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Chairman : Mr. Selim SÄRPER (Turkey).

Threats to the political independence and territorial integrity of Greece : (b) Repatriation of Greek children : reports of the Secretary-General and of the international Red Cross organizations (A/1848, A/1932, A/1933, A/AC.53/L.44, A/AC.53/L.51) (continued)

[Item 19] *

1. Mr. LOPEZ (Philippines) recalled that the Standing Committee on the Repatriation of Greek Children had on 22 November 1951 submitted a report covering its work during 1951. Subsequently, the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee had adjourned the discussion (6th meeting) on the question of the Greek children pending the receipt of replies from the Governments of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia to the invitation to appoint representatives to meet with the Standing Committee. Only the Czechoslovak Government had accepted the invitation, and it had thus become possible to resume the relations, broken since 1950, between the Czechoslovak Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross. That was a gratifying result, and the problem could now be considered a little more optimistically, at any rate so far as Czechoslovakia was concerned. Mr. Lopez hoped the conversations started with the representative of Czechoslovakia were only a beginning and that they would bear fruit. He added that information had been received from Hungary which gave grounds for the hope of an early repatriation of Greek citizens in that country. Although such repatriation was outside the scope of the United Nations resolutions relating to Greek children, it was likely to interest the Committee because the repatriated families would certainly include some children.

2. Mr. KYROU (Greece) said that on 15 February 1951 the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies had addressed to the

central committees of the national Red Cross, Red Crescent, Red Lion and Red Sun societies a circular noting that notwithstanding the approaches made to the host authorities, those authorities had not yet made any useful or constructive proposal. The host countries had, for example, failed to take any action on a suggestion by the two international organizations for determining the whereabouts of the children who had been claimed. Similarly, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies had addressed to each of the host countries lists of names of the children who had been claimed, accompanied by a request to the authorities of those countries to say which of the children mentioned were living in their territories. As stated in the report submitted on 3 August 1951 by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies (A/1948), only the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Red Cross societies had replied. Again, no action had been taken on a proposal by the two international organizations that a representative should be accredited to the various Red Cross societies concerned for the purpose of examining the lists. Preliminary conversations had been started with the Bulgarian and Czechoslovak Red Cross societies, but it had not been possible to continue them. The Hungarian and Romanian Red Cross societies had maintained silence.

3. Faced with those successive failures, the two international Red Cross organizations had attempted to assemble at Geneva representatives of all the Red Cross organizations in the host countries, as well as of the Greek Red Cross Society. The Hungarian and Polish Red Cross societies had not replied. The Bulgarian, Romanian and Czechoslovak Red Cross societies had, for various reasons, declined the invitation. The proposal had not therefore yielded the expected results. The same had been true of another proposal, made on 9 March 1951, that the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

should arrange a meeting with the Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian and Czechoslovak Red Cross organizations.

4. The efforts of the United Nations Secretariat to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly had not met with success either. Only the Governments of Greece and Yugoslavia had replied to the letter from the Secretary-General communicating the text of General Assembly resolution 382 C (V) of 1 December 1950. An attempt by the Chairman of the Standing Committee to get in touch with the governments of the harbouring countries had been no more successful.

5. It was at that point that the Standing Committee had proposed to the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee, on 23 November 1951, that it should adjourn its consideration of the question of the repatriation of Greek children so as to enable the President of the General Assembly to request the governments concerned to appoint representatives to meet with the Standing Committee, if possible not later than 15 December 1951. Only the Government of Czechoslovakia had given an affirmative reply. Mr. Kyrrou was glad to note that favourable attitude on the part of the Government of Czechoslovakia. He concluded his account of the history of the question by thanking the international organizations concerned, adding that his gratitude was in proportion to the efforts made and not to the results obtained.

6. Mr. Kyrrou then summarized the arguments advanced by the governments which opposed the repatriation of the Greek children. Those governments maintained that the question was only a propaganda theme utilized by the western countries for the purpose of discrediting the peoples' democracies. In particular, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania had attacked the Standing Committee, alleging that the establishment of that Committee by the General Assembly was a violation of the Assembly's previous decisions, and that in establishing the Standing Committee, the United Nations had sought to exploit the question of the Greek children for the purposes of a campaign of slander against the peoples' democracies. It had also been affirmed that the lists drawn up by the Greek Red Cross society were spurious. Lastly, the peoples' democracies had given as one of the reasons for their refusal to repatriate the Greek children the fear that those children would be sent to concentration camps.

7. He would deal with all those allegations briefly. With regard to the insinuations relating to the Standing Committee, he pointed out that the Committee was composed of persons of recognized integrity. As for the way in which the lists had been prepared in Greece, he recalled that the representative of the Czechoslovak Red Cross society had had an opportunity to check their genuineness. Lastly, the allegation that the repatriated children would not be returned to their families was fully answered by document A/1932, containing the annual report of the International Red Cross Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies, which proved that the children repatriated from Yugoslavia had immediately been returned to their families in the presence of a representative of the International Red Cross.

8. Continuing his analysis of the reasons given by various States for refusing to carry out the General Assembly resolutions, the Greek representative referred to the question of determining who should apply for repatriation. The international Red Cross organizations had repeatedly tried to settle the matter with the States concerned. The governments of the peoples' democracies had tried to evade the point by introducing a new element. They had claimed that the children harboured by Yugoslavia should be returned to their families, which, according to those governments, were settled in the peoples' democracies. Reference to the three relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, resolutions 193 C (III), 288 B (IV) and 382 C (V), would show that the purpose of those three resolutions was the repatriation of the Greek children, namely, the return of the Greek children to their country. Mr. Kyrrou would like, however, to say that his Government had no intention of refusing families, wherever they resided, the right of claiming children from whom they had been separated; but when such children were returned to families resident in the peoples' democracies, the circumstances of their return should be identical with those in which the Greek children were returned to their families in Greece. He asked that all the desirable safeguards should be provided when Greek children were returned to the peoples' democracies.

9. Lastly, he noted that the host countries put forward political considerations in support of their refusal to repatriate the Greek children and, for example, were anxious that the children should be educated in accordance with the standards prevailing in the peoples' democracies. He pointed out in that connexion that young people had been mobilized into the ranks of the guerrillas who had fought against the Greek people. Other, younger, children had been subjected to forced labour. Lastly, the governments of the peoples' democracies had tried systematically to indoctrinate the Greek children and to turn them against their own country. In support of his assertions, he quoted the text of a letter from Mr. Nicolas Zachariades, the Secretary-General of the Greek Communist Party, calling on the displaced Greek children in Czechoslovakia to learn Russian and become real fighters for the international revolution.

10. Mr. Kyrrou concluded with an appeal to the General Assembly to save the Greek children before it was too late.

11. Mr. SALAZAR (Dominican Republic) introduced his delegation's draft resolution contained in document A/AC.53/L.51. He asked that the draft should be studied in detail as each paragraph dealt in the most practical and simple way with one aspect of the problem. The action to be taken by the United Nations under the draft, if adopted, would undoubtedly represent the least the Organization could do to dispose of the pathetic problem of the repatriation of Greek children.

12. His delegation had never failed to affirm the unvarying attitude of the people and Government of the Dominican Republic on the question of the Greek children. His country's interest was revealed, *inter alia*,

by the efforts which had been made by official and private Dominican organizations. In submitting its draft resolution, his delegation had been inspired by the Dominican Government's constant concern at the dramatic events which had caused the physical destruction of many Greek homes and the involuntary dispersal of families which had been unable to reconstitute their homes. The draft resolution therefore took into account all the causes of and all the factors in the situation of the Greek children. He appealed to all the governments directly concerned, whether Members of the United Nations or not, to be guided by humanitarian feelings and put an end to the tragedy which at present made it impossible for legitimate family ties to be renewed after years of separation and hardship.

13. Mr. Salazar called on all delegations to support his draft resolution and so dispose of a painful problem by imposing a just solution.

14. Mr. VAN GLABBEKE (Belgium) said that his delegation approached the distressing subject under discussion not only with a feeling of sadness, disappointment and bitterness, but also with great anxiety, as it feared that the countries impeding the solution of the problem were preparing for a new war.

15. Before analysing the documents before the Committee, he would consider a number of relevant points. On 27 November 1948, the General Assembly had unanimously adopted resolution 193 C (III), recommending the return to Greece of Greek children away from their homes when the children, their father or mother or, in his or her absence, their closest relative, expressed a wish to that effect, and inviting all the Members of the United Nations and other States, on whose territory those children were to be found, to take the necessary measures for implementation of the recommendation.

16. He had two comments on that resolution. In the first place, the resolution only referred to the return to Greece of the Greek children. The problem of repatriation was therefore expressly confined to the return of the Greek children to their country of origin. That important limitation had been accepted by all Member States and hence, by the USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the resolution had expressly invited Member States to take the necessary measures to implement the recommendation. By voting for that resolution, the USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia had agreed to take the necessary measures. It might be wondered what measures the USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia had taken between 27 November 1948, the date of the first General Assembly resolution, and 18 November 1949, the date of the Assembly's second resolution, to ensure the repatriation of the Greek children. The least that could be said was that the USSR enjoyed great authority in the people's democracies; and if the Moscow Government had done its duty and pressed the governments of those countries to send home the Greek children in their territories, the problem would have been disposed of long ago.

17. After the resolution of 27 November 1948 had produced virtually no results, the General Assembly had

adopted resolution 288 B (IV) on 18 November 1949. After noting that the Greek children had still not been returned to their homes, the General Assembly had urged all the Members of the United Nations and other States harbouring Greek children to make all necessary arrangements, in consultation and co-operation with the international Red Cross organizations, for the early return to their homes of the children in accordance with General Assembly resolution 193 C (III). That second resolution also called for comment. Its text indicated once again that the question of the repatriation of Greek children was strictly confined to the return to Greece of the Greek children still held in the host countries. The direct reference to General Assembly resolution 193 C (III) put the matter beyond all doubt. Because of the utter failure of the States harbouring Greek children to discharge their obligations, the resolution was more categorical. It no longer referred merely to the return of the Greek children to their homes; it spoke of their early return. Lastly, the resolution provided that the States invited to make all necessary arrangements for the early return to their homes of the Greek children were to act in consultation and co-operation with the international Red Cross organizations. Once again it might be wondered what action the Governments of Moscow and Prague had taken between 18 November 1949, the date of the second General Assembly resolution, and 1 December 1950, the date of its third resolution, to comply with the General Assembly's directives.

18. The General Assembly had adopted its third resolution on the repatriation of Greek children—resolution 382 C (V) on 1 December 1950. After noting with grave concern that not a single Greek child had yet been returned to Greece and, except for Yugoslavia, no country harbouring Greek children had taken definite action to comply with the General Assembly's earlier resolutions, the Assembly had urged all States harbouring Greek children to make all the necessary arrangements, in co-operation with the Secretary-General and the international Red Cross organizations, for the early return of the Greek children to their parents and, whenever necessary, to allow the international Red Cross organizations free access to their territories for that purpose. Under that resolution, the General Assembly had also established a Standing Committee to act in collaboration with the Secretary-General and to consult with the representatives of the States concerned, with a view to the early repatriation of the children. Lastly, the Assembly had requested the Secretary-General and the international Red Cross organizations to submit reports on the question to the General Assembly at its sixth session.

19. Those were the events behind the memorandum submitted by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies (A/1848), the third general report of those organizations and the Secretary-General's report on the problem of the repatriation of Greek children (A/1933). In addition, the Secretary-General's annual report on the work of the Organization for the period 1 July 1950, to 30 June 1951 (A/1844), and the report of the United Nations

Special Committee on the Balkans (A/1857) contained detailed information on the question of the repatriation of Greek children.

20. To see the substance of those reports in its true light, certain aspects of the debates in the First Committee at the General Assembly's fifth session should be called to mind. The Ukrainian representative had stated at the 394th meeting of the First Committee that his country, like all other peoples' democracies, was willing to solve the problem of the repatriation of Greek children in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 193 C (III). But, the Ukrainian representative had said, in most cases the parents of children who were living in countries belonging to the people's democracies had not applied for their return.

21. Explaining his delegation's point of view at the 395th meeting of the First Committee, the USSR representative had stated that his country still believed that Greek children should be repatriated as provided in the General Assembly resolutions; but he had added that the lists of children submitted by the Greek Government were unreliable, and that the children could not therefore be repatriated until the host countries had received an assurance that they would be returned directly to their parents.

22. At the 396th meeting of the First Committee, the Belgian representative had answered the statements of the representatives of the Soviet bloc, commenting that it was surprising, to say the least, that certain States had the presumption to claim that they were applying the principle of the right of asylum to thousands of Greek children parted from their families against their will. When the Polish representative had claimed that the Greek children were better treated in the host countries than they could possibly be in their own country and that consequently it was in their interest not to repatriate them, the Belgian representative had pointed out that the governmental authorities of the host countries had no right to substitute themselves for the legitimate representatives of the children, and that although living conditions in Greece were difficult it should not be concluded from that fact that it was in the children's interest for them to remain in the host countries.

23. The Polish representative had pointed out that the host countries should be allowed the necessary time to draw up lists of children to be repatriated and to carry out inquiries in order to determine whether the parents' claims were genuine; but the Belgian representative had rebutted that argument. At that time the host countries had had nearly three years in which to prepare such lists and had also had an opportunity of asking the organs of the International Red Cross to assist them in verifying them. At the same meeting the Australian representative had pointed out that some governments had denied, in spite of very strong evidence to the contrary, that there were any Greek children in their territories, and he had added that there had been undue delays in replying to Red Cross

inquiries, and that some governments had refused to send representatives to conferences organized by the International Red Cross and in some cases had also refused to grant the necessary visas to Red Cross representatives wishing to visit the countries in question. The Australian representative had also stated that he could not understand such a lack of co-operation on the part of countries which had agreed in principle to the return of the Greek children to their homes. After a moving statement by the representative of the Dominican Republic, who had voiced the deep anxiety felt by women throughout the world over the problem of the repatriation of Greek children, the Czechoslovak representative pointed out that meetings had taken place in his country with representatives of the International Red Cross on the question of the repatriation of 138 Greek children living in Czechoslovakia. They were the same children to which reference was made in the Standing Committee's report (A/AC.53/L.44), submitted to the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee by the Philippine representative. The Czechoslovak representative had said that the repatriation of the children had been delayed because it had been impossible to check the authenticity of lists submitted by the Greek authorities. He had even expressed the fear that the Greek Government would not return the children to their families but would send them to a camp especially prepared for them on islands in the Aegean Sea.

24. The Belgian representative felt bound to say that the reports before the Committee made it abundantly clear that that fear was groundless. It had been proved that Greek children repatriated from Yugoslavia had been sent back to their families under the best possible conditions.

25. At the 396th meeting of the First Committee, held on 14 November 1950, the Netherlands representative had justly stated that it was distressing to note that for two years States which had sheltered Greek children had not taken any steps towards their repatriation, even though they had recognized the principle of repatriation. At the same meeting Mr. Politis, the representative of Greece, had aptly remarked that the Bulgarian Government, after having authorized representatives of the International Red Cross to visit its territory, had not transmitted a list of Greek children living in Bulgaria and had not sent a representative to the Conference on the Repatriation of Greek Children held on 10 March 1950 in Geneva. Rumania and Hungary had refused to allow representatives of the International Red Cross to visit their countries. Czechoslovakia, which had identified 138 Greek children living in its territory, had not repatriated them although all necessary conditions for their repatriation had been duly fulfilled by the Greek Government under the supervision of the International Red Cross. After stating that the Polish Red Cross and the Albanian authorities had reported that there were no Greek children in Poland or Albania, the Greek representative pointed out that there were thousands of Greek children in the USSR and in the East German zone occupied by the Soviet forces. The Soviet Union had not denied that statement.

26. At the First Committee's 398th meeting on 15 November 1950, the USSR representative, without withdrawing the statements supporting repatriation which he had made two days previously, again expressed the fear that Greek children would not be returned to their families, but placed in Greek Government camps, and had criticized the way in which the lists of children had been drawn up by the Greek Government. The Belgian representative had said that it was not surprising that errors should have crept into lists which contained the names of 28,000 children. Replying to the statement that a large number of those children were already nineteen or twenty years of age, the Belgian representative had said that that in no way changed the problem if valid requests for repatriation had been made. The Polish representative had taken the floor again at the 398th meeting of the First Committee to say that his delegation was not unaware of the humanitarian side of the problem and recognized that the children should be returned to their homes. He had further stated that all States harbouring Greek children were ready to conform to the provisions of General Assembly resolutions, but that they had accepted responsibility for the children and therefore had to ensure that the provisions of those resolutions were observed. In the end, the Polish representative had dropped the contention that the children were better cared for in the host countries than in Greece and had agreed that it was not a valid argument to contrast the conditions prevailing in Greece with those in the other countries.

27. At the 313th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, the Czechoslovak representative had confirmed that his country was still prepared to repatriate the Greek children, provided an undertaking were given that they would be returned directly to their parents and not be subjected to persecution of any kind. At the same meeting the Polish representative had stated that the children were to go back to their families when the latter made a special request to that effect, in accordance with the principle the General Assembly had laid down in its resolution of 1948 and confirmed in its resolution of 1949. He had added that the host countries had the right to require proof of the authenticity of requests for repatriation and a guarantee that the children would not be sent to camps but restored to their families. In explaining his vote the Polish representative had also said it was an abominable practice to exploit the fate of the Greek children for political propaganda.

28. In that connexion Mr. Van Glabbeke quoted from a letter sent by Mr. Zachariades, Secretary-General of the Greek Communist Party, to the Greek children in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The letter told the children that they were fighters of the army which would liberate the Greek people, exhorted them to love the USSR, their real fatherland, to learn Russian and hate the Anglo-American oppressors and the monarcho-fascists. It told them that the chief object of the experience they were obtaining was to make them better fighters in the struggle for the liberation and social—or, in reality, communist—reconstruction of Greece, and that their education would be completed and find its

consummation in the struggle for a free and socialist Greece in which they would be expected to take part. Such a letter required no comment. To imbue children with hatred, based on political considerations, was criminal. The host countries, whose governments tolerated such practices, lost thereby any claim to gratitude for having housed, fed and clothed the children.

29. Mr. Van Glabbeke said that it was very instructive to compare the statements he had quoted with the five reports on repatriation of Greek children which had been distributed to the members of the Committee. He wished, on behalf of his Government, to thank the organizers and staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the League of Red Cross societies, the Swedish Government, which had lent its good offices at the diplomatic level, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the members of the Standing Committee, in particular its Chairman; their devotion, perseverance, determination and tact had earned them all the gratitude of the civilized world.

30. The first document, the memorandum of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross societies (A/1848), was instructive: it showed that for more than two and a half years every avenue had been explored in vain and that all the host countries, with the exception of Yugoslavia, had consistently refused to co-operate. The letters and communications sent to them had elicited no response, and requests for visas by representatives of the International Red Cross had been refused or pigeon-holed. The memorandum dealt among other things with the Greek children harboured in Czechoslovakia who had not yet been repatriated. His delegation had been very glad to learn that there were grounds for hoping that the Czechoslovak Government would alter its attitude in that connexion.

31. The second document, the annual report of the Secretary-General (A/1844), showed that neither the Red Cross societies of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia nor the Governments of those countries had replied to the proposals put before them. The report was not however entirely negative, for it stated that 289 Greek children had been repatriated from Yugoslavia. That figure had now been increased to 385. His delegation hoped that the flow would increase and thanked the Yugoslavian representative in advance.

32. The third document was the report of the Special Committee on the Balkans, dated 15 August 1951 (A/1857). It stated that applications for repatriation, presented by parents of their own free will and without any pressure from the Greek authorities, had been made for 12,172 children. The lists had been transmitted to the national Red Cross societies of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia, which had admitted the presence of Greek children in their respective countries. The report also stated that the Greek children repatriated from Yugoslavia had reached their homes one week after their arrival in Greece, and that the unavoidable technical difficulties were no grounds for holding up repatriation so long.

33. The fourth document was the third general report of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross societies (A/1932); it gave a cheering account of repatriation under way and of repatriation already effected with the co-operation of the Yugoslav Government and the Yugoslav Red Cross. It explicitly confirmed that the repatriated children were being returned to their parents and not being put into internment camps on their arrival in Greece; that categorically disproved certain allegations made by the countries of the Soviet bloc at the fifth session. The report was also interesting from another point of view: it showed that the national Red Cross societies of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia, which for years had done nothing whatever to help the Greek children's repatriation and which in most cases had not even replied to the letters sent to them by the International Red Cross, were themselves demanding the return of Greek children in Yugoslavia. The Belgian delegation was prepared to consider that problem, a separate and distinct one, if it were placed on the agenda in the regular manner; it would take a favourable view of a solution similar to that which was desirable for the repatriation problem, provided that the national Red Cross societies and the governments of their respective countries gave satisfactory proof of their goodwill and desire to co-operate by taking an active part in repatriating the Greek children who were in those host countries and whose parents wished them to return to Greece.

34. The fifth and last official document was the report of the Secretary-General on the repatriation of Greek children. It stated that the resolution of 1 December 1950 had been communicated to the Governments of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia and to the Government of what was known as the German Democratic Republic. Mr. Van Glabbeke was surprised that the text of that resolution had not been communicated to the USSR Government, for some representatives had stated during the discussion that there were Greek children in that country. However that might be, even though the resolution had been communicated to the countries mentioned, and despite the efforts made by the international Red Cross organizations and by the Swedish Government through the diplomatic channel, nothing had been achieved and none of the governments concerned had shown a sincere desire to co-operate in seeking a solution. The report showed that three years had gone by without one of the children in those countries, with the exception of Yugoslavia, having been repatriated. It went on to say that the Secretary-General remained firmly convinced that the General Assembly would take a very serious view of the situation and would urge once again, on humanitarian grounds, that those children should be sent home without procrastination or delay.

35. Those opposing the Greek children's repatriation who, in violation of resolutions for which they had voted, had done nothing whatever to enable the children to return, could produce little by way of reply to those objective, detailed, mutually confirmatory and

damning reports. In the first place, Mr. Van Glabbeke quoted a letter purporting to have been sent from Budapest, on 10 October 1951, by twenty emigrant Greek parents whose children were reportedly in Yugoslavia. Incidentally the document was quite irrelevant to the only question which was before the Committee, namely, the repatriation of Greek children, and ought not therefore to be discussed. Attached to it were twenty-three letters purporting to be from children harboured in Yugoslavia, complaining of ill-treatment. The authenticity of the letters had not been verified and they could therefore only be taken into account in so far as an impartial inquiry by the International Red Cross proved them genuine. It was impossible seriously to entertain the idea of treating such documents on a par with official documents drawn up by the highest international authorities. The second document was a memorandum, transmitted by the Polish delegation, from eight allegedly Greek and apparently communist organizations, the headquarters of which even were not mentioned. That latter detail in itself made the correspondence open to suspicion. Furthermore, it was a tissue of lies and the Belgian delegation regretted that the representative of Poland should have assumed responsibility for arranging the transmission and publication of such documents. The document contained ample internal evidence of its untruthfulness; chapter 3 charged the Greek Government with raising the question of the repatriation of Greek children only for purposes of provocation, alleged that the children and their parents were desperate at the thought of falling into the hands of the "monarcho-fascists" and added that any decent person should voice his indignation at such manœuvres. Nobody could really take such documents seriously and at the same time refuse to treat the official reports before the Committee with the respect they deserved. The correspondence was beneath comment, and he would do no more than mention its existence. He would, however, reserve the right to comment on it in detail if it should be referred to in the discussion.

36. In view of such a lack of understanding, there could be nothing but approval for the action taken in the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee on 23 November 1950 (6th meeting) and for the adoption, by 49 votes to none with 5 abstentions, of a draft resolution (A/AC.53/L.4/Rev.1) the object of which had been to open negotiations and to reach a satisfactory settlement. The representative of Sweden, Mr. Grafström, had stated on 7 January 1952 (33rd meeting) that the attempts made to establish direct relations with the governments of countries harbouring the children had failed and that there was nothing to prevent the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee from continuing to study the question. On the following day the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee had announced (34th meeting) that the Government of Czechoslovakia had replied to the President of the General Assembly and that conversations were to take place. The delegation of Belgium had been very much moved by the news.

37. The most recent report of the Standing Committee on the repatriation of Greek children (A/AC.53/L.44) gave an account of the events that had taken place

since that time. The President of the General Assembly had sent a letter and telegram to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. The Government of Czechoslovakia had sent a positive reply which had sincerely gratified all delegations. The Governments of Hungary and Bulgaria had not even had the elementary courtesy to reply. That was behaviour unprecedented in the annals of diplomacy and particularly inadmissible when it came from countries that had applied for membership of the United Nations and had sent observers to its proceedings. The Government of Romania had replied but it was regrettable that a Government that had applied for membership of the United Nations should refuse to get into touch with Members of the United Nations especially designated by the General Assembly itself to undertake negotiations with that Government. The reply from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania amounted, in effect, to a blank refusal to return the Greek children to their families in Greece. Such a reply could only bring discredit upon the country responsible for it and it was to be hoped that the observer from that country would find ways of conveying that impression to his Government.

38. When the statements made during the discussions were studied, compared with the official reports before the Committee and considered in relation to the poor results shown by the latest attempt at reaching an understanding, the conclusion to be drawn was that there was a fundamental difference between the approach to questions affecting children on the part of the countries of the Soviet bloc and of all other countries in the world. In the countries belonging to the Soviet bloc, the child was primarily the property of the State which maintained its ascendancy over the child, whereas in all other countries the child primarily belonged to its parents. Some pamphlets which he, like all Committee members, had received were highly significant. One of them, entitled *How children live in Hungary*, contained many photographs, none of which showed the children in the company of their parents. By contrast, in the photographs contained in another booklet entitled *Save the Greek children*, showing the children who had returned from Yugoslavia, they were in all cases accompanied by their parents. The Belgian people judged countries according to the interest they evinced in problems relating to the mother and child. He had the impression that in the countries owing allegiance to communism, conditions were different and that the State came first.

39. Mr. Van Glabbeke appealed to all the countries involved in the matter, and emphasized that as far as he was concerned, he was prepared to forget the past, provided that both sides proceeded at once to the task of returning the Greek children claimed by their families without delay, priority being given to the youngest children who were now about ten years old. He was convinced that it should be possible to find common ground between the two parties and to reach a *bona fide* solution of all the technical difficulties which might have delayed the repatriation of the Greek children. Genuine technical or legal difficulties were involved,

but they could be overcome if the governments concerned were sincerely animated by the desire to solve them.

40. The time had come to dismiss all factors extraneous to the problem. No purpose was any longer to be served by discussing whether the Greek children had been evacuated for safety reasons or abducted, or whether the children had been well or ill-treated in the countries which harboured them. Nothing was any longer to be gained by accusations concerning the alleged reign of terror in Greece, which might be met by counter-charges of the mass executions in communist China. The problem should be considered in its proper perspective.

41. Mr. Van Glabbeke reviewed the arguments against the return of the Greek children. It had first been claimed that the parents had not claimed their children. It had now proved, however, that 12,172 parents had asked for the return of their children and had applied to the United Nations for help. That argument therefore defeated itself. It had also been maintained that the repatriation of the children should be subject to prior agreement on the part of the governments concerned. But it was difficult to see how two governments could agree when one of them refused the representatives of the International Red Cross all access to its territory, refused to reply to communications addressed to it by the United Nations, refused to enter into contact with the International Red Cross, or in other words, refused to agree. It had been alleged that the lists of names of children to be repatriated had given rise to serious doubts. Those lists had, however, been prepared more than three years before. The governments concerned had, therefore, had all the time they needed to verify the lists as they wished, to ask all necessary questions and make all the investigations they considered warranted by the circumstances. Those investigations could be made even now through the most highly respected international authorities, those of the International Red Cross, but instead of applying themselves to that task the governments concerned failed to reply and did not even acknowledge receipt of the documents sent to them. Another argument put forward was that the children were not returned to their parents but thrown into prison. That argument had, however, now been demolished, as reports prepared from authorities of the highest integrity testified to the fact that the children repatriated from Yugoslavia had immediately been returned to their families under the best possible conditions, after medical examination. Finally, it had been alleged that the children would be better off in the host countries than in their own country. He had already demonstrated that the representative of Poland himself had had to drop that argument. It was also contended that the Athens Government was a monarcho-fascist Government and that therefore the children should not be returned until another government came to power. But that constituted a very serious interference in the affairs of another State. The USSR representative, whose Government was so keenly sensitive in such matters, could not remain indifferent to the Belgian reply to that argument.

42. The Belgian delegation considered that it had the right to speak as it had done. Belgium had sheltered Hungarian children and, during the Spanish civil war, also Spanish children. Those children had been warmly received and in many cases their foster parents had been very sorry to see them return home. Yet, even though at the time feeling had run high in Belgium against the Franco Government, the families which had taken in the refugee children had considered it a moral duty to return them to their parents and, albeit regretfully, they had acquiesced.

43. None of the arguments which had been advanced and to which Mr. Van Glabbeke had referred could, therefore, be considered valid, nor could it be maintained that the technical difficulties involved were insurmountable. Those difficulties existed, but it was quite unwarrantable to refuse the representatives of the International Red Cross visas of admission to the countries concerned.

44. In conclusion, Mr. Van Glabbeke emphasized that in spite of all disappointments and obstacles, the

Belgian delegation persisted in the belief that it was possible to reach, along humanitarian lines, the solution which the world's conscience demanded. Countries refusing to collaborate ought to be branded for ever. The Belgian delegation would support any resolution drafted in terms analogous to those of the draft resolution submitted by the Dominican Republic. His delegation remained convinced that, as stated in the third report of the international Red Cross organizations, hope of achieving a final result should not be abandoned in spite of the obstacles encountered. The Belgian delegation earnestly appealed to the USSR Government to use the authority and influence it enjoyed in the countries in which the Greek children were being harboured, to put an end to the suffering of Greek mothers. If it lent its powerful patronage to that action, the USSR's prestige would surely rise in the eyes of the world.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.