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Chairman: Mr. Carlet R. AUGUSTE (Haiti).

AGENDA ITEM 35

Reports of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (continued) (A/5813, A/6013; A/SPC/103, A/SPC/104; A/SPC/L.112/Rev.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that in order to solve the problem which had arisen at the end of the preceding meeting he would use the very terms of the resolution adopted by the Committee two days earlier (A/SPC/L.112/Rev.1). In accordance with that resolution, in which the Committee had considered the request submitted in document A/SPC/104 by the representatives of the Arab States that the members of the delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization should be heard during the Committee's deliberation on item 35, he invited Mr. Tannous, one of the persons constituting the said delegation, to speak in the Committee and to make such statements as he might deem necessary, without such authorization implying recognition of the of the above-mentioned organization.

2. Mr. TANNOUS (speaking in accordance with the decision of the Committee on 20 October 1965, as one of the persons constituting the delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, without implying recognition of that organization) said he would address the Committee as a member of the delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which, regardless of attempts to belittle or ignore it, was a living and active entity speaking for the people of Palestine. On behalf of that organization he thanked the Committee for giving him an opportunity to express the viewpoint of the Palestinian Arab people. He also thanked the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for his report (A/6013) covering the period from 1 July 1964 to 30 June 1965. The statement which the Commissioner-General had made at the Committee's 432nd meeting noted that the lives of the refugees were still clouded by economic insecurity and that the refugees continued to express resentment at the hardships which they had endured for the past seventeen years and to voice their hopes to return to their previous homes. The report

went on to describe the financial difficulties of the Agency, which were so serious as to threaten its collapse. If even the current inadequate rations were terminated, the United Nations, which was responsible for the situation in which the refugees found themselves, would be adding one more injustice to those previously committed. The attitudes and feelings of the refugees as described in paragraph 6 of the report had led to the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Arab people of Palestine wanted to exercise their inalienable rights, including the right to live in freedom in their homes, and not the right offered them in General Assembly resolution 194 (III), paragraph 11. The establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization was an expression of the Palestinian Arabs' determination to continue the struggle for those rights, which had been taken away from them by invading British colonialists and Zionists and by the United Nations, and given to total strangers from all parts of the world. Although the organization had the support of the Arab Governments it had not been established by them but was a manifestation of the vitality, initiative and spirit of sacrifice of the people of Palestine themselves in dealing with their problem. Its formation had been proclaimed by the First Palestine Arab National Congress held at Jerusalem on 28 May 1964 and attended by 424 Palestinian representatives. The Congress had declared the unequivocal determination of the people of Palestine to liberate their homeland from foreign occupation and domination. The establishment of the organization had constituted the turning-point in the history of the Palestinian Arabs and a repudiation of the claims of those who would have the United Nations believe that the question of Palestine no longer existed and that it was only the refugee problem which was on the agenda. As noted by the Commissioner-General in paragraph 6 of his report, the organization provided an additional focus for the feelings of the refugees. After seventeen years of patient waiting they had lost all faith in the United Nations but the establishment of the organization had reawakened their hopes and afforded them an opportunity to renew the struggle for their homeland, to which their strong and genuine attachment could not be shaken by the lapse of time. Wherever they were now residing, the more than 2 million Arabs of Palestine formed a single national entity which had had its home in Palestine from time immemorial. They owned over 90 per cent of the land comprising the total area of Palestine, and before their eviction they had accounted for 93 per cent of the population. The invaders had been trying to convince world public opinion that Palestine and the Palestinian Arab people as such no longer existed and that the only remaining problem was the resettlement of the

refugees, a solution which they were trying to promote because they thought that once it had been put into effect they would have nothing more to fear. They asked why the Arabs should want to return now that their property and possessions had all been given to Jewish immigrants; they said there was no place in Israel for Christians and Moslems, yet they claimed that they were not guilty of discrimination.

3. Prior to the British occupation in 1918, the Moslem, Christian and Jewish communities had lived together in peace and harmony for hundreds of years. With the occupation, however, that situation had been brought to an end and as a result an entire nation had been expelled and its place had been taken by an invader—a development which was surely unique in the history of mankind. That crime of transplantation and annihilation had its origin in two extraordinary political documents. The first was the Balfour Declaration (A/364/Add.1, annex 19), the only document in history which promised to establish a national home for a particular people in the homeland of another people. The second document was General Assembly resolution 181 (II), the only resolution in which the United Nations had ever recommended the partitioning of a country and made itself an accessory to such a crime. The Balfour Declaration, which had caused the tragedy of a whole people and the results of which might well lead to a third world war, had been issued in 1917 when British colonialism and aggressive Zionism had collaborated in a plan to invade Palestine and uproot its people. That it had been a war emergency measure taken by the United Kingdom during one of the Allies' darkest hours in the First World War was attested by the words of the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, as found in the Palestine Royal Commission report of 1937, <sup>1/</sup> concerning the Zionist leaders' promise to try to rally world-wide Jewish support to the Allied cause if the Allies committed themselves to providing facilities for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Similarly, Winston Churchill had described the Balfour Declaration as a practical measure taken in the interest of a common cause at a moment when that cause could afford to neglect no factor of material or moral assistance. Yet the United Kingdom had had no legal right to promise any people a national home in another people's country. The Allies had proclaimed that they were fighting for world freedom, and prior to the issuance of the Balfour Declaration the United Kingdom had promised independence for all the Arab territories, including Palestine, in return for Arab help in expelling the Turkish and German armies from the Arab lands. Those promises had been contained in what was known as the MacMahon-Hussein Correspondence. The Arabs had fulfilled their part of the agreement but the British pledges had not been kept, and the correspondence had been concealed in the archives of the Colonial Office for twenty-three years.

4. The Balfour Declaration was actually self-contradictory, for after promising to assist the Jews in the establishment of a national home in Palestine it stated that nothing would be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing

non-Jewish communities in Palestine. That contradiction had been acknowledged by Mr. Bevin, the British Foreign Minister, in the House of Commons on 25 February 1947, when he stated that the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, which had incorporated the Balfour Declaration, contained contradictory promises, providing for what was virtually an invasion of the country by thousands of immigrants and at the same time stating that that invasion was not to disturb the people in possession. What had happened was that the British had lived up to their promises to the Zionists but not to their promises to the Arabs. Thus the Zionist leader Dr. Chaim Weizmann had been able to say to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine in 1946, "The Balfour Declaration is now our bible". During the period of the Mandate Great Britain had allowed the Zionists to bring more than 600,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine against the will of the indigenous Arab population, who had fought alone against the combined might of the United Kingdom and world Zionism for thirty years.

5. In December 1938, the United Kingdom had held a conference in London with both Arabs and Jews and had subsequently issued a new statement of policy <sup>2/</sup> asserting, first, that the Balfour Declaration meant a national home in Palestine for the Jews and not a Jewish State; secondly, that Jewish immigration to Palestine should cease after the admission of a further 75,000 immigrants; and thirdly, that the inhabitants of Palestine, who at the time totalled 1.3 million Arabs and 650,000 Jews, should gain independence within a period of ten years.

6. The Zionists had rejected that policy, however, and had resorted to violence to prevent its implementation. Two terrorist groups, the "Irgun" and the "Stern", together with the existing "Haganah" which was run along regular army lines, had been illegally organized with the knowledge of the United Kingdom Government and in 1944 had even turned against the very forces which had brought them to Palestine.

7. In 1946, the United Kingdom had announced that it would crush Zionist terrorism, but in effect, it had surrendered to violence and sabotage. Field Marshal Montgomery had sharply criticized his Government at the time and had noted in his memoirs that a large proportion of the army was not allowed to take the offensive which was the only way to eradicate terrorism.

8. In 1947, the United Kingdom Government had placed the problem of Palestine before the General Assembly (A/364/Add.1, annex 1), and thanks to the efforts of the United States Government in the face of strong opposition from Arab, Asian and other States, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution (181 (II)) to partition Palestine into a "Jewish State" and an "Arab State". Thus, the first Zionist objective had been achieved. The manoeuvres used to obtain a majority vote for the resolution in the General Assembly had been described by the then United States Secretary for Defense as bordering on the scandalous. American officials had brought all types of pressure to bear upon countries uncertain about or opposed to

<sup>1/</sup> London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1937 (Cmd. 5479).

<sup>2/</sup> Palestine: Statement of Policy, London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1939 (Cmd. 6019).

partition. The President of the United States had himself admitted in his memoirs that he had succumbed to Zionist pressure and threats.

9. Both the Arab People of Palestine and the Arab State had rejected the Partition Plan for Palestine, since they considered that the United Nations had no right to divide their country. They considered that the United Nations action was illegal, undemocratic and contrary to the principles of self-determination contained in the Charter. Accordingly, the Arab States had requested a ruling from the International Court of Justice, but that request had been unjustly rejected by the General Assembly.

10. The Partition Plan had allotted 56 per cent of the total area of Palestine to the "Jewish State" at a time when Jewish ownership of land was no higher than 6 per cent of the total area of the country and only 9 per cent of the area of the "Jewish State". The Jewish portion included coastal and fertile areas, while the proposed "Arab State" consisted of arid mountainous regions and poor lands with little or no irrigation possibilities. Moreover, the population of the "Jewish State" was to consist of 498,000 Jews and a "minority" of 497,000 Arabs. It was very difficult to imagine how the Jewish population of the Jewish State, representing 50 per cent of the population, would be able to dominate the Arab "minority". The Arabs, therefore, rejected the Partition Plan as being illegal, unjust and unworkable. In fact, as early as 1937 the Palestine Royal Commission had recommended the partition of Palestine along similar lines, but an expert commission had subsequently investigated the possibilities of their recommendation and had declared that partition was unworkable.

11. Many of the Member States which had supported the Partition Plan had later regretted it. The Christian Church in Jerusalem had been shocked by the resolution and for the first time in the history of the Church, Christian leaders of all denominations had conferred together and had signed a statement condemning the Partition Plan as a violation of the sacredness of the Holy Land and as an encroachment on the natural rights of its inhabitants.

12. The second objective of the Zionists had been to expel the Arab population from the "Jewish State". Terrorist attacks had been directed at peaceful and defenceless Arab villages, and at Deir Yassin an entire village had been exterminated. The leader of

the Irgun had subsequently praised the extermination as a masterpiece of military tactics. Such terrorist activities had taken place before the withdrawal of the United Kingdom forces from Palestine and at a time when no Arab soldiers were present in Palestine. Not only had the United Kingdom forces failed to protect the Arab inhabitants, but they had actually taken part in the evacuation of the Arab population from Tiberias and Samakh and had supplied transportation for the refugees from Jaffa and Haifa. Ethel Mannin, in her book The Road to Beersheba,<sup>3/</sup> had recounted the pitiful story of the inhabitants of Lydda and Ramleh who had been forced to leave their homes and walk forty miles in the sun to Ramallah. The crimes committed by the terrorists had been glorified, and their perpetrators, depicted as heroes and liberators, were committing the same crimes against the Arabs as the Nazis had committed against the Jews. As Arnold Toynbee had said, it was the supreme tragedy of the Jews that the lesson they had learned from their encounter with Nazi gentiles should have been not to eschew but to imitate some of the evil deeds committed against them. Nazi persecution of the Jews had indeed been a great crime, but Zionist persecution of the innocent Arab population of Palestine was an even greater crime.

13. It appeared that those benefiting from the death-throes of colonialism were preparing for further expansion. The leader of the Irgun had said that he would continue to fight until the whole of Israel was liberated, and such expansionist views were not restricted to individuals. Official Israel publications continuously reiterated that the minimum boundaries of the State of Israel had not yet been attained and that Zionism would not be fulfilled until all Jews were gathered within its borders.

14. The Arab people of Palestine had been waiting for seventeen years for the injustice inflicted upon them to be righted, and yet they were now faced with the argument that the State of Israel was an established fact and that the Arab people of Palestine no longer existed. They could no longer accept that situation, and since the United Nations had failed to remedy the injustice done, the Arab people of Palestine felt free to use all possible means to regain their human dignity and restore their usurped rights.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

<sup>3/</sup> Chicago, Regnery, 1964.