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Chairman: Mr. Jiří NOSEK (Czechoslovakia).

Economic development of under-developed countries: (c) Land reform: report of the Secretary-General (A/2194 and Add.1, A/C.2/L.158/Rev.1, A/C.2/L.160/Rev.1, A/C.2/L.186 and A/C.2/L.187) (concluded)

[Item 25 (c)]*

1. Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) in reply to previous speakers, said that the Committee had heard the usual charges from the Soviet bloc representatives concerning the terrible conditions among farmers in many parts of the world and the great successes of Soviet agriculture. The Soviet Union representative had expressed deep concern over the shortage of foodstuffs in some parts of the world (225th meeting) but could hardly deny that Poland had recently been experiencing its worst food shortage of the post-war period, which had given rise in the second half of 1951 to unrest and strikes. As the United States delegation had already pointed out, the rationing of meats and fats had had to be reintroduced in Poland in September 1951 and had later been extended to include soap, sugar and other staple goods (208th meeting). Moreover, ration coupons were frequently not honoured.

2. The representatives of the Soviet countries had failed to describe what the Soviet system of land reform really meant for the individual farmer. It was clear, however, that East European farmers were not interested in producing when the State took both their profit and crops; the only answer of their governments was increasingly savage repression.

3. In Hungary, for example, the chief concern of the farmers in the recent harvest appeared to have been to withhold enough of their crops from the State in order to be able to live, while the Government's sole concern was to compel the farmers to deliver their crops at prices fixed by the State that were almost invariably below what was required to provide the farmers

and their families with an essential minimum income. In order to do so, the Hungarian Government had had to use force; indeed, it was only at the United Nations that representatives of the communist governments attempted to conceal policies of that kind: the production report of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture stressed the fact that proceedings were being taken against farmers who failed to hand over the required amount of grain. To cite only one example—on 13 July three Hungarian newspapers had published a list of fines and sentences of as much as eighteen months imprisonment, to which farmers had been condemned on one day alone for such offences as failing to reap their crops in time or to repair their machines. Since that date over 500 other sentences were known to have been imposed, involving terms of 3 to 5 years, for failure to fulfil crop quotas, or refusing to surrender crops, or hoarding.

4. It was true that the Government of the Soviet Union had succeeded in forcing its farmers to join collective farms but there was plenty of evidence of continued hostility to the system, which had now been in operation for twenty years. Thousands of statements had appeared in the Soviet Press indicating the failure of the collective farms to produce according to the central authorities' plans or the failure of those authorities to convince the peasants of the desirability of collectivism.

5. Taking Lithuania as an example, he described the procedure followed there to bring a peasant into a collective farm by means of a so-called voluntary pledge which had to be signed or else the farmer was sent to a labour camp. If he did sign, he forewent his right to go elsewhere. Once a member, the collective farmer was prevented from escaping by the rigorous travel restrictions. He became, in fact, a serf. Restrictions were as rigorous as any imposed during the Czarist régime. Obviously such measures would not have been imposed if it had been considered possible to secure and retain the peasants' co-operation voluntarily. It

* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

was clear from those scattered examples that the twenty years of collectivization had not produced the promised agrarian paradise and that the human factor and human desires had been ignored. It was not surprising, that, as indicated in his recent article on the economic problems of socialism in the USSR, published in *Bolshevik* of 2 October 1952, Stalin himself was disturbed about the Soviet agricultural situation.

6. Mr. ENCINAS (Peru) thought it his duty to correct the Soviet Union representative's implication that in Latin America in general, and therefore presumably in Peru, the United States engaged in an economic policy which perpetuated a one-crop system of agricultural production. The policy pursued under the agreement between Peru and the United States in connexion with the Inter-American Food Production Co-operative Service (SCIPA), to which he had referred on the previous day (228th meeting), was directly opposed to the one-crop system. Another institution equally beneficial to his country was the Cultural and Educational Service, which was waging a campaign against illiteracy. Peru was also benefiting from the fellowships offered under United Nations arrangements.

7. Moreover, private enterprise sponsored by the United States in his country indicated a tendency quite opposed to monoculture. A subsidiary of the Goodyear Corporation manufactured tyres for Peruvian national consumption and a subsidiary of the Grace Company operated textile, sugar and paper plants, took part in copper and other mining industries and had organized cattle-raising centres and a chemical production plant.

8. Mr. KATZ-SUCHY (Poland) said that it had become a habit of the United States delegation in a discussion in the Committee on any economic subject, to refer, whenever attacked, to the existence of food rationing in Poland. He would be the last to deny that Poland had re-introduced food rationing, but the reason was a simple one, namely, the growing general level of *per capita* consumption which in turn had increased the consumption of the working masses.

9. Before the Second World War, the total number of persons employed in non-agricultural work had been 2,700,000; by the end of 1951 it had risen to 5,200,000. That increase in employment, especially industrial employment, had placed an additional 3 million buyers on the market. Before the war, those people had constituted the bulk of the surplus population in the villages and had had no constant income. The seasonal or occasional work they found had enabled them to purchase very little; they had eked out a bare existence by cultivating small plots of land.

10. Since the war, not only had the number of people able to buy things increased but there had also been a considerable increase in the general *per capita* consumption level. The annual *per capita* consumption of milk, for example, had risen from 189 litres in 1938 to 269 litres in 1951; that of meat from 3.3 kilogrammes to 17.2 kilogrammes; that of sugar, from 0.26 kilogrammes to 18.39 kilogrammes and that of matches, formerly a luxury, from 4 boxes to 51 boxes.

11. Although his Government was not satisfied in some respects with the progress achieved, it was, however, indicative of the whole trend of Polish economy and clearly proved the rise in standards of living and in working class purchasing power. Polish consumption

figures were now well above the average in Europe. Rationing had been reintroduced in order to direct the rising trend and ensure equal shares for everyone. He denied the allegation of the United States representative that ration coupons were not always honoured in Poland. The United States representative had apparently wished to prove that the land reform measures in Poland had failed, but the general increase in the level of consumption in fact proved their success, although they had only been in effect for a few years.

12. The Polish delegation, when speaking about land reform, did not advocate any specific system, socialist or otherwise, but merely stressed the urgency of the problem. It must be solved in accordance with the needs, circumstances and state of development of each individual country. The Polish delegation had always confined itself to suggesting general outlines for reform; to imply that only one pattern should be followed might serve to make some countries fearful of the idea of land reform as a whole.

13. Several delegations had disputed the figures he had quoted in his recent statement, but he had made it clear that he was only discussing the position in general and was not concerned with the responsibilities of any one government. Explanations given by various representatives, such as the Indian representative, did not alter the fact that the problem was acute, and that little had been done to implement the resolution originally proposed by Poland. He had also wished to bring out the fact that some attempts were being made to use the slogan of land reform for very different ends, as the statements of the Soviet Union representative and others had revealed. The United States, in particular, had suddenly come forward as a stout defender of land reform: as it could not oppose such reform, it was trying to use it to strengthen its economic grip on many countries. Proof of the United States intentions was to be seen in what had happened in Japan, Western Germany and South Korea.

14. Moreover, the report of the United States Department of Agriculture on farmland ownership in the United States showed that, in that country also, a large proportion of the land was still concentrated in the hands of a few: for example, the 1949 statistics revealed that 3 per cent of persons owning farmland held 41 per cent of the total area of land, while 50 per cent of the total amount of farm produce was produced by 10 per cent of the largest farms. The share-cropping system was still rampant and the tenancy system was more widespread than seventy years previously.

15. *The Geography of Hunger* by Mr. Josué de Castro, an author certainly not hostile to the United States, describing the situation in Puerto Rico, said that the people were reduced to a position of inferiority and the low standard of living was comparable to that in Hong Kong; health standards were also deplorably low.

16. The existence of hunger in the United States itself was undeniable. According to the statistical bulletin of the United States National Research Council, 53 per cent of the population in the southern states suffered from an inadequate diet. Mr. de Castro's book stated that 73 per cent of the population in the black belt and 80 per cent in the Red River Valley were tenants under the anachronistic share-cropping system. Conditions of servitude and semi-slavery were thus to

be found not only in certain under-developed countries dominated by the United States and in others like South Korea, where American aggression had impeded social development, but also in parts of the United States itself.

17. Mr. Sparkman, a Senator from Alabama who had addressed the Committee on a previous occasion, instead of advocating the subdivision of large estates into small holdings for the landless, had stated that the two million under-employed agricultural workers in the United States should be diverted to war production, for which purpose the smaller holdings should be consolidated.

18. The problem of land reform was just as vitally important today as it had been when the Committee had initiated discussion on it. Although the various relevant resolutions adopted constituted an advance, it was for governments to take the necessary action. He had quoted figures and information on Poland's achievements in order to show what could be accomplished in a short time by the nationalization of industry and banks. Land reform was essential to effective economic development. The burning desire of the under-developed country for land reform was well known and no attempt to frustrate that desire would be successful.

19. Mr. TOUS (Ecuador), in reply to the Polish representative's reference to Ecuador, pointed out that, because of the relative sparseness of its population, conditions in Ecuador were not so tragic as in countries which suffered from a shortage of land. Every attempt was made to enable persons so desiring it to secure and cultivate their own holdings. He did not deny that cases of the kind referred to by the Polish representative existed, but that representative, in referring to various Latin-American countries had based himself on a report by a person whose political affiliations were similar to those of the Polish delegation. The Mexican and Argentine representatives had informed the Polish representative that his data and conclusions were obsolete and inaccurate and, in many cases, unrelated to reality. There was little need for him (Mr. Tous) to enlarge on their remarks but he would also point out that the percentages and other statistics quoted by the Polish representative with reference to Ecuador were pure conjecture, because no adequate statistics were available.

20. Ecuador was vigorously encouraging the economic and social development of the nation as a whole and had prepared a judicious plan of land reform in the conviction that ownership was the best incentive to active production. He was glad to note that the Polish representative also appreciated the value of ownership in that respect. That representative should therefore conclude that a farmer would produce more as a cultivator in his own right than as a member of a collective enterprise.

21. In Ecuador, dispossessed landowners received fair compensation from the government, and farmers were provided with sufficient equipment to start cultivation. While not overlooking the existence in Ecuador of unsatisfactory conditions in specific cases, he felt sure that similar conditions could be found in other countries. He was prepared to accept the Polish representative's assertion that conditions in Poland were highly satisfactory, but it was more difficult to study the situation in Poland than in Ecuador or other Latin-American countries. It had been claimed that the backward-

ness of certain Latin-American countries was due to the wiles of foreign companies, but the backward conditions had existed for centuries; they had certainly not been created only recently by foreign exploitation. Those companies might indeed have done more for social welfare and might have paid higher wages than the relatively high wages which they already paid, but it was unfair and insulting to Ecuador to state that the foreign companies had brought about economic slavery. The Latin-American countries had shown their spirit of independence in the past and would continue to do so.

22. Mr. KATZ-SUCHY (Poland) emphasized again that the need for land reform was very real. The Ecuadorean representative could not claim that the facts and figures quoted were wrong, while, at the same time, recognizing the need for land reform. That representative had remarked that the statistics which he (Mr. Katz-Suchy) had quoted were unsatisfactory and that proper information was not available, but ignorance could not be used as an argument against the other party in a controversy. Statistics showed that land reform in Ecuador and other Latin American countries constituted a serious problem. He was surprised at the Ecuadorean representative's denial of the control exercised by foreign monopolies in view of the numerous statements made and data provided by representatives of various countries. All the information available pointed to the fact that there was an urgent need for land reform.

23. Mr. ARKADYEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), said that attempts had been made by representatives hostile to the socialist system of the Soviet Union to cast aspersions on that country's economy and agricultural structure. The United States representative, for example, had arbitrarily taken extracts from certain publications and had painted a misleading picture. There was no need to indulge in fabrications concerning conditions in the Soviet Union because sufficient objective information and testimony by people who had recently visited the country were available. A group of Canadians had recently published a book entitled *We have seen Socialism* on their experiences during a visit to the USSR. They had visited various collective farms and had concluded that the average USSR farmer lived better than and was culturally superior to his Canadian counterpart. The average output of fruit, sugar, potatoes and other crops in the Soviet Union was also reported to be higher than in Canada. The visiting group had described vast irrigation schemes to counteract drought and extensive protective forest belts designed to arrest the ravages of nature.

24. In place of such obvious progress, the United States representative would no doubt prefer to see a plantation system similar to that in the southern states of the United States introduced into the Soviet Union, under which foreign monopolies could treat the workers as chattels as they did in some under-developed countries. Exploitation had existed in Czarist Russia, but the people had cast off the foreign yoke for ever. USSR agricultural workers, in addition to their participation in collective property, were entitled to own land, cattle and poultry and had ample opportunities to extend their technical knowledge and culture. There were no barbed-wire fences separating holdings as there was in the United States. The accomplishments of the Soviet Union were based on the idea of collectivism, whereas, in the

United States, a worker might find himself suddenly bankrupt or unemployed.

25. Deficiencies in the agricultural system of the Soviet Union were the subject of open criticism and every effort was directed at improvement. The United States representative might be asked to confirm whether bankrupt farmers in the United States were forced to migrate to the cities where they swelled the ranks of the unemployed because of the expansion of agricultural monopolies. According to the United States Department of Commerce, the number of large holdings had risen from 5,400 in 1944 to 9,000 in 1950. Mr. Edwards, a United States economist, had stated that vegetable farmers in the United States existed in conditions approximating feudalism and were dependent on middlemen to whom they paid 30 to 40 per cent of the value of their produce. Farmers were obliged to work for corporations and companies on the latter's terms. Another publication by a Mr. Hayward on the enslavement of negroes in the United States showed how the financial monopolies exploited the plantations in the southern states and perpetuated the race and caste system. Puerto Ricans and Mexicans were imported as cheap labour. The United States representative should give careful consideration to the far from satisfactory agricultural situation in his own country. It was evident that the need for land reform demanded effective action.

26. Mr. FACIO (Costa Rica) said the Polish representative had mentioned Costa Rica as one of the countries which suffered from the monopolistic pressure of American capital so that its economic structure remained mono-productive and its economic possibilities were diminished. That was not exactly the case. His country could be considered as having a mono-productive structure—its economy was dependent mainly on coffee—but that situation was not due to foreign pressure. Coffee was and always had been an indigenous native product. His country had, however, been attempting to diversify its production and recently had received United States support in its efforts under the "Point Four" programme. It was successfully producing such foodstuffs as beans, rice, sugar, milk and meat and in the past two years had been enabled to export some beans, rice and meat. The United States had also helped his country by co-operating in the establishment of the School of Agricultural Development which carried out research on the development of new agricultural products suitable to tropical countries.

27. His country did not suffer from the problem of large estates; on the contrary, the forty thousand hectares of land devoted to the cultivation of coffee were divided between 27,000 proprietors, so that many proprietors had less than one hectare of land. The country's chief problem was to make its agriculture more productive.

28. Mrs. BURWASH (Canada) pointed out to the USSR representative that in Canada everyone was free to express his own opinion, however misguided it might be.

29. Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) found himself obliged to answer some of the remarks made by the USSR and Polish representatives.

30. In connexion with the position of the American farmer, he stated that on 1 January 1952 the total

value of farm lands and assets, including savings of farm families, had been almost \$170,000 million against which there had been a farm indebtedness of \$15,000 million. On an average, the standard of living of farm families between 1940 and 1950 had increased by 54 per cent. One measure of that increase was the amount of electricity used on farms. In 1930, electricity was being used in 13 out of every 100 farms; in 1940 in 33 out of every 100; and in 1950 in 78 out of every 100. In 1950, almost two-thirds of the farms had electric washing machines, 61 per cent of farm families had mechanical refrigerators, and 93 per cent radio sets. Between 1945 and 1950 in every State and almost every country standards of living among the agricultural population had been increasing. There had also been a significant growth in the agricultural income in the United States. The gross income had been \$10,000 million in 1940 and over \$37,000 million in 1951, while the net earned income on farms had been \$6,000 million in 1940 and over \$21,000 million in 1951. Purchasing power in 1951 as compared with 1940 had increased by 57 per cent. With regard to the threat of bankruptcy, which the USSR representative appeared to think hung over the head of every American farmer, in 1951 mortgages had been foreclosed on only one and a half out of every thousand farms.

31. Turning to the situation in Puerto Rico, he pointed out that that island, with two million acres of land of which about one million was cultivable, had a population of 2,219,000 in 1950. That meant that Puerto Rico, which was one of the most densely populated areas in the world, had on the average less than half an acre of tillable land *per capita*. The Government of Puerto Rico, with the assistance of the United States Government, was striving to diversify its agricultural production and to develop its industry in order to ease the pressure on the land. Between 1945 and 1951, 136 new factories had been set up and industrial production in Puerto Rico had doubled in the last ten years. A report published by United Nations statisticians in 1949 showed that the *per capita* standard of living in Puerto Rico held the twenty-sixth place among the seventy countries studied, and the *per capita* standard of living in Puerto Rico was higher than that of all but three Eastern European countries.

32. The CHAIRMAN declared the general discussion on land reform closed.

33. Mr. SILES ZUAZO (Bolivia), explaining his delegation's vote on the draft resolutions on land reform before the Committee, said that over 500 years ago the territories of Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, had been the Empire of the Incas which had had an agricultural economy and a population of some eleven million. Despite the difficulties they had had to overcome, the Incas had succeeded in establishing a socialist type of agricultural economy, with social security which had eliminated unemployment and famine. Agricultural production had been admirably organized and excellent systems of communication and irrigation works had been set up. That civilization had produced the potato and maize which were now staple foodstuffs. The agricultural community, which had been the basis of the system, still survived. With the arrival of the Spaniards, the agricultural economy had been transformed into a mining economy and a feudal system had been established.

34. In order to change that state of affairs, which had kept the majority of the population in the most wretched conditions of poverty and backwardness, the Government of the Bolivian Revolution had granted the right to vote to illiterate peasants, and was proceeding to carry out land reform. Previously, because literacy had been a condition for exercising the right to vote, there had only been 120,000 electors out of a population of more than 3 million, and those elected to power had generally represented the interests of the minority.

35. The aim of land reform in his country was to modernize the agricultural community, to give the reward of their labours to those who worked the land, to give land to landless peasants, to do away with unproductive large estates, to provide agricultural machinery, credit and technical advice, and to combat ignorance and disease. In its effort to establish better living conditions in an atmosphere of social peace and progress, his country would study with great interest the experience of other countries and the recommendations of the specialized agencies. He was glad to note that a United Nations technical assistance mission would be sent to Bolivia to advise on the study of land reform.

36. His delegation would support the draft resolutions on land reform before the Committee.

37. Mr. CARANICAS (Greece) said the question of land reform was of vital importance for the development of under-developed countries. Since a detailed statement on land reform in his country had been made in the Committee the previous year,¹ his remarks would be very brief.

38. Land reform in Greece had been begun as far back as 1833, and since that date the Government had distributed to landless peasants land formerly owned by the State, the Church or large proprietors. Between 1917 and 1923, radical measures for land redistribution had been taken in several provinces, and the proprietors of the few remaining large private estates had now been expropriated, so that Greece was at the present time a country of small farmers. Its chief problem was not therefore that of land tenure but that of providing fertilizers and machinery, teaching modern techniques and establishing agricultural co-operatives and credit institutions.

39. His delegation would support the Pakistani revised draft resolution (A/C.2/L.158/Rev.1) for among the many problems which that draft resolution would solve was the provision of capital for land reclamation and irrigation projects. His delegation would also vote for the revised joint draft resolution (A/C.2/L.160/Rev.1) and the United States amendment to it (A/C.2/L.187).

40. Mr. HALIQ (Saudi Arabia), speaking as Rapporteur, pointed out that the word "long-term" should be inserted after the word "low-interest" at the end of the second operative paragraph of the Pakistan draft so as to bring it into line with the expression used in the preamble.

41. Mr. ELAHI (Pakistan) thanked the Rapporteur for pointing out the omission and accepted the change.

42. Mr. BURR (Chile) said that when he had spoken on the subject of land reform (226th meeting), he had expressed some doubts with regard to the second operative paragraph of the Pakistan draft. The explanations which had been given and the amendment to that paragraph which had been accepted by the representative of Pakistan had dispersed his doubts and he would vote for the draft resolution.

43. In answer to a question from Mr. GINOSSAR (Israel), the CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that the representative of Pakistan had accepted the suggestion of the representative of Australia to add the words "feasibility of" in the second operative paragraph of the draft resolution.

44. Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) asked for a separate vote on the second operative paragraph of the Pakistan draft resolution.

45. The CHAIRMAN put the second operative paragraph of the Pakistan draft (A/C.2/L.158/Rev.1) to the vote, as amended by document A/C.2/L.186 and including the changes suggested by the representatives of Australia and Saudi Arabia.

The paragraph as amended was adopted by 42 votes to none, with 9 abstentions.

46. The CHAIRMAN put the Pakistan draft resolution (A/C.2/L.158/Rev.1) to the vote as a whole, as amended by document A/C.2/L.186.

The draft resolution, as amended, was adopted by 47 votes to none, with 5 abstentions.

47. Mr. LUBIN (United States of America) explained that he had abstained from voting on the second operative paragraph of the Pakistan draft resolution because, he had already pointed out, he did not believe that the question it referred to should be considered by the Committee of experts. His abstention did not imply that his delegation felt that if and when the proposed special fund was established it should not make grants or loans for land reform.

48. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the amendment contained in document A/C.2/L.187 had been accepted by the sponsors of the joint draft resolution (A/C.2/L.160/Rev.1), and put to the vote the joint draft resolution, as amended.

The joint draft resolution, as amended, was adopted unanimously.

49. Mr. ABDELRAZEK (Egypt) thanked representatives for their unanimous adoption of the joint draft resolution. That general agreement showed that the world was now aware of the needs of mankind and that the United Nations intended to take steps to promote development for all countries without distinction between rich and poor or strong and weak. He hoped the United Nations would soon be able to solve political problems with the same unanimity, and give liberty to the peoples who were fighting for it, so that all could live in an era of peace, justice and self-determination.

50. Mr. ELAHI (Pakistan) also thanked the representatives for their support of his delegation's draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Second Committee*, 177th meeting.