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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Eighth Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 30 July 1957, at 2.45 p.m.

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Transmission of information on Non-Self-Governing Territories

PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. VIXSEBOXSE	(Netherlands)
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. RYAN	Australia
	Mr. DURAISWAMY	Ceylon
	Mr. Y.W. LIU)	China
	Mr. YIN)	
	Mr. de CAMARET)	France
	Mr. WARNOD)	
	Mr. ARAGON	Guatemala
	Mr. JAIPAL	India
	Mr. PACHACHI	Iraq
	Mr. IDENBURG)	Netherlands
	Mr. GRADER)	
	Mr. THORP	New Zealand
	Mr. GIDDEN)	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. SELWYN)	
	Mr. SEARS)	United States of America
	Mr. MORE)	
	Mr. LYNN)	
	Mr. ALFONZO RAVARD	Venezuela
<u>Representatives of specialized agencies:</u>		
	Mr. PAYRO	International Labour Organisation
	Mr. ORR)	Food and Agriculture Organization
	Mr. ABERCROMBIE)	
	Mr. SALSAMENDI	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. COHEN	Under-Secretary for Trusteeship and Non-Self- Governing Territories
	Mr. BENSON	Secretary of the Committee

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued)

- (d) DIVERSIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION (A/AC.35/L.243)
- (e) INDIGENOUS LAND TENURE IN RELATION TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY
- (f) SOCIAL ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (A/AC.35/L.248, L.250)
- (g) OTHER QUESTIONS (A/AC.35/L.254 and Add.1)

Mr. YIN (China) paid a tribute to the Food and Agriculture Organization for its very useful report on the diversification of agricultural production (A/AC.35/L.243)

Since the economy of almost all the Non-Self-Governing Territories was based on agriculture and a lack of diversification appeared to be the principal feature of the agricultural production of most of those Territories, the question of the diversification of crops, both for export and for domestic consumption, should be carefully studied by the Committee and by the Administering Members.

After emphasizing the importance of the diversification of agriculture from the dietary point of view, he pointed out that agricultural production for export was either insufficiently developed or dominated by one or two main crops. Over-specialization in a given cash crop had rendered the economy of the Non-Self-Governing Territories vulnerable to the wide fluctuations of world primary commodity prices: diversification should therefore be encouraged.

The lack of diversification of agricultural production in the Non-Self-Governing Territories could be attributed to various causes, among them the fact that in colonial days little or no attention had been paid to the economic and social development of the Territories or to the well-being of the indigenous inhabitants. As a result, the traditional subsistence economy of the dependent peoples had undergone very slow change, while the production of export crop in demand elsewhere had been greatly developed.

The Administering Members were now making sincere efforts towards the economic development of the dependent Territories and he was glad to note that they had realized the importance of the diversification of agriculture.

(Mr. Yin, China)

Turning to the FAO report, he noted that in at least eight of the seventeen Territories listed in table 4 reliance on the principal agricultural export had definitely declined. It appeared, however, that a certain amount of diversification had been carried out solely under the stimulus of market forces, and he hoped that, as a result of Government initiative and long-term planning, there would be more diversification of agriculture.

He emphasized that the indigenous inhabitants should be encouraged to grow crops of great export value in order that they might be more fully associated in the process of agricultural development and in economic expansion. In that connexion he had noted with great satisfaction that the Five-Year Plan in Kenya had provided for the development of a considerable variety of cash crops by African farmers. The importance of helping dependent peoples to play an increasingly important role in the development of their countries had gained wide recognition among the Administering Members.

He felt that all were agreed that diversification was most necessary in connexion with the production of food crops for home consumption and he suggested that the Administering Members might subsidize the producers of those crops. The peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories should also be instructed on dietary questions and mixed farming introduced into the Territories.

Mr. WARNOD (France) said that in the immediate post-war period mechanization had been regarded as the best method of raising agricultural production in the French Overseas Territories, but experience had shown that the introduction of new equipment and methods required preparation among indigenous farmers and that the means had to be adapted to suit local conditions and customs. Administrative policy had accordingly been revised to take into account human problems, with rural organization as its starting point.

The Provident Societies (sociétés de prévoyance) established before the war had contributed much to the development of rural production, particularly in Senegal, where they supplied farmers with ground-nut seeds, provided loans to buy fertilizers and equipment and in general fulfilled the same functions as did co-operatives in other countries. The Provident Societies had not, however, achieved their essential purpose, because the peasants were not really participating in their activities and the officials administering

(Mr. Warnod, France)

them had tended to regard them as a public service and to care little about making profits.

After the war, therefore, an intensive effort had been made by the newly elected authorities to replace those societies by co-operatives proper: in Senegal alone more than 300 co-operatives had been established in two years. Heavy losses had, however, been sustained, for Africa had not been ready for the experiment and it had been realized that instead of introducing orthodox co-operative methods the farmers had first to be made aware of the advantages offered by the co-operative system.

To restore the necessary confidence, a number of pilot co-operatives (secteurs co-opératifs-pilotes) had been introduced in Senegal for the marketing of ground-nuts. They were joint-stock companies having a general assembly with broad powers which were delegated to an administrative board composed exclusively of African producers. As a result of the first operation, dividend had been distributed in Senegal for the first time, with far-reaching psychological effects. The Co-operative Alliance (Entente co-opérative) was now endeavouring to set up genuine rural co-operatives, offering advice and giving financial aid to emerging co-operatives.

For the same purpose of encouraging the gradual evolution of co-operatives, the former Provident Societies had been revived in the form of sociétés mutuelles de Production rurale (SMPR), which had been established by a decree of 24 August 1953 for the purpose of harmonizing the economic evolution of rural communities with their political evolution. Effective peasant representation was ensured by elections based on the "village square" system. The new organizations had so-called "general assemblies", which had two advantages over the former assemblies of the provident societies in that they could be more easily convened and were composed of more informed elements, such as village chiefs. The assembly appointed the majority of members of the administrative board.

To encourage each SMPR to develop into a regional co-operative union, provision was made, firstly, to admit co-operative groups on a collective basis, whereas formerly only individual membership had been allowed, and secondly to divide the SMPR's into three independent sections: credit, increase of production, and marketing and services.

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(Mr. Warnod, France)

The members of the administrative board played an important liaison role in informing the village delegates of, and interesting them in, the activities and decisions of the societies and thus creating an atmosphere of solidarity. The SMPR's acted as co-ordinating agencies for economic initiative and contributed to a better organized economy and to the development of farming communities. Thus the initial scepticism of the peasants had been overcome as they had realized the extent to which they were now able to participate in their society.

In French Equatorial Africa the somewhat different experiment of the paysannat, dating from 1953, had been made. The purpose of that institution was to promote the natural evolution of the Overseas Territories by replacing primitive methods, which were often destructive from the point of view of soil conservation, by more modern techniques. The change had to be made gradually, and while extension services were important, the first step taken had been to settle the farmers, many of whom were semi-nomads, on good land. Thorough studies had been undertaken in consultation with the farmers themselves, and with the aid of the subsidies from FIDES much had been achieved under the second Four-Year Plan.

In Madagascar the experiment of modernized self-governing rural communities had been introduced, a system which had many features in common with the preceding ones.

While it might be possible to deplore the variety of the methods adopted in the different Territories, as also their lack of co-ordination and a common basis, they were none the less all prompted by the desire to modernize farming, taking into account local conditions. They all aimed at the evolution of the African farmer and his economic and social advancement. The general conclusion to be drawn from them was the need to combine those endeavours with the organization and promotion of the co-operative movement.

A similar process of evolution was needed in the matter of credit, since the usual forms of guarantee were not adequate in Africa. Mutual credit, mainly in the form of mutual securities, could be of great assistance, in a parallel direction to the effort which had been made to decentralize agricultural credit.

(Mr. Warnod, France)

Various means of protection were afforded to the producer in Overseas Territories. Price stabilization measures had been taken with regard to such commodities as coffee and cocoa. With regard to customs duties, all raw materials and many agricultural products were exempt from protective tariffs. A quota system limited foreign imports and served as a guarantee for the marketing in the metropolitan country of overseas products. The jumelage system ensured the marketing of such products as sisal and palm oil, whose prices were higher than those on the world market, and it was sometimes accompanied by price guarantees.

Market organization systems had been established for oleaginous fluids, sugar and rice, which were of great importance for both France and the Overseas Territories.

The system of direct subsidies was applied in the case of textile fibres, which did not enjoy any protection on the metropolitan market, in order to compensate for the absence of customs tariffs.

The opening of EFAC accounts on foreign markets and the reimbursement of taxes and social expenses had enabled producers to derive substantial advantages in marketing their goods at world prices.

All those protective measures had encouraged producers to develop and diversify their exports, and in spite of world price fluctuations steady progress had been made since the war. The large increase in exports of coffee, bananas, ground nuts, cotton and other agricultural products and the development of new produce was largely due to protection measures afforded to producers. In spite of the dependence of many countries on one or two main exports, much attention had been paid to the production of foodstuffs and the development of resources for local consumption.

The need to study nutritional problems was also realized and an effort had been made to develop domestic cultivation of fish and to introduce oleaginous products where there was a scarcity. The need for local and regional exchanges was becoming more and more clearly recognized and also the need to create movements of trade within the Overseas Territories themselves.

Those were the main concerns to be embodied in the third Four-Year Plan. While the first two had made it possible to equip the Territories with an essential infrastructure and to stimulate production the new Plan would be directed towards a new synthesis, taking into account the human and physical possibilities of the various Territories.

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Mr. ALFONZO RAVARD (Venezuela) said that the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization on the diversification of agricultural production (A/AC.35/L.245) and the statements made by the representatives of France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America had thrown new light on that problem.

According to the FAO report, in about a third of the Non-Self-Governing Territories one agricultural product had made up more than half the total value of exports in 1950-1954. He noted that although the lack of diversification was particularly striking in the smaller Territories, it existed even in the larger Territories, such as Uganda and the Federation of Malaya.

After referring to the evil effects which the lack of diversification in exports had on producers' incomes, Government revenues and balances of payments, he pointed out that a poor harvest or a decline in the world market price of the one crop exported could seriously affect Territories with a monocrop economy. As the FAO report stated, only a few Territories exported agricultural produce in sufficient quantity to influence world market prices. He realized that a monocrop policy had some advantages in a Territory such as Barbados, which had a dense population and produced large quantities of a single crop - sugar - for export, but in the case of British Guiana, which was not highly populated but had vast resources, it might be better for agricultural production to be diversified.

It should be remembered that diversification was not in itself sufficient to safeguard income earned from exports against wide fluctuations in prices; other measures were needed, such as the creation of stabilization funds, to which the French representative had referred at an earlier meeting. Long-term trade agreements between producers in various regions, both in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and in sovereign States, would encourage more regular production and the sale of agricultural products. Producers should also be supplied by the Administering Members with all the technical advice they needed.

The psychological effect of a temporary rise in prices sometimes led to over-production, with disastrous effects. Those effects could be avoided by long-term agreements.

(Mr. Alfonzo Ravard, Venezuela)

While it might not be possible to make a general recommendation in the case of the diversification of export crops, it certainly could be made in the case of food crops for domestic consumption. Statistics relating to the Non-Self-Governing Territories showed that the local production of food crops was often concentrated on one single crop, with the result that the health of the indigenous inhabitants suffered severely and there was a high morbidity rate among children. According to the FAO report, the staple diet of the indigenous inhabitants of many of the Non-Self-Governing Territories contained little or no protein. Such a situation should be remedied by the diversification of agriculture and the instruction of the indigenous people in diet requirements. The experiment carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund in Central America was worthy of emulation and should be carefully studied, for it might solve the dietary problems of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Lastly, the Administering Members should do everything possible to ensure a diversification of agriculture in the Territories under their administration and assist producers by setting up agricultural credit systems similar to that which operated in Venezuela.

The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq) pointed out that the lack of diversification in the agricultural production of most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories could be attributed to the general low level of economic development, the advantages of specialization in a profitable export crop, sometimes to the neglect of food production for local consumption, and such factors as climate, historical circumstances and firmly established patterns of social behaviour.

Diversification of agriculture was vitally needed in order to improve the nutritional quality of local diets, to reduce the vulnerability of the Territories' economies and neutralize to some extent the effects of export price fluctuations, and to make fuller and more rational use of manpower and land resources. Diversification would help to preserve soil fertility, reduce erosion and combat plant diseases. It was true that it could be unprofitable in exceptional cases and that nutritional standards depended on the real income of the population; in itself, diversification could not be expected to effect a

(Mr. Pachachi, Iraq)

drastic transformation of the economy: it had to be integrated with other changes aimed at achieving a general rise in per capita income.

Progress in diversification of agriculture in the dependent territories had been slow and there was insufficient information on diversification of food production for local consumption. Governments should take the initiative in encouraging a more rapid pace through pilot projects, direct assistance, educational campaigns and such incentives as price guarantees.

Since land was the basis of the economic structure of most Territories, the use and ownership of land was the key to development. The opening up of new land should be left to Governments and organizations with enough capital and skill and not to individuals. The conflict arising from the land-tenure systems in the Territories was not merely one between communal and private ownership: it was much deeper, affecting all phases of the lives of the inhabitants. It was a conflict between traditional rights and the necessity of promoting agricultural development along modern lines by means of new techniques and systems of organization which were bound to have a shattering impact on established African society. Those traditional rights to land should be recognized as far as possible. As the East Africa Royal Commission had said in its report, the fact that the Administration retained effective control of vacant land in most United Kingdom Territories often gave the Africans a sense of insecurity in their landholdings despite the elaborate administrative measures taken to reassure them. Recognition of customary rights by law had had a good effect on the Africans in the French Territories. Indigenous rights to land should be protected not only by law but by systems of native reserves and trust lands, as in some United Kingdom Territories. The East Africa Royal Commission had gone so far as to recommend compulsory acquisition of land by the Government if it was not surrendered voluntarily. In the French Territories, acquisition could be made only for public purposes. In any case, the land-tenure question was extremely complex and alienation of land was still going on, although at a slower pace. The conflict was basically one between tradition and change. Traditional systems of land ownership should not be discarded until and unless the indigenous inhabitants had been persuaded of the advantages of change. Most land-tenure systems were not flexible enough to cope with population pressures, but an attempt should be made

(Mr. Pachachi, Iraq)

by Administrations in formulating new land policies to preserve the traditional social structure and stave off unemployment. It was to be hoped that further documentation on the land-tenure question would enable the Committee to discuss the subject more fully at its next session in connexion with social conditions and development.

Mr. SALSAMENDI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), presenting the UNESCO paper on social aspects of industrialization in Africa South of the Sahara in rural areas (A/AC.35/L.250), explained that its purpose was to complete the UNESCO report on urban centres and to offer a synopsis of the studies carried out under UNESCO sponsorship by the International Research Office on the Social Implications of Technical Change. The studies had developed the three basic concepts of the rural milieu, industrialization and the urban milieu, as also the relationship between urbanization and industrialization, the effects both positive and negative of industrialization on various ways of life and the impact on African society of the introduction of monetary economies.

He reiterated UNESCO's desire to collaborate closely in the Committee's work and expressed the hope that it could make a useful contribution.

Mr. JAIPAL (India) noted that while the UNESCO and Secretariat papers on social aspects of economic development (A/AC.35/L.250 and A/AC.35/L.248) were both comprehensive and valuable, the title of the agenda sub-item was inadequate for the broad field they covered.

The changes taking place in African society in the dependent territories should be assessed in the light of the ultimate goals sought by development. The chief goal was national economic integration, i.e. the realization of the ideal of equality of opportunity. It remained to be determined whether territorial societies were geared to the attainment of that goal. On the other hand, there must be a relaxation of tradition enabling the indigenous inhabitants to choose their occupations and conditions of work freely. On the other hand there must be free access to employment regardless of race or colour. The goal could not be achieved unless social cohesion was fostered.

Indigenous societies in the territories were at different stages of transition, in a state of flux without precedent in history. The inevitability of

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(Mr. Jaipal, India)

change should be recognized. The pace of change was often dictated by technological and political factors external to the territories themselves.

The effects of transition from subsistence to monetary economies were both good and bad. Among the positive effects were the creation of new needs and values, improvements in housing and health, the emergence of a new class of indigenous traders and merchants, the emancipation of youth and women, increased personal freedom and the bringing together of various ethnic groups. Among the negative effects were the disruption of the traditional economy, the endangering, in some cases, of self-sufficiency in food, the establishment of new family and social patterns which might not be wholly beneficial, the struggle for power between the new elites and the traditional leaders, and the steady decline in village crafts and skills. Governments should make every effort to save indigenous handicrafts from extinction and to revive those which had already declined by means of co-operatives and community development projects.

Perhaps the only way to create and sustain a balance between social and economic development in the Non-Self-Governing Territories was to ensure that development in all fields was uniform and progressive. Full account should be taken of yet another powerful social reality: the correlation between poverty and colour. Colour consciousness affected most of the indigenous people's attitudes towards life. There was an urgent need to create a public conscience which would make possible the enjoyment of full equality by all citizens regardless of race or colour.

The participation of the indigenous inhabitants increasingly at local and national levels in the political responsibility of controlling the social processes would alone set the right pace of social change so that equality of opportunity could be attained. Economic development should be sustained by forces making for social integration. It was essential that economic forces should not be permitted to damage the fabric of society so as to cause the indigenous people to attempt to change the economic system by violence.

TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION ON NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the 152nd meeting the representative of Guatemala had raised the question of the lack of information on the Belgian Congo and that the Secretary of the Committee had outlined the situation as it had then stood in the light of the exchange of letters in March 1957 between the Secretary-General and the Head of the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations. On the basis of that reply, the representative of Guatemala, supported by the representatives of Ceylon, China, India, Iraq and Peru, had suggested that the Chairman should unofficially approach the Permanent Mission of Belgium in order further to clarify the position.

He had now to report that he had carried out the wishes of the Committee and had had several unofficial contacts with the Permanent Mission of Belgium, which had informed him that it had no communication to make on the matter.

Mr. JAIPAL (India) was sorry that the Chairman had not met with any success. He suggested that the matter should be discussed by the Committee later in the session and asked that copies of the correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Government of Belgium since 1946 should be circulated to the Committee in the form of a document.

Mr. ARAGON (Guatemala), supporting the Indian representative's suggestion, said that he had been greatly surprised by the Chairman's statement, since in the past the Belgian Government had always supplied the necessary information on the Belgian Congo.

Mr. ALFONZO RAVARD (Venezuela), Mr. VELANDO (Peru), Mr. DURAISWAMY (Ceylon) and Mr. PACHACHI (Iraq) supported the Indian representative's suggestion.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Secretariat to prepare and circulate the document requested by the Indian representative. He suggested that the matter should be discussed under item 8 - questions relating to the summaries and analyses additional to those treated under previous items.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.