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Chairman: Mr. S. Amjad ALI (Pakistan).

Freedom of information (*continued*): (a) Problems of freedom of information, including the study of the draft convention on freedom of information (A/AC.42/7, A/2172, chapter V, section VI, A/2181, A/C.3/L.239, A/C.3/L.242/Rev.1, A/C.3/L.243, A/C.3/L.244, A/C.3/L.252 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.255, A/C.3/L.256, A/C.3/L.258, A/C.3/L.259) (*continued*)

[Item 29 (a)]*

GENERAL DEBATE (*concluded*)

1. Mr. BIRECKI (Poland) said that his Government attached great importance to resolution 110 (II), adopted by the General Assembly on 3 November 1947, which condemned all forms of propaganda which was either designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to the peace. The problem of propaganda for war had become acute. Would-be aggressors were turning to every possible means of intensifying such propaganda and of accustoming people to the idea that war was inevitable.

2. The United States representative had tried to persuade the Committee that the typical examples of incitement to war found in the United States Press were merely abuses of freedom of expression by irresponsible persons. The Polish delegation maintained that there was a combined operation, organized, financed and co-ordinated by the United States authorities. The publicity given to the experimental explosion of an atom bomb in Nevada on 22 April 1952 was enough to prove that. Several weeks before the appointed date all the media of information in the United States had been set in motion and an army of reporters had been sent to the spot. The president of the United Press had sent back a news dispatch in which he had cynically

boasted of the atom bomb and its effectiveness. That could not be called an isolated abuse of the freedom of expression. The standing of that journalist, the president of one of the large United States information agencies, like the array of forces dispatched by the United States information enterprises, showed that there really had been concerted action to infect the public mind with propaganda for war.

3. The Committee should also note that United States propaganda was being disseminated internationally. The United States Government was spending billions of dollars on spreading slanders and inciting countries to war. There was a link between the criminal plans that were being made in Washington for aggression and the propaganda for war. As recently as October 1952, the head of the overseas information division in the State Department had announced the establishment of a psychological strategy board to co-ordinate propaganda activities with measures related to the "cold war".

4. Furthermore, the United States Press in the pay of the monopolies was engaged in stirring up the basest human instincts. It abounded in stories of torture, in order to accustom its readers to the atrocities committed by Western troops. The United States representative had referred to the provincial Press in his country and had called it independent. Mr. Birecki went on to cite two extracts, one about the hostilities in Korea, the other about the war in Vietnam, in both of which horrible atrocities were described in the greatest detail. He recalled also the photographs of severed heads that had been published in the United Kingdom press in connexion with the disturbances in Malaya. The intention was certainly to prepare public opinion for the horrors of war. Unfortunately, United Nations bodies had never taken into consideration that terrifying use to which war-mongers put information media.

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

5. The United States representative had claimed that United States information enterprises were independent of trusts and monopolies. On the contrary, the trusts and monopolies, which derived huge profits from armaments and counted upon war to bring them even larger gains, controlled the information media in the United States and directed the hysterical incitement campaign. In July 1952 a United States magazine had noted the increasing concentration of the media for the dissemination of news material in the United States of America. Eight large studios dominated the film industry, and there were five large broadcasting and television networks. A handful of press lords controlled all the popular publications. The opportunities open to individuals were scanty. The *New Republic* of 15 September 1952 had stated that more than 95 per cent of the newspapers in the United States received their news from the three large agencies, the United Press, the Associated Press and the International News Service. Moreover, they were not independent of the advertisers. Advertising revenue accounted for more than two-thirds of the revenue of United States newspapers. The *Washington Post* of 10 October 1952 had printed an article by a public figure, stating that advertisers had the power of life or death over most United States newspapers and used it to dictate their wishes. Worse, the United States trusts and monopolies had for some time been engaged in direct propaganda for war by means of their very advertising. He cited in that connexion an advertisement by United States road haulage companies, stressing the advantage of road over rail transport in the event of war. In 1951 the United States trusts and monopolies had spent six thousand million dollars on advertising, almost twice as much as the United States Government had spent on public welfare and education.

6. Mr. Birecki wished to draw attention to the statement by the "representative of Tito". That agent of a United States satellite had tried to create a diversion by slandering the USSR and the peoples' democracies. That contemptible manoeuvre was doomed to failure. Everyone knew the worth of that puppet government, which shared in the United States plans for aggression and auctioned off the natural wealth of Yugoslavia in order to finance them, as shown in a State Department publication issued in June 1952 and entitled *Titoism and United States Foreign Policy*. The author of that pamphlet had admitted that the Yugoslav information media were being used for the dissemination of American propaganda and had praised the representatives of Tito in the United Nations and congratulated them on their provocative speeches, of which the Committee had just been given a sample. Yugoslavia was literally being submerged by American propaganda, the dissemination of which was being financed on cheap terms as part of the activities carried on under the aggressive pact known as the North Atlantic Treaty. That could be verified from the official records of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee for March and April 1952 (p. 462). The diversionist tactics of the "representative of Tito" would not divert the Committee's attention from its essential tasks.

7. It was to be regretted that none of the United Nations organs which had dealt with freedom of information had made any constructive contribution to the struggle for peace and to the promotion of

friendly relations among nations. It was particularly unfortunate that the Economic and Social Council had not adopted the suggestion in paragraph 6 of draft resolution IV submitted by the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press (E/2190, annex B). The draft code of ethics and the draft convention on freedom of information were meaningless without the amendments proposed by the USSR delegation, which had been rejected.

8. In Poland freedom of information was safeguarded for the promotion of peace. The Polish Parliament had passed an act for the defence of peace which stated that "propaganda and preparations for a new war constitute the greatest threat to peaceful co-operation between nations and are a crime against the mother country and against the whole of humanity". That act provided legal sanctions against those who would engage in such propaganda. Culture in the People's Republic of Poland had been placed within the reach of the entire population. It had become a part of their lives and served their needs. The number of school text-books per 1,000 pupils was ten times what it had been before the war. There were ten times as many newspaper readers, who had in effect become co-editors of the Press. Classical authors whose works were being issued in millions of copies had been made available to the masses of the people. The cultural drive in Poland was inspired by the progressive traditions of Poland and other peoples, and had received much disinterested aid from the USSR. In Poland information media were in the hands of the people and served its interests. Article 71 of the Constitution guaranteed to the citizens of Poland genuine freedom of expression by means of the spoken or printed word and freedom of assembly and association.

9. The Polish delegation hoped that that example would be followed. Be that as it might, the Committee must take steps to prevent the poisoning of minds by propaganda for war. The draft resolution submitted by the USSR delegation (A/C.3/L.255) offered great possibilities in that direction. The Polish delegation supported the draft resolution, which would help to free the Press from the monopolies' grasp and to put an end to propaganda for war, pursuant to the basic principle of General Assembly resolution 110 (II).

10. Mr. LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras) had listened with great interest to the various speeches which had helped to clarify the many aspects of the very important problem before the Committee. His delegation supported the proposals to elaborate a code of ethics and to convene an international professional conference. Freedom of information must not be imperilled by governmental or other outside interference. It was the duty of Press enterprises to give proper sociological guidance to public opinion. To help them in that task, his delegation wanted them to have a code of ethics, which might be used as a basis for other texts.

11. There was a constant conflict of ideas, and a conflict of interests behind the ideas. Information was thus a faithful mirror of each country's political, social, economic and cultural life. Freedom of information was closely connected with economic problems, since political freedom implied economic freedom, or

rather, economic emancipation. Rising above conflicting interests and fleeting political unrest, however, were the eternal principles, awareness of truth, respect for objectivity, and international consciousness. His delegation accordingly thought that it was most important for all peoples and governments to receive regularly objective and impartial reports on the progress of freedom of information. Twentieth-century man must know precisely where freedom of information existed, where it was obstructed, and where it had been crushed by totalitarian methods.

12. As he had already noted, the Press, a powerful sociological instrument, reflected a country's cultural, social, political, economic and moral evolution. Consequently, countries with a tradition of slavery could make no worth-while contribution on the subject of the regulation of freedom of information. The representative of Iraq had apparently misunderstood the statement he (Mr. Lopez Villamil) had made on that subject (422nd meeting); it had not been his intention to refer to the peoples who had recently attained self-government. Traditions of slavery existed in countries which, throughout history, had been governed by force and where nothing had really changed despite a new label. The young nations did not come within that category.

13. Free peoples were not afraid of letting the truth be known. Most of the countries represented on the Committee did not fear the development of the exchange of information, nor had they any misgivings with regard to investigations of freedom of information in all countries. Such investigations, carried out annually under the auspices of the United Nations, might well contribute to the development of freedom of expression and consequently of the most sacred of human rights.

14. The problem of freedom of information was as complex as it was important, and he hoped that his remarks would help the Committee to solve it satisfactorily.

15. In conclusion, he drew attention to a change he wished to make in the amendment he had submitted earlier (A/C.3/L.257) to the draft resolution submitted by the sixteen Powers: the beginning of the proposed paragraph 4 should read: "Decides to recommend that an annual report should be prepared ...".¹

16. The CHAIRMAN stated that the representative of Guatemala had asked to speak in the general debate; as the request had been made after the list of speakers had been closed, he would leave the decision to the Committee.

17. Mr. ZAMOR (Haiti) congratulated the Chairman on that truly democratic procedure. In view of the complexity of the problem, it was to the advantage of the Committee to hear the greatest number of speakers; he therefore proposed that the Guatemalan representative's request should be granted.

18. Mr. BARODY (Saudi Arabia) supported that proposal.

The Committee decided to hear the Guatemalan representative.

¹ The revised text of the amendment was subsequently distributed under the symbol A/C.3/L.257/Rev.1.

19. Mr. TORIELLO GARRIDO (Guatemala) thanked the Chairman and the members of the Committee—in particular the representatives of Haiti and Saudi Arabia—for acceding to his request.

20. He had listened to the preceding speakers with great interest and he agreed that the problem of freedom of information was of capital importance and called for a prompt solution.

21. It was generally recognized that freedom of information was a basic right of the individual in a democratic society, but those who exercised that right were clearly under an obligation to take stock of their responsibilities and to remain within the bounds of morality and respect for others. There could be no deviation from that principle if abuses were to be avoided and if the Press of certain countries possessing very powerful media of information was to be prevented from disseminating news injurious to small countries whose lack of technical means left them defenceless. It should not be possible for unscrupulous information agencies, under the cloak of liberty, to launch campaigns of calumny and slander against countries which took certain economic or social measures to improve the conditions of their people, measures which were, naturally, prejudicial to the interests of those who sought to exploit the people. Such practices could only sow international discord and were a more perfidious form of aggression than military attack or economic penetration.

22. That should not be understood to mean that Guatemala was opposed to the principle of freedom of information; such an attitude would be contrary to its tradition. It had always fought for the respect of all freedoms and it sincerely wished news personnel to be able to exercise their profession without any governmental or other restrictions. The situation he had described, however, did not exist merely in theory. Guatemala had been and continued to be subjected to attacks on the part of certain information agencies that served the spurious interests of economic enterprises and favoured the restoration to power of despots who had accorded them vast privileges in exchange for an unrestrained exercise of tyranny. Those venal information agencies had been highly indignant at the promulgation of a labour code, the establishment of a system of social security and especially the adoption of an agrarian reform law which had freed the peasant from serfdom and given him back his land. In consequence of those measures, false charges had been made against Guatemala by journalists who had gone so far as to accuse one of the most peace-loving peoples on the American continent of machinations in favour of a foreign Power. The free world could no longer allow small countries, which did not possess the financial means to counteract the effects of such campaigns or which would have to use for that purpose funds needed for their economic development, to be maligned with impunity by dishonest journalists.

23. Any enterprise that did harm to a State under the cloak of the principle of freedom of information should at the very least be obliged to repair the damage, without cost to the State in question. That was neither a restriction nor a limitation, but an elementary guarantee which should be a concomitant of freedom of information. The Guatemalan delegation would there-

fore support any proposal to establish the right of correction.

24. It would later submit a draft resolution providing for measures to be taken if a small country were the victim of a systematic and slanderous campaign it could not oppose, for obviously in such cases it was not to be thought that the right of correction was the only solution.

25. The CHAIRMAN said that in accordance with rule 114 of the rules of procedure he would grant the right of reply to the representatives of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

26. Mr. TRHLIK (Czechoslovakia) regretted that the remarks of the Yugoslav representative at the 426th meeting had not been of the same high level as the other speeches heard during the general debate. The Yugoslav representative's charges against the Czechoslovak Press were not worthy of refutation and Mr. Trhlik would confine himself to revealing the reasons underlying them.

27. While professing his deep concern for the situation of the Czechoslovak Press, the Yugoslav representative had attempted to discredit it in the eyes of the world and to present the friendly relations linking Czechoslovakia and the USSR in a false light. Those relations rested on the traditional friendship between the two countries and on the gratitude of the Czechoslovak people towards those who had liberated them from Hitler's domination. Moreover, the friendship between the two peoples had been consolidated by commercial, cultural and social ties and by the common struggle of the Czechoslovak and USSR armies during the Second World War. The peaceful policy of the USSR was in line with the interests and aspirations of the Czech people, who would not let anyone try to destroy their friendship with the Soviet Union.

28. Moreover, the Yugoslav people themselves were grateful to the USSR for having freed them from Hitler's oppression and they considered the USSR their ally. By attacking the Soviet Union, the Yugoslav representative was betraying the interests of his own people and placing himself in the service of a group for which the Yugoslav people had nothing but hatred.

29. The Czechoslovak Press was free, the sole obligation imposed on journalists being to refrain from abusing their freedom for reprehensible purposes. The Czechoslovak Press, radio and cinema were in the hands of the people and rejected all propaganda in favour of war, fascism or discrimination. Far from promoting disharmony among peoples, the Czechoslovak Press was guided by the principles of the United Nations Charter and served the cause of peace.

30. Mr. DEDIJER (Yugoslavia) wished to reply to the charges made against Yugoslavia by the representative of Poland.

31. By reproaching Yugoslavia for being a satellite of the United States of America, the Polish representative was really upbraiding it for being unwilling to become a satellite of the USSR. He had shown a lack of the most elementary courtesy when he had referred to the "representative of Tito". It was common knowledge that the Polish Government had no love for Marshal Tito, because, after leading the

Yugoslav people in the fight against the armies of Hitler and Mussolini and, shoulder to shoulder with his people, thwarting foreign attempts to restore the monarchy after the war, he was leading his people in their struggle for the independence of their country against the Soviet Union.

32. In that connexion, Mr. Dedijer thought it might be appropriate to recall that Gomulka, the head of the Polish people, who had led Poland in the war against fascism, had been replaced by Marshal Rokossovsky. Yugoslavia, for its part, had no liking for the system of "importing and exporting marshals" and was not prepared to let itself be "marshallized" in any way, and especially *à la russe*.

33. The Polish representative had also charged the Yugoslav delegation to the United Nations with obeying the instructions of a foreign Power. Mr. Dedijer considered that those representatives on the Third Committee who had known him for several years would know how little credence should be given to such a fantastic allegation. On the other hand, all the Members of the United Nations were aware of the eagerness with which the Polish delegation carried out orders from the USSR and they knew where the Polish representatives went for guidance. They also knew what displeasure the USSR delegation showed when Poland accidentally failed to vote with the USSR in United Nations bodies. The Yugoslav delegation did not need any instructions.

34. In conclusion, Mr. Dedijer apologized for having been forced to speak a little heatedly; unfortunately, that was the only language his adversaries seemed to understand.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

35. The CHAIRMAN reviewed the draft resolutions before the Committee and said that there were two others which had not yet been circulated. He recalled that under rule 130 of the rules of procedure, the Committee would vote on the proposals in the order in which they had been submitted, but it was free to decide otherwise.

36. He wondered whether, the general debate having closed, it would not be appropriate at that stage to set a time limit for the submission of draft resolutions.

37. Mr. MANI (India) thought that the draft resolution submitted by the sixteen Powers (A/C.3/L.256) was more in the nature of a procedural proposal and should logically be taken first. He made a formal motion to that effect.

38. The Committee should not fix a time limit for draft resolutions until it had taken a decision on that proposal, for if it was adopted there would be no need to vote on the other draft resolutions and the only proposals which could then be submitted would be amendments to the draft convention. The time limit for submitting such amendments could be fixed at that stage.

39. Mr. PAZHAWAK (Afghanistan) agreed that the draft resolution submitted by the sixteen Powers was basically a procedural proposal; he supported the Indian motion.

40. Mr. LOOMES (Australia) did not deny that the Indian representative was right in wanting the

Committee to deal first with the proposal made by the sixteen Powers, but he pointed out that he, together with several other delegations had submitted a joint draft resolution which had not yet been circulated and which was also a procedural proposal.² He therefore felt that the Committee could take no decision until it had seen that text, which should be considered at the same time as the draft resolution submitted by the sixteen Powers.

41. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) did not think the Committee needed to wait for the draft resolution submitted by Australia and other delegations before discussing the draft resolution submitted by the sixteen Powers. It still did not know whether the draft resolution mentioned by the representative of Australia would touch upon the substance of the question; even if it was purely procedural, the Committee could not discuss two texts at the same time and so should consider first the one first submitted, namely the sixteen-Power proposal.

42. Mr. MEADE (United Kingdom) thought it would be better for the Committee to have the various texts and to decide at the following meeting in what order they would consider them.

43. Mr. KAYSER (France) wanted to know whether any rule of procedure provided that procedural proposals should be considered before other proposals. He did not regard a draft resolution such as the one submitted by the sixteen Powers (A/C.3/L.256) or an amendment such as the Honduran amendment (A/C.3/L.257) as purely procedural, inasmuch as one of the clauses of the former touched on substance, as did the latter. The French delegation thought that all proposals were on an equal footing at the outset; that did not prejudice the position it might adopt when a vote was taken on the order of their consideration.

44. Mr. PAZHWAK (Afghanistan) drew the French representative's attention to rule 119 of the rules of procedure, the gist of which was that a procedural motion had priority. In his view, the sixteen-Power draft resolution was a procedural proposal, because, if it was adopted, it would preclude discussion of all other proposals.

45. Mr. AZKOUL (Lebanon) noted that Australia had raised the only valid objection to the immediate

discussion of the sixteen-Power draft resolution. The Australian representative was justified in requesting the Committee not to vote on the sixteen-Power draft resolution until it had taken note of the draft he was submitting jointly with other delegations. Nevertheless, the Committee might proceed to consider the draft resolution contained in document A/C.3/L.256, on the understanding that it would not vote upon it until the other text had been circulated.

46. Mr. SOBOLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed with the United Kingdom representative that it would be better to wait until the Secretariat had distributed the other draft resolutions.

47. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the United Kingdom representative had made no formal motion.

48. Mr. MOE (Norway) moved the adjournment of the meeting.

49. The CHAIRMAN said that under rule 115, two speakers could speak against adjournment.

50. Mr. PAZHWAK (Afghanistan) was against adjournment. There was nothing to prevent the submission of new draft resolutions on the following day and the Committee would again have to wait until they were circulated. As one of the sponsors of the sixteen-Power draft resolution, he emphasized that the Committee would be unable to proceed until it had taken a decision on that proposal.

51. Mr. MOE (Norway) said that he was moving adjournment under rule 117, which called for an immediate vote.

52. The CHAIRMAN called for a vote on the motion for adjournment.

The motion for adjournment was adopted by 14 votes to 9, with 8 abstentions.

53. Mr. BIRECKI (Poland) stated, on a point of order, that his delegation could not accept the slanderous attack made on the patriot Marshall Rokossovsky by the representative of Yugoslavia.

54. The CHAIRMAN ruled that the intervention of the representative of Poland was not a point of order and was therefore out of order.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.

² Subsequently distributed under the symbol A/C.3/L.260.