

Declaration of Human Rights

The General Assembly, by 48 to 0, with 8 abstentions (the Soviet bloc plus Saudi Arabia and the Union of South Africa) adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A U.S.S.R. resolution to defer final consideration of the Declaration until the next session of the Central Assembly was defeated by 45 to 6 with 3 abstentions. The Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Commission were requested to prepare a draft Convention on Human Rights, and measures of implementation. The Economic and Social Council was further asked to examine in greater detail the problem of petitions and minority rights when studying the draft covenant.

(A Canadian Statement on Human Rights and the text of the Declaration are published on pages 18 to 24 of this issue.)

Genocide Outlawed

The General Assembly unanimously approved a Convention to outlaw Genocide. Genocide is defined as an attempt to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. The genocide convention aims specifically to outlaw, prevent and punish crimes such as those perpetrated in the Hitler concentration camps. Its objective is to halt crimes against mankind. The Convention (the text of which appears on pages 25 to 28 of this issue) is open for signature and ratification.

Conciliation in Palestine

The General Assembly, by 35 to 15, with 8 abstentions, established a three-nation conciliation commission for Palestine. Members of the Conciliation Commission are France, Turkey and the United States. The Commission will seek to bring about a settlement in Palestine by means of negotiations, either direct or through the Commission, between Jews and Arabs. It will also prepare the plan of a permanent international regime for the territory of Jerusalem. A United Nations representative will co-operate with local authorities regarding the interim administration of the Jerusalem area.

The Assembly gave approval to a fund of \$32,000,000, to be raised by voluntary contribution for member states, for the relief of Palestine refugees.

Interim Committee

By 40 to 6, with India abstaining, the General Assembly decided to extend for a further year the life of the Interim Committee, popularly known as the Little Assembly. This decision to continue the Interim Committee was a temporary one, and will be reconsidered at the next regular session of the General Assembly in the fall of 1949. Members of the Soviet bloc indicated that they would continue to boycott the Interim Committee.

Use of Spanish

By 30 to 21, with seven abstentions, the General Assembly voted to add Spanish to French and English as its third working language. English, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese are official languages of the Assembly but, hitherto, only English and French have been working languages, i.e., the languages in which all documents, resolutions, and records are published.