

Wednesday, 27 November 1957,
at 10.45 a.m.



NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Agenda item 32: Recommendations concerning international respect for the right of peoples and nations to self-deter- mination	297

Chairman: Mrs. Aase LIONAES (Norway).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. López (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 32

**Recommendations concerning international respect
for the right of peoples and nations to self-deter-
mination (A/2957, A/3515, A/3587) (continued)**

1. Mr. TSAO (China) said that four major aspects of the question of the right of peoples of self-determination had been discussed in the United Nations: respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the evils of traditional colonialism, the recognition of national sovereignty over natural wealth and resources, and a study of the concept of self-determination.
2. The question had assumed international importance because it had a bearing on peace and security. Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter, peace had been disturbed in China, Korea, Indo-China, and Hungary; the struggles which had taken place could have been avoided if the peoples of those countries had been allowed to decide their future in complete freedom, without the imposition of political régimes by a foreign Power from abroad. His delegation had at all times supported the nations and territories fighting for freedom. In the matter of self-determination two broad trends were discernible in the world. The first, which was in accordance with the principles of the Charter, had produced several independent countries in Asia and Africa. The second, which was contrary to the spirit of the Charter, had led to the establishment of Communist régimes in various European and Asian countries. While free and impartial plebiscites were held in certain colonies of the traditional kind, foreign troops suppressed the aspirations of the people towards freedom in those new-style colonies. That was a situation which the United Nations could not disregard.
3. Moreover, the United Nations should see to it that national sovereignty over natural wealth and resources did not hamper international co-operation. It should endeavour to work out methods which would encourage such co-operation, in the general interest, on the basis of equality and justice.
4. His delegation had considered the suggestion that the United Nations should undertake a study of the principle of self-determination. No doubt the study

might provide a useful basis for future action, but at the moment there were several cases which called for immediate action. Apart from the proposed study, therefore, other forms of action should be contemplated. And the study itself should contain a section relating to the aspirations of the peoples under the control of Communist imperialism.

5. It had been suggested, lastly, that Economic and Social Council resolution 75 (V), which dealt with communications concerning human rights, should be reviewed and, possibly, amended and amplified. The procedure provided for in that resolution had yielded no results and the Commission on Human Rights had itself recognized that it could take no action in regard to complaints. It should be noted, in that connexion, that resolution 75 (V) dealt exclusively with individual rights. But the right of peoples to self-determination was a collective right, the violations of which affected an entire nation and threatened world peace. Complaints of the non-observance of that right were therefore the concern of the international community, and his delegation would welcome any proposal which would enlarge the scope of the Council's resolution.

6. He said that the action to which he had just referred would consist of long-term measures which were not mutually exclusive. But, because of the urgency of the question, some thought should be given, during the current session, to the possible adoption of a declaration setting forth a number of principles. For example, the principle of self-determination, which was laid down in the Charter and in article 1 of the draft International Covenants on Human Rights, should be reaffirmed. Secondly, States should be asked to refrain from any intervention in the affairs of other countries, whether for the purpose of determining their political status or for the purpose of promoting their economic, social and cultural development. Lastly, the declaration should state that any régime imposed by a foreign Power would not be recognized by the United Nations.

7. The need to protect the peoples struggling for their freedom and independence could not be over-emphasized. He quoted a passage from the communiqué issued at New Delhi on 14 November 1956 by the Prime Ministers of India, Ceylon, Indonesia, and Burma, calling for the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet forces in Hungary. On 6 November 1956, the Chinese Legislative Assembly had also condemned the Soviet aggression in Hungary. The time had come to take effective practical action to help the peoples wishing to govern themselves and especially to aid those living in terror under Soviet rule. A declaration setting forth the principles he had just mentioned would constitute a first step in that direction.

8. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said that self-determination was not an internal question. In an independent country, tyranny always carried within itself the seed

of its own destruction. The test of the effective exercise of the right to self-determination was whether the people in question was subject to the domination of a foreign Power. He realized that in many respects the problem was a political one; but, in the hope of creating an atmosphere conducive to a solution, he would, he said, deal strictly with its humanitarian aspects. To deny a people the right to self-determination was to deny it a fundamental right. It was the duty of the Committee, one of whose essential tasks it was to ensure respect for human rights throughout the world, to do everything possible to find a solution to a problem which, though difficult, was not insoluble, as the events of the past twenty years had demonstrated. In certain cases, the metropolitan countries had shown a great deal of good will, and they should be encouraged to display even greater good faith and so stop the cruel conflicts taking place in a few territories.

9. It was sometimes said that certain peoples were still too backward to be able to govern themselves. If a people did not know what the right of peoples and nations to self-determination meant, one could hardly grant them that right. In those cases it was the responsibility of the United Nations to decide when the population of a territory had developed to the point of being qualified for the full exercise of that right. However, where men were ready to struggle for years, if necessary to win their freedom, the United Nations did not need to undertake studies to know that the time had come.

10. He noted that one of the commissions which it was proposed should be formed under Council resolution 586 D (XX) would study, among other things, the concept of "peoples". In his opinion, nothing could be more useless, for the meaning of the word was clear: a people consisted of persons who shared a common culture, a common language, similar customs and sometimes also a common religion. The Administering Powers often raised the question of the meaning of the word, but in reality they did so only in order to hide the facts and the deeper reasons for their refusal to grant independence to the territories they administered.

11. Their motive was essentially economic. Since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain countries had been dependent on the then newly-conquered territories for supplies of raw materials and for markets. Consequently, in order to guarantee their own economic stability, they wanted to prolong their occupation of those territories and to defend them against any possible attack. They had established military bases, more for economic than for strategic purposes. Some of the countries in question, however, contended that the bases were intended to defend "the free world". He asked what that expression meant. There was no freedom so long as human rights were not recognized and respected universally. The word "freedom" had become meaningless; it was a mere propaganda slogan which the rival great Powers used with equal facility but which could not deceive the members of the Third Committee. Those who were struggling for independence were not free, nor were those who were preventing a people from governing itself. Moreover, modern armaments were such that the military bases had become useless and archaic, with the consequence that the argument founded on strategic considerations was untenable.

12. The metropolitan countries often agreed to grant

independence to a territory when the cost of maintaining themselves there became prohibitive and financially ruinous; the clear inference was, as he had said before, that the attitude of those countries was based in reality on economic considerations alone. That being so, the problem was probably less intractable than it seemed at first glance. The administered territories were quite prepared, having once acquired independence, to maintain economic relations with the former metropolitan countries, with which they had many ties, particularly cultural ties. Moreover, measures could be taken within the framework of the United Nations and use could be made of the specialized agencies, for example, or of various other bodies.

13. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the members of the Third Committee would make other constructive proposals so that, without further bloodshed, all peoples and all nations might soon enjoy the right of self-determination.

14. Mr. FOMIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) remarked that, as the preceding discussion of the right of peoples and nations to self-determination had shown, an overwhelming majority of the delegations attached the greatest importance to that question. He would ignore the provocative statement made by the person who unlawfully occupied the seat of China and who was attempting to divert the Committee's attention from the matter under discussion by putting forward all kinds of slanderous fabrications.

15. The Committee must bear in mind that it had only five meetings to devote to the discussion both of the three draft resolutions transmitted by the Economic and Social Council (Council resolution 586 D (XX)) and of the draft resolution which, as it had been informed, was being prepared by some delegations. He felt that, in order to expedite its work, the Committee must set a time limit for the submission of new draft resolutions, so that every delegation might have the opportunity of stating its position on all those drafts in a single statement.

16. M. PETER (Hungary) said he had not been surprised that the first speaker should have seen fit to make statements tending to change the atmosphere of the Committee's debates. The person in question, being completely isolated and purporting to represent the Chinese people, could hardly have spoken differently. If the Committee considered itself at liberty to discuss the merits of the different political systems, the Hungarian delegation was ready to take part in such a discussion. He hoped, however, that the Committee would maintain the high moral and political level which had characterized its earlier proceedings.

17. The CHAIRMAN suggested that draft resolutions relating to agenda item 32 should be submitted not later than noon on 28 November.

It was so decided.

18. The CHAIRMAN said, with regard to the nature of the debate, that delegations should be guided exclusively by the language of agenda item 32. He could see to it that delegations confined themselves to the subject, but he could not undertake to define its exact scope. He hoped that representatives would exercise some self-restraint.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.