

Africans Angered by U.S. Lecture on

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Chicago Daily News Service

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y.

The State Department's stuffed shirt is showing again, as so often happens when Africa is the topic.

The Department has delivered itself of a pompous, little lecture on "the rule of law" as its comment on the amazing decision of the International Court of Justice in the Southwest Africa case. The World Court

threw out the suit by Ethiopia and Liberia asking U.N. supervision of Southwest Africa, an old time League of Nations mandate territory.

Largely at American prompting, the Africans spent six years and over \$1,000,000 in legal expenses trying to employ that "rule of law" to prevent the racist Republic of South Africa from carving up Southwest into a Bantustan checkerboard of all-black

and all-white apartheid districts.

Six years ago, the World Court at The Hague agreed to hear the case. But as the years rolled by, one pro-Africa judge died, a new arrival was disqualified as having come in late, and the arteries of several of the elderly surviving jurists hardened noticeably.

The result was the decision July 18 that Liberia and Ethiopia, the two African members from the old

League of Nations, had no right to bring the case. What the court had begun in 1960 was now found to be a great mistake.

The bewildered Africans were left with very little further legal action attractive enough to warrant their interest. For years, friendly American officials had persuaded Africans to put up patiently with the equivocal U.S. policy of condemning apartheid but refusing to do much about it.

International Court's Ruling

The U.S. advice to the Africans was: "Wait for the World Court ruling in your favor. Then we can act in the U.N. Security Council to enforce it." Now, with the marathon case thrown out, the promise of American backing rings dismally hollow.

The Africans plan to ask for U.N. General Assembly action on Southwest Africa, but the Assembly lacks authority to enforce a resolution even if it passes one.

Undoubtedly, the more politically alert of Southwest's 490,000 black residents will be receptive to Chinese Communist guerrilla techniques and weapons. Peking and Moscow have both denounced the Court's decision.

Frustration over Southwest Africa will be added to the anti-British anger which threatens to blow apart the Commonwealth on the issue of neighboring white-minority-ruled Rhodesia.

The State Department response to these ultra-grave developments dwells piously on the "rule of law" on a deeply felt issue concerning the treatment of people as little more than work animals. The Department statement notes that the court's refusal to consider the Ethiopian-Liberian case leaves standing previous World Court advisory opinions asserting U.N. responsibilities over Southwest Africa.

"The United States will

THE WASHINGTON POST

Sunday, July 31, 1966

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continue to support the authority of the opinions and judgment of the court as to those questions on which it has passed," the State Department announced.

African leaders couldn't help recalling acidly that up to now these World Court opinions never have been permitted to get in the way of extensive British and American high profit investments in South Africa's low wage, apartheid-based economy.