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**Chairman: Mr. Thanat KHOMAN (Thailand).**

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Božović (Yugoslavia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

**AGENDA ITEM 35**

**Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter: reports of the Secretary-General and of the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/3601 and Corr.1, A/3602, A/3603, A/3606/Rev.1, A/3607, A/3608, A/3609, A/3647 and Corr.1, A/C.4/360) (continued):**

- (a) Information on economic conditions;
- (b) Information on other conditions;
- (c) General questions relating to the transmission and examination of information (A/C.4/357/Rev.1, A/C.4/359);
- (d) Offers of study and training facilities under resolutions 845 (IX) of 22 November 1954 and 931 (X) of 8 November 1955 (A/3618 and Add.1);
- (e) **Methods of reproducing summaries of information concerning Non-Self-Governing Territories: report of the Secretary-General (A/3619)**

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) read out a note dated 11 October 1957 which the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations had addressed to the Secretary-General in connexion with the information transmitted by Belgium for the year 1955.<sup>1/</sup> His delegation had not taken part in the work of the Committee on Information and had not spoken during the first part of the debate in the Fourth Committee. Some delegations had seen in that lack of co-operation a retrograde step and a dangerous trend towards limiting the information transmitted. In reality, there had been no retrogression. Belgium's interpretation of Article 73 e had never varied since it had signed the Charter in 1945. From

<sup>1/</sup> Subsequently circulated as document A/3601/Add.1.

the moment that the dangerous tendency to make an improper use of the information transmitted had first become apparent Belgium had protested and its representative had spoken on the matter as early as 1947, at the 106th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, held during the second session.

2. Several delegations had expressed regret that the Administering Members had not opened the debate by commenting on the reports prepared by the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/3647) and the conclusions which it had drawn. The reasons why his delegation had not done so were the following. It had transmitted to the Secretary-General the data which, in signing the Charter, it had agreed to transmit for information purposes and for those purposes only. The Belgian delegation could clarify the information provided if some delegations felt the need for explanations, or it could rectify any erroneous interpretations. He wondered, however, whether such explanations would serve any useful purpose. The fact was that the Fourth Committee was proceeding from a fundamental misunderstanding: either it was thought that Belgium had not been acting in good faith when it had subscribed to Chapter XI of the Charter and was exploiting the Congo for the sake of the raw materials, cheap labour and privileged outlets for its manufactured goods which the Territory could provide, in which case no discussion was possible; or it was agreed that Belgium had faithfully accepted the obligations laid down in Article 73 of the Charter, in which case it was doubtful whether the work of the Committee on Information could throw any new light on the problems considered. Fifty years had passed since Belgium had assumed sovereignty over the Belgian Congo and throughout that period its officials, in both Africa and Europe, had been devoting themselves to the study of the problems relating to the Congo.

3. For all his own knowledge of the Belgian possessions in Africa and his long experience in dealing with their problems, he would not consider himself qualified to give advice on the administration of other Territories in "Black" Africa, still less of other areas in Africa or elsewhere in the world. He did not belittle the efforts of the members of the Committee on Information and the difficulties with which they had had to contend by reason both of the fragmentary character of the documentation available to them and of the lack of political information and information on the independent countries bordering on the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Such information would enable them to make a useful comparison of the policy of the administering Powers in the dependent territories and the policy of the sovereign States which had the same problems to deal with and could not be suspected of serving the interests of foreign monopolies. They would thus be enabled to compare development programmes, investment plans, systems of taxation, systems of

granting concessions and so forth, as also the results obtained.

4. In his opinion the members of the Committee on Information were faced with an impossible task and, no matter how diligent their efforts, they could not have a better understanding of the problems of the Non-Self-Governing Territories than did those who devoted their whole time to the study of such problems and their solution. Furthermore, as the recommendations of the Committee on Information were drawn up in general terms it was impossible to reply to the criticism expressed. Were the Belgian representative to challenge a criticism to the effect that the majority of the Administering Members were neglecting a certain obligation, for example, he would be told that that criticism did not refer to the Belgian Congo, whereas if he let the criticism pass without comment it would be concluded that there was nothing to be said in reply.

5. Nevertheless, he wished to examine some of those criticisms. The representative of India had said, for example, that industrialization had had a negligible influence on the volume of imports. Yet in the Belgian Congo industrial output had increased from 1955 to 1956 by 31 per cent in the chemical industry, 20 per cent in foodstuffs and 16 per cent in textiles; the index of the volume of industrial production was 362, 1947-1949 being taken as a base. The fact that that increase had not influenced the volume of imports was proof of the remarkable development of indigenous consumption. The latter had, in fact, doubled between 1950 and 1955 and a study by the Central Bank of the Belgian Congo showed that indigenous consumption accounted for 5,230 million Belgian francs' worth of imported products manufactured or processed in the Congo from raw materials produced in the Territory. He would point out in that connexion that there was a Central Bank in the Belgian Congo, which was in accordance with the wish expressed by several delegations.

6. In his statement during the general debate the representative of Iran, who had presented a detailed study, had made a slight error: he had said that the Administering Members had been entrusted with responsibilities with regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Actually the administering Powers had been recognized as sovereign in those Territories long before the United Nations Charter had been signed. The representative of Iran had further observed that investments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories were inadequate in that they represented only 5 to 7 per cent of the national income whereas investments represented from 15 to 22 per cent of the income of developed countries. In the Belgian Congo total gross investment had represented, as shown in a report by the Central Bank of the Belgian Congo, 85,000 million Belgian francs from 1950 to 1955 and 32 per cent of the national product in 1950, 35 per cent in 1951, 32 per cent in 1952, 27 per cent in 1953 and 1954 and 26 per cent in 1955.

7. The representative of Ecuador had expressed satisfaction that the Administering Members were, on the whole, seeking to attain the objectives that had been set forth in the report of the Committee on Information which the General Assembly had approved at its ninth session (A/2729, part two, para. 17). The fact was that the administering Powers had made it their policy to pursue those objectives long before the General Assembly had approved them. The representative of Poland had indicated that in the Non-Self-Governing

Territories the authorities should emphasize the need for investments which would not bring an immediate yield. If the Administering Members failed to reply to such criticisms ill-informed people might well believe that the criticisms were justified. If, on the other hand, the Administering Members pointed out that such investments had long ago been made in Territories under their administration, they would be told that such criticisms did not apply to the particular Territories in question.

8. The introduction to the publication by the Ministry of the Colonies on the ten-year plan for the economic and social development of the Belgian Congo,<sup>2/</sup> dated 1 June 1949, had replied in advance to the criticisms expressed. The writer had explained the need for the plan and for a long-range programme which would go further than the annual budgets. He had pointed out, for example, that the agricultural services could not help the indigenous peasantry to develop if the educational service did not provide for the training of more agronomical assistants, if communications were not improved and if the economy was not so balanced as to permit agricultural surpluses to be sold. One of the advantages of the ten-year plan was that it enabled the officials concerned to compare their projects and co-ordinate them harmoniously within a general framework. The plan was likewise justified from the economic standpoint, for economic development presupposed adequate facilities in such sectors as transport and power.

9. The introduction likewise answered the criticism made by the USSR, which charged that the plan had been established for the benefit of foreign monopolies, and those voiced by Yugoslavia, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines and El Salvador to the effect that the indigenous inhabitants had too small a share in the national income. The plan gave priority to raising the level of living of the indigenous inhabitants.

10. Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) asked whether the Belgian representative was speaking to sub-item (a) or (c) of agenda item 35.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that while the Committee was considering sub-item (c) at the present meeting, it was his practice to allow the members of the Committee to express their views freely.

12. Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium), continuing his statement, said that from 1950 to 1955 production in the Belgian Congo had increased by 74 per cent and the national income and prices had reached index figures of 162 and 115 respectively in 1955 as compared with 1950. Indigenous per capita income had risen by 81 per cent from 1950 to 1955, as shown in a study published by the Central Bank in October 1956. Those figures refuted the statement made by the Czechoslovak delegation that indigenous incomes had not increased at the same rate as incomes in the metropolitan countries. In actual fact the rate of increase had been more rapid. The introduction to the Plan décennal made it clear that priority would be given to a substantial improvement in the indigenous level of living. It stated that the Government would resolutely pursue a policy calculated to ensure a progressive increase of incomes. All the essential needs of the indigenous population were to be met, since the

<sup>2/</sup> Plan décennal pour le développement économique et social du Congo belge (Brussels, Les Éditions de Visscher, 1949) vol. I.

presence of the Belgian Administration in the Congo could only be justified by an improvement in the living conditions of the indigenous inhabitants. The internal market was to be the basis of the Congo's expanding economy. The author of the introduction also pointed out that famine was no longer a danger and that the Administration had induced the people to cultivate sufficient food crops to provide the necessary minimum all over the Territory. At the same time the ten-year plan was to increase the purchasing power of the masses, raise consumption and improve the tax yield. In that connexion it should be remembered that in 1949 indigenous taxation had been estimated at 200 million Belgian francs out of a total revenue of 4,562,602 thousand Belgian francs and that in 1956 a sum of 331 million francs in indigenous taxation out of a total revenue of 10,525 million francs was anticipated.

13. The introduction to the Plan décennal had also referred to the need for industrialization and for diversification of the economy, which were the most rapid means of increasing incomes and creating an internal market which would act as ballast in a highly unstable economy; it might be feared that that development would have an unfavourable effect on sales of simple finished goods to the Belgian Congo, but it should be remembered that the metropolitan country would acquire a richer customer for machinery and goods which were harder and more expensive to produce. The number of commercial firms had risen from 2,314 in 1937 to 4,277 in 1947, in which year they had employed 160,000 industrial workers and 57,000 clerical workers.

14. The author of the introduction had also explained the reasons for the Congolese economy's undue sensitivity to fluctuations in the world economic situation. There were two reasons for that weakness. First, the lack of a processing industry and the fact that almost all the raw materials produced in the Territory were exported had the effect of impoverishing the country's economy; the remedy would be to develop a processing industry, which would lead to an increase of per capita and total income, and at the same time to create an internal market capable of absorbing the production of that industry. Secondly, the weakness was caused by the undue importance of exports in the Territory's economy. The effect of fluctuations in world markets was rapid and violent, which was a particularly serious matter for small indigenous businesses. The first observation was in reply to criticisms that had been made by the delegations of Pakistan and the Ukrainian SSR with regard to the lack of diversification in the economy.

15. The Bulgarian representative had deplored the decrease in the price of agricultural products and the increase in the price of oil. The authorities of the Belgian Congo shared that concern with the other under-developed countries, the value of whose exports was decreasing while the prices of their imports increased. At the present time the situation was aggravated by a fall in the price of copper, of which the Belgian Congo was a large producer; the producing countries were powerless to stabilize their prices in the absence of international action to that end.

16. He replied next to the representative of Saudi Arabia, who had advocated a balance between agriculture and industry, and to the representative of Iran, who had dwelt at length on the subject of scientific research. At the present time there were thirty-three

agricultural training establishments, with approximately 2,000 pupils. The Institut national d'études agronomiques du Congo belge (INEAC) had received an allocation of 460 million francs for 1957, or 5 per cent of the Territory's budget. During the years 1951 to 1956 inclusive the Institut had distributed 2,000 tons of grain and over 5 million plants.

17. Replying to the representative of Ceylon, who had expressed regret that the Belgian authorities in the Congo had not asked for technical assistance from the United Nations, he pointed out that a large number of British officials had remained in Ghana and had thus become, so to speak, technical assistance officials; in the Congo there were 7,800 officials, more than 2,000 university graduates employed by commercial firms and over 2,000 holders of diplomas from technical and vocational colleges, performing similar duties to those which would be carried out by officials of the United Nations Technical Assistance or the United States Point Four.

18. He went on to quote passages from the introduction to the Plan décennal in which technical development by means of appropriate equipment had been envisaged, at the same time as social evolution by the establishment of peasant holdings (paysannats), since ownership fostered attachment to the land. At the end of 1956 the following results had been achieved under the ten-year plan: 150,000 families had been settled, 200,000 plots allocated and 8 million hectares surveyed.

19. With regard to education, he said he had been glad to hear the representative of Pakistan say that it was idle to think that a few scholarships for higher education would suffice and that it was not enough to educate a select few but that the mass of the people must be educated and the governed must be rendered capable of choosing their government. That exactly expressed the concern of the Government of the Belgian Congo; it was stated in the introduction to the Plan décennal that women's education must be developed, since children received their first teaching from their mothers and educated members of the population needed wives who would be their equals and helpmates.

20. The representatives of Ceylon and Egypt had expressed regret that the Belgian authorities did not make use of the scholarships offered by Member States. He would reply to that that Belgium had spent hundreds of millions of francs on the Congolese universities. At the Lovanium University Centre, for example, there were seventy professors and 170 pupils (130 indigenous inhabitants and about forty Europeans, ten of whom were girls). Scholarships were open to all who could benefit by continuing their studies. The proportion of teachers to pupils was still, however, too high, for the authorities insisted that the teaching should be equal to the Belgian standard and that the examinations should be equally severe.

21. The Polish representative had said that the colonial Powers should increase their investments by deductions from the large profits they made by exploiting the Territories. In that connexion he drew attention to a mistake in Mr. John Gunther's book "Inside Africa",<sup>3/</sup> which asserted that the Belgian State not only extracted taxes from the corporations concerned—naturally—but dividends as well. In actual

<sup>3/</sup> New York, Harper and Brothers, 1955.

fact, however, those sums went to the Treasury of the Belgian Congo. He read out a passage from the introduction to the Plan décennal concerning mineral rights, the conditions on which concessions were granted, the royalties due to the State and the various revenues the State derived from the corporations. The system laid down in Belgian legislation was both bold and effective, since on the one hand it gave the public authorities a share in the profits without any expenditure on their part and on the other it gave them control of the enterprises without the responsibilities of management. That system of mixed economy had given satisfactory results: mining enterprises had greatly developed and the State had received substantial returns.

22. The representative of Israel had recalled the members of the Committee to objectivity and a sense of reality when he had asked whether all the States which criticized the Administering Members had done half as much for their own people as the Administering Members had done for the peoples of the dependent territories. The Belgian delegation did not see in that statement a cause for complacency, for the shortcomings of others were no excuse for the faults of one's own country. There were, however, certain attitudes that could not be tolerated.

23. In that connexion he quoted from a speech delivered by Mr. Krishna Menon at Bombay on 14 September. Mr. Menon had said that another problem facing the United Nations was the problem of non-liberated people in Africa: there were millions of people still living in subhuman conditions in Africa under imperialistic régimes of European Powers and those people were distributed in colonies under the régime of Powers ranging from the comparatively civilized and liberal British to the cruel and uncivilized.

24. Mr. Menon was well aware that in free India more people were living in far more inhuman conditions than in the Belgian Congo or even in the whole region of Equatorial Africa. Unfortunately Mr. Menon's audience did not know Africa. They only knew the shanty towns of Bombay and could only conclude that conditions in Africa were worse and that it was the fault of the imperialist régime to which those countries were subjected.

25. The representative of Israel had suggested that the critics of the Administering Members should examine their own consciences. He himself had never doubted the good intentions of a State towards the peoples under its authority. If others had been less successful it was possibly because they had encountered, in the country and the people they had to deal with, and in deep-seated prejudices and stubborn conservatism, even more formidable obstacles than those with which the Belgians had had to contend in the equatorial forest and its primitive people. Perhaps, too, they had lacked the resources which history and providence had bestowed on Belgium.

26. He neither condemned nor accused anyone. All he asked—and he believed he had the right to do so—was that the achievements of his country should be judged not by what it had still to do but by what it had already done, by the progress that had been made and the primitive conditions that had existed at the outset.

27. Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) noted that the informa-

tion furnished by the representative of Belgium covered the period up to the end of 1956. He asked whether the document Belgium had transmitted to the Secretary-General also contained such recent data.

28. In his statement, the Belgian representative had tried to refute criticisms that had been made during the debate on sub-item (a) of agenda item 35, although the Committee was now discussing sub-item (c). He wondered if the Chairman would allow other representatives to reply to that rebuttal even though the Committee was so far behind schedule.

29. Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) replied that the document transmitted by his Government referred to 1955 and contained no information on 1956.

30. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Committee was always interested when Administering Members supplied additional information in the course of the debate. It was the usual policy to allow speakers the greatest possible freedom. All representatives would therefore have an opportunity to reply to the Belgian representative.

31. In reply to a question from Miss BROOKS (Liberia), Mr. BENSON (Secretariat) stated that the Belgian note of 11 October 1957 was the most recent communication the Secretariat had received from that country and that it had arrived too late to be included in document A/C.4/359.

32. Miss BROOKS (Liberia) asked if the text of that note could be circulated.

33. Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) said that although communications of that kind were not usually circulated he had no objection to the note being made available to the Committee.

34. Replying to a question from Mr. CARPIO (Philippines), Mr. BENSON (Secretariat) said that the financial implications of reproducing the communication would be minimal.

35. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the text of the communication should be circulated as a document.

It was so decided.<sup>4/</sup>

Mr. Khoman (Thailand) took the chair.

36. Mr. JAIPAL (India) said that he would be only too glad to pay a tribute to the work accomplished by Belgium in the Congo, but unfortunately the Committee on Information knew very little on the subject.

37. He would have liked Belgium to give that Committee its assistance by providing the kind of information it had just given the Fourth Committee. The practical advantages to be derived would far outweigh the juridical objections which the Belgian delegation had raised. If the Belgian delegation did not want the information furnished by the Administering Members to be discussed, there seemed little point in furnishing it. No intelligent human being would be satisfied to play such a passive role. By its very nature, such information called for discussion.

38. The representative of Belgium considered that the reports of the Committee on Information were of a general character. How could they be otherwise in view of its terms of reference?

<sup>4/</sup> Subsequently circulated as document A/C.4/359/Add.1.

39. Concerning Mr. Menon's remarks, he would point out that they had been directed to countries where racial discrimination was permitted by law, and not to the Belgian Congo. As far as India was concerned it had to contend with all kinds of difficulties deriving from its history, its climate and its population pressure. Mr. Ryckmans had been to India and knew what efforts that country was making.

40. Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) said that he realized that considerable efforts were being made. He only asked that Belgium should be given equal credit, since it felt the same concern for the inhabitants of the Congo.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.