



**COPY
FOR REFERENCE
ONLY - DO NOT
CIRCULATE**

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
26th meeting
held on
Thursday, 8 November 1984
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

DEC 10 1984

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIALLO (Guinea)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 74: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued)
- (d) REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT AND COMMENTS THEREON (continued)

*This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/39/SR.26
15 November 1984
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued) (A/39/21)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/479)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued) (A/39/497)
- (d) REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT AND COMMENTS THEREON (continued) (A/39/239 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2, A/39/602)

1. Mr. TERNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the world situation had deteriorated further since the General Assembly's previous session, and the fault lay with the imperialists who were promoting the aggravation of tension, the acceleration of the arms race and the undermining of trust among peoples.
2. The forces of reaction were also stepping up their propaganda campaign against détente and peaceful coexistence between States with different social systems, deliberately distorting facts and making slanderous accusations against particular countries. That "psychological war" against the socialist countries and many developing countries was becoming daily more widespread, with the media, used for subversive purposes, encouraging actions directed against lawful Governments and interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States in flagrant violation of the rules of international law. The capitalist monopolies were employing the most advanced communication technology to spread tendentious information and manipulate public opinion in disregard of the principles governing international relations, which constituted the foundations of the Charter.
3. Four powerful agencies alone - United Press International, Associated Press, Reuters and France-Presse - controlled 80 per cent of the news disseminated in the capitalist countries and the developing countries, and while until recently the monopolies' prime concern had been with the dissemination of their products, they had now taken to investing in the development of peripheral information systems so that they could continue to play a key role in matters relating to the content and nature of the information disseminated.
4. In the field of information, the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication could be of considerable assistance to developing countries, inter alia in undertaking an objective analysis of the true state of their information and communication media, by helping them draw up independent policies in that area and encouraging the establishment of the new world information order.
5. The socialist countries had reaffirmed their constructive position regarding information questions in the Political Declaration of the States Parties to the

/...

(Mr. Ternov, Byelorussian SSR)

warsaw Treaty, adopted at Prague in 1983, in which they had inter alia condemned the use of the media for spreading tendentious and slanderous information about particular countries.

6. The psychological war the imperialists were waging made the establishment of the new world information order, condemning propaganda for war, militarism, hegemony and hatred among peoples, all the more urgent for the majority of countries.

7. By virtue of the fact that they influenced millions of people, the media bore a heavy responsibility towards the world community; they should disseminate detailed, accurate and objective information on international life and the means of settling world problems, principally with respect to preventing nuclear war and to disarmament. Their role was not confined to providing factual information; they should also educate public opinion and make it understand the causes of certain situations.

8. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the work of UNESCO, which was rendering the international community valuable service, particularly in the field of communication; for that reason it categorically condemned the position of certain countries, foremost among them the United States of America, which were engaging in odious blackmail against that organization.

9. Byelorussia, for its part, would continue working actively, in co-operation with the developing countries, to speed the establishment of the new world information order, one of the most urgent questions of the modern age, and to restructure international relations in that field on an equitable basis, taking into account the legitimate interests of the developing countries.

10. Mr. NYAKYI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the reports of the Secretary-General, the Committee on Information and the Director-General of UNESCO would make a positive contribution to the ongoing debate on the need for a new world information and communication order, and would help bring the international community closer to that goal. His delegation supported the 59 important recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information, which were evidence of the Committee's seriousness and dedication, and welcomed the encouraging, lucid and concise report of the Director-General of UNESCO.

11. From a careful study of those reports, it was clear that the major current problems fell into two categories. The first was the weakness of the information and communication infrastructures in the developing countries and the unacceptable, and yet ever widening, gap between them and the industrialized countries. The international community as a whole was alert to the problem and to the need, recalled in recommendations 6 and 7 of the Committee on Information, to ensure both the elimination of existing inequalities and all other obstacles to the freedom and balance of information and better access by the developing countries to communication technology. That need lay at the very heart of the International Programme for the Development of Communication adopted by the UNESCO General Conference, which aimed at creating the atmosphere conducive to the establishment

/...

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

of a new world information and communication order. Since its inception, that programme had financed 87 national, regional, interregional and international projects, and UNESCO also engaged in other activities for the development of communication, focused on training, utilization of local resources and strengthening of local institutions.

12. The United Republic of Tanzania, which was among the beneficiaries of those efforts, was grateful to the countries which, through their generous contributions to the Special Fund or under bilateral or other arrangements, had made those achievements possible. UNESCO, which thus bore a central co-ordinating responsibility, deserved encouragement and support, and the Committee should make it clear that the maligning and hounding of UNESCO by certain countries and vested interests were quite unacceptable, and should, along with the Committee on Information, call on the United Nations system as a whole to support UNESCO and endorse the recommendation that the Department of Public Information should co-operate more regularly with it. While resources had admittedly never been equal to the demands on them, the perfectly valid need to question every item of expenditure should not provide an excuse for some Member States to oppose every new proposal, regardless of its merits and its benefits for the international community as a whole.

13. His delegation was of the view that there were at least two areas in which the United Nations could and should make progress: the establishment of a world-wide short-wave network and the acquisition of a communications satellite. The decision to establish a United Nations short-wave radio service had been taken as long ago as 1946. Furthermore, in his delegation's view, the viability of the project had never been in doubt. The audience existed and was growing, particularly in the developing countries, which continued to be subjected to broadcasts of foreign radio stations and were awaiting just such a solution. Thus, the fact that the modalities of its establishment were still being discussed and that facilities were still being rented cast doubts on the Organization's seriousness. His delegation hoped that the additional report which the Committee on Information had requested the Secretary-General to prepare would be helpful in finding a solution to the financial problem. Much the same could be said about the proposed acquisition of a United Nations communications satellite. Like the Committee on Information, his delegation had difficulty in accepting the legal, economic and technical arguments put forward against the project. Given the growth of the United Nations system and of the volume of communications which the new information order would entail, the time had perhaps come when the advantages of acquisition finally outweighed the advantages of renting. Economic considerations could not be the only criterion for decision-making in that area; political, social and cultural factors should be taken into consideration to a greater degree, especially since it was unhealthy for the United Nations to continue to rely on the facilities of one Member State in so vital an area: being dependent was inseparable from being influenced.

14. The second category of problems covered the philosophical and ideological concepts associated with the debate on - and the controversy over - the establishment of a new world information and communication order. His delegation

/...

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania)

believed that the heat of that debate should not obscure the fact that certain issues had been clarified in the past five years. Thus the Western industrialized countries had begun to gain a better understanding of the legitimate anxieties and concerns of the developing countries and an awareness of the fact that "freedom of the press" and the "free flow of information" imposed responsibilities with regard to "justice" and "equality". Once again, it was UNESCO, through the McBride Commission, which had indisputably provided the best analysis of the problems involved and had contributed in large measure to a definition and clarification of many communication issues and concepts. That was particularly true in the controversial area of the definition of the responsibilities of journalists and their employers vis-à-vis the media, society as a whole, the law and universal values. In order to resolve the contradictions and conflicts which might arise from the actual exercise of those responsibilities and to reassure critics of the current state of anarchy in that field, the McBride Commission had recommended the adoption of a code of ethics for journalists and their employers. Unfortunately, the hopes raised by those efforts had been disappointed: the leaders of independent news organizations from 20 countries, meeting at Talloires, France, in May 1984 for the so-called "Voices of Freedom" Conference, had shown little enthusiasm for the self-regulation of their activities, thereby dismissing an idea which had already been accepted and adopted by more than 60 countries. The philosophical and ideological differences could not be reconciled overnight; the positions of the supporters of the current unequal system and the positions of the States calling for the establishment of a new order must be brought closer together through study and discussion. His delegation therefore supported the various meetings and studies which UNESCO and other interested parties intended to organize in the future and hoped that the signatories to the Talloires Declaration would put their declared commitment to co-operate in efforts to expand the free flow of information into practice by participating in those discussions, since the replacement of the current unequal system with a new order guaranteeing justice and equality was in the long-term interest of those who profited from the current system.

15. His delegation also welcomed the activities of the Department of Public Information, which were a perfect illustration of the work done by the United Nations to promote a new world information and communication order and hoped that those activities would benefit from the commitment and political will of the international community.

16. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that the third world, which had been kept on the fringes of the technological revolution in communication because of historical and economic constraints, had often called for the establishment of a new world information and communication order based on equality, justice, the free flow of information and progressive changes in the dependent status of the developing countries in the area of communication and information. Unfortunately, the current distribution of communication resources continued to reflect the existing pattern of economic and technological power, with the developing countries falling ever farther behind. Thus the real debate concerned not only freedom of information but also justice, balance, the redressing of structural imbalances and a new distribution of

/...

(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

technical and human resources, with a view to decolonizing information and transforming it into a vehicle for the aspirations and civilizational values of all peoples.

17. His delegation had taken note of the report of the Committee on Information and supported the recommendations aimed at establishing more balanced relations and advancing the dialogue on the new world information order. The activities of the Department of Public Information should be more imaginative in promoting the news agencies of the developing countries and should strengthen, by means of diversification, the Department's co-operation with regional agencies and information and communication institutions, in particular the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the Pan African News Agency. The Department should make efforts to facilitate those organizations' access to communication technology and the channels for disseminating information, in accordance with the recommendations of the Conferences of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned States held at Jakarta and Cairo, so as to enable those organizations, not to oppose the existing monopolies, but to provide peoples with diverse sources of information. He welcomed the Department's efforts to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on Information in 1982 and 1983 on the subject of the distribution, rationalization and strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations information centres, the flow and processing of information and linguistic balance in the training of journalists. His delegation, which used French as its working language, wanted the French Language Production Section to be given the resources to issue sufficient numbers of press releases, taking into account the need to ensure an equitable use of existing resources. In more general terms, the Department's resources should be increased at a rate commensurate with the increase in the activities of the United Nations system and the Department's own responsibilities for projecting the Organization's image and helping to diminish the developing countries' dependence in the area of communications.

18. His delegation had taken note of the report of Director-General of UNESCO and wished to pay tribute to Mr. M'Bow. It also welcomed the fact that UNESCO, whose central role in the area of communication and information was well known and whose exceptional influence compelled recognition, had done outstanding work, despite certain criticisms, in promoting the establishment of a new information order. One example of that work was the development of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which was currently functioning in a satisfactory manner, since the number of projects launched by it was increasing significantly. The Programme should be encouraged, especially through additional contributions to the Special Account.

19. Thus, some progress had been made in the dialogue between North and South, even if it had been slow. It was now necessary to carry the exercise further and to convince the nations which controlled the information and communication world that the establishment of a system of international understanding in that field was beneficial to all.

/...

20. Mr. HALINEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic States, said that freedom of thought, opinion and expression were fundamental human rights whose implementation had to be based on the right to seek, receive and disseminate information and to express opinions independently of Government policy and free from any kind of censorship or other restriction.

21. The endeavours of the United Nations in the field of information, and particularly those of the Department of Public Information, were vital in generating better understanding of the United Nations and winning the support of Governments and peoples for the achievement of its objectives.

22. The Nordic countries had carefully studied the report of the Committee on Information (A/39/21) and the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/39/497). They recognized the need to establish a new world information and communication order and to eliminate the existing imbalances which hindered the free, wider and better-balanced flow and dissemination of information, knowledge and ideas, and they hoped that the Special Committee would adopt by consensus all the recommendations formulated by the Committee on Information in its report.

23. The Nordic countries welcomed the recommendation that the Secretary-General should prepare a consolidated study on the contributions of, and co-ordination between, various organs of the United Nations in support of the development of information and communication infrastructures and systems in the developing countries. They reaffirmed the role of the Department of Public Information as the focal point for the dissemination of information about the activities of the United Nations and welcomed the Department's efforts. Greater emphasis, however, should be placed on economic and social issues and on questions of human rights. The role of United Nations Information Centres in the dissemination of information on the maintenance of peace and security and on disarmament should also be strengthened.

24. The Nordic countries noted with satisfaction that the efforts to develop a system for monitoring and evaluating the activities of the Department of Public Information were continuing and that the results of the evaluation would be reflected in the planning of future activities and in determining priorities. They re-emphasized the importance of making optimal use of the limited resources available.

25. The efforts of the Joint United Nations Information Committee to streamline operations and reduce duplication should be strengthened. The two Non-Governmental Liaison Services (Geneva and New York) made a valuable contribution by providing information on international development issues to specific target audiences in the industrialized countries.

26. The Nordic countries gave their full support to the continued publication of Development Forum, which dealt with world issues from a world-wide perspective, and appreciated its editorial independence. Nevertheless, a more stable financial basis for its publication was required, and it should therefore be financed from the regular United Nations budget.

(Mr. Halinen, Finland)

27. The Nordic countries also supported the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), established under the auspices of UNESCO, which constituted an important step in the development of information and communication infrastructures in developing countries. They also welcomed the initiative taken jointly by the United Nations and UNESCO to convene a second round-table meeting on a new world information and communication order in 1985.

28. Mr. KURODA (Japan) said that the establishment of a new world information and communication order was conceived as an evolving and continuous process. Such a process could not be advanced merely with words. The international community must not shirk its responsibilities by engaging in ideological disputes, but should rather do its utmost to promote the information and communication capabilities of the developing countries by devising practical and realistic activities.

29. The disparities between the developed and the developing countries in the dissemination of information had often been pointed out. The developing countries wanted information concerning them to be more accurate and more ample. They also wanted greater access to information concerning other parts of the world. They were concerned about the fact that inaccurate information about a developing country could adversely affect the latter's national well-being. Efforts should therefore be made to enhance the accuracy, objectivity and balance in mass-media reporting. However, the imposition of restrictions on the free flow of information, or its subjection to censorship, would not solve the problems just mentioned. Freedom of thought and expression was a fundamental human right and was essential to the development of a free and healthy society. Understanding between countries would be fostered only when all points of view were represented and when there was free dissemination of information.

30. Any disparity between developed and developing countries in the field of information should be corrected by expanding the capabilities of the developing countries. Developed countries and international organizations should co-operate with developing countries towards that end. Co-operation among developing countries at the regional level was also required. Japan, for its part, was participating actively in the work of the Committee on Information and the International Programme for the Development of Communication. It had contributed \$US 300,000 to that programme in 1983 and was planning to make a contribution in the current fiscal year as well. More than 10 per cent of the yen credits which Japan had provided in 1982 had been spent for the improvement of the communication infrastructures of developing countries.

31. The Department of Public Information had been working with diligence and efficiency to promote a better understanding of the world and of the purposes of the United Nations. It had the vital task of enhancing the public's image of the United Nations so as to ensure that the international community would continue to support it. He paid tribute in that connection to the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and his staff for the manner in which they had been performing their duties.

/...

(Mr. Kuroda, Japan)

32. While the work of the Department of Public Information continued to expand, the resources available remained at the same level. His delegation noted with concern that an increasing number of recommendations were being adopted requesting the Department to begin new projects or to expand its existing programmes. Those recommendations were adopted with no indication of priority and without regard to the financial and other constraints facing the Department. A scale of priorities must therefore be established so that the resources available to the Department were not spread too thin, which would result in a deterioration of the effectiveness of its activities. Higher priority should also be given to social and economic information and the publication of Development Forum should be continued.

33. In conclusion, he said he hoped that the Committee would make every effort to reach a consensus on the question of information.

34. Mr. BLOCKER (United States of America) said that he welcomed the liveliness of the debate on questions relating to information and the candour which had characterized the proceedings from the very outset, beginning with the statement of the representative of Algeria. The debate, for which the United Nations was an ideal forum, had provided Member States with an opportunity to set forth their priorities, philosophies, passions and policies, and had highlighted the two conflicting views of the role of information in national and international political life.

35. According to the authoritarian theory of information, the press was the servant of the State and was responsible for disseminating, under tight control, the official version of the facts which the State called "truth". Under the authoritarian system, in which the State exercised a de facto monopoly of information and in which objective truth did not exist, the dissemination of divergent views was hindered or suppressed. Opposed to that theory was a liberal conception of the press in which the latter, far from being an instrument of power, was a means for disseminating a wide variety of information enabling free individuals to form their own opinions, check on government and decide on policy. The authoritarians said that the liberal press was not responsible and the liberals said that the authoritarian press was not free. Adding to the conflict was the fact that words like "freedom" and "responsibility" were defined differently in each camp.

36. Nations which identified with neither camp should carefully weigh the consequences of their choice and should not be misled by those who accused the United States and the Western media of "conspiracy" to "dominate" or "monopolize" the international flow of information. To maintain that "so-called freedom of the press" was merely a cloak whereby the United States sought to impose its "cultural imperialism" was pure propaganda, and it was time to denounce unfounded accusations of that nature.

37. His Government supported the development of a new, more just and effective world information and communications order based on the free circulation and wider

/...

(Mr. Blocker, United States)

and better balanced dissemination of information, by means of concrete and effective programmes designed to meet the real information and communication needs of developing countries.

38. Far from seeking to establish a new colonial age based on the monopolistic control of information and the advanced technology associated with the dissemination of information, his country had proposed in 1978 the creation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which it had supported ever since, in the conviction that imbalances in the world's flow of information could best be corrected through practical assistance and co-operation, rather than through confrontational rhetoric and ideological discussions. The United States of America and other industrialized countries remained committed to helping poorer nations develop their communications systems more rapidly. For example, the United States had helped some countries develop their communications infrastructures through both bilateral and multilateral programmes and its assistance in that field amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars. Of course, it believed that improved communications were essential to countries' overall development, but it did not believe that they had to have the most advanced technologies as prerequisites for the establishment of a new world information order based on the free circulation and better balanced dissemination of information. There was no country too poor to afford free and independent media: each nation only had to commit itself to respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression as defined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Not enough voices were heard in support of that basic freedom, and too few were raised to warn of the dangers of censorship, which represented the most serious threat to the free flow of information, and to protest against the tighter controls some Governments were imposing on information under the guise of establishing a new world information order.

39. On the other hand, the western media were accused of defining world news according to Western values and excluding what happened elsewhere. They were also accused of emphasizing negative aspects of the developing world and of exploiting its supposed dependence in the information field to transmit a distorted image of the developing world back to it. Such accusations were without foundation. In the first place, the flow of news was not in one direction: 75 per cent of all developing States had their own national news agencies and, if they chose Western rather than other wire services, it was not because they held a monopoly but because they gave satisfaction. Moreover, news of the developing world represented two thirds to three quarters of the news circulating in the developing world and a third of the news in the industrialized nations. In the United States, 60 per cent of all foreign coverage came from the developing world. It was therefore obvious that the Western "domination" of international information was only a myth.

40. Where the practical matters before the Committee were concerned, his delegation's three key concerns were: the need to adhere strictly to the principle of zero net budget growth; the necessity for the Committee on Information to undertake the proper monitoring and guidance of the activities of the United Nations Department of Public Information; and the importance of operating by the principle of consensus.

/...

(Mr. Blocker, United States)

41. His Government had been pleased to note that members of the Committee on Information recognized the importance of minimizing the financial implications of its recommendations. The Committee on Information should next call on the Department to review its programmes carefully in order to eliminate those which were ineffective or duplicated other United Nations activities. That would make it possible to free resources for more worthwhile projects.

42. With regard to the monitoring and guidance of the Department's activities, the Committee on Information had recommended some useful changes, but many more were needed. The recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report (A/39/239) seemed to offer a useful starting point. The Department of Public Information should, through the redeployment of existing resources, institute an improved accounting system which would enable it to make a better assessment of the cost-effectiveness of its activities. In that regard, he noted the statement by the Under-Secretary-General that the Department had taken steps to strengthen its internal evaluation capacity, and now had a comprehensive system for monitoring its own activities.

43. As several delegations had already noted, the recent session of the Committee on Information had failed to reach a true consensus. The Group of 77 had refused to include the phrase "an evolving and continuing process" in one paragraph about a new world information and communication order even though it already appeared in key UNESCO documents on the subject. His delegation could not understand the attitude of the Group of 77.

44. His Government was eager to see the consensus principle restored in the Special Political Committee. That was why, almost a month earlier, his delegation, together with those of the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands, had formally proposed to the Group of 77 that the debate on items considered in the Committee on Information should not be reopened during discussion of questions relating to information in the Special Political Committee and had suggested that new proposals of a controversial nature should not be introduced there. It would have been possible in that way to restore consensus through a reasonable compromise on the single outstanding issue that blocked full accord in the Committee on Information, and to preserve the delicate balance of that Committee's recommendations. But the Group of 77 had not yet responded to the proposal. Moreover, the set of recommendations considered by the Committee on Information should not be the subject of another substantive debate in the Special Political Committee because to engage in a double debate would be a waste of time and energy and would jeopardize the role of the Committee on Information, which his delegation believed should be responsible for the substantive work on information matters.

45. His Government firmly believed that there was no place in the discussion of information questions for extraneous recommendations directed at a single Member State. If necessary, his delegation would act on that belief, despite its attachment to the principle of consensus; nevertheless, it sincerely hoped that the recommendations of the Committee on Information would not be held hostage to the particular passions of a few Member States.

/...

46. Mr. SCHLEGEL (German Democratic Republic) said that although the mass media could not be regarded as the ultimate cause of peace or war, the fact remained that they shaped public opinion and contributed to creating a climate which could favour or inhibit policies of peace and disarmament or preparation for war. The use made of the press, radio and cinema before the last two world wars provided an eloquent example. Conscious of the lessons of history, the States Parties to the Warsaw Treaty had emphasized in their Political Declaration of January 1983 that the danger of war could not be reduced without creating an atmosphere of confidence in relations between States, which required the spreading of truthful information.

47. Information and communications were an integral part of international relations in the modern world. Relations in those fields should be based on a number of basic principles. In particular, all countries had to be in a position to maintain their own national information system and to participate in the international circulation of information on an equal footing without any discrimination. The international exchange of information should be balanced, and the information disseminated should effectively contribute to solving global problems such as the maintenance of peace, disarmament, international understanding and co-operation among peoples. International relations in the field of information and communication had to be in accordance with the democratic norms of international law, with special emphasis on the principles of sovereign equality, non-interference, self-determination and peaceful co-operation. They had to be founded on mutual respect for the sovereignty of States in the field of information. In that connection, the most important international instrument was the Declaration on the mass media adopted by UNESCO at its twentieth General Conference in 1978.

48. His delegation regretted that the consideration by UNESCO of vital current questions had become the target of fierce attacks by certain States, and it rejected any attempt at political and financial blackmail aimed at preventing UNESCO from fulfilling its mandate.

49. International relations in the field of information were currently characterized by immense inequalities. The activities of transnational corporations in direct television and sound broadcasting by satellite, transboundary data flows and remote sensing were undermining the national sovereignty of States and jeopardizing the cultural identity of peoples. International legal regulations should therefore be prepared as a matter of urgency.

50. Under those conditions, the "free flow of information" concept only served to aggravate the existing relations of dependence, and to allow Western countries to maintain the status quo and to preserve their monopoly. A type of information imperialism was involved.

51. The establishment of a new international information and communication order had to be seen in the context of political and economic decolonization. The German Democratic Republic therefore provided assistance to developing countries in the form of scholarships, or by sending experts into the field, to allow them to develop their capacities in the area of information. During the past 20 years,

(Mr. Schlegel, German
Democratic Republic)

more than 800 journalists from African, Asian and Latin American countries and from national liberation movements had been trained at the International Institute for Journalism of the German Democratic Republic. Almost 1,500 people had attended training courses run by the Institute in their respective home countries.

52. The delegation of the German Democratic Republic was also concerned with the development of national satellite systems which could be integrated into international communication networks and give developing countries a chance to overcome, in the long run, their state of dependence. The international telecommunication organization INTERSPUTNIK had been founded for that purpose in 1971, based on principles of political and social responsibility. Democratic procedures for tariff setting, channel allocation and profit distribution ensured that due account was taken of the interests of all member States. INTERSPUTNIK practice showed that it was possible to democratize international information relations if the democratic principles of international law were applied to those relations.

53. In opposition to that policy, certain media organizations were waging psychological warfare based on distortion and manipulation, advocating the arms race, counterrevolution and resistance against any kind of progressive development. The advocates of psychological warfare - Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty or Radio Marti - were fully integrated into the imperialist State machinery in administrative as well as financial terms. Those broadcasting stations violated the principles of peaceful coexistence and formed an element of confrontation which had nothing in common with fair competition between different ideologies.

54. The Department of Public Information had a very great responsibility in the field of information and communication. It had to orient its activities to the priorities indicated in General Assembly resolution 35/201 and subsequent resolutions concerning the maintenance of peace, disarmament and international security.

55. The German Democratic Republic commended the support provided by the Department of Public Information to the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, as well as the annual training programmes run by the Department for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. Nevertheless, the Department should attempt to increase its effectiveness in implementing the numerous programmes entrusted to it in line with the priorities set and within the limits of existing resources, and should also take measures regarding the equitable geographical distribution of posts.

56. Mr. IBRAHIM (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement made the previous day by the Zionist representative, to the effect that Israel was the only democracy in the Middle East, was farcical. That racist régime had been founded on genocide, it practised discrimination against oriental Jews and was trying to eradicate more than half a million Arabs who, as the indigenous population of the country, had chosen to cling to their land notwithstanding the status of second-class citizens to which they had been relegated and all the types of persecution, oppression, expulsion and confiscation which they underwent.

/...

(Mr. Ibrahim, Iraq)

57. The Zionist representative had said that freedom of the press existed in the occupied territories and that those territories were an open society where anyone could go, but it must be pointed out that "anyone" did not include former residents of the occupied territories, nor other Palestinians, or even certain journalists who at one time or another might have said something that did not please the Zionist occupation authorities. Journalists currently in the occupied territories were as a rule prevented from going to the areas where events were taking place. Journalists from the occupied territories were often arrested or deported or in other ways prevented from practising their trade. According to the Zionist representative, censorship applied only to military matters, but it was well known that in order to publish stories without censorship, Arabic-language newspapers copied them from the Israeli press, even though that procedure did not always provide a guarantee against censorship. On the topic of the censorship of political views, it had to be mentioned that the Arabic-language newspaper Al Fajr, published in occupied Palestine, often appeared with a blank space where its editorial should have been, without being allowed to mention the fact of censorship. With regard to the allegations of the Zionist representative concerning the Al Araq newspaper published by Iraqi Kurds in their own language, the Iraqi delegation had a copy of that newspaper which any member of the Committee could consult. Whenever the subject of human rights was raised in any forum, the Zionist representatives tried to divert the attention of Member States in order to cover up the crimes committed against the human rights of the Arab population in the occupied territories and elsewhere by the régime which they represented.

58. Mr. BAALI (Algeria), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Committee was the only judge of the accuracy and authenticity of the facts which he had indicated in his statement of 1 November 1984. It was deplorable that the Manichaeism rightly denounced by the representative of Portugal continued to be practised by certain delegations which consistently saw the world as divided into two categories, the free democracies on the one hand and the rest of the world, given over to authoritarianism and absence of freedom, on the other. His delegation was pleased to learn that the West did not exercise a monopoly but, on the contrary, invited competition with the press agencies of the third world, as if such competition was not illusory given the difference in the means available to the two sides. As to the importance which the Western mass media gave to information from the third world, it must be pointed out that such information did not appear unless Western interests were at stake, in Lebanon one day, in Central America the next. The passion with which certain delegations had defended the new international information and communication order was no more than a justifiable expression of the developing world's demand for a fairer and more effective order in that area.

59. His delegation wished to point out that those who said they were fervent partisans of consensus were the very same who the previous year and the year before that, had destroyed that consensus after making firm promises to the Group of 77, which had made all possible concessions. The Group of 77 would nevertheless continue to co-operate, in a spirit of openness, dignity, equality, tolerance and responsibility, to bring about the new world information and communication order.

/...

60. Mr. BINAH (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, like the representative of the United States, he regretted that extremely political questions and recommendations directed against a particular Member State had been introduced into the debate on information questions, thus slowing down the work of the Committee on an important item. Given the false and tendentious allegations made by the representative of Iraq, it should be said that the Iraqi régime, which according to the latest annual report of Amnesty International had executed 300 people, was in no position to speak about human rights. No comparison could be made with the situation in Judea and Samaria.

61. Everyone was well aware of the situation of the press in Iraq. As early as 1964, the Iraqi régime had abolished, along with political parties, all freedom of the press. In 1967, Act No. 155 had required all newspapers to obtain a licence from the Ministry of Information in order to be published, and had prohibited any private press. The Government currently not only controlled the press, but used it in its war effort to make its people believe that its armies were victorious.

62. With regard to the situation of the Kurds in Iraq, although 45,000 had been allowed to return to the north of the country, the Iraqi delegation had been careful to avoid mention of the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Kurds to arid areas in the south of Iraq, where they were submitted to forced Arabization aimed at destroying their language and their culture.

63. Mr. IBRAHIM (Iraq), again speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred the Zionist representative to the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/38/409), in particular its paragraphs 152 and 154.

64. Mr. BINAH (Israel), again speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that most, if not all, of the arguments put forward by the representative of Iraq were based on information published in the press in Israel and in Judea and Samaria.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.