

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE EIGHTH MEETING

held on Saturday, 27 April 1968, at 11.35 a.m.

President:

H.I.H. Princess Ashraf PAHLAVI

Iran

REVIEW OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED, AT THE INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS, IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE THE ADOPTION AND PROCLAMATION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN 1948, PARTICULARLY IN THE PROGRAMMES UNDERTAKEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES (item 9 of the provisional agenda) (A/CONF.32/4, A/CONF.32/5 and Add.1, A/CONF.32/7 and Add.1 and 2, A/CONF.32/8-10, A/CONF.32/12-13 and Corr.1, A/CONF.32/16; A/CONF.32/L.9-11) (continued)

General debate (continued)

The Very Rev. Fr. HESBURGH (Holy See) said there was little he could add to the personal message sent by Pope Paul VI that would further bring out His Holiness's deep and compassionate concern for the successful outcome of the Conference. Pope Paul had given the world his own thoughts on the intimate and organic connexion between economic, social and cultural rights on the one hand and political and civil rights on the other, in his recent encyclical "Populorum Progressio", which had followed upon the classic encyclical "Pacem in Terris" of Pope John XXIII. As could be seen from the document on the Church in the world today, issued by the second Vatican Council, all the moral and spiritual strength of the Catholic Church was necessarily aligned on the side of those suffering deprivation of their fundamental rights in any part of the world. The Church also maintained that the powerful and rich in the world must now join in safeguarding the rights of the weak and the poor. The Holy See accordingly welcomed the past achievements of the United Nations and would give full moral and spiritual support to further endeavours to inspire mankind's conscience in matters of human rights and development.

His delegation greatly favoured the suggestion for a High Commissioner for Human Rights, possibly to become a world ombudsman on the strength of recognized personal integrity and high moral leadership. Such a High Commissioner, if backed by a representative committee of high competence, by adequate national and regional support and by ultimate juridical support from national, regional and international courts, could become the personal focus for efforts to translate hopes and ideals into reality. Obviously, the Conference's success depended on arriving at realistic mechanisms to achieve that purpose. Agreement on the need for a High Commissioner would be a minimum step in the right direction.

The younger generation was deeply concerned that inequalities, prejudices and flagrant discrimination, together with racism, should still flourish throughout the world, and lack of effective action would leave them with no alternative but violence.

The real choices facing humanity today, young and old, were love or hatred, peace or violence, order or disorder; and continuing apathy in the face of worldwide and inhuman injustice would certainly lead the young to doubt the sincerity and courage of the older generation. Indeed, the much-abused concept of love had a contribution to make to the Conference's work.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had represented a great rhetorical victory not to be underestimated; but at the crossroads now reached, the Conference was called upon to decide as to the future direction of efforts: more rhetoric, or effective implementation. The deepest aspirations of mankind were being negated in many different ways in every country of the world, and frustration led to the tendency to accuse others of shortcomings rather than to look deeply into one's own conscience, individual or national. An honest attempt by each country to measure its own achievements against the great ideals enunciated in the Universal Declaration would do wonders for the Conference's work.

What every individual, irrespective of nationality, religion, language, sex or colour, wanted was to be a person in his own right, secure in his human dignity, accepted in fraternity and firm in hope for the future. One single human being was more important than all the money in the world, all the power and the glory of man-made nations or empires. If that truth were recognized, surely no Government could do less than grant all its citizens the reality of the ideals expressed in the Universal Declaration and the International Covenants on Human Rights.

Many eloquent words had been spoken about the Rev. Martin Luther King. Dr. King had been a man of spiritual insight, deeply concerned for his fellowmen everywhere. Eschewing violence as wrong, he had been willing to work, to suffer and to die for his belief in man's inherent dignity, convinced as he was that his dream of universal justice could not be achieved without suffering. Perhaps more might be accomplished if every individual were to search his own heart and decide how much he would be willing to suffer to ensure personal justice for all in his own country. The actions of a single person could move millions, as witness the effect of the lives of Dr. King, Gandhi and Pope John XXIII, and no country in the world today was perfect in providing the full ideal of human opportunity for all its citizens. Unless it aspired to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights truly universal in the hearts of men, in their families, schools, churches, national programmes and international relations, the Conference would be missing a great opportunity.

Mr. BASOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the most important problem before the Conference was how to promote and ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to enlist the collaboration of States in that field. The many important steps taken in recent years testified to the determination of most of the countries Members of the United Nations to fight for the emancipation of millions of people from colonial slavery and the eradication of all forms of racial discrimination. But, those aims entailed a radical change in the nature of United Nations activities in the field of human rights.

There were too many human rights problems still unresolved twenty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There were gross violations in Asia and the Near East. Certain imperialist countries were depriving millions of people of their elementary rights and freedoms, and even of their lives.

The danger of the revival of Nazism could not be ignored in Europe, where the doctrine was being openly preached. Such activities were reminiscent of the coming of Hitler's party to power, and determined efforts were needed to suppress all forms of neo-Nazism.

In South and South West Africa the criminal policy of apartheid was still continuing and presented a serious threat to peace and international security. In Southern Rhodesia the African population played practically no part in the administration and lived like pariahs.

The elimination of colonial and racial oppression should be based on the enforcement of the rights of nations to self-determination and free and independent development. His delegation endorsed the thorough-going recommendations of the International Seminar on Apartheid, Racial Discrimination and Colonialism held recently in Zambia. The Warsaw Seminar too constituted an important contribution to the programme of the International Year for Human Rights by recommending that the International Conference on Human Rights should strive to make the International Year for Human Rights effectively the year of realization of economic and social rights.

That was important, for despite positive achievements, the United Nations had no very definite results to show in ensuring the vital rights to work, education, rest, and social security, and it systematically declined to exercise its authority and influence in the direction of social and economic rights on the inadequate pretext that certain specialized agencies were dealing with those problems. The results achieved by the United Nations in that direction could best be evaluated by the speed and effectiveness with which its various instruments on the subject were put into effect.

The realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms depended primarily on the social and economic structure of society. Experience demonstrated that socialism was best able to ensure real equality in the political, economic and cultural spheres. In under fifty years of existence, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic had raised the literacy level of its people, developed modern industries, mechanized its agriculture, introduced universal education and created conditions for the workers to attain socialist rights and political freedoms. The rights enjoyed by the citizens in regard to work, education, rest, old-age pension, free medical assistance, etc. showed that, under socialism, freedom and all-round development of personality were built on a sound economic foundation. In addition, workers enjoyed wide political rights and freedoms like the right to elect and be elected, the right of association, freedom of speech, press, assembly and meetings and other freedoms forming an inseparable part of socialist democracy. The building of a new society was not the only achievement of socialism; it carried new ideas and principles into the world arena, and in the United Nations, the socialist countries fought for peace, national independence, security and freedom of peoples.

The United Nations should constantly oppose the gross violations of human freedoms and rights which went with imperialist interference in the internal affairs of other countries, colonialism and neo-colonialism, apartheid, racial discrimination, neo-Nazism and neo-Fascism.

The activities of the United Nations in the defence of human rights and fundamental freedoms were being threatened by the attempts of certain Western countries to distort the nature of the activity of its agencies dealing with those problems. The proposal to appoint a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to set up other similar super-governmental bodies would serve no purpose and would violate the principles and aims of the United Nations Charter. His delegation had hopes that the Conference might prove to be an important step forward in further strengthening and developing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and thereby ensuring peace throughout the world.

Mr. HAYTA (Turkey) said that organized Turkish society throughout the long history of the Turkish people had always been based on justice and tolerance; even when the sovereign had had absolute powers, the fundamental rights of his subjects had been respected. More recently, the Turkish Republic, convinced that human rights and fundamental freedoms constituted the foundations of peace and security not only at

the national level but throughout the world, had never departed from the principle that peace within the country meant peace in the world. More than forty years earlier, Kemal Ataturk had been convinced that a new era of harmony and mutual understanding would prevail in the world, with no discrimination as to colour, religion or race. Under the Turkish Constitution, all citizens were equal before the law, and no individual, family, group or class enjoyed special privileges. Women in Turkey had enjoyed full civil and political rights for several decades; they could enter the government service and the liberal profession on equal terms with men.

Thus, ever since the United Nations had been established, Turkey had fully supported every effort to promote and develop human rights and was a party to almost all the international conventions (see A/CONF.32/4). Turkey was a staunch supporter of the International Year for Human Rights and had carried out the recommendations contained in the relevant General Assembly resolutions. As a member of the Council of Europe, it had signed and ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

His delegation would have further comments to make when the various agenda items were discussed. At the present juncture he would underline one topic only, namely racial discrimination, to which the world as a whole was devoting particular attention, as the Declaration and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination showed. Turkey's views on the subject of apartheid were well known, and it had voted for all the resolutions condemning that policy.

While in the twenty years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration a considerable number of international instruments concerning the protection of human rights had been adopted, other measures must be taken wherever it proved necessary, to ensure the protection of human dignity.

Mr. STRANEO (Italy) after expressing his appreciation of Iran's devotion to the cause of human rights, as demonstrated on many occasions, said that the starting-point for the Conference agenda was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was a landmark in the history of human rights. It could not be expected that in the twenty years which had passed since its adoption, the principles it laid down would be fully implemented. The road was inevitably long and arduous. The advent of many new States and the rapid progress of science and technology had engendered needs never before felt or even imagined. Furthermore, the international community had only recently given cautious approval to the first tentative steps towards some

form of international control in the field of human rights. Another difficulty lay in the very nature of fundamental human rights and the problems involved in the establishment of the conditions necessary for their full implementation. As the Italian Constitution stated, the elimination of obstacles to the enjoyment of economic and social rights was a condition for the effective recognition of civil and political rights, and the removal of those obstacles was a function of the State. Indeed, only full-scale balanced development in the economic and social fields could ensure the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights.

It was the task of the Conference to strike a balance between a pessimistic assessment of the position with respect to human rights in many parts of the world and over-optimism based on the progress made by the international community during the past twenty years.

It would be unwise to concentrate solely on specific topics in the field of human rights on which the agenda laid special emphasis. Those topics undoubtedly called for immediate attention; but his delegation would have preferred a discussion based on the two broad fields of human rights: civil and political rights; and economic, social and cultural rights. Racial discrimination, self-determination of peoples and slavery, together with any other forms of denial of human rights or impediments to their effective recognition, could easily have been dealt with within that framework.

When the Commission on Human Rights at its twenty-fourth session had expressed the hope that the Conference would pay due attention to economic, social and cultural rights, it had in fact been expressing concern at a certain lack of balance in the Conference agenda. The Italian delegation regretted that the eradication of illiteracy had not been listed as an actual agenda item. It hoped nonetheless that the Conference would give careful attention to the subject.

On the question of evaluating methods and techniques used in the enforcement of human rights, and drawing up a programme for the future, he thought that the documentation prepared by the Secretariat was objective in its approach and systematic in its arrangement. The human rights situation in various parts of the world was far from satisfactory and a common effort had to be made to ascertain what more could be done. In that connexion, regional reports were particularly useful in that they encouraged comparisons and sometimes showed how a start could be made in areas where

nothing had yet been achieved. The expert studies carried out had at least one idea in common: the importance of action at the educational level. That indicated one possible line of future action. However, great efforts would be required if new methods were to be developed. A still more difficult task would be to identify and adopt new measures and new techniques to speed up the tempo of international protection of human rights.

Various proposals had already been formulated and some were in an advanced stage of study by organs of the United Nations. Others again had been made in the studies prepared by experts, and still others might be suggested during the Conference. The Italian delegation was ready to examine all such proposals, since it was well aware that any action that might contribute concretely and in an orderly manner to the promotion and protection of human rights was a necessary condition for world peace.

The Italian Government was by no means opposed to the establishment of some form of international control to protect human rights; but such control must be kept within bounds by essential juridical safeguards, to ensure that there was an objective evaluation of the facts, and that the task of political evaluation, which was the responsibility of the General Assembly, was not transferred to technical bodies.

With regard to the relationships between the various international or regional organs and institutions which had been or were to be set up for the protection of human rights, his delegation felt that there was a growing need for the functions of those bodies to be co-ordinated and harmonized as soon as possible. It hoped the Conference would find time to examine that problem and would pay particular attention to the co-ordination of the work done at the international and regional levels.

As the President of the Italian Republic had said in his message to the Conference, the road to peace lay in respect for human rights, and the Italian delegation hoped that that principle would guide the Conference in its work.

SPECIAL MESSAGES ADDRESSED TO THE CONFERENCE

At the President's request, Mr. SCHREIBER (Executive Secretary of the Conference) read out the text of messages received from H.H. the Amir of Kuwait and from the President of Czechoslovakia.^{7/}

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

^{7/} The text of these messages appears in the Final Act of the Conference, annex III, O and P.