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ASSEMBLY

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

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THIRD COMMITTEE, 1190th  
MEETING

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at 10.45 a.m.



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Chairman: Mr. Nemi Chandra KASLIWAL  
(India).

AGENDA ITEM 42

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (continued):

- (a) Report of the High Commissioner (A/5211/Rev.1 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.1031 and Add.1);
- (b) Question of the continuation of the Office of the High Commissioner (A/5186)

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS  
(continued)

*The problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong (continued)*

1. Mr. MEANS (United States of America) said that his delegation was somewhat concerned at the tenor of the debate on the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.3/L.1031 and Add.1). It had been stated that the Third Committee was not the correct forum in which to raise the question of Chinese refugees; yet specific groups of refugees from Algeria, Angola and elsewhere had been the subject of discussion by the Committee at the fifteenth and sixteenth sessions. In the view of his delegation, the joint draft resolution was a reaffirmation of General Assembly resolution 1167 (XII). He asked the sponsors whether it was not true to say that the draft resolution did not commit the High Commissioner to go beyond extending his good offices or to exceed the terms of his mandate; that it did not ask for any funds; and that it gave the High Commissioner wide discretion to report on his activities to the General Assembly, at its eighteenth session. As he understood the text, it did not ask any Government to approve or disapprove of any other, but simply drew attention to a situation which his Government believed to exist and on which some action should be taken. He hoped that the Committee, in discussing refugees, did not intend to adopt a double standard. Although his Government was not prepared to commit itself with regard to the terms of the draft

resolution, he wished to submit two amendments<sup>1/</sup> for the consideration of the sponsors.

2. Mr. RABETAFIKA (Madagascar), speaking as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution stated that it would be unrealistic to regard the problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong as simply a matter of immigration, since it involved, not a natural migration from one country to another, but an exodus of hungry people seeking refuge abroad. A refugee was any civilian forced to leave his country because of a threat of physical or moral destruction, whether as a result of persecution, war, natural calamity, or famine. While the Hong Kong Government might prefer to call such people "immigrants" in order to avoid social discrimination against them, not all those seeking asylum in Hong Kong had been able to benefit from such favourable treatment, for it was well known that thousands had recently been turned back at the frontier. In 1957 the United Kingdom delegation had stated at the twelfth session, when the question had been less acute, that the problem of the Chinese "refugees" in Hong Kong required the attention of the international community. He must protest, therefore, against any assertion that the Third Committee was not, in the particular case at issue, faced with a problem of refugees—an assertion made because it was thought inconvenient to help the people concerned, and based on arguments which, though not admitted, were none the less biased.

3. He must also protest against the suggestion that the draft resolution was somewhat discriminatory and might divert funds needed for other refugees to the Chinese refugees. All refugees, without distinction of race or nationality, were entitled to the Committee's sympathy, and his delegation would support any measures which might bring them relief. Its outlook was strictly humanitarian, and it attached more importance to the wretched condition of the Hong Kong refugees than to demographic considerations or political implications. If the question of those refugees had been a political one, the sponsors of the draft resolution would never have brought it before the Committee. It was not their intention to be provocative; all that they wished to provoke was an appeal for international co-operation on a social and human problem.

4. Reminding the Committee of the recommendations of the report entitled "The problem of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong", prepared in 1954 for the High Commissioner by Dr. Edvard Hambro, chief of the Hong Kong Refugee Survey Mission, and of the terms of General Assembly resolution 1167 (XII), he said that the draft resolution now before the Committee did not differ, in essentials, from the latter. If the Committee rejected the draft resolution, it would be disregarding the recommendations of resolution 1167 (XII); by adopt-

<sup>1/</sup> Subsequently circulated as document A/C.3/L.1033.

ing it, it would be displaying its continuing interest in all humanitarian undertakings, and particularly in the refugee problem.

5. He saw no objection to the United States amendments but would wish to discuss them with the other sponsors.

6. Mrs. QUAN (Guatemala), on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, asked for time in which to study the United States amendments—which they would wish to be in a position, if possible, to accept—and to

prepare a reply to the questions raised by the United States representative.

7. Mr. MEANS (United States of America) moved the adjournment of the meeting, under rule 119 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in order to give delegations time in which to consider his amendments.

*The motion was adopted by 36 votes to 9, with 23 abstentions.*

The meeting rose at 11.5 a.m.