

28. PREVENTION OF FALSE OR DISTORTED REPORTS

The subject of false or distorted reports was raised in a resolution proposed by the Yugoslav delegation for the "Prevention of the Dissemination to the Detriment of Foreign States of Slandorous Statements which are Harmful to Good Relations between States and in Conflict with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations". The resolution recommended that the General Assembly advise Member States to take urgent legislative and other measures to establish the responsibility of the persons publishing or circulating false and contentious reports calculated to impair relations between nations and incite to war. The resolution further recommended that States should take measures to prevent the publication and dissemination through the channels of governmental bodies of reports not carefully and conscientiously verified. The debate in the Third Committee on this resolution was similar to that in the First Committee on the Soviet resolution on war propaganda. The resolution was criticized for the absence of a precise legal definition of the words "contentious and slanderous reports".

Another criticism was that the Conference on Freedom of Information to be held in 1948 was the appropriate occasion for discussion of the issues raised by the Yugoslav representative. The Canadian delegate stated that the Yugoslav resolution was not acceptable since it implied the necessity for legislative action on the part of governments which would restrict the rights of freedom of the press.¹ The French delegation in a conciliatory effort to combine the many amendments which had been made to the Yugoslav resolution submitted a new proposal which invited governments to study such measures as might be taken on the national plane to combat, within the limits of constitutional procedure, the diffusion of false or distorted reports likely to injure friendly relations between states.

¹The full text of the statement by the Canadian representative on this subject is given in Appendix II, G, p. 231.