Greek Special Import Duty Discussed In Plenary Session

On 27 November 1951 the Greek Government imposed a tax on certain imported goods. This tax, which led the French Government to bring the matter to the Contracting Parties as contrary to the terms of Article III (see page 7 of Agenda Press Guidance, GATT 75) was repealed on 31 December 1951. It was superseded by another measure which, in the view of the Greek Government, would help indirectly to counteract the depreciation of the drachma. This new measure imposed a tax on foreign exchange, and was collected by the Bank of Greece at the time when the imported goods were paid for.

The French delegation maintained their view that this new measure was not in accordance with the GATT and after a general debate the Contracting Parties decided to refer the matter to the Panel on Complaints, which has been set up at this Session to deal with complaints referred to the Contracting Parties.

During the discussion the delegates of Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium and the United States supported the contention of the French delegate that it was desirable to examine in more detail the Greek special import tax, pointing out that the tax appears to contravene the obligations of the GATT by placing additional import duties on goods which are bound under the GATT concessions. The delegate of Greece, however, maintained that the measures were essentially monetary in character, through which it was hoped to secure the real value of the drachma in relation to other more stable currencies.