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Chairman: Mr. Max JAKOBSON (Finland).

AGENDA ITEM 32

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/6313)

1. Mr. EL-BOURI (Libya) said that the Palestine refugee problem involved an area of major importance to world peace, and should therefore be approached not merely from the standpoint of assistance to the refugees, but with due consideration for the roots of the problem and its many political, legal and humanitarian aspects.

2. In the eighteen years since the adoption of the General Assembly partition resolution 181 (II), the United Nations had made no progress towards a solution based on the restoration of the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine to self-determination, freedom and independence. It continued to bear responsibility for the tragic situation of over a million Arabs of Palestine, who had been the victims of an act of colonial aggression engineered by Zionist and imperialist forces. It should seek a solution within the framework of the decolonization efforts which had been instrumental since the foundation of the United Nations in creating almost sixty new, independent States in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. However, the forces of imperialism were tenacious and resorted to new methods in order to maintain their presence and influence in areas which they regarded as essential to their vital interests. Having been forced to relinquish their hold over the Arab States, they had established a bridgehead in the heart of the Middle East by creating the puppet State of Israel as a base for perpetuating their hold on that economically rich and strategically important region of the world. Thus, the artificial creation of the State of Israel should be recognized as a manoeuvre in the last desperate struggle of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Like Southern Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, South West Africa and South Africa, Israel was one of the manifestations of the colonial question, which was one and indivisible.

3. Reviewing the events which had culminated in the partition of Palestine, he said that the British had

promised to recognize the independence of the Arab States, including Palestine, in exchange for the participation of the Arabs on the side of the Allies in the First World War; in fact, the role played by Arab forces had been decisive, particularly in the defence of the Suez Canal. The United Kingdom had procured a mandate over Palestine in order to keep that territory out of Arab hands, and following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire the Allies had agreed to divide the Arab lands among themselves. In exchange for Zionist support of the Allied war effort and Zionist influence in bringing the United States into the war, the United Kingdom had supported the establishment of a "Jewish national home" in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration,^{1/} a product of collusion between Zionism and British imperialism, and had been an immoral document, constituting an act of international treason. From the moment the Mandatory Power established itself in Palestine, it had begun, in collaboration with international Zionism, to prepare the disaster of 1948. It had not only encouraged Zionist immigration into Palestine but assured the newcomers protection and ownership of land, granted them internal autonomy, and provided them with weapons with which to equip clandestine armies, while at the same time suppressing Arab resistance by force of arms. In 1939, when it had become clear that the imperialist-Zionist plan could not be imposed on the Arabs of Palestine, the United Kingdom had published a White Paper^{2/} in which it recognized certain Arab rights and called for the establishment of a Palestinian State with a population one third Jewish and two thirds Arab. However, Zionist terrorism had frustrated that plan, and the outbreak of the Second World War and the growing interest of the United States in the establishment of a Jewish homeland had brought the situation to its tragic climax—the adoption of the partition resolution 181 (II) by the United Nations on 29 November 1947.

4. The partition resolution was at the root of the tragedy which had befallen the Arab people of Palestine. It had created a Jewish State with a population half Arab, and had handed over more than half the territory of Palestine to those who had previously occupied only 7 per cent of it. The Zionists, invoking the authority of the United Nations, had systematically seized Arab lands, expelling the legitimate owners and inflicting the most horrible atrocities upon them; the Zionists themselves had admitted that their massacres of the Arab inhabitants had been responsible for the Arab exodus. There could be no greater tragedy than

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Second Session, Supplement No. 11, vol. II, annex 19.

^{2/} Palestine: Statement of Policy, London, H. M. Stationery Office, 1939 (Cmd. 6019).

that of an indigenous people driven from its homeland by an armed invasion sanctioned by the imperialists and by the Organization to make way for foreign immigrants. Every effort had been made by the imperialists to nurture the new Jewish State: vast sums had been poured into the country for the facilities necessary to accommodate Jews from all parts of the world on the absurd pretext that a balance must be maintained between the 2 million Zionists occupying Palestine and the 100 million Arabs living in the thirteen States of the Arab community, Israel was being and would continue to be armed by the imperialists with the most modern weapons in order to ensure its military domination of the Middle East.

5. There was a clear parallel between the methods used by the imperialists to maintain the State of Israel in Palestine and those applied in Rhodesia. In Rhodesia the white immigrant settlers had been given the most fertile lands, and enjoyed the full protection and support of the administering Power. In Palestine, Zionist immigration had been encouraged by the Mandatory Power, with the result that the Jewish population had risen from 58,000 in 1919 to 300,000 in 1935. In Rhodesia, the United Kingdom had in 1923 granted internal autonomy to the settlers and encouraged them to arm and undergo military training. In Palestine, the United Kingdom had granted the Zionists a measure of internal autonomy and allowed them to build a Zionist army. Just as the United Kingdom had transferred power to the Rhodesian white settlers after arming and organizing them so that they could impose their will on the country's black majority, so it had armed the Zionists of Palestine so that they could overcome Arab resistance, which had lasted from 1919 until 1948, had been put down by the violence just as the struggle of the Zimbabwe people was being repressed by armed force.

6. The so-called State of Israel was founded on the racist theory of the "chosen people", a theory applied in practice against the Arab minority through the enforcement of a series of unjust laws and regulations similar to those imposed on the African population of Southern Africa. The Arabs in Israel were subject to emergency regulations which restricted their freedom of movement and choice of residence and discriminated openly against them in matters of education, employment and other inalienable human rights. According to an article published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* on 11 March 1966, they lived in closed areas under the authority of military governors having discretion, *inter alia*, to impose curfews, prohibit free assembly and ban newspapers. According to *Le Monde*, those emergency regulations had been condemned by prominent Jewish officials as inhuman and without precedent in civilized countries, or even in Nazi Germany. Under the emergency regulations, the Israel authorities had systematically seized Arab property abandoned during the 1948 hostilities or belonging to persons living in areas which had subsequently been incorporated in the State of Israel. Special legislation enacted in 1953 authorized the Government to expropriate any property regarded as essential to national security, the defence of the State, the absorption of Jewish immigrants, the settlement of war veterans, or economic development. As a result, according to *Le Monde*, almost 70 per cent

of Arab land had been expropriated for the benefit of the Jewish inhabitants, and the compensation offered had been so negligible that it had been refused outright by the great majority of the victims.

7. The so-called State of Israel rested on another equally dangerous myth—that of the "promised land", which had been exploited by Zionist propaganda in order to disguise Zionist racist and imperialist tactics. Its falsity was clear from the fact that towards the end of the last century, before finally fixing on Palestine as the victim of Zionist aggression, the Zionists had attempted to negotiate with the Ottoman Sultan at Constantinople with a view to obtaining Cyrenaica, the eastern part of Libya, as the site of a Jewish national home. That idea had been dropped following the report of a commission of inquiry that Cyrenaica did not lend itself to extensive agricultural exploitation—though neither the Sultan nor the people of Libya would have agreed to it. Further evidence that the "promised land" myth was no more than a pretext was the fact that another country, in East Africa, had also been considered as a possible place for realizing the Zionist dream.

8. His references to Zionist racism and the myth of the "chosen people" should not be construed as anti-Semitism. The Arabs were not against the Jews as such; they respected Judaism as a religion closely related to Islam and Christianity, but they opposed Zionism because it was a racist and colonialist movement. Unfortunately, Zionist propaganda had been effective among Jews all over the world, although many honest Jews had denounced it as a danger to the Jews and to Judaism as a religion. There was no racial discrimination in the Arab countries, and the Jews there had always lived in harmony with the Moslem and Christian majority; indeed, the Arab countries had traditionally been a refuge for Jews fleeing persecution in Europe.

9. In an era when most formerly oppressed peoples had fulfilled their national aspirations and become sovereign States and Members of the United Nations, the Arab people of Palestine continued to suffer flagrant injustice. It was deplorable that the moral authority of the United Nations should have been used to sanction aggression against a defenceless people. The partition of the Holy Land had been decreed on the pretext that Jews and Arabs could not live together, although history gave the lie to that theory. The United Nations would not have committed so grave an error had it had its present experience and maturity; because of its initial membership and the influences which had been predominant in its early years it had been induced to endorse the evil plans long nurtured by Zionism and imperialism. The world looked to the United Nations to rectify its error, not persist in it, and thus to regain its prestige as a champion of justice and freedom.

10. Israel was a continuing source of tension and disorder, which threatened peace and security in the Middle East and in the whole world. The Zionist authorities had recently sought to mask their aggressive intention by making unfounded charges against Syria, with the obvious intention of using the alleged incursions of Palestinian groups as a pretext for further aggression against the Arab countries. Israel,

which had been created as a bastion of imperialism and neo-colonialism, was bound on a course of expansion at the expense of the Arab countries. Zionist propaganda directed against the Arabs was not limited to the Middle East, but was carried out internationally, with the support of pressure groups and information media in the capitalist countries. Zionist activities were particularly blatant in the United States of America; the recent act of vandalism committed against the permanent mission of a Member State by Zionist fanatics—United States citizens—in New York was a good example. It was in order to oppose Zionist aggression that the Arab people of Palestine had in 1964 established the Palestine Liberation Organization.

11. His delegation wished to pay tribute to UNRWA and its Commissioner-General for the services which they had rendered in critical circumstances, despite their shortage of funds. Mr. Michelmores had shown commendable objectivity in recognizing that the refugees, after waiting for eighteen years, still longed above all to return to their homes—a significant fact from which some sought to divert attention. The unwavering desire of the refugees to return to their country had been confirmed countless times in previous reports—and recently even by a correspondent of The New York Times. With regard to the financial situation of UNRWA, the reduction of certain contributions from year to year, despite the sufferings of the refugees, could only be interpreted as a means of pressure aimed at liquidating the rights of the Palestinian people. It was especially deplorable that the United States should be reducing its contribution sharply while giving millions of dollars to finance the artificial economy of Israel and enable it to acquire arms. If the refugees were allowed to recover their property they would not need American help or international charity; but when the Arab countries had asked the United Nations to appoint an international custodian for that property, they had encountered fierce opposition from the friends of Israel.

12. He could assure the Zionists and their friends that no threats to liquidate the refugee question or even to cut off international assistance entirely would weaken the determination of the Palestinian people in their struggle for liberation and the restoration of their rights. It was incumbent upon the United Nations to continue to assist the Palestine refugees until a just solution was found.

13. Mr. BANCROFT (United States of America) expressed his Government's appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. Michelmores as Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

14. It was important to bear in mind the dual nature of the Palestine refugee question. The plight of the refugees cried out for a permanent solution, but the immediate task was a humanitarian one—to ensure that the refugees would continue in the coming year to receive United Nations assistance, on which they depended for the necessities of life. It was also important to bear in mind that the meeting of those needs was inseparable from the maintenance of peace and stability in the area.

15. The Agency had shown itself to be an effective organization, soundly administered; the Commissioner-General's report (A/6313) showed how much it had been able to do within the limits of its resources in the three major fields of relief, education and health. In particular, the health service and health education programme would be of lasting benefit to the standard of living in the area. The Agency's education programme had been highly effective; the report estimated, for example, that over 90 per cent of the recent graduates of UNRWA's vocational and technical training courses had found jobs and were leading productive lives. The teacher-training programme was so successful that many of its graduates were finding employment elsewhere in the Arab world. Nevertheless, despite its great and demonstrated value the UNRWA education programme did not go far enough; his Government strongly supported Mr. Michelmores's suggestion that it should be further expanded and improved, and his Government would like to see as much as possible of its contribution spent for education.

16. With regard to the equitable distribution of relief rations, his Government felt obliged to comment once again on two important aspects of the programme. One was the perennial problem of rectifying the relief rolls. It welcomed the progress in that direction which the Commissioner-General had reported, but hoped that the agreements arrived at in principle with host Governments would be carried out promptly so that full rectification could be a reality at last. It was difficult to believe the suggestion in paragraph 22 of the report that there would be adverse reactions among the refugees to the Agency's efforts to stop the trafficking in ration cards and rationed commodities. Surely the only objection would come from the traffickers themselves. It was outrageous that a few profiteers should be permitted to cheat needy refugees out of benefits provided by the international community.

17. The second difficulty in the food ration programme was the fact that young men on the Agency's ration rolls had been recruited into the Palestine Liberation Army. His delegation had made it clear that it considered it inadmissible for a United Nations agency to supply rations to men serving in an army dedicated to the solution of the repatriation question by armed force, and, indeed, to the overthrow of the Government of a Member of the United Nations. His delegation had noted the financial arrangements worked out by the Commissioner-General with the host Governments, as described in paragraph 26 of his report, but his Government's position remained one of principle that the General Assembly should not give the impression that it condoned or regarded with indifference the involvement of any United Nations agency with an organization avowing such purposes.

18. With regard to the crucial problem facing UNRWA—its rising expenses and how they were to be met—certain basic facts had to be faced. First, the increasing refugee population created an increasing demand for the Agency's essential services. Secondly, the per capita costs of providing those services were also increasing. Inasmuch as the Commissioner-General had estimated that the budgetary deficit for

1967 would amount to \$4 million, it was understandable that he should characterize the prospect as grim. Clearly, if the necessary funds were not forthcoming, the Agency would be forced to take some difficult decisions on how and where to curtail its services. The United States, for its part, would continue to give its fair share of financial support to UNRWA, and it shared the hope of the Commissioner-General that all Governments would contribute generously to provide the refugees with their essential needs.

19. In the light of all those considerations his delegation wished to suggest the elements which it believed should form the basis of the Committee's resolution on the subject. First the Committee should clearly restate its commitment to a permanent solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees, its deep regret that repatriation or compensation for the refugees as provided in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) had not been effected, and its regret that no progress had been made in the programme for the reintegration of the refugees either by repatriation or by resettlement. Secondly, it should urge the Governments concerned to come forward with more flexible and realistic plans for an ultimate solution. The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine should remain the focus for such plans and programmes, but it was chiefly the responsibility of the Governments concerned with the problem to make some moves towards compromise and conciliation. The third and most urgent element was financial. It was time for an urgent call to be made to all Members of the Organization to contribute as generously as they could to the needs of UNRWA in 1967. The basic fact was that UNRWA was still both a humanitarian necessity and an essential factor for stability in a very tense part of the world.

20. The compromise resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its previous session (2052 (XX)), which had expressed the consensus of the great majority of Members, was based on those three elements. In view of the essentially unchanged realities of the situation and its continuing urgency, his delegation was introducing a draft resolution along the same lines.

21. He would like to emphasize the importance which his delegation attached to UNRWA by quoting a statement made recently by United States Assistant Secretary of State Sisco to a sub-committee of the United States Senate. Mr. Sisco had said that UNRWA remained a major factor in the stability of the Near East and that drastic changes in UNRWA would subject the area to the possibility of disorders and political turmoil, adding that the United States had been the principal supporting pillar of the Agency and believed it necessary to continue its support. Other nations, however, had no smaller an interest in the continued effectiveness of the Agency's programme, and they should consider perhaps more seriously than they had in the past the financial responsibility which was therefore incumbent upon them.

22. Mr. HILMY (United Arab Republic), exercising his right of reply, said that at the 448th meeting the Liberian representative had seen fit to advise the Arab States to take advantage of the benefits

which the presence of Israel in the Middle East could offer them, and had specifically mentioned Cairo's Al Azhar University in that connexion. He had not exercised his right of reply at the time, but now that the Liberian representative was again urging the Arab States to compromise with Israel he would like to remind him that the Arabs, 100 million strong, had an advanced civilization of their own and did not need any help from the 2 or 3 million usurpers, aggressors and colonizers in Israel. Al Azhar University was a thousand years old and had shed its light throughout Africa when that continent had been known to the West as "the dark continent".

23. In his statement of the previous day the Liberian representative had said that he could not read about the fate of the Jews in concentration camps during the Second World War without weeping. He should be reminded that in the past the Arab world had opened its gates to Jews whenever they had suffered from persecution in any part of the world. During the Hitler era Egypt had given refuge to many Jews fleeing from nazism. But the Arabs could not be expected to feel sympathy for the Jews who had expelled the rightful inhabitants of an Arab country and seized it for themselves. The Liberian representative had called upon the Arabs to work in harmony with the Israelis, comparing them to the black and white keys of a piano. The question was, who would play which keys? In that connexion, he reminded the Committee of the discrimination practised by Israel within its own borders as between white-skinned Jews from the West and Jews from Africa and Asia whose skins were not so white. The position taken by the Liberian representative in the Committee was the more unjustifiable in that it was contrary to Liberia's position at the Second Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held at Cairo in 1964. At one time there had been a plan to establish a Jewish homeland in Africa; he was sure that had Liberia been chosen for that purpose the Liberian representative would be coming to the Committee to protest against the usurpation of his country just as the representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization were doing.

24. The Liberian representative had also said that if the Arabs could prove to him on the basis of the Bible that the Jews had not inhabited Palestine in ancient times and thus had no right to be there today, he would switch his allegiance to them. The Arabs did not want him to switch his allegiance; they simply wanted him to be impartial. The Committee's business was to discuss resolutions, violations of agreements, and the UNRWA budget, not to argue about the Bible and religion.

25. Mr. DOSUMU-JOHNSON (Liberia) said that if the United Arab Republic representative had read the Liberian statement carefully he would not have made the remarks which the Committee had just heard. Ever since Liberia had come into existence its policy had been to settle disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation or compromise. For example, when Guinea had been under French rule Liberia had been at odds with France on the matter of the border between the two countries, but as soon as Guinea had attained its independence the question had been settled by com-

promise, negotiation and conciliation. The burden of his statement the day before had been the need for compromise; but the Arab delegations took offence at the very mention of such words as "compromise" and "negotiation". He held no brief for either the Arab or the Israel side of the dispute, and he had nothing but the deepest sympathy for the refugees.

26. Mr. KHALAF (Iraq), exercising his right of reply, said that a careful reading of the Liberian representative's statement of the previous day had given him no reason to withdraw any of the remarks he had made about it at the time. Liberia could compromise on matters affecting its own interests if it so desired, but it should not ask the Arabs to compromise on the interests of the Palestine Arab refugees at the expense of justice and human rights. The Liberian representative had suggested that the United Nations should buy land on which to settle the refugees permanently. Why did he not suggest that land should be bought for the purpose of resettling the Jews now occupying land which rightfully belonged to the Arabs?

27. There were some who would like the world to forget the whole problem. The Arab delegation, on the other hand, wanted to bring it to the attention of world public opinion. At the 500th meeting, he had commented on the failure of The New York Times to report the Committee's current debate. The very next day that same newspaper, while listing the items under consideration in the Assembly's other Committees, had not mentioned the subject of the Special Political Committee's discussion, identifying it only as "Continuation of the general debate". Little wonder that some delegations were already asking whether New York was the proper place for the United Nations. The Office of Public Information should make sure that all important matters discussed in the United Nations were given world publicity.

28. The CHAIRMAN announced that the list of speakers in the general debate would be closed at 6 p.m. on Thursday, 3 November 1966.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.