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President: Mr. Hernán SANTA CRUZ (Chile).

Present: The representatives of the following countries:

Belgium, Canada, Chile, China, Czechoslovakia, France, India, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay.

The representatives of the following specialized agencies:

International Labour Organisation, World Health Organization.

Forced labour and measures for its abolition (E/1884, E/1885 and Corr.1, E/L.104 and E/L.165) (*continued*)

[Agenda item 13]

At the invitation of the President, Miss Toni Sender, representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, took her seat at the Council table.

1. Miss SENDER (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) said that it was the duty of her organization to be interested in all cases of forced labour; the ICFTU was resolved not to rest until every example of degradation of the working man was brought to light.

2. The examples which she was about to submit to the Council were part of the hundreds of thousands of documents which made up a mountain of evidence against the USSR. She had photostatic copies of the documents which had been brought to the free world by Russians and Poles who had escaped from the Soviet Union. They bore the letterhead of the NKVD and the Gulag, the forced labour section of the NKVD.

3. She wished first of all to submit a handbook of seventy-five pages containing complete instructions on the running of forced labour camps in the USSR. No one would go to the trouble of producing such a document for the sake of using merely a few copies.

4. An idea of the vastness of one of the camps, that of Ukhta-Pechora, in the Arctic Circle, could easily be

obtained from an examination of the great variety of occupations mentioned in the manual in question. Besides unskilled labour the manual contained a list of twenty-six trades.

5. As regards the diet of the prisoners, the chart setting up the monthly norms indicated that 1,292 calories per day were allotted for each worker. The minimum calorie requirements for a man weighing 154 lbs was estimated at 2,500 calories, if he was engaged in sedentary work. It must also be remembered that that figure had been established for temperate climates, while the camp in question was situated on the 67th parallel, inside the Arctic Circle, which meant that the minimum calorie ration should certainly be increased in view of the rigours of the climate. It could thus be seen that that sub-normal diet for labourers was at a starvation level. Further, the vitamin content of the food was so low that the manual gave detailed instructions for scurvy treatment. On the other hand, according to page 7, paragraph 1, it was possible for a prisoner of the forced labour camp to receive a better food ration if he was a Stakhanovite or shock worker. Thus the cruel system of using the whip of hunger to stimulate workers to greater efforts was followed. It was a vicious circle, because more work caused greater exhaustion with a resulting need for more calories.

6. That illness was widespread in the camp could be seen from the detailed instructions for the minimum feeding of patients. On page 20, paragraph 21, it was stated that outgoing patients, such as those with dysentery and fever, might be given a diet, which was not to exceed the value of the food ration previously fixed for the camp inmate and was to correspond to his average wages five days prior to his falling ill. It was left to chance whether convalescent labourers recovered or died. Workers punished for offences committed within the camp were allowed only 716 calories per day, while it was indicated in section 24, paragraph 156, that the minimum ration for dogs was to be 1,184 calories. What was more, it appeared from paragraph 157 that all the kitchen scraps from the guards quarters were to be given to the dogs in addition to the above-mentioned rations.

7. The manual contained other instructions which gave an idea of the filth in which the workers had to live. It was indicated for example that clothing was to be used until completely worn out; and it was also specified that clothing was not to be exchanged and that a sick person must turn in his clothing before entering the prison hospital. There were severe punishments for those accused of wasting clothing, as follows: for the first offence: the prisoner's working days were not credited to his account for six months and the cost of the articles must be covered by him; for the second offence: solitary confinement for one year, cancellation of all past entries to his credit and the repayment of the cost of the articles.

8. Children of all ages were subject to imprisonment in forced labour camps, as was revealed by the large number of pages dealing with the instructions on children's food and clothing. Anyone who had any doubt of the existence of forced labour camps need no longer remain in uncertainty.

9. She stated that she had in her possession photostatic copies of many affidavits, court orders and other evidence showing that people were sent away for offences which they themselves could not understand. As an example, she quoted the case of a Russian who had expressed the opinion that the life of a worker abroad was superior to that in the USSR; to make him appreciate living in the USSR better he was sent to a forced labour camp.

10. She thought that enough evidence was available, including that which had been produced at the twelfth session of the Council, to point the contrast between the reality and the paradise depicted by the representatives of Eastern European countries. Could it be called "socialism" when a social order could only be maintained by the cruel imprisonment of millions and millions of people, most of them innocent? Was it socialism when justice was meted out by three men of the USSR Administration who passed sentence without a hearing, sentences based upon so-called confessions forced from the accused by all the diabolical methods of modern torture?

11. The last speaker at the previous meeting had quoted an assortment of alleged cases of forced labour, but had discovered no defects in the USSR paradise. He had asked for investigations in territories where the United Nations was already conducting them. There was a joint proposal from the United States and the United Kingdom calling for an investigation by an impartial committee of all countries where forced labour was allegedly practised. Consequently, the Secretariat had asked all countries whether they were ready to co-operate with such an impartial committee. The majority, including the major Powers, had accepted the proposal, with the exception of the Soviet Union, which had submitted a resolution with the purpose of preventing an investigation of its own forced labour camps. It was clear that the sole purpose of the USSR resolution was to put the investigation in the hands of its communist-dominated unions, and in that way to give a clean bill of health to a régime which controlled the greatest slave labour empire that had ever existed.

Calling attention to other people's sins, if they were sins, did not give absolution for one's own.

12. If the USSR had a clear conscience, it would allow a joint committee of ILO and the United Nations to look into the existence of those forced labour camps; the committee would then be able to come back to the Council and announce for all to hear whether they had found the accusations to be true or not.

13. The ICFTU welcomed the ILO's message to the Economic and Social Council, was gratified that that body saw the problem as the ICFTU did, and moreover that the great majority of countries had shown their readiness to co-operate in the general investigation of slave labour. It was time to take action and to still the cries of the millions of slaves who were suffering and dying of starvation and ill-treatment in the Soviet Union.

14. Mr. KEARNEY (Canada) recalled that the question of forced labour had been included in the agenda of several sessions of the Economic and Social Council; numerous debates had been devoted to it, during which the United States and United Kingdom delegations and the trade-union organizations of the free world had submitted to the United Nations circumstantial evidence of the existence of forced labour. The Canadian Government had been gravely disturbed by those charges which seemed difficult to refute and which showed that forced labour was being practised systematically in certain parts of the world.

15. Forced labour was an inhuman and barbarous practice and was contrary to the fundamental freedoms solemnly proclaimed in the Charter; the proofs of its existence had become so striking that they could no longer be ignored. The United Nations should take steps to verify, carefully and objectively, the truth of the charges that millions of human beings were victims of the forced labour system and had been separated from their families either for their political convictions or on some other equally insufficient grounds. Forced labour was not only practised on a large scale, but was employed by the Governments of States Members of the United Nations which had proclaimed their faith "in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person".

16. The peoples of the free world could not remain silent in the face of the growing body of proof showing that elsewhere in the world the fundamental rights of other men were being violated in a way which must shock all those who defended freedom.

17. The Canadian delegation would have liked to see the enquiry carried out as originally contemplated, that is, by an impartial United Nations commission with free access to all countries without exception. In its reply to the Secretary-General, the Canadian Government had stated that it was prepared to co-operate fully with such a commission of enquiry. It was with the greatest regret that it had had to note the fact that the Government of the USSR and certain other governments of Eastern Europe directly concerned were not prepared to participate in such a collective effort to establish the truth about the existence of forced labour.

18. The unco-operative attitude shown by those governments made it necessary to abandon the original solution and adopt the type of enquiry proposed in the draft resolution submitted jointly by the United Kingdom and the United States (E/L.104). It was clearly desirable that the governments of the USSR and of the other Eastern European countries should change their attitude in the matter; since, however, it seemed highly unlikely that they would do so, the Council should recognize that the *ad hoc* committee on forced labour, the creation of which was proposed in the joint draft resolution, could do no more than conduct an enquiry based on documents and on such evidence as it might receive.

19. Obviously, if an impartial commission, in an on-the-spot enquiry, found further evidence in the USSR of the existence of forced labour—as it doubtless would if it had free access to all parts of the Soviet Union—then such finding, in the eyes of the USSR, would only serve to increase the alleged slander and libel.

20. The Canadian delegation wished to make a number of suggestions with regard to the composition of the *ad hoc* committee on forced labour, the scope of its activities, and the services which should be placed at its disposal.

21. First, the Canadian Government attached the greatest importance to the composition of the committee; while it had the greatest respect for the judgment of the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the International Labour Office, it wished to emphasize the desirability of appointing members who enjoyed an international reputation, possessed the necessary qualifications for the type of work they would be required to do, and, lastly, were completely honest and impartial. Since it would not be easy to find persons who met all those requirements, the Canadian delegation thought that it would be desirable to provide for a committee of three members, instead of the five members envisaged in the joint draft resolution. Moreover, the necessary work would be carried out more effectively by a small group of highly qualified persons.

22. The Canadian delegation considered that the *ad hoc* committee should be presided over by a jurist of international reputation and should include a member qualified to deal with trade-union matters and a member having, if possible, experience of concentration camps.

23. So as to observe the principle of geographical distribution, it would be advisable to appoint one representative from Europe—preferably from a Scandinavian country—one representative from Latin America, and one representative from Asia.

24. As regards the *ad hoc* committee's methods of work, the Canadian delegation considered that the enquiry should be based upon a detailed study of the relevant legislative and administrative texts and of their implementation. In that regard, it was to be hoped that any documents which the committee might need would be provided by governments without delay. By means of such a study the Committee would be able to determine whether it needed additional data, to confirm a

number of specific points, and to draw a general picture which would enable it to submit a complete and objective report. His delegation would like the joint draft resolution to be more explicit on that point.

25. As regards the administrative aspects of the question, the Canadian delegation thought that every possible step should be taken to enable the *ad hoc* committee to function as efficiently as possible in view of the special importance of the task for which it would be responsible. In that regard the statement of financial implications submitted by the Secretary-General (E/L.104/Add.1) was unsatisfactory and required revision.

26. The Canadian delegation wished to make the following suggestions:

(a) The duration of the *ad hoc* committee's activities should not be determined in advance; in any case, it seemed unlikely that the committee would be able to complete its work in two months, as envisaged by the Secretary-General, and the Canadian delegation would be opposed to confining its activities to so short a period.

(b) It would be entirely inappropriate to limit the length of the report to one hundred and sixty pages. That figure might seem a generous one, but the length of the report would depend upon the data which the committee saw fit to include in it; accordingly, it was for the committee itself to determine the length of its report.

(c) The final report should be issued in more than two languages, and in a much larger number of copies than suggested by the Secretary-General. If the number of copies of the report itself was to be limited to 2,000, provision should be made for the publication of a larger number of copies of a summary of that report.

(d) The *ad hoc* committee should have at its disposal an adequate staff with the necessary skill and experience; it was essential that its secretariat should include some jurists.

(e) If the committee decided to call in witnesses, it should have legal advisers at its disposal, as much for its own sake as to assist the witnesses.

(f) The members of the committee should either receive a higher subsistence allowance than that provided for, or be paid a salary. Provision should also be made for payment of the travel and subsistence costs of the witnesses and legal advisers.

27. The Canadian delegation considered that the USSR draft resolution (E/L.165) was of no practical value, since although it contained certain interesting points, its operative part did not recognize the existence of forced labour. Moreover, the attitude of the USSR on the question was revealed in the first paragraph, in which it was stated that "the information hitherto submitted... [was] grossly slanderous and libellous towards the Soviet Union".

28. In conclusion, he said that his Government was deeply concerned by the great number of facts proving the existence of forced labour and the violation of fundamental human rights by certain governments. He

regretted that the governments of the USSR and of the other countries of Eastern Europe were persisting in their refusal to co-operate in an impartial effort to establish the truth of the accusations made.

29. The Canadian delegation would vote in favour of the joint draft resolution (E/L.104), in the hope that it would be adopted by the Council and that the *ad hoc* committee so created would be able to accomplish its task effectively.

30. Mr. CABADA (Peru) said that he would not have replied to the slanderous accusations made against his country by the representative of the World Federation of Trade Unions at the previous meeting if the latter had not also cast aspersions upon the other countries of Latin America. Since his country represented the interests of Latin America in the Council, however, by virtue of the principle of geographical distribution, it felt in duty bound to defend its neighbours against those accusations.

31. He had already had occasion, both in plenary meetings and in the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, to unmask the true character of the World Federation of Trade Unions. That organization was abusing the consultative status granted to it; instead of collaborating constructively with the Council on economic and social matters, it took advantage of its seat at the Council table to spread tendentious political propaganda in accordance with its own political bias.

32. The report submitted by the WFTU furnished a striking example of the tactics employed by that organization. The accusations made in the report were a tissue of lies. In point of fact, none of the practices denounced by the WFTU existed anywhere in Latin America.

33. He recognized that the countries of Latin America had undoubtedly inherited from the colonial régime which had preceded the era of their independence and which men of all the races on the continent had

fought to overthrow, some vestiges of the feudal system. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the last traces of feudal servitude had been abolished by law. The progress made during the twentieth century, both in communications—in destroying the isolation of the outlying regions from the great centres of population—and in education, had ensured the uniform application of legislative provisions safeguarding the freedom of the citizens.

34. Contrary to the accusations made by the WFTU, peonage did not exist in Peru, nor did any other practice contrary to human rights. Moreover, access to his country was entirely free, so that anyone who so wished could easily visit the country and observe the conditions prevailing there. Peru had highly progressive social legislation, which included provision for social insurance, paid vacations, and many hospitals for workers. As for the *métayage* system, which was the traditional method of cultivating the lands of the Peruvian coastal plain, that system represented a perfectly legitimate and fair labour contract. Similar systems existed on their continents. The *métayers* were in no way enslaved by the proprietors, but were free men conscious of their rights and interests.

35. Equally absurd accusations had been made against other Latin American countries, such as Venezuela. Some of those accusations were pure inventions, while others referred to practices long since abolished and forgotten. The French Government might equally well be accused of maintaining the practice of the *corvée*, abolished on the night of 4 August 1789.

36. In conclusion, he pointed out that it was not by chance that his country had been singled out for attack by the representative of the WFTU. The violence of his attacks were undoubtedly due mainly to the energetic opposition shown by the delegation of Peru to the tactics employed by the WFTU in the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.