

The Non-Aligned Road: Toward Freedom in Africa

By [Greg Guma](#)

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

In 1954 the Soviet Union tested its first hydrogen bomb. In the summer negotiations between France, Britain, Vietnam, China and the USSR ended the Indochina War. Vietnam was divided into communist and non-communist sectors, but the US refused to sign and Eisenhower began talking about “the falling domino principle,” which he defined as potentially “the beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.”

In response, the US created SEATO, an alliance of anti-communist countries in Southeast Asia and plucked Ngo Dinh Diem out of a New Jersey seminary to head South Vietnam’s



government.

Back at home the US Supreme Court unanimously ruled that segregation was illegal. The Army-McCarthy Hearings were also held, after the notorious US Senator accused army officers of communist sympathies. But Tailgunner Joe had finally gone too far. Before the end of the year a special Senate committee recommended McCarthy’s censure. In the 1954 mid-term elections the Republicans lost control of the Senate. The mood was tense, but there were signs of change.

In Chicago, Toward Freedom’s education and organizing mission was taking shape. A first “booklet” was published in October 1954: “Colonialism and the United States: Proposals for Charter Amendment,” on a series of proposed UN changes covering Information Services, unions and federations, colonial empires outside the UN, the moving of Indigenous Peoples, conscription for foreign service, immigration, conciliation and mediation.

In 1955 Bill Lloyd initiated a new feature, “The Editor’s Column.” The first installment suggested a survey of colonial areas to assess popular reaction “to the idea of establishing time-tables for self-government or independence.” Timetables – something dictators and imperial powers tend to dislike.

Lloyd’s practical argument was that having a date for independence was just as important to “articulate, freedom-loving people in colonial areas as it is for the banker to put a date on

the promissory note he makes you sign when loaning you money.”

In February he turned his attention to an upcoming Asian-African conference, suggesting that if the US truly wanted to reduce polarization it should abandon the “futile legalistic view of colonial affairs” and support more UN authority in settling colonial conflicts in Kenya, North Africa, and Malaya (Malaysia), which gained independence in 1957.

Kennedy and Algeria

The struggles that TF chronicled in those years were often ignored by the mainstream press. But Sen. John F. Kennedy was a reader and personally praised its coverage of the Algerian revolution. Kennedy also noticed when Bill Lloyd pressed the State Department and NATO about the involvement of US warplanes in Algeria.

By 1955 the French had sent in at least 100,000 troops. A million French settlers owned the best land, TF noted, and had “an equal vote in the Algerian Assembly with representatives of 9 million Arabs.” Readers were urged to contact their elected leaders before the crisis “develops into another Indochina situation.” It was a clear call to action.

The Air Force initially denied the involvement of US planes, but TF pressed and eventually obtained the admission that, yes, US planes had dropping French paratroopers over Algeria. They described it as “a NATO exercise.” TF’s July 1955 cover story carried the bold headline:

U.S. HELPS FRENCH FIGHT ALGERIAN NATIONALISTS

In the editor’s corner, Lloyd attacked US “toadying to colonialism,” pointing out the hypocrisy of a US Congress resolution supporting self-determination on the same day that President Eisenhower sent helicopters to “put down the Algerian nationalists.” He also acknowledged French criticism that anti-colonialism could be a “self-righteous mark for commercial and financial penetration. The difficulty points inescapably to the need for United Nations rather than unilateral American conciliation or mediation.”

Two years later, on July 2, 1957, Kennedy introduced Res. 153, which called for an international effort to find “an orderly achievement of independence” for Algeria. TF devoted an editorial column that summer to an “eloquent plea for peace” by the senator.

A Voice for New Nations

Toward Freedom was literally the only US publication to provide advance reporting on the historic Bandung Conference, the event that launched the non-aligned movement. It also published the first eyewitness account after the meeting.

In April 1955, the leaders of 29 Asian and African nations gathered in an Indonesian mountain city and served notice to the world. They wanted a voice in regional and world policy decisions. Bill Lloyd and the TF group immediately recognized the historic nature of this event. In fact, the publication had announced the possibility a year in advance. Homer Jack attended and rushed a first, on-the-spot report for the May issue. Soon afterward, TF published Jack’s widely praised longer report as a pamphlet. The first edition sold out in a month.

For the next four decades Toward Freedom chronicled the non-aligned movement’s progress and setbacks. Lloyd called the Bandung conference “the first general conclave of Asian and

African nations in history, and also the most widely representative meeting yet to be called by leaders independent of both sides in the world cold war.”

The world changed radically during his editorial tenure, but Bill also remained committed to the concept of world federalism. Just as a small Swiss canton had taken the lead in creating that country’s federalist system, he felt that new nations could play an important role in the birth of a post-nationalist world order.

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