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Chairman: Mr. Jiří NOSEK (Czechoslovakia).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Núñez (Costa Rica), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 30

Forced labour: report of the Economic and Social Council (A/2662, A/2686, chapter V, section VIII, A/C.3/L.456) (*continued*)

1. Mr. COATON (Union of South Africa) said he had already had an opportunity to express his delegation's views on the report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Forced Labour (E/2431).¹ Of the eight charges made against the Union of South Africa, not one was relevant to the question which the *Ad Hoc* Committee had been called upon to examine; in not rejecting them from the beginning, it had proceeded beyond its terms of reference. Furthermore, its conclusions, at least in so far as they related to his country, were unwarranted and completely at variance with the facts; that was all the more regrettable as his Government, in a spirit of full co-operation, had found it possible to place before the *Ad Hoc* Committee full information on all those charges, as could be seen from pages 403 to 413 of the report and from document E/2431/Add.5. In connexion with that document he would add nothing to what he had said at the eighth session of the General Assembly and at the 588th meeting at the current session, except that it was preposterous to insinuate that forced labour existed in any degree in a country from which slavery had disappeared more than a century before.

2. His delegation obviously could not support a draft resolution based on the *Ad Hoc* Committee's report. He would therefore be obliged to abstain when a vote was taken on the draft resolution (A/C.4/L.456) submitted. If, however, the individual paragraphs were put to the vote separately, he would vote in favour of paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of the operative part, but would have to abstain when a vote was taken on the preamble because of its reference to resolution 524 (XVII) in which the Economic and Social Council

commended the *Ad Hoc* Committee for its work, and also when a vote was taken on paragraph 3 of the operative part, which, like the corresponding paragraph in resolution 524 (XVII), flowed directly from paragraph 552 of the report. It was an appeal to Governments to re-examine their laws and administrative practices in the light of the *Ad Hoc* Committee's conclusions; as his Government was unable to accept those conclusions in so far as they related to it, it would be unable to associate itself with such an appeal.

3. Mr. PAVLICEK (Czechoslovakia) observed that for several years the question of forced labour, which was on the agenda of various United Nations bodies, had been for some delegations, and especially for that of the United States of America, merely a pretext for grossly slandering the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the peoples' democracies. In the current year, it had been China's and Albania's turn to be subjected to slanderous attacks by the United States representative. That representative had also referred to Czechoslovakia in his most recent speech, which was in any case nothing but a faithful reflection of the Voice of America broadcasts. The attacks against the People's Republic of China and against Albania were all the more unworthy because those two countries, owing to the opposition of the United States to their admission to the United Nations, were unable to present their views.

4. The United States representative had referred in his speech to the report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Forced Labour (E/2431). The Czechoslovak delegation had already said what it thought of the report of that Committee, the setting up of which it had opposed, and his comments on the subject would be brief. Since its establishment, that Committee had had neither the necessary authority nor the necessary competence to concern itself with that question, and its members had not even been selected from among persons with an intimate knowledge of labour problems, the lives of workers, and such matters. While the *Ad Hoc* Committee had listened to those who had slandered the peoples' democracies, it had closed its eyes to facts that proved the existence of forced labour in, for example, the United States of America, and had even gone so far as to seek to conceal notorious cases of forced labour. The membership of that body sufficiently explained its bias and why it had not studied working conditions in the capitalist countries—more particularly in the United States, where the exploitation of the workers was most obvious. When it had been unable to keep silent on laws proving the existence of forced labour it had sought, by using ambiguous phraseology, to disguise the real effect of those laws. Paragraph 547 of the report, in connexion with vagrancy laws in the United States, included the passage: 'if extensively interpreted and applied, it could lead to a system of forced labour for economic purposes in the States

¹ Joint United Nations and International Labour Organisation document. See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Sixteenth Session, Supplement No. 13*, and No. 36 in the *Studies and Reports (New Series) of the International Labour Office*.

concerned". That was precisely what was happening. That was the ultimate aim of the measures of racial discrimination applied against the non-white population. The *Ad Hoc* Committee had not concerned itself with the condition of servitude of the share-croppers, who ran into debt not only when the harvest was bad, but also when it was too good, as prices then declined. The *New Statesman and Nation* of 21 August 1954, gave examples of conditions in the southern United States, and of peonage, that showed very clearly where forced labour really existed and to what points the *Ad Hoc* Committee ought to have directed its attention if it had wanted to perform its work honestly and impartially.

5. Like the United States representative in his speech, the *Ad Hoc* Committee in its report had given evidence of bias in respect of Czechoslovakia, and he wished to say a few words about social conditions in his country. At the end of the Second World War, Czechoslovakia had been economically devastated and ruined through the Nazi occupation. Thanks to the enthusiastic work of the workers and peasants, who had known that they would benefit by the fruits of their labour, Czechoslovakia had set out on the road to rehabilitation. The end of the five-year plan had been marked by a monetary reform and the abolition of the rationing of food and of certain industrial products. During 1953 the retail prices of consumer goods had been reduced on two occasions. There was currently no unemployment in Czechoslovakia, as was natural in a country in which the right to work was guaranteed to every citizen. The number of persons working was constantly increasing; the number of persons employed in the economic sector had increased by about one-third from 1949 to 1953. The number of women in employment was also increasing, especially in trade, banking, transport and light industry. At the end of 1953 the average level of wages had risen by 34 per cent, and by 56 per cent in industry. The volume of industrial production in 1953 had been 100.2 per cent higher than in 1948. Electric power production had risen from 4,100 to 12,400 million kilowatt hours. The production of coal—pit coal and lignite—had risen from 34,700,000 to 54,700,000 metric tons, that of steel from 2,300,000 to 4,400,000 metric tons. The insurance system provided for the needs of workers in the event of sickness or accident and in old age. The State's contributions had amounted to 6,100 million Czechoslovak crowns in 1953, or 71 per cent more than in 1948. Czechoslovakia had also made substantial progress in the educational, scientific and cultural fields. Education had been reorganized under a new Act. The number of pupils in the year 1953-1954 had exceeded 1,800,000. The number of teachers had been more than 36 per cent higher than in 1948. Over 19,000 workers were attending evening courses or studying by correspondence. The number of universities and faculties had risen from 22 in 1948 to 39 in 1953.

6. The results achieved in Albania had been no less striking. On 29 November, the anniversary of its liberation, that country had celebrated its national holiday, for on 29 November 1944, Albania had once and for all put an end to the domination of the exploiters and to foreign supremacy. Before the Second World War it had been one of the most backward countries. The war and the vandalism of the occupying forces had made the situation even more disastrous: over 100,000 million leks' worth of damage had been

caused. The Albanian people owed its rehabilitation to its courage and to the invaluable assistance of the USSR. It had been able to carry through an initial two-year plan, and the five-year plan shortly to be completed was an entire success. Industry was in full swing. In the course of a few years many industrial undertakings had been built, new towns created, three railway networks set up and irrigation canals constructed. Industrial production was more than eleven times what it had been in 1948; the production of electrical energy, oil, ore and asphalt had risen substantially. Agriculture had developed at a faster rate. Albania was now not only an agricultural, but also a highly industrialized country and had entirely changed its appearance in ten years. The Albanian woman, who had formerly been merely her husband's slave, now played an important part in all spheres of the national life. Albania had decided to go forward and slanderous attacks could not deter it.

7. He wondered why the United States persisted in repeating its slanders every year, and whether it wished to divert the United Nations from its proper role and to unleash a campaign the purpose of which was easy to discern. Its efforts were doomed to failure, for anyone who visited the peoples' democracies—and the number of visitors to those countries was increasing—was immediately convinced of the absurdity of the United States delegation's allegations and realized that labour was free in those countries.

8. Mr. MICHELET (France), who had himself undergone two years of forced labour at Dachau, deplored that the discussion of that important question had been begun too late to permit him to expatiate on it as it deserved. To all former inmates of the concentration camp world, it was a bitter disillusionment to think that there still existed concentration camps where men were placed not for committing ordinary law crimes but, as the draft resolution before the Committee euphemistically put it, "as a means of political coercion". France, hundreds of thousands of whose citizens had but a few years previously undergone forced labour, was ready to approve of any measure that would put an end to it.

9. Accordingly, the French delegation supported unreservedly the condemnation of systems of forced labour employed as a means of political punishment, as they were an intolerable infringement of inalienable human rights. It disapproved of any condemnation for political purposes accompanied by hypocritical economic exploitation, and therefore associated itself particularly with paragraph 1 of the operative part of the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456).

10. It also approved of the request made in paragraph 2. The competent international organizations, and in particular the International Labour Organisation, which administered International Convention No. 29, ratified by France in 1937, should continue to take an interest in the question of forced labour. His delegation had no illusions concerning the possibilities of the United Nations taking direct action in the matter. There was a better chance that public opinion, by exercising moral suasion on Governments, would put an end to forced labour.

11. His delegation warmly supported paragraph 3 of the operative part, in the expectation that a re-examination of laws and administrative practices would make a noteworthy contribution to the cause of mutual

understanding among peoples. It would be desirable for the Council, at its nineteenth session, to have before it a new report taking into account replies from Governments and any new information received on forced labour.

12. In conclusion, he hoped that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution before it, thus taking a step towards the elimination of one of the most infamous stigmas of the current epoch: forced labour for political reasons.

13. Mr. ALTMAN (Poland) strongly protested against the statements of the Kuomintang representative who, not content with occupying a seat not rightfully his, had hurled utterly unfounded charges at the great Chinese people and its lawful Government. Those charges had, moreover, been merely a repetition of the United States representative's slanderous remarks, all the more intolerable because they had been made in the absence of the true representative of China, who was kept out of the United Nations by the opposition of the United States of America.

14. The Polish delegation had already stated its views on the report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Forced Labour (E/2431) at the eighth session of the General Assembly. He regretted that the item, which could only hinder the relaxation of international tension, had been placed on the agenda of the ninth session. Inquiries into the problem of forced labour were needed in countries where it really existed, and he was happy to see that the Governing Body of the International Labour Office had recently decided to include the question in the agenda of the 1956 International Labour Conference with a view to adopting a convention or a recommendation. The United Nations, too, should deal with the question, but in strict accordance with the principles of the Charter. The establishment of the *Ad Hoc* Committee had been a mistake, and he regretted that the Economic and Social Council at its twelfth session had not adopted instead the proposal to establish a large international committee of representatives of all the trade-union organizations, which would have been qualified to study all the available data.

15. The draft resolution now before the Committee (A/C.3/L.456) condemned the existence of systems of forced labour; it was a commendable objective at first sight, but when studied closely it took on an altogether different aspect. The draft resolution was based on the *Ad Hoc* Committee's report, and any impartial and well-informed person was bound to be indignant at the utter lack of objectivity displayed in that document. For his part, he felt indignant both as an expert in social matters and labour legislation and as the representative of a country which for the past ten years had been in the vanguard of social progress and which had been basely attacked in the report. For the third time in the space of one year, the United States of America, for reasons having nothing to do with the elimination of forced labour and respect for human rights, had caused that report to be discussed in the United Nations. It was to be regretted that the United Nations should again waste its time on the examination of a document unanimously condemned by many social experts of different persuasions. It was similarly to be regretted that the document should have been published under the auspices of the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation. The United Kingdom representative had said that it

contained slight inaccuracies; that was a strong understatement. The *Ad Hoc* Committee, a tool in the "cold war", had for political motives arrogated to itself the right to interpret facts as it pleased and even to invent them. Its slanderous accusations against Poland, the Soviet Union and other democratic countries were not founded on objective information but on so-called evidence furnished by organizations dominated by the United States of America and on the depositions of traitors and United States espionage agents who were the avowed enemies of their countries of origin. It had been rightly noted at the seventeenth session of the Economic and Social Council that depositions by such persons were not admitted by the courts of many countries, but the *Ad Hoc* Committee had preferred them to the views of honest people, like the representatives of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and Mr. Christopher Whyte, whom the USSR representative had mentioned. The report was full of false or distorted quotations and of references to obsolete documents, and the assertions in it often rested on mistranslations. Such methods, commonly used by propaganda agencies like the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, were inadmissible on the part of an organ whose duty it was to be completely objective.

16. In addition, the *Ad Hoc* Committee had ignored many aspects of forced labour, especially those most common in the capitalist countries. Furthermore, it had consistently made excuses for colonial Powers in connexion with forced labour and the inhuman exploitation of the indigenous inhabitants in colonies and Trust Territories.

17. He gave two examples which, in his view, established the bad faith of the *Ad Hoc* Committee. The first concerned the USSR. The Committee had studied Soviet legislation on the protection of motherhood providing that a pregnant woman could ask for lighter work than that she habitually performed, while keeping the same salary; those provisions, which also existed in Poland and which were recognized by experts, such as those of the ILO, as being very progressive, had been interpreted by the *Ad Hoc* Committee as proving the existence of forced labour in the USSR.

18. The second example concerned Poland. There was a law in Poland under which students of professional schools and universities, in accordance with a carefully worked out plan, were employed, on the completion of their studies, in the branch of industry for which they had been trained. That law, which assured to young graduates decent working conditions in their chosen profession and which spared them the difficulties described in the report submitted by the ILO in May 1954 to the Advisory Committee for Intellectual Workers, was in the view of the *Ad Hoc* Committee evidence of the existence of forced labour in Poland.

19. The partial report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee could not be used as the basis for a decision by the United Nations; he had to protest, therefore, against the proposed preamble to the joint draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456) in which the General Assembly noted resolution 524 (XVII) of the Economic and Social Council, which had commended the *Ad Hoc* Committee for its work. No one who believed in social progress, in the triumph of human rights and in respect for the lofty aims of the United Nations could fail to conclude that the *Ad Hoc* Committee's report was a disgrace to its

authors and to those at whose instigation it had been drawn up.

20. Paragraph 1 of the operative part of the draft resolution condemned the existence of systems of forced labour which were referred to in the report. There were, however, many other forms of forced labour which it was not suggested should be condemned. The United States delegation, by slanders and hypocritical statements, tried to distract public opinion from the widespread practice of forced labour in various forms in the United States of America, where slavery for debts, hereditary slavery and the sale of children as slaves still existed; where severe penalties were laid down by the laws on "vagrancy" and where, in certain southern States, local legislation prohibited the inhabitants from leaving the State without an authorization which was delivered only on payment of a very high fee, so that workers were unable to obtain one. A number of American publications admitted the existence of forced labour *de jure* and *de facto* in the United States and there was something deeply shocking about the abuse for political purposes of the noble words "fundamental human rights" and "dignity and worth of the human person" in the draft resolution.

21. The Polish delegation would vote against the draft resolution.

22. Mr. DUNLOP (New Zealand) said that the material assembled on the problem of forced labour was impressive. The International Labour Organisation had been studying the question for many years and was the body best able to secure the results for which the United Nations was striving—the ultimate abolition of forced labour in any form. The Economic and Social Council was to be congratulated on having initiated the wider United Nations study of that difficult problem in such a way as to make possible a balanced and responsible treatment. No solution could be found at the political level while nearly all the countries concerned denied the existence of forced labour in their territories and some refused to co-operate with the United Nations by providing the relevant information. The action of the Council in requesting further study by the International Labour Organisation and the Secretary-General was proper at the current stage and the New Zealand delegation would support the draft resolution which endorsed it. The work of the ILO would be greatly helped if the United Nations supported it and reaffirmed that international opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to the institution of forced labour, which was undoubtedly one of the greatest organized crimes ever committed against humanity.

23. Mr. KADRY (Iraq) appreciated the endeavours of the *Ad Hoc* Committee to carry out its work carefully and conscientiously. He did not agree with all the Committee's conclusions, but he recognized that the Committee had carried out a useful task, which would undoubtedly promote the cause of human rights. He was glad to know that the *Ad Hoc* Committee had remained in contact with the Governments concerned.

24. The previous year, when the question had been discussed, the Iraqi delegation had urged the necessity of studying the problem in all its aspects in order to abolish forced labour in all forms by international measures. The *Ad Hoc* Committee seemed to have interpreted its terms of reference to mean that it should deal only with those forms of forced labour which were imposed systematically and which concerned

large groups. That interpretation took no account of the human side of the problem. Forced labour should be denounced whatever the reason for it or the number of its victims, and the Iraqi delegation could not agree that it was a less serious infringement of the fundamental rights of human beings when imposed for economic reasons than when imposed for political reasons. That did not mean that his delegation did not deplore the last-mentioned form of forced labour or regret that certain countries refused to co-operate with the United Nations by supplying the information requested. By adopting that negative attitude those States forfeited the moral right to accuse other countries. Furthermore, accusation was itself a negative attitude, whereas a positive attitude was called for; for that reason the delegation of Iraq regretted the use of the word "proof" in connexion with forced labour. The reduction of the problem to the collection of proofs could only accentuate the division in world public opinion; the power of public opinion was undoubtedly one of the main factors in the solution of the problem but the international community had to base its condemnation on the objective study of all aspects of the evil in question.

25. At the previous meeting the Committee had heard a statement concerning the situation in Communist China. It was almost regrettable that that statement should have been based on such abundant information, since it was hard to believe that men could treat their fellow men so cruelly. Reference had been made to forced labour imposed by law and the practice of forced labour. A distinction should be drawn between the two aspects of the question: in certain cases they might coincide but in others the practice existed though there was no legal sanction for it; in that connexion he cited the case of the building of a railway in French Equatorial Africa in 1926. The French Government had recently assured the *Ad Hoc* Committee that forced labour had been completely abolished in 1946 under the Labour Code for Overseas Territories; that was satisfactory, although it was a pity the decision had not been taken earlier. Moreover, abolition by law did not guarantee abolition in practice; forced labour was an integral part of every form of economic exploitation, of which colonialism—an anachronism that was bound to disappear—was one of the chief examples.

26. It was hardly necessary to add that forced labour, whether or not sanctioned by law and whether practised for economic or for political purposes, was a pernicious system and should be studied and treated as such.

27. In view of those considerations, the Iraqi delegation thought the *Ad Hoc* Committee's conclusions should be revised and brought into harmony with the facts. There was a lack of balance in the opinions emitted on certain cases. The reservations in paragraph 69 of the report (E/2431) with regard to the lack of definite conclusions should be borne in mind; the Iraqi delegation, however, did not share the views expressed with regard to a number of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The study was incomplete and the conclusions were based on insufficient data.

28. The Iraqi delegation would support the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456), but asked for a separate vote on the words "are on such a scale as to", against which it would vote.

29. Mr. BUVAILIK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) protested against the slanderous statements

made with regard to China and Albania, two countries which were not represented in the United Nations. The United States representative had made untruthful accusations concerning the great Chinese people, which had been repeated by the representative of the Kuomintang clique.

30. Mr. YU Tsune-chi (China), speaking on a point of order, asked the Chairman to rule that the expression "Kuomintang clique", used by the previous speaker, was inadmissible.

31. Mr. SAKSIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking on a point of order, said that his delegation could not regard the preceding speaker as the representative of China.

32. The CHAIRMAN stated that points of order were raised to ask the Chairman for a ruling. Inasmuch as the General Assembly had accepted the report of the Credentials Committee, he considered that the representative of China rightfully occupied his seat in the Third Committee.

33. He would give no ruling on the point raised by the Chinese representative, but invited the Ukrainian representative to refrain from using language which might give offence to other members of the Committee.

34. Mr. BUVAILIK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that no slander could affect the peaceful and constructive efforts of the Chinese people, which had gained its independence. Foreign influence had served to perpetuate the feudal system and to maintain a backward and stagnating economy in Asia, the cradle of civilization. The Chinese people had shaken off its yoke and rebuilt its country which had been ruined by the Kuomintang exploiters. More progress had been achieved in the past five years than in centuries before. Irritated by the socialist policy of the Central People's Republic, the United States of America was trying to slander it and was stressing that the alleged forced labour was imposed for political reasons. The fact was that there were very few political offenders in China. In any case, incitement to subversion and sabotage alone, and not expression of opinion, were punishable crimes. Moreover, the penal code was based on the principle of re-education. The only way for a man who had committed a crime against his country to redeem himself was to work for society. Article 89 of the Constitution stated that no man could be punished unless he was proved guilty and had been granted all necessary judicial safeguards. Prison labour was regulated and paid for and prisoners received social security benefits. Their labour did not compete with that of free workers, as was the case in some capitalist countries. The most serious violations of human rights occurred in the countries whose Governments were accusing China. In 1950, the League to Defend the Workers' Rights had submitted to the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Slavery set up by the Economic and Social Council a documented report on legal and illegal methods of forced labour in the United States. Discrimination against United States citizens who belonged to the Negro race was a well-known fact. It was also known that private enterprises in the United States could recruit labour in prisons. A New York State law passed in 1919, amended in 1929 and still in force, stipulated that prisoners should be used exclusively for hard labour. In the southern States, the number of arrests and convictions for vagrancy and

similar offences rose during the cotton harvest season when a full supply of labour was needed.

35. It was regrettable that, after several years, the Third Committee was still spending time on discussions which could only poison the atmosphere, when there were more urgent tasks demanding its undivided attention. The ruling circles of the United States had asked that the item should be included in the agenda in order to be able once again to slander the peoples' democracies and to keep up the international tension. At the twelfth session of the Economic and Social Council, the USSR had proposed that a large international committee composed of representatives of all existing trade-union organizations should be set up to study the conditions of workers throughout the world (E/L.165).² The States which had opposed the proposal knew that the findings of an impartial survey would go against them. Their past and current attitude showed that their objectives were purely political. Their attempts to divert public attention were in vain however; it was an established fact that forced labour existed in capitalist countries, particularly in the United States of America.

36. As for the false charges made against the peoples' democracies, they could be easily disproved by the truthful testimony of foreign observers. Between 1949 and 1953, 463 groups of visitors from sixty-two different countries had travelled through the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR. They had moved about freely and had spoken to anyone they pleased. Not one of them had mentioned the existence of a system of forced labour. *The New York Times* of 27 June 1954 had published a report by one of its correspondents who had visited Siberia and who had mentioned none of the facts alleged in the *Ad Hoc* Committee's report. Mr. de Nerva, a well-known Brazilian writer, upon his return from the USSR, had published a fully documented book and had given a lecture at Rio de Janeiro in which he had stated that he had seen no evidence of forced labour, but had been struck, on the contrary, by the Soviet authorities' concern for the well-being of workers. A Bolivian statesman, Mr. Salazar, whose travel notes had been published in the magazine *El Pueblo*, of February 1954, had stressed that he had been able to converse freely with people of all professions everywhere; he had noted that the people of the USSR was making giant strides on the road to progress, that it was engaged in constructive work, and was sincerely anxious to maintain good relations with all the nations of the world. Forced labour was inconceivable in the Ukrainian SSR, as in all the Soviet Socialist Republics, where exploitation was unknown. Social progress was based on free and creative work; that explained the enthusiasm of the people, which considered work as an honour and a heroic enterprise.

37. The Ukrainian SSR would vote against the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456), which was contrary to the provisions of Chapter IX of the Charter and prejudicial to the strengthening of international co-operation.

38. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said that at the eighth session of the General Assembly he had drawn attention to the shortcomings of the voluminous report drawn up by the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Forced

² See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twelfth Session, Annexes*, agenda item 13.

Labour (E/2431). He would have been satisfied with a scientific and impartial study; unfortunately the text submitted had a strong political tinge. The Third Committee should not have examined the question from that point of view or referred it in that form to the Economic and Social Council, which was already overburdened with work. Accusations, reproaches and mutual recriminations would not make it easier to find a humanitarian solution. Although verbal battles were to be preferred to real wars, men sometimes misused their gift of speech to a point where it became a bane for the human race. In any case, it was an insult to the intelligence of delegations to try to pass in silence the existence of forced labour in colonial territories. The Committee could not know for certain what was going on in China, since it had no direct contact with the greater part of that country, but everybody was aware of the situation prevailing in the colonies. Yet the *Ad Hoc* Committee had not considered it, and had given a limited interpretation to its terms of reference by deciding (E/2431, paragraphs 13 and 15) to concern itself with laws and regulations and their application. In many instances, forced labour was prohibited by law, and yet the practice continued, particularly in the colonial territories where the situation had not really changed since the end of the Second World War. He wondered why the Committee had decided to confine itself to "systems" of forced labour rather than to study the problem as a whole, in the light of the essential psychological considerations involved. The Saudi Arabian delegation had pointed out at the eighth session of the General Assembly that anybody who engaged in a trade which he disliked or for which he had no inclination was in a sense doing forced labour. Even when the person concerned resigned himself to his fate, the fact remained that he was giving in to the pressure of circumstances. Millions of human beings were currently in that situation. Military service was another example of a system under which persons were called on to engage in certain activities against their will. It might be argued that it was a matter of national defence, a necessary evil; the same argument could be used to justify the mobilization of manpower to serve the economic interests of a country. The *Ad Hoc* Committee had dealt with only one aspect of the question, and that was why its report was political in nature.

39. It was not so much the legislative texts that mattered as the facts. Throughout the world people suffered from nervous breakdowns because they were doing work which they did not like. In that connexion, external pressure and resignation had the same effect. Among the conditions which led to the appearance of forced labour was one which might, by a curious paradox, be called "forced leisure". Men were compelled to accept any kind of employment in order to earn their living and to provide for their family, because there were no posts available in their own profession. That happened more frequently in the colonial territories than anywhere else, as there were insufficient openings for workers there and, owing to the selfish policy of the monopolies, people died of hunger in lands where the soil was prodigiously rich. The indigenous inhabitants were forced to cultivate the undeveloped land for the greater benefit of certain groups of people. An Arab proverb compared people placed in that position with camels which carried water they did not drink. The *Ad Hoc* Committee had not con-

cerned itself with such facts, although it had stated in its report (E/2431, paragraph 19) that it wished to "discharge its task . . . on a universal basis". It had been satisfied with the replies received from Governments without troubling to find out whether any forced labour existed which was not covered by legislative texts. The eleven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456) said nothing about the colonies. In Saudi Arabia he had seen pilgrims coming to Mecca from all parts of the world and knew what was happening in colonial territories. The representatives of Iraq and Afghanistan had, moreover, already raised the question. The silence of the *Ad Hoc* Committee and of the sponsors of the draft resolution was inexplicable. The colonial Powers recruited soldiers from among the indigenous inhabitants who asked for work. After having fought for freedom such Powers should not set up or encourage tyrannical systems. He was mentioning hard facts, what he knew were indisputable, objective truths, which no philosophic subterfuges could hide. The members of the Committee could easily arrive at an understanding if each considered that humanitarian problem from the right angle. Unfortunately, not one of the representatives of the eleven Powers who had taken part in the discussion so far had mentioned forced labour in the colonial territories. The Governments replied to the allegations made by quoting texts. He would undertake to show that the laws in question were not applied. About twenty years previously he had seen Senegalese troops used in the Middle East against people who were fighting for their independence. The soldiers in question had told him that they were in the army because they did not wish to die of hunger. Senegal was, however, one of the richest countries in the world so far as natural resources were concerned. The representative of Iraq emphasized the anachronistic nature of colonialism in the twentieth century. Colonialism still existed, even if it sometimes appeared in a different guise. The *Ad Hoc* Committee's report therefore seemed to be incomplete.

40. The delegation of Saudi Arabia could not support the eleven-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456), which would make the General Assembly express satisfaction with the action already taken as regards forced labour. Moreover he could not help being amused at paragraph 4 of the operative part, where the use of the word "whatever" in sub-paragraph (a) indicated some doubt as to the willingness with which Governments would reply. It could not reasonably be hoped that Governments would confess their guilt. They would say that forced labour did not exist in their countries and would again submit legislative and statutory texts in support of their statements. As to the "new information" envisaged, he suggested that the observations he had just made on the question of colonial territories should be borne in mind if really useful work was to be done.

41. Mrs. PRIETO (Cuba) recalled that at United Nations meetings the Cuban delegation, which was one of the sponsors of the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.456), had always supported the suppression of forced labour in all its forms. At the eighth session of the General Assembly and at the seventeenth session of the Economic and Social Council, the head of her delegation had had an opportunity to review the question in detail and to explain the position of Cuba, which he had again affirmed in the general debate at the 483rd plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

He had emphasized that the United Nations ideal of the dignity of the human person had to be achieved, and that forced labour, which reintroduced slavery and set humanity back several centuries, should therefore be prohibited. Slavery in all its forms was prohibited under Cuban law. It was for that reason that the Cuban delegation, along with the ten other Powers,

had proposed the draft resolution, which was evidence of its good faith and its concern that the General Assembly should act in a fitting manner, that is to say, take constructive measures to ensure that the infamous system of forced labour disappeared from the countries where it still existed.

The meeting rose at 6.5 p.m.