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FOURTH COMMITTEE  
3rd meeting  
held on  
Tuesday, 16 October 1984  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea)

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19 October 1984

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The meeting was called to order at 11.55 a.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS (A/C.4/39/2 and Add.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that he would take it, if he heard no objection, that the Committee wished to grant the requests for hearings relating to the question of Western Sahara, contained in documents A/C.4/39/2 and Add.1.
2. It was so decided.
3. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that he had received three additional communications containing requests for hearings on agenda items 26, 29 and 105. He suggested that, in accordance with the usual practice, the communications should be circulated as Committee documents for consideration at a subsequent meeting.
4. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 104: ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH ARE IMPEDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN NAMIBIA AND IN ALL OTHER TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION AND EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE COLONIALISM, APARTHEID AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (continued) (A/39/23/Part III, A/39/133, 478; A/AC.109/766, 778, 779, 781, 782, 786 and 787)

5. Mr. SPARROW (India) said that, in a historical sense, economic interests had had a major influence in the colonization of lands and peoples and that such interests were therefore prominent among the elements prone to stand in the way of liberation from the colonial yoke. The prime example was that of Namibia. The answers to the questions of how apartheid had survived the world-wide campaign for its eradication and how Pretoria had maintained its stranglehold over Namibia lay, at least in part, in the very nature of the racist régime and in the sordid history of aggression, subversion and destabilization practised by it for many decades. There could be little doubt that South Africa's conduct was greatly influenced by the amount of diplomatic support it enjoyed in the capitals of certain important Western countries. Moreover, Pretoria's vast economic interests in the territory of Namibia militated against Namibia's independence and more than compensated for any financial strain imposed on the occupying administration. The entire socio-economic system in Namibia rested on the logic of colonial masters controlling native serfs, and the exploitation of strategic resources like uranium added another dangerous dimension to the situation. Foreign economic and other interests had derived sustenance and support from the attitude of certain Governments whose lip service to the Namibian cause had not succeeded in disguising their complicity with South Africa in despoiling Namibia of its resources and prolonging its bondage.

6. The pattern of economic development of other Non-Self-Governing Territories had also been adjusted to serve the interests of the administering Power and other foreign interests and involved ever-increasing dependency on the outside. While there was nothing objectionable about the development of any one sector such as tourism, the need for economic diversification and balanced growth was of

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(Mr. Sparrow, India)

overriding importance. It was incumbent upon the administering Power, the United Nations and other international organizations to encourage that process. The "ideological" debate, with its polarized views of the activities of foreign economic interests as either positive or negative, tended to obfuscate the main point, which was that activities inimical to the interests of the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories were not permissible, and that the people must have the unfettered choice to determine the course of their socio-economic development, including the extent and pattern of external participation therein.

7. His delegation wished to reiterate the view that military activities and arrangements by colonial Powers in territories under their administration were obstacles to decolonization. The militarization of Namibia was a striking case in point. In spite of the arms embargo, Pretoria had continued to build a vast military machine which it used with impunity not only against the people of South Africa and Namibia but against independent African States in the region. Military activities and arrangements by colonial Powers were inimical to the interests of the peoples of those territories. His delegation supported the Assembly's view that military bases should be dismantled and removed. Particular care must be taken to ensure that Non-Self-Governing Territories were not in any way involved in military activities directed against others.

8. He stressed that the Government and the people of India espoused the cause of decolonization, which had always remained an important plank of its foreign policy. Liberation from colonialism would remain incomplete unless it was total - not only political, but also economic, military, social and cultural.

9. Mr. M'TESA (Zambia) said that in Namibia the activities of foreign economic and other interests were directly violating the right of the people to take control of their own finite natural resources. They also violated Decree No. 1 of the United Nations Council for Namibia, which required any foreign organization or transnational corporation wishing to exploit the Territory's resources to be licensed by the Council, acting as administering Authority.

10. Irrefutable evidence had been presented before several United Nations bodies that foreign economic interests were in collusion with South Africa, thus reinforcing its illegal occupation of Namibia, and also that their activities were being shamefully supported by some Western countries.

11. The people of Namibia needed the international community's moral and material support to rid their country of foreign occupation, domination and exploitation. In the face of the racist South African troops deployed to keep them in colonialist bondage, the Namibians had had no option but to take up arms, under the leadership of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), their sole and authentic representative.

12. The people of Namibia were, further, being held as pawns in super-Power rivalries for spheres of influence, as one such Power persisted in linking their independence to an extraneous issue like the withdrawal of Cuban forces from

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(Mr. M'tesa, Zambia)

Angola. Such diversionary tactics were responsible for continued bloodshed and disruption in Namibia. The people of Namibia asked only to live like any other, as free people and masters of their own destiny.

13. The speedy implementation of resolution 435 (1978) was being blocked by the immoral complicity of the transnational corporations with a few Western countries determined to serve their own military, political and strategic interests, and of both with South Africa, which disguised its intransigence on the question of Namibian independence by pretending to be interested in a negotiated settlement. That collusion had intensified the exploitation of Namibia's natural resources, particularly the crucial uranium reserves in the Territory.

14. Zambia viewed with concern any loans made to South Africa by international financial institutions, since they would help to defray the cost of its military build-up, its repressive war against the people of Namibia and its persistent acts of aggression against neighbouring African States, and to develop a nuclear-weapon capability. No requests for loans from such a monstrous régime, whose survival depended on the oppression and denationalization of its own indigenous majority, should be countenanced.

15. Mr. OLEANDROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the world had long been aware of the predatory nature of the activity of foreign capital in colonial and dependent territories and of how the imperialist States exploited the natural and human resources of such territories for their own political, economic and military purposes. Colonialism and neo-colonialism had created ideal conditions for the extraction by monopoly capital, through transnational corporations, of fabulous superprofits through the plundering and exploitation of the local populations of colonial, trust and dependent territories. The imperialist Powers continued to oppose the liberation of dependent peoples from the yoke of colonialism and neo-colonialism in order to maintain those conditions.

16. Great progress had been made in the struggle against colonialism as a result of the Great October Revolution of 1917, the victory over fascism in the Second World War and, in recent years, the work of the United Nations, which still faced the task of hastening the complete elimination of the last vestiges of colonialism in all of its manifestations, especially its most detestable incarnations, racism and apartheid. The United Nations, in numerous resolutions and decisions had already done a great deal to expose and condemn the exploitation of colonial territories by foreign monopolies and it was unfortunate that those decisions and resolutions had remained a dead letter because the colonial Powers, primarily the United States and its allies, regarded the preservation of colonialism and racism as vital to their economic, political and military interests.

17. One of the most dangerous vestiges of lingering colonialism was southern Africa, whose liberation was blocked by the support given to the Pretoria régime by the United States and its NATO allies. That support helped perpetuate apartheid and the illegal occupation of Namibia, and encouraged the Pretoria régime to commit new acts of aggression against sovereign African States. The policy of the Western

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(Mr. Oleandrov, USSR)

ruling circles was to continue to co-operate with the apartheid régime in exploiting the natural and human resources of the African continent, to undermine the independent States of the region and to strengthen their own military position in that area. The United States in particular was determined to protect its economic interests and military position in southern Africa, and its investments in South Africa amounted to billions of dollars. Hundreds of Western companies were also extracting superprofits, which would continue to flow as long as the racist system was preserved.

18. In recent years, Japan's co-operation with the South Africa racist régime had also expanded considerably. It was now South Africa's second most important trading partner, after the United States, and in the past year the trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$3.3 billion. Tokyo made no secret of its interest in South African mineral resources, in return for which it provided Pretoria with the latest technology needed to strengthen the racist régime's industrial potential, including military production.

19. Imperialist exploitation and repression had assumed particularly monstrous dimensions in Namibia, where nearly 400 transnational corporations appropriated more than 60 per cent of the gross domestic product in the form of net income; and that was in a country with the world's most unfair per capita income distribution - to the disadvantage of the blacks, of course. The transnational corporations were also the major support of South Africa's military machine, through the purchase of war bonds, the financing of arms purchases, the granting of credits, and the like. With the growing liberation struggle in Namibia, many of those corporations had begun to co-operate very closely with the South African army in Namibia in order to secure control and to protect their key branches there; and it was they who made sure that the Western Powers would block any settlement to the Namibia problem which did not permit the continued exploitation of Namibia by foreign capital.

20. The United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations had done valuable work in documenting the exploitation of Namibia and other colonial and trusteeship territories with solid and extensive data. United Nations documents on decolonization clearly showed that the activities of foreign monopolies in small colonial territories, supported by the administering Powers, blocked the growth of national self-consciousness of the peoples of those territories and prevented decolonization. Those territories, as a result of their dependence, suffered from growing unemployment and poverty, forcing many of their inhabitants to leave their countries in search of work elsewhere. Micronesia, for example, with 13 branches of transnational corporations, was totally dependent upon the United States, and its economic situation was catastrophic. Its total economic dependence enabled Washington to reduce it to a virtual colony.

21. The colonial Powers tried to justify their colonial exploitation by claiming that their colonies were too small, too underpopulated or too isolated to be independent, or that their populations actually preferred colonial dependence. They sometimes tried to disguise their colonies as "commonwealths", "associations" or in the form of various types of "integration", but only in order to maintain

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(Mr. Oleandrov, USSR)

their uncontrolled hegemony without United Nations jurisdiction. Nor was anyone fooled by claims that their rule brought nothing but blessings to the colonial territories. United Nations documents provided ample evidence that foreign transnational corporations did nothing to improve the welfare of colonial peoples, and that, on the contrary, they played an important role in preventing the economic and political development of those territories.

22. The Soviet Union had always condemned the predatory activity of the Western foreign monopolies in Namibia and other colonial territories and would continue to do so. His delegation felt that such activity was one of the major obstacles to decolonization and supported the demand of the African States for the immediate withdrawal of investments from the Republic of South Africa and Namibia and an immediate halt to all economic co-operation between the Member States of the United Nations and the racist Pretoria régime. His delegation was also convinced that the United Nations must take serious and prompt measures to counter the activities of the imperialist monopolies and to achieve decolonization everywhere. The General Assembly should accordingly adopt the decisions prepared for the current session of the General Assembly by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which renewed the demand that the Western Powers and their transnational monopolies should stop economic, financial and all other assistance to the racist régime of South Africa, as well as strict implementation of existing United Nations decisions in that connection.

23. The Soviet Union supported the proposals of the African States that the Security Council should impose binding and comprehensive sanctions against South Africa in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. It favoured strict observation by all States of existing Security Council sanctions and was categorically opposed to the continuing co-operation by the United States and Israel and some of their allies, in defiance of numerous United Nations resolutions, with South Africa, particularly in the nuclear field, and against co-operation in the transfer of technology, the delivery of materials and equipment and of technical assistance to South Africa's nuclear programme.

24. His delegation was convinced that a specific list of countries guilty of violating United Nations decisions regarding decolonization as well as of monopolies which continued to exploit the natural and human resources of colonial, Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories should be included in a General Assembly resolution, and it supported in that connection the demand of the developing countries that the elimination of colonialism should be extended to the economic sphere. It was essential to adopt effective decisions at the current session to hasten the full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and his country would continue to do its utmost in that connection and to help people struggling for national independence and social progress.

25. Mr. PULZ (Czechoslovakia) said that the motivations which had been decisive for the colonization of an entire continent remained decisive for the imposition of neo-colonist models of development upon areas currently or formerly under colonial domination. The main motivation of the foreign economic and other interests operating in Territories under colonial domination was the desire to exploit their human and natural resources.

26. A prime example was Namibia, where foreign monopolies exploited the cheap labour available and plundered mineral, agricultural and marine resources. Similarly, in Puerto Rico there was exploitation of labour and national wealth by the United States, and foreign economic interests operated to the detriment of Micronesia and American Samoa as well. In all cases, their activities were aimed at maximum profits derived from the application of the laws of the capitalist system. In providing for their selfish interests and jeopardizing the inalienable heritage of the peoples of the colonial Territories, foreign economic interests violated the universally recognized principle of national sovereignty over natural resources. In Namibia, such activities further violated Decree No. 1 of the United Nations Council for Namibia.

27. The activities of transnational corporations, which were extolled by the colonial Powers as assistance that promoted the well-being of the people involved, actually worsened their social condition. In the case of the Namibians, for instance, labour legislation was never applied. They were assigned dangerous work under unsatisfactory conditions and were provided inadequate medical services, if any.

28. The situation in a number of other Non-Self-Governing Territories was also a matter of concern. The policies of the administering Powers and the activities of foreign monopolies had led to high rates of unemployment generally and to a high rate of emigration for economic reasons. In Namibia, there were gross disparities in salaries between black and white workers. The widespread impoverishment, and the aggravated social ills thus created, could not be abolished through governmental measures by the administering Powers, whether well-intentioned or not.

29. The unscrupulous desire of the Western monopolies for maximum profits was also evidenced by their involvement in the South African economy. Over 1,000 foreign corporations, mostly from the United States, the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Switzerland, were operating in South Africa and accounted for one half of its economic production. Moreover, the Governments involved supported the activities of the transnational corporations under their jurisdiction.

30. The activities of foreign economic and other interests only served to increase the dependence of Non-Self-Governing Territories and to sap the vitality of their economies. That was most obvious in Namibia, where monopolies were not interested in developing Namibian industry but generally invested in the mining industry alone, with the result that the economy of the Territory was in a continuous decline and 60 per cent of its gross national product was swallowed up in profits by South African and Western corporations. The same was true, however, in other

(Mr. Pulz, Czechoslovakia)

Territories as well: in Puerto Rico or the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands, where the unilateral imposition of a capitalist and dependent economic structure made the economies vulnerable; or in Micronesia where the United States policy of fostering economic dependence had led to the ruin of agriculture which had been the backbone of the Territory's economy prior to trusteeship. That basic structural problem was compounded in the Territories by other factors such as disadvantageous geographic location, sparse population or limited natural resources.

31. Transnational corporations were becoming a tool for preserving colonial domination because their activities effectively supplemented political, military and economic measures taken by colonialist Governments and helped create the conditions for imposing neo-colonialism upon newly independent States so as to ensure their future exploitation.

32. Hence the importance of a study of their activities. A particularly useful document in that connection was the Register indicating the profits that transnational corporations derive from their activities in colonial Territories (A/38/444), issued by the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations. Even though compiled on the basis of information from only a few transnational corporations, which had not been verified, the Register attested to the highly profitable nature of those activities. Czechoslovakia believed that the Register should be broadened to include information from more corporations and from Western Governments.

33. Czechoslovakia also supported the immediate and consistent implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and demanded, in the spirit of the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, the elimination of colonialism from the economic sphere as well. All socialist countries had supported the just demands of the peoples of the colonial Territories in the recent Moscow Declaration of Member Countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Lastly, Czechoslovakia endorsed the decisions which the Special Committee on decolonization was submitting for approval to the General Assembly.

34. Mr. DEYHIM (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that one of the tasks of the Committee was to ascertain whether the activities of transnational corporations had contributed in any way to the prosperity of the Namibians and other colonized peoples, particularly to their exercise of the right to self-determination. The question could also be raised whether the interests of those companies were the major obstacle in the process of decolonization. In that regard, the Council for Namibia, through its Decree No. 1 for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia, had drawn attention to the destructive role of the transnational corporations, a role that had been reaffirmed in the resolution contained in document A/AC.109/795, adopted by the Special Committee on Decolonization. That resolution condemned the activities of foreign economic, financial and other interests operating in the colonial Territories as a major obstacle to political independence and the enjoyment of the natural resources by their indigenous inhabitants, and it strongly condemned the transnational corporations which continued to supply armaments, oil and nuclear technology to the Pretoria régime.

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(Mr. Deyhim, Islamic Republic of Iran)

35. On the other hand, the tactic used by the States providing support to those companies was to allege that the leaders who supported the resolution believed that profit was evil. Based on that viewpoint, the Western Group had refused to discuss the role of transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia at its tenth session, under the pretext that it was a political matter. He asked why, if the activities of those companies were in harmony with the prosperity of the Namibians, they did not take into account the extent to which the companies contributed to and sustained apartheid, their role in the military, nuclear and other strategic sectors of South Africa, their socio-economic impact and the extent to which they contributed to the maintenance of South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia.

36. The justification used by the United States to try to legitimize the continued domination of Non-Self Governing Territories by foreign powers was that the Territories supposedly owed their prosperity to large infusions of foreign capital; that argument gave the impression that it would be better for the indigenous people to lift all restrictions against foreign investments in those territories for the sake of development. Based on such reasoning, the necessary conclusion would be that peoples such as the Namibians and the black majority of South Africa actually enjoyed the ideal model for prosperity, well-being and economic infrastructure. He noted that Namibia's natural resources in minerals, which were of significant strategic and economic importance, were located in the "Police Zone" set aside for the white minority. Despite all efforts made by the Council for Namibia, the white majority continued its monopoly of the mining, fishing, marketing and livestock industries. It appeared that the so-called "constructive engagement" policy of Pretoria and its supporters had brought no real result other than further impoverishment and draining of the natural resources of the indigenous population.

37. In Namibia, the ever-growing greed for the accumulation of wealth and the basic elements of the materialistic system were the cornerstone of hegemony and domination. The imperialistic economies spread its scope of influence over other domains of life, including the political and the cultural, leading to the realization that the presence of foreign economic interests in the Non-Self-Governing and colonized Territories had encouraged even further dependency by the indigenous population on the oppressive Powers. He called upon the world community to exert pressure on the transnational corporations and the countries supporting them to bring all their activities to an end. His delegation urged all Members of the United Nations to cease all dealings with South Africa, and it strongly condemned the militarization of Namibia by South Africa and the nuclear and technical co-operation of the United States and the racist Zionist régime with the Pretoria régime. In view of the colonial Powers' lack of will and determination to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions, it was evident that the continuation of the struggle of Namibians and the black majority of South Africa was the only guarantee for achieving that objective.

38. Mrs. KUROKOCHI (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the Soviet allegation that Japan's co-operation with South Africa was expanding, said that her Government's position on the questions of Namibia and apartheid were

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(Mrs. Kurokochi, Japan)

well known and that there had been no change in its policy to keep relations with South Africa to a minimum. Japan had no diplomatic relations with South Africa. It had refused to accord any recognition to the so-called independent bantustans. It confined its economic relations with South Africa within the bounds of normal trade and did not permit direct investment such as the establishment of local corporations in South Africa by Japanese nationals or corporations under its jurisdiction, and had called upon foreign exchange banks and their branches abroad to refrain from extending any loans to South Africa. Japan had scrupulously observed Security Council resolution 418 (1977) calling for an arms embargo against South Africa, and there was absolutely no military co-operation between the two countries. It had never exported nuclear reactors or any related technology to South Africa that would assist it to develop nuclear power. And last but not least, Japan had restricted cultural, educational and sports exchanges with South Africa.

39. It was true that in a completely free society such as Japan's, even minority organizations such as the Japan-South Africa Diet-Members' Friendship Federation, which sought to foster friendly relations with South Africa, did and could exist, because freedom of expression, assembly and association was guaranteed by Japan's Constitution and, contrary to the situation in some totalitarian countries, was scrupulously respected by all. In any case the Government and people of Japan would stand firm on the current policy towards southern Africa in general and the apartheid problem in particular.

40. Mr. BADER (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Soviet allegation that his country had "egged on" South Africa to commit armed aggression against its neighbours could not be further from the truth. The United States had been deeply involved in negotiations between South Africa and Mozambique to relieve the tense situation between those two States, leading to a non-aggression accord between them. Similarly, the United States had tried to act as an intermediary in negotiating the withdrawal of South African troops from southern Angola. In early 1984, Angola and South Africa had agreed to a military disengagement, an important step aimed at creating an atmosphere of peace.

41. With regard to the statements by the representatives of the Soviet Union and Iran on the alleged sins of United States and Western corporations in Namibia and other Non-Self-Governing Territories, he said he would address the question of investments in southern Africa and Namibia later in the session. The United States made no apologies, however, for investments in other Non-Self-Governing Territories. Such investments opened the path to modernization for these Territories, and he would present figures later in the session to demonstrate the manner in which the Territories benefited from foreign investment.

42. With regard to the charge made by the representative of the Soviet Union concerning alleged United States nuclear co-operation with South Africa, he said that the United States would not supply South Africa with nuclear fuel or other fissionable material, nuclear reactors or sensitive nuclear technology unless the

(Mr. Bader, United States)

South African Government adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and placed all its nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and inspections. Although the United States Secretary of Energy had provided authorization for the Fluor Corporation to perform maintenance activities at the Koeberg nuclear power station in South Africa, those activities had not entailed the supply of nuclear material or equipment to South Africa, nor had they increased the risk of nuclear proliferation in South Africa. Moreover, they had been readily available from a number of other sources. The Koeberg nuclear power station was an entirely civilian facility; its reactors had been supplied by another country and were subject to inspection by the IAEA to verify that material was not diverted from those reactors for military or explosion purposes.

43. In reply to the allegations concerning Micronesia, he said that it was a strategic trust, supervision of which was, according to Article 83 of the United Nations Charter, reserved to the Trusteeship Council and the Security Council. He referred the members of the Committee to the provisional verbatim record of the debate which had taken place in the Trusteeship Council in May and June 1984 on that subject.

44. Mr. KESAVAPANY (Singapore), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his country rejected the Soviet Union's charge that his country had had some involvement in the activities of transnational corporations in Namibia. He stood by his Government's well-known record concerning Namibia.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.