

The League of Nations budget, including funds for refugee work, had been voted unanimously by all members, not excepting those States of which the refugees had been nationals, and the United Nations could hardly do less. If the United Nations supplied some aid—and from the point of view of the individual refugee such aid would be little enough—they would do so as an elementary human duty. In the Charter they had affirmed the worth and dignity of the human person, not merely of the politically co-operative person. They were now offered a practical opportunity of acting in that spirit.

At the outset of the debate the chairman (Mr Fraser) expressed the opinion that there was sufficient common ground between the two apparently contradictory viewpoints to form the basis of agreement; and this, after an extended discussion, proved to be so, even though the Yugoslav, Soviet Union, and some other representatives could not bring themselves to complete acceptance of it. Summing up the general debate, Mr Fraser said that there was universal agreement that a problem did exist and that it must be solved; but he had understood no one to suggest that it was a permanent problem, or that refugees, except those who were war criminals, quislings, or collaborators, should be coerced or compelled to go back to their own countries.

But as for the opinion that once a refugee had declined an opportunity to return to his country he was no longer entitled to any assistance, how could such a principle be applied in practice? Mr Fraser asked the Committee to consider the example of those members of the Polish Armed Forces who had fought with the United Nations in their common struggle and who had since declined the official and friendly invitation of the Polish Government to return to Poland. The United Nations had a responsibility towards them; and he for one could not be a party to presenting these men, who had risked their lives and whose comrades had died in the common cause, with the option of either returning to their own country or starving. It would be for the Economic and Social Council to give serious thought to the measure of assistance that should be given to people such as these who believed themselves to be antagonistic to the existing regimes in their own countries.

After further consideration by a sub-committee, the Third Committee adopted the text of a draft resolution referring the problem of refugees to the Economic and Social Council for thorough examination and early report and putting forward a number of principles which the Council should take into consideration. Of these the principal ones were, briefly, that refugees who had definitely made up their minds not to return to their countries of origin should not be compelled to do so and should become the concern of an international body; that those who wished to return should be encouraged and assisted in every possible way to do so; and that no action taken as a result of the resolution should be such as to interfere with arrangements for the surrender and punishment of war criminals and traitors.