

Ralph Bunche

the odyssey continues...

6

MODULE

Mr. U.N.



■ Synopsis

“Mr.U.N.” tracks Bunche’s diplomatic career starting in 1945 when he serves as advisor to the U.S. delegation at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco. Shortly thereafter he accepts an invitation to join the United Nations as Director of Trusteeship. For the next 25 years, until shortly before his death in 1971, he works for the world organization in various capacities rising to become Undersecretary-General of the United Nations, the highest post attainable by a U.S. citizen. The module focuses on:

- Bunche’s ability to work successfully with diverse interest groups in drafting Chapters 11 and 12 of the U.N. charter, chapters which created the legal basis for the independence of U.N. Trusteeships and other non-self-governing territories;
- his work as Director of the Trusteeship Division developing policies and building an organizational framework that would lead towards independence and self-government for the Trust Territories;
- his appointment in 1957 as United Nations Undersecretary-General for Special Political Affairs, in charge of U.N. peacekeeping operations around the world;
- the criticism leveled at him by civil rights leaders who feel he has sold out by working within the establishment;
- Bunche’s behind the scenes efforts to ensure adoption by the U.N. General Assembly of Eleanor Roosevelt’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- his close collaboration with Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld;
- the role Bunche played in the Atoms for Peace project and in setting up the International Atomic Energy Agency

■ Historical Background

By 1945, after six years of horrendous warfare, death and destruction, the world was again ready to try to set up an organization that would ensure the future peace and security. Well before the end of the war, the United States and its allies had made plans to create the United Nations. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with newly created weapons of mass destruction brought the war with Japan to a close but also lent even greater urgency to the search for lasting peace. While there was concern about nuclear arms proliferation there was also the hope that peaceful applications of nuclear power would lift all nations out of poverty. Colonized peoples, many of whom fought and died in the armies of their colonizers, were increasingly impatient to self-govern. The colonizing powers, for their part, did not want to give up control of the resources and wealth of the colonies. By the early 1950s, ideological tensions between capitalism and communism combined with competition for the world's natural resources engendered the so-called Cold War.

By 1944, Ralph Bunche had moved to the State Department's postwar planning unit that was involved in mapping the future of the colonial territories. He was appointed an advisor to the United States delegation to the conference in San Francisco where fifty nations were meeting to draft a charter for the United Nations. Bunche distin-

In This Module (in order of appearance)

TERMS TO KNOW

nationalistic, non-self governing territories, decolonization, trusteeship, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Magna Carta, Soviet Bloc, Organization of African Unity, the Cold War, State Department

PEOPLE REFERENCED

Eleanor Roosevelt, Trygve Lie, W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, A. Philip Randolph, Mary McLeod Bethune, Walter White, Arthur Davis, Dag Hammarskjöld, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Kwame Nkrume, Richard Nixon

PLACES REFERENCED

Hiroshima, San Francisco, Great Britain, France, Holland, Belgium, colonial empires worldwide (non-self governing territories), Gold Coast/Ghana

PEOPLE ON SCREEN

Dr. Herschelle Challenor, Sir Brian Urquhart, Dr. Ben Keppel, Dr. Robert Harris, Dr. David Levering Lewis, Robert Edgar, Dr. John A. Davis, Dr. Ofuately Kodjoe, Ernest Gross, Clovis Maksoud, Nnamdi Azikiwe, William Mashler, Abba Eban, Dr. Benjamin Rivlin, John H. Johnson

guished himself by his ability to work with conflicting interest groups and by his skill at drafting language for Chapters XI and XII of the United Nations Charter. The wording of these two chapters laid the legal groundwork for the eventual independence of the Trusteeships and other non-self governing territories.

■ Relevant Standards

National Council for the Social Studies Strands

Strand IV. Individuals, Groups, & Institutions

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *individual development and identity*, so that the learner can: (f) Evaluate the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change.

Strand VI. Power, Authority & Governance

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance*, so that the learner can: (f) analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

Strand IX. Global Connections

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *global connections and interdependence*, so that the learner can: (g) describe and evaluate the role of international and multinational organizations in the global arena.

National Center for History in the Schools Standards

Standard 3. Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore, the student is able to

- D. Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.

■ Map Connections

On a map of Africa, note the location of mineral resources, which were sources of wealth to colonizing nations. (Information about various countries' mineral resources can be found in a standard encyclopedia.) You can create your own map at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps/>.

■ Before You Watch

For suggested preview strategies and activities, see page 4 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

If this is the first module screened, ask the students: Have you ever heard of Ralph Bunche? What do you know or think you know about Ralph Bunche? What do you predict you might find out about him in the video you are about to watch?

OPINION What do you think is the best way to prevent war? What factors cause wars? Do you think individual people (leaders, whether elected or not) or systems (political and economic structures) have more to do with the causes or prevention of war?

RECALL Why are the lives of colonized peoples of particular interest to Ralph Bunche?

**HISTORICAL
CONTEXT** What was the League of Nations and what were the reasons for its failure? Why did the European powers resist independence for their colonies?

■ While You Watch (teacher's answer key)

For suggestions on how to use these questions, see pages 4-5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. What does Bunche say about the challenges of a nuclear age?

[Answers may include: The challenge must be met. Either civilization must destroy war or war will wipe out any trace of civilization. The universe could again be transformed into a seething cauldron of infuriated nations.]

2. When the U.S. delegation refuses to use the language proposed by Bunche for an article in one of the chapters of the Charter, how does he succeed in having it considered?

[He slips it to the Australians.]

3. Given the ideological terms in which World War II had been fought, what role does Bunche believe race will play in the post-war period?

[Race and racism will be central to the future peace and security of the United States and the world.]

4. Bunche succeeds in getting language into the resolution on non-self governing territories stating that the rights and welfare of the people living in the territories are of vital concern to the peace and general welfare of the world. What is the significance of this language?

[It means that the United Nations can intervene to protect the rights of the people on the grounds that any abuse of their rights jeopardizes the peace and security of the world.]

5. What are some of the natural resources of Africa that are mentioned as being important to European economic development?
[Diamonds, gold, copper]
6. W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, A. Philip Randolph and other African American leaders believe there should be a push for immediate independence for African colonies. What is Bunche's position?
[That it is important to lay the groundwork and set the legal precedents that will assure the peaceful transition of power.]
7. What evidence does Dr. Otuatye-Kodjoe cite in support of Bunche's position?
[Eventually all trust territories became independent, and the U.N. became the major focus for discussion of issues involving the right of self-determination for colonies.]
8. What important resolution involving human rights does Bunche have a hand in getting the U.N. General Assembly to adopt? Who authored the document?
[The Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Eleanor Roosevelt.]
9. What concern does the Soviet Bloc have about the U.N.? What happens as a result of that concern?
[They think the U.S. exercises too much control over the U.N.; Trygve Lie, the first Secretary-General, is forced to resign and is replaced by Dag Hammarskjöld.]
10. What important new position does Hammarskjöld create for Ralph Bunche?
[Undersecretary-General of the United Nations]
11. As the Cold War intensifies and the stockpile of nuclear arms continues to mount on both sides of the Iron Curtain, what do Hammarskjöld and Bunche do?
[Answers may include: Convene a conference on atomic energy; set up a U.N. agency to foster peaceful uses of atomic energy, create the International Atomic Energy Agency]
12. African American publisher John Johnson says how gratifying it was for him to see "my first black supreme court justice, first black attorney general, mayors, governors, prime ministers" at the independence ceremonies for Ghana in 1957. How do the Africans respond to this?
[It prompts them to ask "Now that we Africans have our independence, when will you Negroes get yours?"]

■ After You Watch

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

For suggestions on how to structure post-viewing discussions or activities, see page 5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. As World War II came to a close, there were unresolved issues as well as new ones for the world to deal with. What do you think were the biggest issues facing the world in the aftermath of World War II? Explain your answers.
2. What division of the United Nations was Dr. Bunche given responsibility for, and why was his job so critical?
3. In Chapter XI of the U.N. Charter dealing with non-self governing territories, Bunche included language that states that the problems of the territories are of vital concern to the peace and general welfare of the world. Why did he do this? What did it imply about the way conflicts involving non-self-governing areas might be handled by the U.N. in the future?
4. Do you think Dr. Bunche made the right decision in going to work for the United Nations? If he had stayed with the State Department, what might he have accomplished there that he wasn't able to do at the United Nations?
5. What impact did the existence of newly independent African nations, and their representation in the U.N., have on the civil rights movement in the United States?

■ Digging Deeper—Activities and Research Projects

1. Have students research the relationship between Dr. Bunche and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the civil rights movement. Ask them to consider how Dr. Bunche's work as director of the United Nations Trusteeship Division and his support of decolonization at the U.N. might have influenced Dr. King or other leaders of the civil rights movement. Have them share their findings in pairs, and then in a full class discussion.
2. Ask students to create a poem or song lyrics (in any acceptable literary form) that would express the feelings of a people now freed from colonial rule.
3. Have students listen to freedom songs from South Africa and research the role they played in the struggle for democracy there. One source for recorded songs is "This Land is Mine: South African Freedom Songs" available from Folkways Records, FW05588. Excerpts can be heard online by clicking on speaker icons next to titles at <http://www.folkways.si.edu/search/AlbumDetails.aspx?ID=1068#>.

Students may also find it interesting to compare the lyrics to the South African anthem during white rule—"The Call of South Africa" (available at <http://www.anc.org.za/misc/call.html>)—with the current anthem, "Nkosi sikelel' iAfrica" (Lord Bless Africa), which can be found online at <http://www.polity.org.za/html/misc/nkosi.html?rebookmark=1#english2>
4. Have students create a chart in which they compare and contrast main points in the Magna Carta, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United States Bill of Rights.

