



Monday, 7 January 1952, at 10.30 a.m.

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Chairman : Mrs. Ana 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. Mrs. DOMANSKA (Poland) said that the whole development of the treatment of the refugee problem since the first session of the General Assembly had been political rather than humanitarian, owing to the increasing pressure exercised by the United States Government.

2. Like some other governments, the Polish Government had always felt that the whole emphasis should be placed upon the repatriation of refugees and displaced persons ; it had therefore opposed the establishment of the International Refugee Organization. It had feared that the Western Powers would have too strong an influence upon that agency and that the provisions of its Constitution (General Assembly resolution 62 (I), annex, article 2) concerning repatriation would not be carried out. Those fears had been justified.

3. The intention to prevent the repatriation of displaced persons had not at first been so obvious as it had become later. The International Refugee Organization had at first merely attempted to restrain the homeward movement. The Polish Government, which

had a natural interest in repatriation owing to the number of Polish citizens deported to Germany during the Second World War, had immediately sent into Germany repatriation missions, which had demanded access to the refugee camps in order to inform their inmates about the new conditions in their native country. The missions had been frustrated at every turn. Not only had their personnel been denied free access to the camps, but censorship of the Press and radio had been instituted and fascist organizations had been encouraged to wage, in the camps, a campaign of slanders and lies against the USSR and the peoples' democracies. Every effort had been made by the United States and United Kingdom occupying authorities to persuade the inmates of the camps to reject the idea of repatriation. Finally, the Polish repatriation missions in Western Germany had been dissolved and all the Polish consular offices had been forcibly closed. Even the Polish Red Cross representatives had been hampered in their work to such an extent that they had been compelled to send a detailed memorandum to the IRO headquarters in Geneva in February 1950, listing a large number of cases in which the repatriation of sick persons had been hampered by the authorities in the three Western Zones of Germany.

4. The Western Powers had not merely prevented the repatriation of Polish refugees and displaced persons, but had forcibly recruited them for work under the most intolerable conditions, regardless of their original qualifications. Several such cases had been raised in the Canadian Parliament. The pressure exercised upon those who had expressed a desire to be repatriated had been so strong that large numbers had withdrawn their requests and only the most determined had been finally allowed to return home. Thousands of children with no one to speak on their behalf had failed to return from Western Germany ; of the thousands deported from Poland by the Germans, only 2,500 had been returned through IRO. Furthermore, under a law published on 21 March 1950 by the United States

\* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

authorities in Germany, United States courts exclusively had been empowered to decide the cases of displaced children ; it was inconceivable that United States courts should be given jurisdiction over such matters.

5. The case of the displaced children was particularly distressing when it was recalled that the Germans had had an organization at work during the Second World War — one subsequently condemned as comprising war criminals — which had selected many Polish children for germanization, had changed their names and had falsified their documents. Many cases could be cited in which the occupying Powers had upheld the original German falsifications. Nevertheless the Polish Government had received thousands of requests for repatriation.

6. In that context the distortion of the definition of a displaced person was more readily intelligible. The original definition as contained in the Constitution of IRO (General Assembly resolution 62 (I), annex I to the annex, part I, sections A and B) had been so altered that the current definition actually included categories which had been specifically excluded from the initial definition. That perversion had gone to such lengths that, under the new definition,<sup>1</sup> a German could be regarded as a refugee in Germany.

7. The real reason for that development was political. The United States of America and its partners had from the outset intended to recruit the refugees and displaced persons into armed groups to further their aggressive policy against the USSR and the peoples' democracies and to merge them eventually into the armies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The passage of the recent Mutual Security Act by the United States Congress had merely been the culmination of the entire United States policy with regard to refugees and displaced persons.

8. Allegedly private and voluntary organizations dealing with the refugee problem were only further instruments of that policy. Prominent members of the permanent United States delegation to the United Nations were also members of allegedly private organizations, the aims of which were avowedly the recruitment of spies and saboteurs to engage in activities hostile to the USSR and the peoples' democracies, as accounts in the Press, particularly in the *New York Times* of 30 October 1951, clearly showed.

9. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was appealing for funds in order that such activities should be continued, and it seemed likely that he would make further appeals. If the 400,000 refugees and displaced persons for whom he claimed that such funds were necessary were permitted to speak freely, there was no doubt that they would demand their repatriation, and that the problem would thus be automatically solved. The Uruguayan representative had rightly stated (377th meeting) that the refugees needed above all the restoration of their dignity as human persons ; but his con-

clusions had been false. Only by repatriation could the refugees and displaced persons regain their full dignity in recovering their full civil rights among their own people.

10. The Polish delegation would therefore whole heartedly support the Byelorussian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.201), which offered a solution acceptable to the refugees and displaced persons themselves and to the families from which they had been severed.

11. Mr. YU TSUNE-CHI (China) believed that the functions of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should not be confined to any particular area, but, as the High Commissioner himself had indicated, should embrace all areas where the problem was acute. He therefore strongly supported the High Commissioner's suggestion (374th meeting) that a branch office should be established for refugees in the Far East. According to the High Commissioner's own report (A/2011, para. 53), there were 5,000 refugees in Shanghai, and according to other information there had at one time been at least 120,000 refugees in Hong Kong and Kowloon ; furthermore, 80,775 refugees from the mainland of China had registered, and about 53,000 were known to be in Macao, India, Pakistan, Burma and Indo-China ; there were tens of thousands more in various parts of south-east Asia. It was to be hoped that the High Commissioner would accord high priority to those refugees, irrespective of any budgetary limitations. Those in Hong Kong were stranded in territory where the Chinese Government had no diplomatic or consular representation, and were thus a category over whom the High Commissioner, under his Statute, was bound to feel a particular concern.

12. The Chinese delegation wished to express its warmest gratitude for the co-operation given to the High Commissioner by voluntary organizations such as the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs ; such assistance came appositely under the terms of General Assembly resolution 319 A (IV). Consequently, his delegation would support any authorization the High Commissioner might request to solicit and receive voluntary contributions. A more considerable sum than the suggested \$ US 3 million might well be set ; with goodwill on the part of the Members of the United Nations that might easily be attained.

13. Assimilation or resettlement projects were the key to the problem of the refugees, provided that no discrimination was applied with regard to the status of the individual refugees. Efforts by certain governments in that direction were to be welcomed. It must always be remembered that assimilation had produced great nations and that in the long run countries which accepted that principle would themselves be strengthened.

14. Mr. WAHLUND (Sweden) observed that the Third Committee was not concerned with the circumstances that had created the refugee problem, but with doing its best to assist the million and a half refugees within the High Commissioner's mandate. The problem, as the High Commissioner's Statute declared, was humanitarian, not political.

15. Sweden had received more than 100,000 refugees during the Second World War, and still sheltered more

<sup>1</sup> 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), chap. I, article 1.

than 50,000, who enjoyed essentially the same privileges with regard to social welfare as Swedish citizens. The Third Committee could be assured that the information with regard to refugees in Sweden reported in the recent United Nations publication *The Refugee in the Post-War World*<sup>2</sup> was wholly correct, as was the assumption made therein that there was every reason to believe that Sweden would not change its traditional policy of hospitality.

16. The Swedish delegation would thus oppose the Byelorussian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.201) and support the joint draft resolution (A/C.3/L.200). While it strongly favoured keeping the United Nations budget as low as possible, it would not hesitate to make an exception in the case of the refugee question. Accordingly, it would support the High Commissioner's request for the authorization to establish branch offices. He was certainly correct in thinking that the voluntary organizations were unlikely to enjoy the same support as they had in the past and that the work of protecting refugees could not be effectively performed without close personal contact with the governments concerned.

17. There could be no objection in principle to the High Commissioner's proposal to establish a special fund to provide assistance to refugees by an appeal for voluntary contributions, as he would not be concerned with the administration of relief funds.

18. Mr. NAJAR (Israeli) pointed out that, although IRO was finally coming to an end, the refugee problem had by no means been solved and the High Commissioner had a heavy task before him. The problem could not be dealt with on a political plane, since so many human problems had to be considered. Many sick and aged refugees who were not encouraged to migrate to certain countries, were holding back their younger and healthy relatives, who would have been welcomed. Assimilation and resettlement were long-term problems, and could not be solved by the mere fact of migration, as Israel was in a very good position to affirm.

19. The High Commissioner had pointed out that improvement of the economic position of a country did not lead directly to improvement of the situation of refugees in that country. The Israel delegation could endorse that statement from its own experience. The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees<sup>3</sup> erroneously assimilated refugees and aliens in the liberal professions, without taking into account the fact that refugees, unlike aliens, could not return to their countries of origin.

20. The High Commissioner had asked the Third Committee to give its approval on three specific questions — the opening of branch offices in various countries, the launching of an appeal to establish an assistance fund, and an invitation to governments to sign and ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The High Commissioner's right to appoint representatives in any country which acknowledged the need for such

representation was expressly recognized in paragraph 16 of the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (General Assembly resolution 428 (V), annex), and the High Commissioner did not require the Third Committee's approval before taking such a step. It was therefore for the Fifth Committee to provide him with a suitable allocation to finance such tasks. The Israel delegation in the Fifth Committee would consider the High Commissioner's request with the utmost understanding; it also wished to recall that, in accordance with paragraph 2 of the High Commissioner's Statute, the activities of the branch offices would have no political tendencies.

21. He would be prepared to support the High Commissioner's request for authorization to launch an appeal for an assistance fund, provided that no vote on the matter implied any moral or material obligation on the governments concerned to contribute to such a fund.

22. His delegation would also willingly support an appeal to Member States to sign and ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; his Government had signed the convention in 1951 and had taken preliminary steps with a view to ratifying it.

23. Mr. ACRITAS (Greece) paid a tribute to the constructive work undertaken by the High Commissioner's Office. His delegation supported the plan to appoint permanent representatives in certain countries, subject to the approval of the governments concerned. The Greek Government had agreed to the establishment of such a branch office at Athens, on the understanding that the national authorities concerned would collaborate closely with the local representative on refugee matters within the competence of the High Commissioner's Office.

24. The budgetary side of the question would be considered and decided by the Fifth Committee; the Third Committee's task was to determine whether the establishment of eleven permanent missions was warranted. In that connexion he thought that the High Commissioner's own estimate could be relied upon.

25. The Greek delegation fully supported the plan for the establishment of an assistance fund, but wished to reiterate that the fund would not solve the problem. The only fundamental solutions were emigration or assimilation into the life of the country where the refugees were situated, and the refugee problem therefore constituted an aspect of the broader problems of over-population and man-power. Other organs of the United Nations were dealing with those broader problems and, although he did not wish to minimize the importance of the High Commissioner's task, he thought that the scope of his Office should always be borne in mind.

26. With reference to the publication *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, a preliminary report which had been made by the study group set up by the High Commissioner, he thought that official documentation should have been requested directly from governments. The question of refugees could only be regarded from the points of view of the States concerned; any other point of view was dangerously theoretical and controversial. In particular, certain statements in the report

<sup>2</sup> Document A/AC.36/6 (Geneva, December 1951).

<sup>3</sup> 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).

about categories of refugees in Greece were out of place and incorrect.

27. With reference to the Byelorussian representative's remarks concerning the non-repatriation of Russian children, he wished to stress the plight of a greater number of Greek children who had not been returned to their parents from the peoples' democracies.

28. Mr. SHCHERBATJUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) stated that the reason why the refugee problem was still on the agenda of the General Assembly after six years of discussion was that the practical solutions put forward by the Soviet delegations had been sabotaged by the delegations of the United States, the United Kingdom, France and other countries. States Members of the United Nations had taken two different positions with regard to the fulfilment of obligations under the General Assembly resolutions on refugees adopted in 1946 (8 (I) and 62 (I)), the Yalta Agreement of 1945 and the decision of the Council of Foreign Ministers in 1947; the Western Powers had embarked upon a systematic violation of all those provisions and had thereby created an artificial refugee problem, whereas the USSR had returned all Allied prisoners of war and refugees.

29. The Western Powers were pursuing a policy of forcible resettlement by means of blackmail and terrorism in their European refugee camps. Instead of providing suitable conditions for the repatriation of refugees, they were undermining the morale of the occupants of the camps with a view to exploiting them as cheap labour in countries of immigration and recruiting spies and diversionists to further their aggressive plans.

30. There were many examples of ill-treatment and refusal of repatriation reported by persons who had returned from camps in the United Kingdom and United States Zones of Germany, and also from the French Zone, where the recommended alternative to repatriation was enlistment in the Foreign Legion fighting in Indo-China. The camp authorities in Germany and Austria represented the countries of immigration as an earthly paradise. Nevertheless, Soviet citizens who had returned from Venezuela had reported extremely bad conditions for refugees in that country; there was evidence from several sources that, contrary to the Australian representative's assertions at the 376th meeting, the condition of refugees in that country was extremely poor and that families were arbitrarily separated.

31. The Ukrainian delegation strongly protested against the refusal of occupying authorities in Germany and Austria to repatriate Soviet children, in spite of the USSR Government's insistence. The special United States courts set up to decide upon such repatriation were not competent in the matter.

32. The Western policy on refugees served to protect war criminals and quislings by extending refugee status to them. Ukrainian fascist organizations in the United States of America and Canada were disseminating anti-Soviet propaganda through various channels. In the circumstances, his delegation would support the Byelorussian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.201), which condemned the violation of agreements on the repatriation

of refugees and proposed the constructive step of returning refugees to their countries of origin.

33. Mr. DAVIN (New Zealand) paid a tribute to the High Commissioner and to IRO; his Government had contributed to their work both financially and by accepting considerable numbers of refugees.

34. The New Zealand delegation, while sympathizing with the Canadian request for more precise details, saw no objection, in principle, to the proposal in the joint draft resolution (A/C.3/L.200) that the High Commissioner should be authorized to appeal for voluntary contributions to enable emergency aid to be given to the most needy groups of refugees within his mandate. He was, however, not able to say how his Government would respond.

35. He was in favour of the establishment of branch offices to help the High Commissioner in his work, but thought that the number and organization of the offices were matters for the Fifth Committee to decide. The New Zealand delegation would support the other two lines of action recommended in paragraph 28 of the High Commissioner's report (A/2011) and provided for in the joint draft resolution — the working out by governments and specialized agencies, in collaboration with the High Commissioner, of long-term plans to help hard-core groups of refugees to secure a normal livelihood and the free participation of refugees in opportunities for migration.

36. It was in the interest of refugees that all governments which felt that they could do so should ratify or accede to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as soon as possible; meanwhile, the treatment of refugees entering New Zealand was at least as good as that prescribed in the convention.

37. The proposal in the Byelorussian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.201) was familiar; the large majority of refugees and displaced persons were in fact innocent victims of political intolerance who, as representatives of the New Zealand Government visiting the camps had been able to ascertain for themselves, had no wish to return home. The Third Committee would certainly reject the Byelorussian charges — in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution — that IRO was forcibly preventing the repatriation of refugees and displaced persons. The accusation against the United States of America in paragraph 3 of the operative part of the Byelorussian draft resolution had already been fully discussed in the First Committee in connexion with the USSR complaint against the Mutual Security Act and had been formally rejected by a large majority<sup>4</sup>.

38. The New Zealand delegation would oppose both the Byelorussian draft resolution and the Syrian amendment (A/C.3/L.202) to that draft resolution, which tended to confine it almost entirely to the problem of Palestine refugees.

39. Mr. HAJEK (Czechoslovakia) thought the report of the High Commissioner for Refugees unsatisfactory, since, instead of giving any real account of the progress made by the various United Nations organs on the

<sup>4</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, First Committee, 472nd to 475th meetings.*

refugee problem, it merely gave information on certain technical and financial details.

40. The basic policy of the United Nations on the question of refugees and displaced persons, as defined by the resolutions adopted at the first session of the General Assembly, should be to encourage such persons to return to their own countries. In fact, the majority of repatriations had been carried out before IRO came into being. The resolutions on the refugee problem adopted at the first session of the General Assembly had, moreover, stated explicitly that certain categories, including traitors, quislings and war criminals, were to be excluded from any international aid. Nevertheless, many Ukrainian refugees who had served in nazi SS formations, as well as ex-members of the Vlassov army, had been supported by IRO funds. In addition, and again in flagrant contravention of instructions forbidding IRO to encourage subversive or hostile activities against the government of any Member of the United Nations, persons living in IRO camps were being subjected to propaganda intended to persuade them to renounce their citizenship of Eastern European countries. Such facts were not of course mentioned in United Nations reports on refugees.

41. The refugee problem was very definitely political, and its treatment was governed not by humanitarian but by political considerations. There was no real reason why it should not have been solved: the fact was that it was being exploited deliberately by the North Atlantic Treaty nations, which needed refugees to swell the forces of a new aggressive army. For that reason, ex-fascists and collaborators were being labelled refugees and afforded the protection of IRO. A law, passed in June 1950, had made it possible for foreigners from countries which might form the scene of a future war to enlist in the American Army. That was done with the connivance of both IRO and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, although it was even more reprehensible than the practices of the French Foreign Legion, whose volunteers were at any rate not called upon to fight against their country of origin.

42. The Mutual Security Act of October 1951, a glaring example of the Western war-monger's indifference to questions of principle, allocated the sum of \$ US 100 million for subsidizing the activities of persons resident on the territory of the Soviet Union and the peoples' democracies. At the same time, new conventions, such as the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, had set up a new category of refugees, namely those who had become refugees as a result of events that had occurred after 1 January 1951 and who were to occupy an increasingly important share of the attention of IRO and the High Commissioner's Office. Those refugees, who were the instrument as well as the victims of the "cold war" that was being waged by the United States of America against the free peoples of Europe, were constantly increasing in number as a result of the unceasing propaganda aimed at inducing inhabitants of the peoples' democracies to leave their own countries. The United States authorities, not content with Press

and radio propaganda, had also, on several occasions, employed force for the same purpose. The policy of both IRO and the High Commissioner's Office was dominated by United States imperialist aims; the repatriation of refugees was certainly no longer their main preoccupation.

43. The position in Western Germany, where Germans returned to Germany from the countries they had occupied in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement were considered as refugees in their own country, was unacceptable. In the German Democratic Republic, however, there were 2,730,000 such Germans, who were usefully employed both in agriculture and industry. They were in fact in no way refugees. They were useful citizens, unlike their fellows in Western Germany, who on the instructions of the occupying authorities, had not been assimilated, but had purposely been kept apart from the rest of the population to form the basis for a revisionist movement. Such German "refugees" were being used for armed raids across the frontiers.

44. In drawing the attention of the United Nations to the problem of those German "refugees", the High Commissioner's Office was unwittingly showing how a United Nations organ was being exploited for United States imperialist ends. The High Commissioner's Office was to facilitate the recruiting, training and selection of persons under the Mutual Security Act. That was yet another example of abuse of the United Nations flag. The United Nations was in fact being asked, through the intermediary of the High Commissioner's Office, to swell the allocation of the Mutual Security Act. The Czechoslovak delegation could not approve the allocation of funds for an organization which had departed so far from its original aim.

45. The refugee problem could only be solved, and a valuable contribution thereby made to the cause of peace, if the United Nations resumed its original aim to repatriate refugees and allow them to contribute to the reconstruction of their own countries. The Czechoslovak Government, which deplored the inhuman exploitation of refugees for the ends of the "cold war", had extended a welcome to those of its people who had fled the country in a moment of panic.

46. The Czechoslovak delegation would support the Byelorussian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.201).

47. The CHAIRMAN announced that the general debate on the items under discussion was closed. The High Commissioner would of course reply to the questions asked of him in the course of the debate. Representatives wishing to exercise the right of reply according to rule 114 of the rules of procedure could do so at the following meeting.

48. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) formally proposed that, in view of the large number of speakers who wished to avail themselves of the right of reply, each speaker should be limited to ten minutes.

*It was so agreed.*

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.