, “5th Special Session” (1955), pp. 3–4.

610 A/C.4/L.390 “Acceptance and examination of petitions concerning Trust Territories—Israel: draft resolution”, 14 October 1955.

611 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 125.

612 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 121.

613 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 125.

When discussion of the 1955 Visiting Mission's report began, seven political organizations from Togoland made oral statements. During the discussion of the Fourth Committee, Antor stressed the importance of the Volta River project,⁶¹⁴ which would not be conducted if British Togoland remained a trusteeship territory or was separated from the Gold Coast.⁶¹⁵ He criticized the Mission's recommendation to hold a referendum in British Togoland, but not in French Togoland. He also found the wording of the referendum question proposed by the Visiting Mission unacceptable. He suggested that the choice should be independence first and integration second.⁶¹⁶

*Photo 19: Togoland Unificationists before 4th Committee (1 December 1955)*⁶¹⁷



Source: UN Photo.

Odame added that given the serious political crisis in the Gold Coast between the CPP government and the NLM it was “unlikely that the best interests of world peace and of the inhabitants of Togoland under British administration would be served by authorizing the integration of Togoland into the Gold Coast in the existing circumstances.”⁶¹⁸

Olympio generally agreed with the Visiting Mission's recommendation to hold a plebiscite under UN supervision. However, given that he himself first called for a plebiscite on Ewe unification in late 1947, it came as no surprise when he protested that

614 Completed in 1965, the project involved constructing the Akosombo Dam in Ghana. This hydro-electric initiative aimed to generate power for domestic and industrial use, leading to the formation of Lake Volta, one of the world's largest artificial reservoirs. The dam remains a key element in Ghana's energy infrastructure.

615 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 336.

616 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 338.

617 At left are (left to right): Alex Odame, A Chamba, and Senyo Gatror Antor (Togoland Congress). Across the desk from them are Mr. Anani Santos (left), representing Juvento, and Sylvanus Olympio (AEC).

618 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 340.

he “knew no reason why the plebiscite could not be held in 1957 in both Togolands.”⁶¹⁹ He held: “If there was any difference between the two plebiscites proposed by the Mission, it was only a difference in timing.”⁶²⁰ He also regretted that in recent discussions in the Trusteeship Council there seemed to be a tendency to apply the report of the Visiting Mission only to the question of the future of British Togoland. He warned that once British Togoland became part of the Gold Coast, the two Togolands could never be united. The reunification of Togoland already seemed to be off the table. He found it indicative that “an effective argument in favour of the reforms for Togoland had been that they should be regarded as a means of hastening the Trust Territory’s removal from what Mr. Ajavon, speaking in the French Parliament, had called the ‘intolerable meddling of the United Nations’ and its integration into the French Republic.”⁶²¹

The CPP representatives, Mensah, Asare, and Fleku, opposed the continuation of trusteeship over any part of British Togoland after the attainment of Gold Coast independence and any delay in holding the 1956 plebiscite. Mama Foussemi (UCPN) and Robert Ajavon (PTP) reiterated their arguments that the complete and immediate independence of French Togoland was a fantasy since the territory still needed French help for economic and social advancement.⁶²²

General Debate

During the general discussion, India supported the views put forward by the British representative. The Indian representative, Krishna Menon, could not agree with the attempt to use the Ewe in French Togoland to decide the fate of the Ewe in British Togoland and the Gold Coast. The draft resolution that his delegation introduced was divided into two sections: “The future of Togoland under British administration” and “The future of Togoland under French administration.”⁶²³ In this way, the draft resolution avoided to mention the unification of Togoland and the future of each territory was dealt with separately. The first part of the draft approved the Visiting Mission’s recommendations for a plebiscite in British Togoland under United Nations supervision and recommended its immediate implementation. The second part endorsed the Visiting Mission’s conclusions on the need for a similar plebiscite in French Togoland and asked the French to submit programs for political reform and their recommendations for holding a plebiscite.

Liberia tabled a number of amendments, the essence of which was to remove the separation of the “future of British and French Togoland” in the two sections of the Indian draft, so as to include unification as a possibility in the referendum question, and to allow an immediate referendum in French Togoland as well. Finally, a revised version of the Indian draft resolution expressed that the referendum should ascertain a majority in

619 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 352.

620 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 349.

621 United Nations, “UN Yearbook 1955” (1955), p. 351.

622 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 354.

623 A/C.4/L.428/Rev.1 available at GAOR, 10th Session, Annexes, (A/10/Annexes), *Agenda item 35: The Togoland unification problem and the future of the Trust Territory of Togoland under British administration: report of the Trusteeship Council*, p. 5.

regard to form a union with an independent Gold Coast. The term ‘union,’ which was proposed in the referendum question (a core component on which the separatist discourse of the HSGF is built on today) was, according to the Indian delegate, Jaipal, merely meant that it “would leave open the question of the nature of the union of Togoland with an independent Gold Coast.”⁶²⁴

The French, British, and Indian delegation opposed the Visiting Mission's proposal that the results in the four proposed voting districts should be considered separately. Yet, the Dutch delegate noted that the Visiting Mission had in a way prejudged the issue by presenting alternatives for which the Togolandese should have an opportunity through the plebiscite to indicate their preference.⁶²⁵ The Guatemalan representative dispelled the disagreement over the four-unit formula: following the plebiscite, the General Assembly could decide at its 11th Session (1956) whether the peoples' wishes could best be met by looking at the results as a whole or by considering each voting district separately. Oddly, the fact that leaving this question open could influence the voters' decision was not contested by any delegation.

The General Assembly was divided. For many anti-colonial states the early sealing of the first independence of an African colony trumped the unification of Togoland. In the end, the Liberian amendments favouring the pro-unification position were defeated, albeit narrowly.⁶²⁶ In the plenary session, the draft resolution was adopted without change.⁶²⁷ Mexico's representative, Espinosa Y. Prieto, was elected UN plebiscite commissioner.

Ultimately, the questions were formulated in such a way that France and Britain could hope for a confirmation of their agenda. The people in British Togoland could vote for

- a) “the union [integration]⁶²⁸ of Togoland under British Administration with an independent Gold Coast,” or
- b) “the separation of Togoland under British Administration from the Gold Coast and its continuance under Trusteeship, pending the ultimate determination of its political future.”

Thus, the people in British Togoland could choose between either independence or the status quo. Skinner assesses that the “framing of the plebiscite question reflects the extent to which the reunificationists had lost – or had been excluded from – control of the mechanisms through which the future of the trust territory would be decided.”⁶²⁹

624 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 437.

625 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 420.

626 GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), pp. 461–63.

627 General Assembly Resolution 944(X), adopted on 15 December 1955.

628 Today's confusion around the HSGF's claims concerning the “union” between Ghana and Togoland can be traced back to the Indian draft resolution, which changed the wording of the ballot from “integration” to “union” because it sounded less aggressive and “would leave open the question of the nature of the union of Togoland with an independent Gold Coast”, GAOR, “10th Session: 4th Committee” (1955), p. 437.

629 Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland*, pp. 153–54.