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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES

Fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE EIGHTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 3 September 1953, at 11.20 a.m.

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PRESENT:

Chairman:

Mr. LOOMES Australia

Rapporteur:

Mrs. MENON India

Members:

Mr. PETHERBRIDGE Australia

Mr. FRAZAO Brazil

Mr. YANG China

Miss MAÑAS Cuba

Mr. SVEISTRUP Denmark

Mr. BENITES-VINUEZA Ecuador

Mr. PIGNON France

Mr. MASFAR Indonesia

Mr. KHALIDY Iraq

Mr. SPITS Netherlands

Mr. PERRY New Zealand

Mr. PIRACHA Pakistan

Mr. MATHIESON United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

Mr. ROBBINS United States of America

Representatives of specialized agencies:

Mr. GAVIN International Labour Organisation
(ILO)

Mr. DESTOMBES United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural
Organization (UNESCO)

Mrs. MEAGHER World Health Organization (WHO)

Secretariat:

Mr. HOO Assistant Secretary-General

Mr. BENSON Secretary of the Committee

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (A/AC.35/L.134, L.135 and Corr.1, L.140) (concluded)

Mr. KHALIDY (Iraq) recalled that the justification of the functions of administering Powers in Non-Self-Governing Territories was the extent to which they, as advanced and democratic countries, could help to improve the standard of living of more backward peoples. An essential feature of the economy of any country was that the inhabitants should own the greater part of the resources and should play a preponderant part in directing and operating its economic activities. Thus, the primary economic duty of an administrative Power was to train the indigenous populations to assume those responsibilities themselves, and not merely to establish their own industries in order to benefit from the local resources, the cheap labour and the special protection often given to foreign settlers by their compatriots in the administration. It should be the primary concern of the administering Powers to promote local savings and investment and the establishment of local enterprises directed by the indigenous inhabitants under the supervision of the administration.

In 1951, the Committee had expressed the view that international action should continue to encourage the promotion of concrete programmes of economic development undertaken by the administering Powers in various territories. In 1952, it had been suggested that the information submitted to the Committee might show the extent of indigenous investments, the banking systems, and indigenous credit in the various territories. Special emphasis had been laid on the part played by indigenous capital in financing industries. While the growth of investment and industry in certain territories had been considerable, the principal factor was not the mere establishment of industries, but ensuring that the inhabitants of the territories were benefiting from them. Otherwise, exploitation would reign unchecked, since foreign capital tended to channel earnings to foreign countries and to become a disruptive element hostile to the aspirations of the people towards self-government.

Another question which should be stressed in connexion with the 1951 report and the studies to be undertaken in 1954 was that of land distribution. In 1951, the Committee had recognized that the area of alienated land in some

Non-Self-Governing Territories was considerable and that in others where it was smaller no indication was given its quality. The figures given in the special study of economic conditions and development showed that the situation in parts of Africa was urgent; the percentage of land alienated to non-Africans in Swaziland, Kenya and the Belgian Congo was particularly high.

The Secretariat's documents on economic conditions (A/AC.35/L.134) and on agriculture (A/AC.35/L.135) emphasized the dangerous trend which threatened the producers of agricultural export crops with lower prices. That situation was closely connected with the question of land distribution. Moreover, the food situation in some Non-Self-Governing Territories was becoming extremely difficult. For example, it was stated in document A/AC.35/L.135 that the production of food crops had declined in some French territories and that the French Economic Council had admitted the urgent need for a radical change in the existing agricultural policy, if the decline were due not to poor crops but to a trend of the rural economy. The inevitable conclusion was that, when the economy of a territory was geared to foreign interests, it became more vulnerable to world market fluctuations, which had an adverse effect on the standard of living of the indigenous population.

Turning to some concrete examples of the economic conditions in some territories, he pointed out that the figures in the report on French territories (A/2410) failed to shed light on certain important questions, such as land distribution in Tunisia. The information on public finance gave rise to some serious conclusions. Whereas the 1952-53 appropriations were 2,394 million francs for public health and 6,131 million for education, 2,600 million francs were provided for the expenses of the French Residency and its jurisdiction. The amount of 2,834 million francs allotted for the police and gendarmerie exceeded the public health budget. Moreover, Tunisia paid approximately 4,000 million francs a year or three times the amount of its regular budget to France in repayment of its debt of 80,000 million. The economy of the territory was designed to benefit the settlers far more than the indigenous inhabitants.

In document A/2410/Add.1, some figures were given on mineral production in Morocco, but the distribution of ownership was not indicated. The Iraqi

delegation had ascertained that all Moroccan mines were owned by French citizens and enterprises except the phosphate mines, which were owned by the Moroccan Government. The finished minerals were controlled by French cartels, which held the exclusive export rights. Thus, the ores were bought at low prices and resold for hard currency at the prevailing world market prices for the advantage of French trade alone. The United States Government had brought France's violation of the International Act of Algeiras, which stipulated economic liberty without inequality, before the International Court of Justice. The Court had given a ruling in 1952 which the French Government had ignored. The figures in the French administration's report showed a progressive increase in mineral production, but the identity of the beneficiaries was not revealed.

As the Committee would undertake an intensive study of economic conditions at its next session, the administering Power should prepare information on the distribution of industrial wealth in Morocco as between the indigenous inhabitants and French settlers. The Iraqi delegation had ascertained that nearly all industries were in the hands of French firms and that, with the exception of the State Bank of Morocco, in which very few shares were held by Moroccans, no bank was owned even partly by indigenous inhabitants.

The Committee should inquire into the procedure of granting permits to Moroccans for setting up industrial or banking enterprises; the difficulty of obtaining such permits was one reason for the absence of indigenous industries. Even when they were obtained, Moroccans were discouraged from competing with French companies.

Railways and port facilities were also exclusively in French hands, while the Moroccans who supplied the cheap labour lived miserably in the notorious "shanty towns". Under the existing conditions, industrial and economic expansion could only be expected to increase the number of people living in those degrading dwellings. All the insurance companies except one were owned by the French. Moreover, it was apparent from the fragmentary information on international trade in document A/2410/Add.1 that 75 per cent of Morocco's total international trade was monopolized by France; only the manufactured goods which France was unable to supply could be imported from elsewhere.

The unsatisfactory economic conditions in Morocco could not be imputed to the inhabitants themselves. Marshall Lyautey had written, when the French protectorate was first established, that the country had some outstanding economists and businessmen and that the people were industrious, intelligent and progressive. With regard to land distribution, so important in a primarily agricultural country, many French settlers had secured large tracts of land in the early years of the protectorate, to the great detriment of the indigenous inhabitants. Since then, all so-called land reforms had been directed towards transferring more land to the settlers, who had obtained the most fertile tracts. Moreover, when the quality of land was improved by the administration's irrigation schemes, the title to it was soon transferred to French citizens or enterprises. The existing agricultural conditions contrasted sharply with accounts of Moroccan agriculture before the protectorate.

The Committee's yardstick in appraising the work of the French administration in Morocco was the extent to which the standard of living of the average Moroccan was being affected by French economic, industrial and agricultural improvements. The French administration should supply the Committee with the necessary information at its next session, when economic conditions would be the main item on its agenda.

Mr. PIGNON (France) recalled that the representatives of India and Iraq had expressed some anxiety about what they felt to be deliberately contrived competition between industrial production and the production of consumer goods for the local populations of the territories. He assured them that nine tenths of the total volume of agricultural production provided foodstuffs for the local population. Metropolitan France had taken no part of that output, but had, on the contrary, facilitated the import of rice into Central Africa. The quantities of foodstuffs, although considerable, remained insufficient and supplies were not well distributed. The problem was complicated, particularly in the West Saharan territories, by the people's tendency to abandon their traditional foodstuffs, millet and sorghum, in favour of rice.

The obvious solution would be to persuade growers to devote all their available arable land to food production, but that would be uneconomical and difficult as the growers were violently opposed to any measure which would reduce their purchasing power. A substantial increase in food production could only result from a long-term programme which already had priority in the French Government's development plans. The problems, however, were great: it was not easy to teach an African better methods of growing, for instance, manioc, and before rice could be grown on any extensive scale, considerable preliminary irrigation and levelling was necessary. Nevertheless, the area of land under cultivation continued to rise yearly. In Morocco for instance, in 1951-1952, the area under cultivation for bread grains had increased by 170,000 hectares and that for fruit trees by 17,000 hectares. Most, if not all, profit from the increased production went to the Moroccan people, and the production of certain industrial goods such as cotton had grown accordingly.

The position was equally good in Tunisia where there had been an excellent harvest in 1952 and where much progress had resulted from irrigation and soil restoration projects. Standard-of-living indices for 1952 showed that the consumption of goods such as cereals, sugar, tea, cloth, sewing-machines, bicycles and radios had increased for all workers, both urban and agricultural. The administration was proceeding with its plans to eliminate the shanty-towns which had resulted from the recent sudden growth in urban populations.

Reference had been made to exploitation or even monopoly in the commercial relations between metropolitan France and its overseas territories. In 1952 France had taken 67 per cent in value of the exports of her overseas territories and had provided some 70 per cent of the value of their total imports. Although the figure for its exports showed a slight increase as compared with the figure for 1938 (52.9 per cent), France could not be accused of pursuing an imperialist policy. Its currency difficulties were those common to many other countries. Further, France took only 50 per cent of the exports of Morocco and Tunisia, mainly because the considerable output from the mines of those two territories could be absorbed by countries outside the French Union.

The Non-Self-Governing Territories derived many advantages from their connexion with the metropolitan country, as for instance during the sudden fall in the price of raw materials in 1952. The production of cocoa and cotton had not only been assisted by subsidies, but France had also undertaken to sustain the purchasing power of the African grower even to the disadvantage of the metropolitan consumer. Other measures gave preference to goods produced in the French overseas territories; deficits in their balance of payments were covered by the metropolitan country; reinvestment was encouraged as part of the general process of industrialization; profits largely went back into the territories in the form of goods, salaries, labour and purchasing power. Certain resources, such as Moroccan phosphate, had long been under the exclusive control of the local government. Far from benefiting from the dollar earnings of the territories under its administration, as the Iraqi representative had suggested, France itself frequently met the dollar deficits of countries within the Union.

While recognizing the immensity of the tasks remaining to be done and welcoming constructive criticism, he urged the Committee not to doubt the good faith and intentions of the French Government.

GENERAL QUESTIONS RELATING TO SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES, ADDITIONAL TO ANY TREATED UNDER PREVIOUS ITEMS (A/AC.35/L.144, A/2407, 2408, 2409, 2410 and Add.1, 2411 and Add.1, 2412, 2413 and Add.1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, 2414 and Add.1 and 2)

The SECRETARY, referring to the complaint about the paucity of information on certain agenda items, pointed out that it was the Committee's practice to concentrate on one main topic each year; the documentation on the other subjects therefore tended to be less. If the Committee so wished, however, the Secretariat would endeavour to amplify the documents distributed, as for instance that on general trends in the Non-Self-Governing Territories to which the United Kingdom representative had referred.

Mr. MATHIESON (United Kingdom) said that it had not been his intention to criticize the scope of the document; he realized that the information

had been submitted to the Secretariat at a late date so that it had lacked sufficient time to be more comprehensive.

Mrs. MENON (India) added that it would help the Secretariat to complete and distribute documents in advance of Committee sessions if the administering Powers were to submit their information promptly.

Mr. ROBBINS (United States of America) reminded the Committee that the administering Powers were not wholly responsible in the matter of information and could not therefore guarantee the submission of their reports on time.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN RESPECT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES, INCLUDING INFORMATION ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (A/AC.35/L.129, 138, 139, 145)

Mr. ROBBINS (United States of America) expressed his Government's appreciation of the opportunity afforded through the United Nations scholarship programme to twelve residents of territories under United States administration during the past year for advanced training in social welfare, economic development and public administration.

In speaking of housing in the Caribbean area, the United Kingdom representative had praised the work of two American housing experts of the Caribbean Commission, one of whom was a Puerto Rican. Mr. Robbins could corroborate the statement, having personally seen the results of that work. The moral which he wished to draw, however, was that much could be accomplished with relatively little money through the use of self-help methods and with international co-operation.

His Government had participated with considerable satisfaction in the continuing and effective work of the Caribbean Commission and the South Pacific Commission, regional commissions outside the United Nations which collaborated with the specialized agencies.

The Caribbean Commission, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization, had convened a technical conference on home economics and education in nutrition in 1952, as a result of which the FAO would conduct during the current year a three-month training course for home economics workers. Under the auspices of the Commission, regional technical conferences, attended, and in some cases co-sponsored, by the specialized agencies, had also been held on such subjects as industrial development, the timber trade, vocational training and education.

The South Pacific Commission had also been co-operating with the specialized agencies on various projects, and its 1953 Conference had been attended by observers from the ILO and the FAO who had made a significant contribution. Previous speakers had mentioned several projects in the Pacific area undertaken by the local administrations in collaboration with the South Pacific Commission; such projects numbered over thirty and were of great interest because, while they reached directly only a small percentage of the population, their influence would be widely felt.

Those two regional Commissions had modest programmes, since they were primarily advisory bodies. Low as their budgets were, they had to be justified by positive results, which were being obtained. Their vitality derived in large part from the active participation of the people of the area, who were able to make their needs and desires known and heeded. Lastly, in the short period of the Commissions' existence, there had been a marked increase in friendly co-operation between the peoples and the administrations within the two areas, in the regional exchange of ideas and scholarship, in the tendency to solve common problems together, and in the appreciation of the possibilities of international collaboration.

His Government wished particularly to draw the Committee's attention to the technical assistance programme for the training of foreign nationals developed by Puerto Rico, as it would doubtless have no further occasion to submit information about that new Commonwealth. The programme, initiated in 1950, continued to be financed jointly by the United States and Commonwealth Governments. In 1952, Puerto Rico had appropriated 25,000 dollars for the programme and had also defrayed all the costs of the training given by its

various agencies. The programme was administered through a "Point Four Office" established in the Puerto Rico Planning Board. Under programmes of the United States and international agencies, a total of 273 trainees and observers, the majority from Latin America and the Caribbean but also some from Asia, the Near East and Africa, had come to Puerto Rico during the fiscal year 1952. They included persons holding important posts in their own countries.

In addition to the training of individuals, there had been several group projects in Puerto Rico. Thus, the number of trainees from the Caribbean area at the Metropolitan Vocational School had grown from 30 to 75 at a cost of 93,000 dollars contributed by the United States Mutual Security Agency. A training centre for co-operative leaders from the nine countries of the Caribbean had been established by the Organization of American States in collaboration with the University of Puerto Rico and was financed jointly by the two organizations. Under a special agreement with the same University, the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences had sent to it 21 Latin American students for special training in "Rural Living". Lastly, Puerto Rico itself had financed a programme at the University for the training of Latin American labour leaders, a programme so successful that it was being repeated.

During the coming year the Commonwealth would play an increasing role in the various technical assistance programmes. Its degree of development, its bilingual competence, its experience with agriculture and commerce under tropical conditions, and the enthusiastic interest of its Government made it a unique laboratory for under-developed areas all over the world, so that the number of trainees in Puerto Rico could be expected to mount rapidly. The 1953 plans of the Puerto Rico Planning Board included the continuation and expansion of the vocational training project, new projects for the training of Latin American nutritionists, trade-union leaders and leaders of co-operatives, and a project of translating technical materials from English to Spanish for distribution to Spanish speaking countries. By its generous participation in the Point Four Programme, Puerto Rico was playing an important role in international affairs and showing the way to a better life without sacrifice of freedom.

Mr. BENSON (Secretary of the Committee) said, with reference to the United States representative's remarks on the Caribbean Commission and the South Pacific Commission, that the work of the two Commissions had been reported on in document A/AC.35/L.138, and that the Secretariat had frequent occasion to collaborate with them, particularly with the former.

Mr. PETHERBRIDGE (Australia) observed that international collaboration had grown very considerably in the past few years; he was confident that it would continue to do so in the future. The Secretariat had submitted excellent documentation on international collaboration with regard to Non-Self-Governing Territories, describing its many aspects. Australia was taking an active part in those efforts, and had been contributing funds to UNICEF, the Colombo Plan and the South Pacific Commission. Some of the countries which were receiving aid from Australia were themselves helping their neighbours by granting scholarships and extending technical assistance; thus international collaboration developed a great network of disinterested help. The growth of international collaboration should be accompanied by the growing recognition of the earnest desire to aid the development of all peoples which made that collaboration possible.

Australia, being primarily a donor country, was well aware of its duty to undertake developmental projects in territories under its own administration. It had discharged that duty in Papua, and had during the past year continued to co-operate with the specialized agencies and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. For instance, it had approached the World Health Organization in connexion with a malaria control project.

The Colombo Plan had two aspects: direct economic aid, and technical co-operation, which included the sending of experts in various branches to Asia, the training of Asian students in Australian universities and technical schools, and the furnishing by Australia of technical equipment for use in schools and universities in the region. The exchange of students, in particular, had resulted in a mutually valuable cultural exchange.

He outlined briefly the work of the South Pacific Commission, which had inaugurated a number of social and economic research projects and had recently submitted to its member Governments ambitious proposals for the advancement of

vocational training in the South Pacific region. The Commission was authorized to co-operate in an advisory and consultative capacity with the specialized agencies, and had been represented at conferences sponsored by several of them. The Commission had shown its interest in the Papua literacy project, to which he had referred at an earlier meeting, by granting financial aid and by publishing the relevant documentation. At its second conference in 1953, the Commission had discussed a wide range of subjects, including the importance of encouraging the formation of co-operative societies for the production, transport and marketing of copra and other commodities and the question of health education. It would thus be seen that, in its own region, the South Pacific Commission was contributing substantially to international collaboration.

Mr. SPIES (Netherlands) stated that an important aspect of the South Pacific Commission's work was its function as a clearing house for experience gained in the administration of territories in that area. Netherlands New Guinea had benefited by the advice of specialists of the Commission: an expert on leprosy had visited the territory; experts on cocoa-growing and an entomologist collecting information on plant diseases had made studies there; and New Guinea expected to receive a grant-in-aid for research on inland fisheries.

The Commission had made studies on the position of the Pacific islanders in island industry and commerce and had helped to distribute literature to the Papuans. Useful suggestions had also been made for the use of visual education aids, especially in adult education. The Commission was supporting a community project in New Guinea by a grant-in-aid and by expert advice and was assisting in the development of welfare centres in urban communities.

A conference of the representatives of the populations of all the territories had been held early in the year. The advantage of such meetings was not only the opportunity given to the populations to express their wishes, but also the establishment of contacts and the broadening of views on the problems of different areas.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

21/9 a.m.