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SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 13 April 1982, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BURWIN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

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Consideration of reports submitted in accordance with Council resolution 1988 (LX)
by States Parties to the Covenant, concerning rights covered by articles 13 to 15
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The meeting was called to order at 5.20 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1988 (LX)
BY STATES PARTIES TO THE COVENANT CONCERNING RIGHTS COVERED BY ARTICLES 13 TO 15
(continued)

Report of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (E/1982/3/Add.3) (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the representative of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic to reply to questions relating to the report.
2. Mr. RUDNIK (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that he would address his replies to the questions concerning education, culture and religion.
3. With regard to education, the representative of Bulgaria had asked how the Byelorussian SSR handled the transfer of children from kindergartens to schools and how children were prepared for the more advanced stages of education. Pre-school-children's institutions were the first link in the chain which would combine upbringing within the family and upbringing in society throughout the educational process. There were now 40,000 children aged six in school and, by 1985, all six-year-olds would be enrolled. The educational programme in pre-school institutions had been designed in such a way as to provide conditions for both the psychological and scholastic development of children and to prepare them for the realities of the outside world; it protected and strengthened the health of children, imparted basic practical skills, instilled a love of work, prepared them for school education and taught them to respect their elders and love their socialist native land. Pre-school institutions were free from racial prejudice.
4. In reply to the representative of France, he said that a census taken in Czarist Russia in 1897 had indicated that it would take 180 years to eliminate illiteracy among men, 300 years to eliminate illiteracy among women and 4,600 years to eliminate illiteracy in the provinces, including Byelorussia. By the year 1936, however, illiteracy had been eliminated in the Byelorussian SSR. The right to attend a school where teaching was in the native language was guaranteed under article 43 of the Constitution. The compulsory nature of education for all children and teenagers, which was stipulated in article 4 of the Public Education Law, did not contravene article 13 (3) of the Covenant. The compulsory nature of education applied only to State schools; parents were free to give guidance on religious and moral issues in accordance with their own convictions. No provision was made for separate schools for other nationalities because such communities were scattered throughout the country and were small in numbers; it would be impossible to provide schools for them all.
5. Replying to the question put by the representative of Norway regarding the grading system, he said that performance was graded according to five categories. Grades three, four and five were all passing grades, with five representing outstanding performance; grades one and two were failing grades.

(Mr. Rudnik, Byelorussian SSR)

6. To the representative of Mexico, he pointed out that there was a close relationship in the Byelorussian SSR between higher education and production. While students were normally encouraged to follow careers suited to their individual personalities and talents, demographic changes had increased the demand for manpower and provision had to be made for young people to be guided into appropriate sectors of the economy where they were needed most.
7. As the correct choice of a profession was very important for productivity, a system of professional guidance for school leavers had been developed. Such guidance was important because, at the age of 15, after eight years of schooling, young people were not adequately equipped to assess their own abilities. Professional guidance counsellors provided advice both in the school and on an extramural basis. Admission to universities was decided by competitive examination and once admitted, university students were given allowances and benefits enabling them to work in the area of their specialization.
8. The representative of Norway had asked how the unity of instruction and communist education, mentioned in paragraph 8 (f) of the report, had been achieved. The answer was to be found in the same subparagraph which stressed the co-operation of the school, the family and the public in the rearing of children and adolescents. An important link was provided by standing parent committees which were involved in all aspects of the education and raising of children: they organized extramural excursions, enterprises and cultural activities for the students, discussed school work, generally continued the traditions which had already been established at the pre-school level and applied the same guidelines.
9. The representative of France had inquired whether it was possible for writers and artists to have personal careers outside the writers' and artists' unions. Before an author could join a union he must already have produced a number of publications. There was nothing to prevent non-members from publishing. In principle, membership of a union presupposed a degree of professionalism.
10. The point relating to copyright and freedom for scientific research and creative ability raised by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany was covered by article 45 of the Constitution, which stipulated that the State provided the necessary material conditions for citizens to enjoy freedom of scientific, technical and artistic work. That freedom was limited only by the provision that the publication of military or State secrets or material of a chauvinist, war propaganda, pornographic or sadistic character was prohibited. The distribution of foreign books was permitted. International copyright was recognized.
11. Interest in cultural activities was evident from the fact that more than half the population visited museums or art galleries annually; each family, on average, subscribed to four journals. People went to the cinema 15 times a year on the average; that figure was higher than corresponding figures in many Western countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Federal

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Republic of Germany. A considerable amount of material published in foreign languages was translated, including the classics and works by modern authors. There was a bookstore in Minsk which sold a wide range of publications from developing countries as well as other foreign publications. Publications within the proscribed categories were not, of course, offered for sale. The country received many visits from foreign cultural groups. Film festivals were held for films from both developed and capitalist countries. The cost of books and theatre or cinema tickets was lower than elsewhere in Europe because of Government subsidies.

12. Replying to the question raised by the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya regarding ownership of historical and cultural monuments, he said that while such monuments could remain in the care of individual citizens, the State retained ownership in order to ensure their preservation and universal access to them.

13. In reply to the representative of Norway, he pointed out that the reference to concert life covered music collectives or professional groups, like the Byelorussian People's Chorus. There were also amateur groups, including 2,000 theatre collectives, of which 60 were entitled to use the term "People's" to indicate that their standard of performance was at the professional level even though the participants were amateurs.

14. The museums covered by paragraph 52 of the report were mainly ethnographic, historical, art museums and scientific exhibitions. The clubs mentioned in paragraph 53 were not clubs in the usual sense; they were rather model cultural centres situated mainly in the rural areas but also in the cities. Films or plays were shown at such centres; they had libraries; visiting collectives could perform there; there were other activities such as chess, sewing and drawing. The purpose was to enable people to relax after work. Everybody could buy tickets to performances at the cultural centres. In the rural areas, the rural population participated in cultural events at the centres.

15. In reply to the question on religion raised by the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, he said that the reference to religion in paragraph 10 of the report covered religion in the broadest sense. Under article 50 of the Constitution, the church was separated from the State, and the school from the church. Infringement of the laws governing that separation was a criminal offence under articles 139 and 140 of the Criminal Code of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. Violations of the laws separating church and State might take the form of attempts to force people to contribute tithes or donations to religious ministries to finance the mass dissemination of material calling for non-compliance with those laws.

16. The representative of Norway had asked for information on the extent to which knowledge about the major religions of the world was covered in the educational system. Instruction on that subject was provided in history and social science courses.

17. The CHAIRMAN declared that the Working Group had concluded its consideration of the report of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic on the rights covered by articles 13 to 15.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

