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Chairman : Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON (Thailand).

**Report of the Economic and Social Council
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 (*continued*)**

[Item 11]*

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. LIMA (Brazil) said that his delegation would give its full support to the draft resolution submitted by Burma (A/C.2/L.136) in view of the importance of the work done by the regional economic commissions.

2. The work of the Economic Commission for Latin America had received considerable praise at the thirteenth session of the Economic and Social Council. As a result of the measure of co-operation already achieved with the other regional commissions, with the specialized agencies and with the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, duplication of work was being avoided. He reiterated the invitation extended by his Government to ECLA to hold its fifth regular session in Rio de Janeiro.

3. His delegation wholeheartedly supported the draft resolution submitted jointly by Chile and the United States (A/C.2/L.134) which envisaged both emergency action and measures to meet chronic famine conditions and was aimed at solving one of the most important problems facing the United Nations at the present time.

4. Mr. AREAN (Argentina) said his delegation shared the view that the problem of food shortages constituted a fundamental problem to which it was essential that the United Nations should find a solution, both on an emergency and on a long-term basis, so that the purposes of the Charter might be achieved as speedily as possible.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Supplement No. 3*.

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

5. His Government had always supported any initiative aimed at improving the food situation of the world, both in the field of increased production and by making large donations towards meeting crises arising out of natural causes. Although Argentina was an important producer and exporter of foodstuffs, it was now exporting less owing to increased home demand. In the past, that demand had been merely potential since all consumers had not been in a position to satisfy their needs. However the purchasing power of the home market had increased as a result of the Government's policy of fair shares for all and food consumption in Argentina had now reached an unprecedented level in respect of quantity, quality and low cost.

6. In arranging for an international scheme to meet food shortages, it would no doubt be useful to appeal to all governments, but the Committee must also adopt more practical measures. His delegation considered that prices constituted a fundamental aspect to be taken into account when increased food production was urged. Consequently any resolution which might be adopted in that respect should include reference to payment of adequate prices for foodstuffs in all international transactions. In that connexion, he recalled a proposal submitted by his Government to the Inter-American Economic and Social Council in August 1951 and recently adopted by that body to the effect that : the control of prices of basic materials and food products should be applied in such a way that the producers receive an adequate profit and the workers earn fair wages, in order to decrease the disproportion between the standard of living of those workers and the standard of living in the highly developed countries.

7. His delegation was in full sympathy with the aims of the joint draft resolution submitted by Chile and the United States, but it should be ascertained more clearly whether that joint draft was intended to meet the chronic problem of malnutrition as well as merely emergency conditions.

8. His delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution submitted by Burma.

9. Mr. MARINO PEREZ (Cuba) believed that, in spite of existing difficulties in various national economies which would have to be remedied, the world economic situation justified a sense of satisfaction and optimism. Workers, generally speaking, had attained a higher standard of living and, in many cases, under-developed countries were receiving higher prices for their exports of raw materials which had moreover increased. Although progress in their economic development was still slow, those countries were in a far more favourable position than hitherto.

10. It must be remembered that under-developed countries benefitted from any improvement in the economic situation of the industrialized countries themselves since the economic bonds between the countries of the world were growing stronger day by day. Disarmament and the establishment of peace and security could be achieved only if the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe would direct their efforts towards such economic and social co-operation. Nevertheless, the industrialized countries, headed by the United States, had sufficient basic resources and were in such a secure economic position that general world prosperity and economic development were ensured against any crisis which might threaten them. It should be the primary aim of the United Nations further to strengthen such co-operation between all countries, whatever their stage of development, so that a firm basis for human prosperity might be established.

11. He stressed the importance of the work being done by the various economic organs of the United Nations and by non-governmental organizations. It was an indispensable complement to the efforts undertaken in the national sphere; but the latter should not be relaxed.

12. In view of the need for measures which by maintaining suitable conditions in trade in primary commodities would ensure world economic stability, he called the Committee's attention to the draft resolution which his delegation had submitted in that respect (A/C.2/L.141).

13. Mr. WOULBROUN (Belgium) wished to reply to the remarks made by the Czechoslovak representative (181st meeting) in introducing his delegation's draft resolution entitled "Deterioration of the position of the working population as a result of the armaments race" (A/C.2/L.135).

14. Naturally, no one believed that armament programmes would bring about improvements in the economic and social field. However, the Czechoslovak representative had pointed to the United States and to Western European countries as being responsible for rearmament. The Czechoslovak representative claimed to speak for the peoples' democracies but had forgotten the democratic principle of the rule of the majority. The United Nations had on several occasions, by a considerable majority vote, denounced aggression and the western Powers had never been labeled the aggressors. Those responsible for the present tension were the countries of Eastern Europe which had never disarmed after the war and had refused the friendship offered by their former allies, and restricted themselves to making regular disarmament proposals which were unacceptable to the majority. The Czechoslovak representative had therefore based his statement on false premises.

15. The Czechoslovak representative had accused the western Powers of letting the armaments burden fall on the working population as a result of inflation and of the fact that wages had not kept up with the increased cost of living. The governments of the western Powers had taken many measures to control inflation and, in Belgium, the workers were guaranteed a rise in wages in case of a rise in the retail price index. According to a very influential economist, real wages in Belgium had risen during 1950-1951.

16. He asked the Czechoslovak representative whether he felt himself in a position to state that under a communist régime, unproductive expenditure such as that entailed by the manufacture of war material did not deprive the population as a whole of consumer goods.

17. As for the Czechoslovak representative's assertion that the workers in Western European countries had no opportunity of influencing the economic policy of their countries, he declared that in Belgium the workers exercised considerable influence in the organs attached to the three great traditional parties, which themselves accounted for the vast majority of parliamentary representatives. He added that the working population had been granted still further opportunities to participate in economic affairs by far-reaching structural reforms, and cited a number of national bodies in Belgium on which the workers were represented. Moreover, five trade union representatives were participating in the work of the Belgian delegation to the General Assembly and their views were taken into account on every aspect of that work.

18. In common with many draft resolutions submitted by delegations of the Eastern European countries, the Czechoslovak draft resolution enunciated certain principles on which general agreement existed but also added passages which were unacceptable and were made all the more so by the tendentious commentaries which accompanied their submission. His delegation would therefore be inclined to reject the draft resolution as it stood, but reserved the right to comment on it again at a later stage if it were substantially amended and the polemics eliminated.

19. His delegation fully shared the humanitarian considerations on which the joint draft resolution by Chile and the United States (A/C.2/L.134) was based and would support it after incorporation of the various changes of form that had been suggested. He had not fully studied the amendments submitted by the USSR (A/C.2/L.137) to that joint draft resolution, but in view of the fact that its amendment to paragraph 5 reintroduced the basic theme of the Czechoslovak draft resolution, he regarded it as unacceptable.

20. His delegation had observed with interest the growing importance of the regional economic commissions, and would therefore support the Burmese draft resolution (A/C.2/L.136).

21. Mr. SAKSIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that since the USSR representative had, at previous meetings, stated his delegation's general views on the world economic situation, he would merely comment briefly on the measures taken in the USSR to combat food shortages and on the draft resolutions before the Committee and the USSR amendments to document A/C.2/L.134.

22. In view of his delegation's sympathy with the under-developed countries and its consequent interest in the work of the regional economic commissions, it took a favourable view of the Burmese draft resolution (A/C.2/L.136). While his delegation agreed with the continuance of the work of those commissions, it could not support the expressions of satisfaction which the draft resolution contained. The regional economic commissions had a number of shortcomings. For example, the composition of ECAFE, as the Burmese representative himself had pointed out (182nd meeting), was unsatisfactory, since it did not include a true representative of the Chinese people. Similarly, as a result of the obstacles advanced by the United States, ECE lacked representatives from a number of European countries. He, therefore, proposed the deletion of the words "with satisfaction" and "valuable" from the second paragraph of the Burmese draft resolution and indicated that with that deletion, his delegation would vote for it.

23. The joint draft resolution submitted by Chile and the United States raised the important problem of measures to be taken to combat famine. That question was of crucial importance because the majority of the peoples of the world were under-nourished and in some countries the problem assumed the proportions of famine. Moreover, it was not only in the under-developed countries that the situation was critical; even in some modern progressive western countries there was a serious lack of food, in some cases more serious than during the war. The problem therefore called for energetic measures for its solution.

24. In that connexion, he would outline the steps taken in the USSR to deal with the situation. Before the Revolution, Russia had been basically an agricultural country, but because of the semi-feudal estate system, it had been extremely backward and production techniques had been positively medieval. As a result, notwithstanding the country's size and fertility, the food requirements of the population had not been satisfied. After the downfall of the Czarist régime, the USSR Government under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin had undertaken a complete reconstruction of the country's agricultural system based on the principles of collectivism and on the most modern techniques. The country had thus been transformed into an industrialized one with a very advanced agricultural system. In 1951, Soviet peasants had received from the Government 137,000 tractors, 54,000 combined harvesters and more than 2 million smaller agricultural machines and implements. The peasants had thus been enabled to increase their output. Despite the devastation due to the war, the richest agricultural districts had been rehabilitated and production was much in excess of the pre-war level. From 1947 onwards all rationing of food had been eliminated and there had been a steady decline in food prices.

25. The Government, however, had not stopped at that. On Stalin's initiative, it had elaborated vast plans for increasing output by the transformation of climatic conditions and other natural obstacles. The USSR Government has thus provided adequate supplies of food for the population. It was in the light of the experience of his own country that he could not take a favourable view of the proposals in the joint draft resolution, which he considered inadequate. That was why his delegation had moved the amendments to the joint draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/L.137. The first two

amendments were based on the fact that his delegation did not consider it necessary to praise the work of the specialized agencies or of voluntary non-governmental agencies which had not so far produced very concrete results in the provision of food. Paragraph 5 of the joint draft resolution was acceptable, but an addition should be made to it to indicate that famine could be effectively combatted only by directing the great financial and material resources currently involved in war production into peaceful channels. His delegation had therefore proposed an addition to that effect. The remaining paragraphs of the joint draft resolution were satisfactory, provided the first part of paragraph 8 was altered as indicated in the fourth USSR amendment.

26. The most important of the USSR amendments was the last one. The addition of the new paragraph proposed was essential because of the cases, completely unacceptable in view of the terms of the Charter, in which attempts were made to extort political, economic, or military commitments from countries suffering from famine in exchange for food. He again emphasized the importance of the problem dealt with in the draft resolution and hoped that, if the Committee took a favourable view of his delegation's amendments, it would be possible to reach agreement on a combined draft resolution.

27. He was compelled to reply to certain statements made by the United States representative on 11 January 1952 (181st meeting) in connexion with the joint draft resolution. He felt that on that occasion there had been a certain lack of modesty in the United States representative's description of the assistance given by his country to others which were suffering from famine. The United States representative had also presented an incorrect picture of the situation in the 1920's when the United States had given aid to the USSR. He wished to correct that picture, on the basis of official United States documents.

28. The very poor harvests in the USSR in the 1920's were due not, as the United States representative had said, to the activities of the Soviet Government but to the aftermath of the First World War and the subsequent four-year civil war encouraged by the United States and other capitalist Powers which had diverted the Soviet workers and peasants from peaceful production. In November 1917, the United States Ambassador in Russia had officially asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he considered it possible for the United States to deal with Russia as it had dealt with China, in other words to turn the young republic into a United States colony. Mr. Saksin went on to quote statements made by American politicians which had encouraged the United States to carry out military intervention against the workers and peasants of the country. Under cover of the agreement under which United States assistance had been provided in 1921, a number of United States agents, posing as distributors of relief, had entered Soviet territory and fomented the civil war in the USSR. As a result, the USSR had finally been compelled to abrogate the agreement. His criticism of the United States Government's action in no way extended to the American people, whose workers had always been favourably disposed towards the USSR and had finally forced their leaders to give up their military intervention in the USSR.

29. The remaining draft resolution, that of Czechoslovakia (A/C.2/L.135) was a very important document

which fully compensated for the defects of the other two draft resolutions. His delegation would support it. He reserved the right to speak on the amendments to the draft resolutions at a later stage.

30. Mr. BORIS (France) recalled that the Economic and Social Council had held a detailed and comprehensive discussion of the world economic situation at two successive sessions, and in four months' time would be continuing that discussion at its next session. In the meantime, the regional economic commissions would also have given close attention to factors influencing the world economic situation in each of the areas under their competence. Another debate on that question in the Second Committee might seem superfluous. As a matter of fact, in the course of the discussion of section I of chapter II of the Council's report, few representatives had seized the opportunity which it offered of speaking on the world economic situation; it should be noted that the Second Committee could have considered whether the report and the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council had covered the subject adequately.

31. In the circumstances, despite the fact that it had asked to be placed on the list of speakers if the world economic situation had been examined, the French delegation would confine itself to explaining briefly, at the appropriate time, why it supported the Chilean-United States joint draft resolution (A/C.2/L.134) and the Burmese draft resolution (A/C.2/L.136), and why it was unable to vote for the draft resolution submitted by Czechoslovakia (A/C.2/L.135).

32. Mr. TOBIAS (United States of America) regretted that the discussion of a matter of such great importance to the health and happiness of the world had been interrupted by the attacks of the Czechoslovak and USSR representatives. He was surprised that the USSR representative objected to the faint words of praise addressed, in the joint draft resolution (A/C.2/L.134), to the inter-governmental organizations for their efforts to control the natural forces which caused famine.

33. He was accustomed to attacks on his presentations of facts, but he felt compelled to object to attacks levelled against the motives of the United States in its humanitarian work. He had not intended to indulge in self-praise in listing the instances of United States interest in and sympathy with the misfortunes of other peoples. Since the United States had so frequently been depicted as a war-mongering colossus, he might be pardoned for having referred to cases where his country had acted for reasons altogether different from those alleged by its assailants. He reserved the right to submit details in defence of the United States position.

34. The USSR representative had drawn a distinction between the United States people and the United States Government. It should be clearly understood that the United States Government expressed the mind of the people apart from small opposition groups which were free to express criticism. The working people of the United States—and the term "worker" should not be interpreted narrowly as "manual worker"—were the backbone of the country and had firmly withstood the crises of the past as they would withstand any in the future.

35. The Czechoslovak representative had referred to the effects which the United States defence programme would have on the standard of living of United States workers (181st meeting) and had pointed out that smaller amounts of consumer goods and less new housing would be available in the immediate future. That was perfectly true, but the sacrifices would not be confined to any one sector of population as the United States President had made clear in his Economic Report to Congress in 1951. Unfortunately those sacrifices were necessary; not even the Czechoslovak representative could expect the United States to remain passive, to proceed with its normal economic pursuits and to accept aggression and the abandonment of its freedom.

36. The United States would press forward with its defence programme as far as its own security and the security of the free world required. But, as the United States President had recently stated in his Annual Address to Congress on the State of the Union, the strength of the United States depended upon the health, morale and freedom of its citizens. Measures for the welfare of the American people could not be abandoned if the fight for peace were to be won.

37. The Czechoslovak representative had emphasized alleged trade discrimination practised by the United States against the so-called peoples' democracies. The United Nations Command in Korea had informed the world that many of the arms used by the North Korean and Chinese communists to kill United Nations troops had been manufactured in Eastern Europe, and it was not surprising, therefore, that the United States discriminated against that area by refusing to send strategic materials to it.

38. The Czechoslovak representative had also referred to the allegedly wretched conditions from which United States workers were suffering as a result of what he termed the "armaments race". That representative had stated that the cost of living in the United States had risen much more steeply than wages since June 1950 and that employers sought to conceal the facts by publishing wage statistics in terms of the average hourly wage, thus camouflaging the effect of alleged cuts in overtime. The *Economic Indicators* prepared by the United States Council of Economic Advisors and the monthly reports of the Department of Labor gave, however, in addition to average hourly earnings, a table of average weekly earnings fully reflecting overtime payments. The edition of *Economic Indicators* for December 1951 contained a comparative table of such earnings between June 1950 and October 1951 which showed that earnings in the manufacturing industries taken as a whole had risen slightly more than the cost of living since June 1950. The same was true of earnings in most other industries.

39. In connexion with the Czechoslovak representative's attempt to prove that the purpose of the United States defence activities was to swell the profits of corporations, Mr. Tobias quoted a statement by Mr. Mansfield of the United States delegation made on 30 November 1951 in the Second Committee (156th meeting), to the effect that, with the exception of the oil, service and amusement industries, the net profits, after deduction of taxes, of every important industrial group in the United States had been considerably smaller in the third quarter of 1951 than in the same period of 1950 when defence production had hardly started. The

combined net profits of the 490 leading United States corporations during the third quarter of 1951 had been 28 per cent below those of the corresponding period of 1950. During that quarter, the net profit of the iron and steel industry had gone down by 41 per cent; chemicals by 43 per cent; machinery by 39 per cent. Those were the industries upon which the United States primarily depended for the production of its defence needs.

40. The Czechoslovak representative had implied that little or nothing was being done to provide the American people with social or cultural services. It was true that, as the appropriations directly related to defence had increased, the proportion devoted to social and cultural purposes had decreased, but the proportion of the federal budget assigned to those purposes for the fiscal year 1952 was 11 per cent and not 4 per cent as indicated by the Czechoslovak representative, who had, besides, conveniently forgotten to mention state and local expenditures on social and cultural activities (about \$10,000 million annually) which were even higher than federal expenditure. Projected federal expenditures for social and cultural purposes in the fiscal year had been placed at about 8 thousand million dollars.

41. He regretted that the level of the debate had been lowered by the kind of attack just made by the representatives of Czechoslovakia and the USSR. He would not attempt to deal at length with current economic conditions in Czechoslovakia, but wished to ask the Czechoslovak representative some questions. He asked whether it was not true that the official statistics of the Czechoslovak Government showed that the average wage increase between 1938 and 1948 had been 153 per cent while the wholesale price index had risen by 225 per cent during the same period; that the average wages for industrial workers in Czechoslovakia were as low as 70 to 80 dollars per month even when converted at the official rate of exchange; that the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia had stated in the National Assembly on 31 October 1951 that the food supply was causing them extreme worry and was the subject of many complaints and dissatisfaction; that, in March 1951, six years after the war, bread and flour rationing

had had to be re-introduced; that the earnings of Czechoslovak workers had in fact been cut in December 1951 when the traditional Christmas bonus had been abolished except for workers in the very lowest pay categories; that the accident rate had recently increased in Czechoslovak industry; that, in order to buy a suit of clothes at ration prices, a Czechoslovak worker must work 50 hours as compared with 25 hours required of the worker in the United States and that the period of work required to purchase other commodities in Czechoslovakia as compared with the United States was 20 hours as against 6 and a half hours for shoes, 23 hours as against 1 hour 12 minutes for one kilogramme of butter, 12 and three-quarter hours as against 1 hour for 1 kilogramme of cheese, 76 and a half hours as against 1 hour 22 minutes for 1 kilogramme of coffee and 6 hours as against 25 minutes for a dozen eggs.

42. The CHAIRMAN called upon the representative of WHO.

43. Dr. FORREST (World Health Organization) stated that his organization would offer its full co-operation to FAO and the other agencies referred to in the joint draft resolution (A/C.2/L.134) within the limits of its budget. He pointed out that, as implied although not specifically stated in the joint draft resolution, famine had frequently been the cause of endemic and other diseases.

44. In addition to its activities to counteract debility and disease, WHO had stressed the possible danger to health of flood control and irrigation projects. Co-operation with the other specialized agencies was very successful and his organization was consulted when advice in such matters was given to governments. Efforts to remedy malnutrition depended to a considerable extent on the quality of the national health services organized by governments in which field his organization was making a positive contribution. It was unfortunate that famine frequently assumed the proportions of an emergency, since many famines were the result of foreseeable circumstances which were capable of continuous study.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.