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Chairman: Mrs. AZA FIGUEROA (Chile).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Dehousse (Belgium), Vice-Chairman, presided.

Refugees and stateless persons (*continued*)

[Item 30]*

Problems of assistance to refugees: reports of the International Refugee Organization and of the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/1884 (chapter VI), A/1948, A/2011, A/C.3/563, A/C.3/L.199, A/C.3/L.200, A/C.3/L.201) (*continued*)

[Item 31]*

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. DE GUZMAN NOGUERA (Colombia) said he wished to speak in order to remain true to his country's humanitarian tradition and to recall some philosophical principles that had been forgotten. Man had three principal rights. The first was the right to live, which meant that human beings had to live together and bound a people into a great and tightly knit whole, comprising both the living and the dead. The second—a consequence of the first—was the right to a country which could be called home. The third, on which the enjoyment of the first two depended, was the right to work. Yet, in the twentieth century, some human beings were denied those fundamental rights. To restore to them those rights was not a matter of philanthropy but a mere matter of charity for those who had been brought up under Christian principles and a question of human solidarity for the disciples of historical materialism.

2. True to its traditions, Colombia wished to collaborate in the solution of the refugee problem. His country had received refugees and granted them as favourable living conditions as its legislation allowed; it had done everything in its power to mitigate their suffering and was ready to accept branches of the Office

of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in its territory.

3. The Chilean representative's remarks (374th meeting) concerning the danger of setting up branch offices were interesting; but the High Commissioner's explanations and assurances were quite satisfactory. The Statute of the High Commissioner's Office (General Assembly resolution 428 (V), annex) spoke of local or regional representation. His delegation considered that branch offices were essential. The United Nations, which had assumed a heavy responsibility in setting up the Office of the High Commissioner, had a duty to make it physically possible for him to succeed in his task. The United Nations was not being asked to make great sacrifices, but merely to give the High Commissioner the necessary authority for launching an appeal for voluntary contributions and to place at his disposal the funds he required to carry out his work.

4. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which was composed of representatives of Member States and which was notoriously critical, had, in principle, approved the High Commissioner's budget estimates (A/1853, chap. III, section 20 a). The Third Committee did not therefore have to discuss the appropriations in detail. Its task was merely to outline the policy which was to guide the High Commissioner in his operations. The United Nations had elected the High Commissioner and trusted in him; it should therefore rely upon him to make the best use of the funds it placed at his disposal.

5. With regard to the fund for the immediate relief of the refugees, the representative of Colombia was willing to authorize the High Commissioner to launch an appeal for general contributions to a total of \$ US 3 million, which would make it possible to alleviate much suffering; he urged the members of the Committee to discharge their obligations arising out of the responsibility assumed by the United Nations vis-à-vis the refugees and displaced persons.

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

6. Mr. KOS (Yugoslavia) recalled the earlier discussions on the refugee problem and the liquidation of the International Refugee Organization, which, he said, would go down in contemporary history for the many reservations and numerous disputes it had caused. When in 1949 the great majority of the members of the Third Committee had decided (General Assembly resolution 319 (IV)) to set up the Office of the High Commissioner, they had hoped that the interests of the refugees would be the sole determining consideration in the search for a solution to the problem.

7. His delegation felt that by reason of its terms of reference, its structure, the fact that it was directly answerable to the General Assembly, and the personality of its chiefs, the Office of the High Commissioner had all the prerequisites for carrying out its task in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and for fulfilling the expectations of the refugees. But in the final analysis its work depended above all on the attitude and goodwill of the countries concerned.

8. The proposals and requests of the High Commissioner had to be considered in relation to the general problem which the international situation was daily making more complicated. With that in view, Mr. Kos proceeded to analyse the conclusions set forth in the High Commissioner's report (A/2011).

9. In the first place, the High Commissioner was asking the General Assembly for authority to launch an appeal for voluntary contributions. In that connexion he observed that the High Commissioner's scope of activity was wider than had been that of IRO. He should therefore employ the resources placed at his disposal for material assistance to refugees for relief in critical cases, wherever they might appear in the world.

10. The Office of the High Commissioner should only accept voluntary contributions to which no conditions were attached. It would be advisable if the High Commissioner, when reporting on the material assistance he had furnished during the preceding year, were to give some indication of the assistance he was likely to have to furnish in the coming year. In that way those who supplied the resources for material assistance would be encouraged because they would see why the assistance was being requested and for whom it was intended. In that way, too, the Third Committee would have an opportunity of considering and guiding the actual work of the Office of the High Commissioner.

11. The Office of the High Commissioner was the only legitimate successor of the International Refugee Organization. If the High Commissioner was to take over IRO's liabilities—which meant the needs of the refugees themselves—it was reasonable that he should also take over IRO's assets and be able to use them as instructed by the Third Committee; those assets would perhaps be the only material resources he would have with which to begin his work.

12. Secondly, the High Commissioner was contemplating extending the field of his activities by cooperating with the governments and specialized agencies concerned to draw up long-term plans for the assimila-

tion of refugees. The Yugoslav delegation felt that the refugees' countries of origin should also be consulted whenever they did not refuse consultation. Most of the Yugoslav refugees had left their country not as genuine political *émigrés* but because they had been duped by one-sided propaganda and had given way to pressure resulting from post-war conditions. But the Yugoslav Government, as the Yugoslav Minister of the Interior had stated in Parliament, had never abandoned its citizens. He felt that the High Commissioner had not paid sufficient attention to the possibilities of repatriation, which should really form a material feature of long-term plans.

13. He was not referring to forced repatriation or the return of refugees to their countries of origin irrespective of their probable fate there. An attempt had to be made to give refugees an objective idea of the conditions prevailing in their countries of origin. The High Commissioner or his representatives should therefore get in touch with governments which honestly desired the repatriation of all their citizens, with a view to studying the circumstances in which the refugees would be able to return to their countries. Speaking for his own country, he said Yugoslavia had nothing to hide about the lot of its repatriated *émigrés*. The High Commissioner would consequently be able to reduce the number of refugees for whom he was contemplating drawing up long-term programmes without any certainty that they would be successful.

14. Finally, a body to deal with migration had just been set up outside the United Nations. Speaking generally, the Yugoslav delegation wondered what would become of the United Nations functions under the Charter in the economic and social field if, whenever the moment for practical action arrived, a group of States dealt with such questions outside the United Nations.

15. He feared that the formation of the agency in question would cause the refugee question to be studied in accordance with principles other than the economic and social principles by which the High Commissioner was to be guided, and that the new institution would handle the refugee problem without recognizing the High Commissioner's authority or taking his work programmes into account.

16. The Yugoslav delegation felt that the magnitude of his task and the existing situation made it impossible for the High Commissioner to direct all operations from a single office: he required representatives on the spot, in branch offices, for otherwise he would be unable to do his job. Hence the High Commissioner ought to be supplied with the requisite funds; and what he had applied for were not unduly large sums. The High Commissioner would have to recruit highly skilled staff, according to the principles of equitable geographical distribution, so as to ensure that the work was done in an impartial and objective spirit.

17. In a world in which social change and events daily created new categories of refugees, the position of the Yugoslav Government remained unchanged. The Yugoslav Government hoped that all the disputes and misunderstandings would be brought to an end and that the refugee problem would be settled in future

according to strictly humanitarian principles. It defended those principles in domestic as well as in international affairs.

18. Mr. AZKOUL (Lebanon) said his country had always been keenly interested in humanitarian questions and deplored the lot of those uprooted human beings who had lost everything and were at the mercy of events. The Lebanese had for some years harboured refugees and the sight of their misfortunes increased the desire to help all refugees. In the first place Lebanon had received Armenian refugees and allowed them to become Lebanese citizens without distinguishing between the able-bodied and others. The Armenian refugees had become excellent citizens, skilful workers, honest and upright. The Lebanese Armenian community continued to take an interest in the lot of Armenian refugees elsewhere, and the Lebanese delegation shared that concern. More recently Lebanon had received refugees from Palestine. There was an indirect causal connexion between them and the activities of the United Nations which, despite its good intentions, had helped to create that tragic problem. There was a lesson there which the High Commissioner ought not to forget.

19. In general, the United Nations was not to blame for the existence and plight of refugees, even in Korea. But the same was not true of the Palestine refugees, since the United Nations had taken a decision which was bound to create a further category of refugees. By its decision to partition a small country, it had turned one part of the country into a place of refuge for aliens, and an exodus of population had inevitably resulted from the partition. The United Nations responsibilities were therefore twofold: towards the large majority of refugees it had a humanitarian mission to perform; while towards the Palestine refugees it had legal obligations, and it would be equitable if assistance to Palestine refugees were an item in the budget.

20. Those considerations influenced his delegation's position. It felt that the United Nations which had created an international body ought to provide it with the means to perform the task for which it had been created. The High Commissioner, who enjoyed the confidence of the United Nations, stated that despite his attempts to repatriate and resettle the refugees, cases of distress still existed for which material assistance was indispensable. The Lebanese delegation was in favour of authorizing the High Commissioner to launch an appeal for the refugee assistance fund which he recommended. It would, however, like to have particulars of the groups to be assisted and their whereabouts.

21. With regard to the question of branch offices, his delegation thought it was impossible to refuse to set them up if the High Commissioner considered them necessary. The establishment of such offices would enable a representative from the High Commissioner's Office to gain first-hand knowledge of the circumstances of refugees, of the rights they were granted or denied, of the legislation of the country where they were settled and of the way in which they might be better protected. Such a measure would also have a beneficial effect on the refugees because it would be a great moral comfort to them to be able to see a representative of the United Nations working on the spot. The location and number

of the offices and the size of their staff were matters to be discussed by the Fifth Committee rather than by the Third. However, his delegation felt that it should be possible to reduce the number of officials employed by each office to less than six.

22. He then returned to the case of the Armenian refugees, of whom 400,000 had taken refuge in Lebanon and Syria after the First World War. For those refugees there was no further problem, because they had become either Lebanese or Syrian citizens. He wished however to correct one inaccuracy which appeared in the United Nations publication entitled *The Refugee in the Post-War World*¹ and to make it clear that those who had returned to the Armenian SSR had done so not as refugees but as Lebanese or Syrian citizens and had returned to the USSR for purely ideological reasons. In 1922, 25,000 Armenians had emigrated to Greece, while 125,000 had settled in France. After the Second World War, there had been a third exodus of the Armenians from the USSR, Poland and the other peoples' democracies, and also from Germany where they had been prisoners of war. Some of them had been under the protection of IRO, while others had been protected by Nansen passports.

23. The question was to decide what should happen to the first category when IRO ceased to exist. In addition, the position of those with Nansen passports was somewhat ambiguous, because they had all the duties of citizens without enjoying all the corresponding rights. His delegation therefore hoped that the High Commissioner's Office would pay particular attention to the question of Armenian refugees, would establish contact with Armenian organizations and would, where necessary, consult an expert on the subject.

24. Mr. PAVLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, as early as 1946, the General Assembly had, in resolutions 8 (I) and 62 (I), considered the problem of refugees and laid down the principles for its solution. The Assembly had recognized that the problem of refugees and displaced persons was an international one and had recommended that the displaced persons should be speedily returned to their countries of origin. On 23 April 1947, the Council of Foreign Ministers, recognizing the importance of repatriation, had adopted a decision whereby the participating Powers had acknowledged the right of the countries concerned to appoint representatives to visit the camps and the assembly centres where displaced persons were held, had prohibited all propaganda against repatriation and had authorized the camp officials to circulate newspapers and publications and to show films from the countries of origin of the displaced persons in their charge. Those measures had been perfectly logical and had shown that the countries of origin were quite legitimately interested in the fate of their nationals.

25. What had in fact happened was that the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France had tried to evade their responsibilities and to prevent the repatriation of the nationals of the USSR and the peoples' democracies. Those three Powers had done

¹ See *The Refugee in the Post-War World* (A/AC.36/6), Geneva, December 1951, p. 267.

their utmost to prevent the Soviet repatriation missions from accomplishing their task. For example, in the United States zone of occupation in Germany, the members of those missions had only been able to speak to the displaced persons one by one and had had to hold their conversations in special rooms in the presence of United States officials. Soviet missions had been denied admission to camps on 1 March 1950 in the United States zone and on 9 April 1950 in the United Kingdom zone. The United States, United Kingdom and French authorities had taken measures to prevent Soviet nationals from receiving information or even news from their country. News broadcasts describing the great works in progress in the USSR had been censored. On 1 February 1951 the occupation authorities in the American zones of Germany and Austria had forbidden the dissemination of news on life in the Soviet Union and the distribution of newspapers and publications from the USSR. Displaced persons who had expressed the wish to return to their countries of origin had met with obstacles of every kind — refusal to grant *laissez-passer*, completion of questionnaires, etc.— and had been threatened with arrest if they should leave the camps. Not only did the occupation authorities and IRO prevent nationals of the USSR and the peoples' democracies from returning to their countries, but at the same time they conducted intensive slanderous propaganda against those countries. They had encouraged the formation of committees composed of fascists, and where intimidation had failed had gone as far as murder. The displaced persons' camps had been handed over to traitors and war criminals, and even to para-military organizations directed against the Soviet Union.

26. The United Nations publication *The Refugee in the Post-War World* showed what sort of people many of the inmates of the refugee camps were: they included persons who had been captured in Nazi uniform, White Russians, traitors recruited by the Germans, Ukrainian terrorists and, in particular, the remains of the "Fourteenth Ukrainian SS Division". Those individuals had been the hope of the German and Italian fascists. It was common knowledge how they had fared. The Americans, the British and the French were trying to use them but they too would fail.

27. The International Refugee Organization had served as an instrument in the propaganda campaign against the USSR and in favour of the countries to which it was sought to attract the displaced persons. It had been transformed into a recruiting centre for cheap labour for the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France. The part played in the past by IRO had been assumed by the High Commissioner's Office, for the Western Powers were in no way interested in repatriating the displaced persons, but solely in recruiting slaves and mercenaries; for them, the matter was a commercial and military transaction. He referred to an article in a 1948 number of *Reader's Digest*, which showed that the displaced persons' camps were virtual slave markets. But even more than workers, it was saboteurs and spies that the United States authorities, on the instructions of the Department of Defense, were endeavouring to recruit from among nationals of the Eastern European democracies, as

anyone who read the United States Press could see. The International Refugee Organization had done everything in its power to encourage those odious machinations.

28. The last annual report of IRO^a showed that the number of displaced persons repatriated — which had always been negligible — had dropped to almost nil. The reason was not that no persons desiring repatriation were left, but that the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France had done everything in their power to prevent the repatriation of nationals of the USSR and the peoples' democracies. Not content with illegally detaining those nationals, they had separated families and like Hitler had torn children from their parents. He quoted a number of letters from parents vainly demanding their children from the American authorities. The USSR delegation could not tolerate such inhuman practices.

29. There was a close connexion between those intrigues and the so-called Mutual Security Act of 1951 (Mutual Security Act and Mutual Security Appropriation Act) appropriating a hundred million dollars for refugees from the peoples' democracies and the organization of terrorist bands in those democracies. That was the true purpose of that act, as had been admitted by certain prominent persons in the United States of America. The object was to recruit traitors, war criminals and mercenaries for service against their country.

30. Representative Kersten had spoken, in the United States Congress, of the formation of a foreign legion for what he called the defence of Europe, meaning the overthrow of certain governments and their replacement by régimes which were hated. That intention was reflected in the report of the High Commissioner (A/2011), who was asking that half of the proposed funds should be reserved for future refugees, in other words for the mercenaries whom it was sought to recruit in their countries. The sum asked was three million dollars, but more would be requested later.

31. It might be asked what an enterprise of that kind had to do with the mission of the United Nations and whether the United Nations was to finance the espionage activities of the United States of America. Spies had been parachuted into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia and into Romania, and those spies were recruited in the refugee camps, a fact which was surely known to the High Commissioner. In his statement (373rd and 374th meetings), the High Commissioner had not said a word regarding repatriation—and the omission could hardly have been accidental. He was following the policy of IRO and seeking to perpetuate the refugee problem.

32. The USSR delegation would vote against the provision of any funds, whether provided by the United Nations or not, for the use of the Office of the High Commissioner, since the latter's activities merely held up repatriation. Nor could his delegation approve any long or short-term programme since the only problem that was being spoken of was how to maintain a source of cheap labour. The USSR delegation would also

^a See document E/2005.

oppose the establishment of branch offices, for the Office of the High Commissioner was an obstacle to repatriation and merely served as a link in the designs of the United States of America and its satellites to launch a war of aggression.

33. The USSR delegation would vote for the draft resolution submitted by the Byelorussian SSR (A/C.3/L.201).

34. Mrs. ROOSEVELT (United States of America) reserved the right to reply later to the statements made by the representative of the USSR; she pointed out that the United States of America had no satellites and as a free country was associated with other free countries.

35. Mr. RODRIGUEZ FABREGAT (Uruguay) said that his delegation echoed the views expressed by the Colombian representative. The Uruguayan delegation also felt that if funds for the relief of refugees made it possible to lighten the sufferings of a single human being, that alone would be sufficient reward for the Third Committee's efforts.

36. The fate of refugees, outlawed from society and deprived of all assistance, required the attention of the entire international community. In 1926 the international community had for the first time taken action to assist refugees with the drafting of the first international convention on refugees, to be followed, in 1928, 1931, 1933, 1938 and 1939, by the drafting and signing of international instruments for raising the status of the refugees.³ Finally, in 1946 (General Assembly resolution 62 (I)), after the collapse of the Nazi régime, the United Nations had set up the International Refugee Organization, for the purpose of assisting refugees and displaced persons and had thus established the principle of international co-operation for the protection of refugees.

37. In keeping with that principle the Third Committee ought to try to find a solution to a problem which was still acute. He paid a tribute to the work of Lord Cecil and more recently of Mrs. Roosevelt who, inspired by the most generous motives, have done much for refugees and displaced persons. He also referred to the work of the International Refugee Organization, which the Third Committee had just heard criticized in terms of unusual violence. Although Uruguay might have reservations to make concerning some of the schemes launched by the organization, it could only pay a tribute to its accomplishments as a whole. He felt bound to point out that neither the Government nor the people of Uruguay would have agreed to participate in the work of an organization that engaged in subversive political activities under the guise of assisting refugees. The refugee problem must be approached in a spirit of humanitarianism and solidarity consistent with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

38. His delegation felt that the United Nations should continue the work it had begun and assist the twelve

million persons who had been uprooted from their mother countries by the Second World War, had seen the foundations of their livelihood destroyed and had become the playthings of circumstances.

39. Countries which, like Uruguay, had been able to examine the problem at close quarters realized that it had three main aspects: some refugees could settle in the country where they had sought asylum; others could settle in a country other than the country of first asylum; finally, some refugees could not succeed in settling anywhere and were equally unable to return to their country of origin, either because that country placed obstacles in the way of their repatriation or because the refugees refused for valid reasons to be repatriated. His delegation fully understood, for example, the unwillingness of Spanish refugees to be repatriated so long as the Franco regime was in power, for they knew that in Spain their freedom and their lives would be in jeopardy.

40. The refugee problem should not be viewed in an abstract or general light but from the point of view of the individual. Uruguay, whose population was chiefly descended from immigrants, realized how difficult it was for newcomers to become acclimatized in a new country, but it also knew that in its own case the immigrants had contributed a valuable element and had stimulated progress on democratic lines. It could not be said that the countries of Latin America regarded the question of refugees in a theoretical or sentimental way or that they disregarded the facts of the problem, for it was bound up with their traditions, their ancestors having fled from Europe to start a new life in a new world.

41. There was no point in criticizing the work done by IRO or in asserting, as had been done, that the refugee problem should already have been solved. The problem existed, and the difficulties with which displaced persons were faced were only too real.

42. When the United Nations had decided to set up the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees to succeed IRO, it had taken into account the developments that had occurred in the refugees' situation. It was true that their number had decreased since the Second World War, but the plight of such of them as remained was still critical, and moreover, as the Lebanese representative had pointed out, the partition of Palestine had led to the emergence of new groups of refugees. It was not always possible to make hard-and-fast calculations or classifications; deaths or cases of sickness could be counted, but there was no yardstick for some kinds of distress; no one could measure the agony of those who had seen their whole existence shattered or the violence of the shock caused in a child's mind by the sight of the massacres and destruction which he had witnessed.

43. The representative of Uruguay appealed to the members of the Committee to do all they could to keep human conscience alive, lest it grow callous through familiarity with such misery; he appealed to them to ensure the protection of those who were still refugees or displaced persons.

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplement No. 20, Resolutions, No. 428 (V), annex, chap. II, para. 6 A (i).*

44. Those were the reasons for which the Uruguayan delegation had joined with other delegations in submitting a joint draft resolution (A/C.3/L.200) by which the General Assembly would authorize the High Commissioner to launch an appeal for funds for the purpose of enabling emergency aid to be given to the most needy groups among the refugees within his mandate. Those who were aware of the warm sympathies of the High Commissioner knew that there was no need to fear he would abuse the confidence placed in him, or that he would not zealously defend the cause of those refugees who could not return to their fatherland.

45. Under paragraph 2 of the operative part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would recommend all States directly affected by the refugee problem to pay special attention to it when executing programmes of economic reconstruction and development. In Uruguay, the authorities competent under the Constitution were studying the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees¹ and would probably propose a number of amendments to Uruguayan legislation so as to make ratification of the Convention possible.

¹ See United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons: *Final Act and Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (Palais des Nations, Geneva, 1951).

46. Everyone engaged in studying the refugee problem came into contact not only with the High Commissioner but also with a number of charitable organizations; he wondered if the High Commissioner could at a later stage supply some information on the work of those organizations and the value of their assistance. If those organizations wished to take part in the discussion, they should be given an opportunity to state their views.

47. It was to be hoped that the branch offices would enable the High Commissioner to perform his task successfully. If he thought that any receiving countries were not granting refugees the proper treatment, he ought to be able to tell them so immediately through the branch offices.

48. In conclusion the representative of Uruguay said that his country had always received refugees in a spirit of absolute equality and had given them the right to take part in the life of the community on the same terms as its own citizens. Those principles would alone ensure respect for human dignity, and it was in that spirit that the Uruguayan delegation had joined with other delegations in presenting the draft resolutions (A/C.3/L.199 and A/C.3/L.200) which had been submitted to the Third Committee.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.