



Monday, 19 March 1951, at 10 a.m.

CONTENTS

Page

Forced labour and measures for its abolition (E/1884, E/1885 and Corr.1, E/L.165 and E/L.172/Rev.2) ( <i>continued</i> ).....	303
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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, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization.

**Forced labour and measures for its abolition (E/1884, E/1885 and Corr.1, E/L.165 and E/L.172/Rev.2)<sup>1</sup> (*continued*)**

[Agenda item 13]

1. Mr. CHERNYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted that the United States representative had undertaken to defend the enemies of the USSR, who were attempting to subject the peoples of the Soviet Union to the oppression of the capitalist monopolies, under which the workers in many countries were suffering.

2. He disputed the United States representative's statements, which were based either on false documents fabricated by German fascists or on the testimony of traitors employed by the American and British intelligence services. The evidence of former Japanese prisoners of war repatriated from the USSR, to which reference had also been made in that connexion, had frequently been obtained by means of torture.

3. From the time when the question of what was called forced labour was first placed on the Council's agenda, the USSR delegation had opposed the efforts of the representatives of the capitalist countries to disguise the fact that all labour under the capitalist system was forced labour. Owing to the existence of private

ownership of the means of production, the workers were forced under threat of starvation to work for the profit of the capitalists. That compulsion was further accentuated by the existence of masses of unemployed, which constituted a deadly threat to the employed workers and thus induced them to accept a deterioration in their living and working conditions. The USSR delegation had also drawn the Council's attention to the fact that at the current stage of the development of civilization it was inadmissible to retain slave and semi-slave working conditions for workers in colonies and dependent territories. It had also stressed the fact that in the Non-Self-Governing Territories as well as in many capitalist countries there was no system of social insurance.

4. He recalled that with a view to concentrating the Economic and Social Council's attention on the enslavement to which the workers in the capitalist countries were subjected, the USSR delegation had proposed the establishment of a large international commission composed of representatives of manual and intellectual workers belonging to all the existing trade-union organizations (E/L.165).

5. He then described the forms of forced labour to which the Negroes in the United States of America were subjected, and the discrimination of which they were the victims. He referred to a number of cases which indicated that the Negro workers received wages very much below those paid to workers of other racial origins for similar work, and also that the practice of peonage persisted. Prisons were one of the principal means by which Negroes were kept enslaved in the United States. Negroes were detained in large numbers and often without good reason for the purpose of doing forced labour which was of a markedly penal nature. He cited various documents showing both the important part played by forced prison labour in the United States, the exploitation of the prisoners and the terrible conditions in which they worked. He drew attention in particular to the Federal Prison Industry Corporation, its activities and large profits which were in marked contrast with the extremely small wages paid to the prisoners. He quoted several extracts from pamphlets published by the United States Labor Department on the prison labour in the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Joint draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom and the United States of America (E/L.104), incorporating amendments submitted by France (E/L.167) and accepted by the sponsors of the draft resolution (see 474th meeting, paras. 66 and 68).

6. As regards prison conditions in the United Kingdom, he recalled that at the ninth session of the Council his delegation had cited a number of facts illustrating the inhuman conditions prevailing in the United Kingdom prisons in particular as regards corporal punishment. He gave further examples which showed that the situation had not improved.

7. In reply to the French representative's attack on the USSR, he cited various facts showing the terrible conditions under which convict labourers had had to build the Cayenne-Kourou Road, and pointed out that there were more prisons than hospitals in Indo-China.

8. He emphasized the important part played in the United States by forced labour of immigrants, in particular foreign labour brought in under contract, and refugees and displaced persons. He described the tragic situation of workers in that category, and emphasized the existence in the United States of numerous slums where the death-rate from disease was extremely high.

9. He disputed the statements made by the representatives of the colonial Powers, who had boasted of the achievements of the colonial system, citing in that connexion an article published in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, which gave striking proof of the abject misery of the masses in the colonial territories of Asia and Africa.

10. He denounced the slanderous allegations brought against the USSR by the representative of Chile, a country where workers who fought for better living conditions were shot. The Chilean representative's statement was understandable in view of Chile's close economic and political dependence on the United States of America and of the fact that there were many United States bases along its coast. He regretted that the Chilean Press had not been really impartial in its accounts of the Council session; and he had been shocked to find on the walls of Santiago certain posters hostile to the Soviet Union.

11. It was clear that the United States wished to impose upon the Council the will of the United States monopolies, which were carrying on a bitter campaign against the USSR. The purpose of that campaign was to divert popular attention throughout the world from the growing economic difficulties in capitalist countries and the deterioration in their standard of living as a result of the armaments race.

12. He drew the Council's attention to the close ties between the United States monopolies and fascism which explained, for example, the recent release of accomplices of Hitler such as Krupp.

13. He could not accept the joint draft resolution submitted by the United States and the United Kingdom (E/L.172/Rev.1), which proposed the establishment of a small group of independent experts. Such a committee could have no authority for it would not be representative of the workers, and its main purpose would not be to investigate working conditions in the capitalist countries.

14. The Economic and Social Council should adopt a comprehensive and objective resolution on the real

conditions of workers and employees in all countries, including the capitalist countries as well as the USSR and the peoples' democracies. The Council should pursue the purposes assigned to it under the Charter, and particularly under Article 55 which provided for the promotion of higher standards of living and universal respect for and observance of human rights without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. The Soviet Union delegation had submitted a draft resolution to that effect (E/L.165). He reviewed the provisions of that draft resolution and recommended the Economic and Social Council to adopt it.

15. The PRESIDENT announced that the general discussion on the item was closed.

16. He recalled that under rule 51 of the rules of procedure he could permit members to exercise their right of reply. He reminded Council members that their replies should be fairly short. A vote should be taken on the subject that same day.

17. Mr. KATZ-SUCHY (Poland) said that he had not been surprised to hear the United States representative affirm, in his previous statement (474th meeting), that the truth of his argument had been demonstrated and that the Council should therefore confirm it by adopting the draft resolution submitted by his delegation.

18. In his own opinion, the United States representative, on the contrary, had not succeeded in proving the truth of what he had said, as he had not replied to the accusations lodged against the United States and, by his silence on that score, had implicitly admitted that the United States had been pursuing purely political objectives in bringing that question before the Council.

19. He noted the satisfaction expressed by the United Kingdom representative at the conclusion of the unpleasant task which the discussion had imposed upon him. It must indeed be very unpleasant for certain representatives to be obliged to spread slanders under the guise of humanitarian concern.

20. He drew the Council's attention to the fact that, according to the United Kingdom representative's statement, the proposed committee would be enabled to receive evidence which would not be divulged and which no United Nations organ could subsequently examine and discuss. That elimination of all control on the part of the United Nations disclosed the real object of establishing the committee, which was designed to become a tool of American propaganda against the USSR. That object should be clear to all those who intended to vote in favour of the joint United States and United Kingdom draft resolution.

21. The United Kingdom delegation had been unable to deny the existence of forced labour in the British colonies, which was an indisputable fact, and could not have that question referred to the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Slavery, inasmuch as it had itself proposed that the question under consideration should be placed on the agenda of the Council.

22. Contrary to what the United States representative had asserted, discrimination against coloured people

and especially against Negroes in the United States of America did not constitute merely a not very important relic of the past. That discrimination was first and foremost a form of forced labour, as it amounted to the exclusion of Negroes from the higher types of employment and forcibly relegated them to more menial tasks. The exceptions, such as the case of Dr. Bunche, in no way proved any lessening of discrimination, which was, moreover, practised even against him and persons of his calibre.

23. He then recalled the existence in the United States of the Taft-Hartley Act, which had frequently, and in particular by President Truman himself, been called a law to enslave the workers.

24. In a previous speech he had already mentioned a third kind of forced labour existing in the United States — that resulting from discrimination for political reasons. He had not questioned the United States Government's right to check the loyalty of its employees, but had merely examined certain consequences of the measures taken in that connexion. The United States representative had admitted that many civil servants had been dismissed, but he had not mentioned the trade-union leaders, film actors and workers who had been deprived of their employment for political reasons and who, as a result, had been obliged to find work which in most cases did not correspond to their training or abilities.

25. The United States representative had spoken with feeling about the strong and prosperous Czechoslovakia which had existed before the Second World War. He had described it thus because most of its production and profits had then gone to the capitalist countries and in particular to the United States of America. Now that Czechoslovakia had freed itself from foreign exploitation, the United States representative considered that it was going through a period of economic regression. That opinion was absolutely unfounded and need not therefore be refuted, but the United States representative should be asked who, if not the Western Powers, was responsible for the Munich agreement and who had delivered Czechoslovakia to Hitler in order to divert the latter's attention to the East. The United States representative should also be reminded that it was the Red Army that had liberated Czechoslovakia, at heavy cost, at the end of the Second World War.

26. The United States representative had said that Mr. Katz-Suchy's worst mistake was that he failed to realize that the United States was a free country open to all. To show how untrue that statement was, it was enough to point to the McCarran Act and all the requests for entry into the United States that had been refused for political reasons. For example, in 1950 only five Polish Press correspondents had been admitted to the United States, and only after encountering many difficulties, whereas Poland had thrown open its territory to two peace congresses and several hundred journalists. The singer Paul Robeson had not been allowed to go to the Warsaw congress and a young Polish student had been unable to take part in a ceremony organized at Hyde Park under the auspices of the United Nations to commemorate the anniversary of

President Roosevelt's death. Those two examples, chosen from a large number, showed that there was no real freedom of movement in the United States.

27. His quotations from Karl Marx had not been to the taste of the United States representative, who had tried to prove that his theories were false. History had shown, however, that all Karl Marx's detractors were forgotten whereas the Marxist ideal was becoming a reality in the second half of the twentieth century. The United States representative's remarks were only part of a campaign of propaganda and hatred directed against the USSR and the peoples' democracies. There was nothing new in that campaign for it had begun with the advent of the communist régime. All that need be said was that the number of those taken in by such propaganda was decreasing daily. The world had learnt to despise traitors and renegades and those who bought their services.

28. In conclusion, he recalled the words of Zola after sentence had been passed on Dreyfus, words which the Polish representative thought fitted the current situation: "Truth is on the march and nothing will be able to stop it".

29. Mr. NOSEK (Czechoslovakia) wished to reply to certain remarks made at the previous meeting by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States. The United Kingdom delegation had been careful to conceal the fact that it supported the campaign of slander launched by the American Federation of Labor, a campaign which formed part of the war of nerves against the peoples' democracies. It had, on the other hand, tried to prove that the United Kingdom had a genuine socialist government because certain activities had been nationalized. He would not, in the short time at his disposal, endeavour to explain the main differences between the existing régime in the United Kingdom and that in Czechoslovakia. He would merely point out that, if the aims in each case were considered, it would be seen that whereas the economic and social policy of Czechoslovakia was to raise the standard of living of the working classes and thereby contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, the United Kingdom had, on the contrary, adopted a war economy and refused to allow the Second World Peace Congress to be held at Sheffield.

30. The United States representative had reproached the Czechoslovak delegation for not knowing the history of its own country. It would seem, however, that it was he who did not know the history of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak people had not forgotten the period when it had been subjected to the exploitation of capitalist monopolies, and when its living conditions could not be improved because of crises and unemployment. The United States representative had also failed to mention that Czechoslovakia had been handed over to Hitler by the Western Powers.

31. The Czechoslovak people had learned the necessary lessons from its recent past. It had set up a genuinely democratic government and had combined with the USSR and with the other peoples' demo-

cracies, for it knew full well that that was the only way of ensuring that its interests would be respected and defended.

32. Mr. ARMENDARIZ DEL CASTILLO (Mexico) wished to point out that his delegation had never, during the session, attacked other delegations or governments of States Members of the United Nations. The Polish representative, however, had on two occasions attacked the Mexican Government, accusing it of providing incorrect information regarding Mexican workers who had temporarily migrated to the United States.

33. The Mexican delegation had already protested against the Polish representative's remarks. However, in view of his repeated assertions, it wished to draw the Council's attention to the essential difference between forced labour and the conditions of the Mexican workers in the United States of America, which were sometimes not satisfactory.

34. The Mexican delegation categorically repudiated the Polish representative's statement that Mexican workers in the United States were subjected to a form of forced labour. The Mexican workers in the United States were quite free to accept their contracts or not. They received the pay agreed upon and were repatriated when they so desired at the expense of their employers. When cases of discrimination, for example in working conditions, pay or accommodation were noted, the two governments concerned took the necessary steps to deal with the situation. The working conditions of Mexican workers in the United States were in general quite satisfactory as a result of constant improvement.

35. The Mexican Government could not tolerate any kind of forced labour, whether concealed or overt. If it had thought its nationals were the victims of forced labour in the United States, it would have prohibited their emigration. Labour conditions were not the same for all workers in all countries of the world, but that did not mean that the less favourable conditions could be described as forced labour.

36. Mr. KOTSCHNIG (United States of America) said that the discussion had reached a point where certain delegations were causing obstruction with a view to delaying a vote which they feared. Unjustified attacks had again been launched with the sole aim of discrediting the United States of America. He did not intend to reply to each one, having already done so, as the summary records of meetings abundantly showed.

37. In reply to some of the points made by the Polish representative, he wished to emphasize that the average wages of Negro workers in the United States were in most cases higher than those of workers in the peoples' democracies. The Polish representative had said a great deal about racial discrimination in the United States but had passed over in silence the deportations of entire racial or religious groups resorted to in the USSR.

38. The question of prison labour in the United States had also again been raised. No one had ever denied that prisoners in the United States were put to work. That was a common practice in all countries. However,

strict control was exercised in that field by the authorities. The products of prison labour were not allowed in interstate commerce and no federal funds were made available for road construction in which prison labour was employed. Moreover, the persons sentenced to labour of any kind were ordinary convicts and there were comparatively few of them.

39. It had likewise been claimed that the Taft-Hartley Act was designed to compel people to work, that in fact, it was a "forced labour Act". He had already quoted texts proving that it was nothing of the sort. Moreover, it was incorrect to claim that American legislation spoke of forced labour; the only express reference was to compulsory or prison labour, which was quite a different matter. With respect to loyalty oaths and the attempt which had been made to present them in an unfavourable light, he thought the United States had a perfect right to protect itself against a fifth column instigated by certain foreign Powers hostile to the United States.

40. In addition, two representatives had criticized the remarks he had made in regard to Czechoslovakia, in an attempt to demonstrate that that country had been victimized at Munich. He wanted to point out that the United States was not a party to that ill-fated attempt to preserve the peace. By contrast, he wished to recall that the Second World War had been preceded by an agreement between Germany and the USSR the basis of which was the dismemberment and partition of Poland, a country which was still deprived of certain parts of its territory. As to the "flourishing economy" of Czechoslovakia under communist rule, one could have legitimate doubts in view of the recent establishment of bread rationing in that country.

41. He wished further to point out that, contrary to what had been said, while certain Poles might have had some difficulties in coming to the United States in recent years, thousands of other Poles had been admitted to United States territory during that same period. That matter was an open book for everyone to read, as was indirectly proved by the facts and figures which had been collected at random and quoted in order to attack it. The United States had no reason to fear an investigation in its territory and was prepared to co-operate with the proposed *ad hoc* committee by every means at its disposal. The communist countries on the other hand had given no such indication with respect to themselves, which was an open admission of a guilty conscience.

42. He thought it was time to put to the vote the draft resolutions which had been submitted.

43. Mr. BERNSTEIN (Chile) observed that the representative of the Soviet Union had made three observations in reply to the remarks he himself had made at the 473rd meeting, which had dealt exclusively with the question of forced labour in the world. He wished to reply in his turn.

44. The Chilean delegation deeply regretted that placards criticizing the Soviet Union should have been pasted up on the walls of the city; it was an old-established habit of his compatriots to scribble their



political opinions on the walls of Santiago, and foreigners could glean there information on the political life of Chile for the past twenty years. If the Soviet Union representative looked carefully, he would see also placards denouncing a certain country towards which the Soviet Union did not nourish particularly friendly feelings. There were ill-behaved persons in all Chilean political parties.

45. The Chilean Press had perhaps not been very kind to the Soviet Union, but there was at least one paper which was not very kind to the Power to which he had already alluded, and still less so to the Chilean Government itself. The Soviet representative asserted that that campaign had been instigated by the Chilean Government; he would point out in reply that in Chile a section of the Press was anti-communist and also anti-government. If the government really controlled the Press, it would certainly begin by suppressing political campaigns against itself.

46. The Soviet Union representative had alluded to a Russian fable about a peasant and a horse, implying that Chile played the role of the horse and was under the whip. Apparently the Soviet Union was so accustomed to playing the role of the peasant and applying the whip to other countries that it was incapable of grasping the idea of international co-operation based on friendship. He trusted that during his stay in Chile that the Soviet Union representative had learned to appreciate the dignity and independence shown by the Chilean Government in international affairs.

47. In the most friendly spirit, he challenged the Soviet Union representative to tell him the names of any United States land, sea or air bases in Chile. He would be delighted to accompany him on a visit of inspection. He feared, however, that he would not have the pleasure of a trip in company with the Soviet Union representative, since there were no bases of any kind in Chilean territory.

48. Mr. KATZ-SUCHY (Poland) stated, in reply to the representative of Mexico, that he had never attacked that country's delegation. On the contrary, he had paid a tribute to the Mexican Government's efforts to ensure better working conditions for Mexican workers who went to the United States of America. It was none the less true that those workers were victims of discriminatory measures in the United States, although of course the Government of Mexico could not be blamed for that.

49. Turning to the German-Soviet agreement which had preceded the Second World War, he pointed out that it was not the first time that the countries of the Western Hemisphere had brought it forward out of rancour as an argument against the Soviet Union; they would have liked to see Germany launch an assault on the USSR as early as 1 September 1939. He further pointed out that, at the end of the war, Poland had reverted to its historical boundaries and was not deprived of some of its territory, as the United States representative claimed. He quoted an excerpt from a work in which Mr. Kenneth E. Davis, an American specialist on foreign affairs, stated that an analysis of events showed that Stalin had prevented a betrayal on

the part of the democracies and that it was not impossible that he would go down in history as the saviour of the free world. He thought it high time to stop repeating the argument of the so-called partition of Poland.

50. Mr. CHERNYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) remarked that the United States representative had once again fallen back on the Russo-German treaty of 1939, as his country's delegation always did when things grew difficult. In that connexion he would recommend perusal of a publication by the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs entitled *The Falsifiers of History*, and invited those interested in the matter to refer also to the statements by the Soviet Union representative in the General Assembly.

51. With regard to the slander to which a number of alleged quarrels in the joint enterprises of which the USSR was a member had given rise, he recalled that that matter had been raised as early as the fourth session of the General Assembly, and that his country's attitude was set forth in the Assembly records. Slander would remain slander, whether or not it was submitted to an *ad hoc* committee.

52. With regard to the levels of wages in the USSR and the United States, he recalled that he had spoken on the matter at length during the debate on the world economic situation, adducing irrefutable evidence of facts.

53. He would also like to reply to the representative of Chile that the observations he had made on the subject of American bases in Chile were perfectly justified, and that information on the subject had appeared in the whole Latin American Press.

54. Mr. BORIS (France), speaking in reply to certain observations made by the representative of the USSR, noted that the Cayenne penal settlement — to which no one but ordinary convicts had ever been sent — had been abolished a number of years previously, and the account given by the USSR representative in that regard could only refer to a situation dating very far back.

55. Moreover, the USSR representative had failed to mention the fact that in Indo-China, in 1946, in addition to 46 general hospitals, there had been 95 medical centres, 155 infirmaries, 165 dispensaries, 290 maternity homes, 120 children's dispensaries, 32 special establishments for leprosy, cancer, tuberculosis and other diseases, as well as a Faculty of Medicine and 3 Pasteur institutes for the preparation of vaccines.

56. Mr. CORLEY SMITH (United Kingdom) deplored the turn the discussion had taken, but said the statements made recently by the USSR and other representatives made it incumbent upon him to supply some further details.

57. Corporal punishment was authorized in the prisons of the United Kingdom, but only in cases where the prison officials had been violently attacked. In that connexion, he recalled that he had quoted at length passages from the RSSFR corrective labour code, which provided in particular that enquiries would be con-

ducted into woundings or deaths resulting from the use of weapons. It should be remarked that that referred only to ordinary corrective labour camps. How discipline was maintained in the "punitive colonies" mentioned in the Russian Corrective Labour Code was not stated.

58. He also recalled that he had merely said that the *ad hoc* committee should be able to adopt the procedure which seemed most suitable to it for the hearing of witnesses, so as to avoid possible reprisals against their families. He had not attempted to lay down any definite rules. He thought, however, that it would be absolutely necessary to reserve the right of reply in the *ad hoc* committee. He was most anxious for the question of forced labour to be referred to such a Committee, so as to avoid discussions like those they had just had in the Council itself.

59. Lastly, he would ask the USSR representative once again whether his government was prepared to state the number of persons under detention in the Soviet Union, and whether it would authorize an impartial United Nations commission, or even the body provided for in the USSR draft resolution, to conduct an enquiry in USSR territory. He had already asked those questions, but had not yet received a reply. Such silence amounted to admission of guilt. The United Kingdom was not in the least afraid of the results of such an enquiry in its own territory.

60. Mr. CHERNYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said the observations he had already made

on the matter, together with the USSR draft resolution, were a sufficiently clear reply to the United Kingdom representative's questions. Furthermore, his (Mr. Chernyshev's) remarks on the extent of the existing documentation had also shown that forced labour was a practice very widespread, particularly in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France and the colonies and territories dependent on those countries.

61. The USSR representative's statements and the draft resolution he had submitted clearly showed the need for establishing a great international commission composed of trade-union representatives and responsible for conducting an exhaustive and impartial enquiry into the situation of the workers both in countries where private capitalist ownership predominated and also in the USSR and the peoples' democracies.

62. The United Kingdom representative should also clearly explain what his government intended to do to abolish slavery in the colonies and territories under its administration, where human dignity was degraded by slavery, forced labour and the exploitation of the population.

63. The PRESIDENT reminded the Council that the discussion was closed and announced that the draft resolution under consideration would be put to the vote at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.