

Mr. President, fellow-delegates:

1. *Reverse order of this P's*

On November 27, 1953, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution recognizing, among other things, that "in the framework of their constitution and of the compact agreed upon with the United States of America, the people of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have been invested with attributes of political sovereignty which clearly identify the status of self-government attained by the Puerto Rican people as that of an autonomous political entity."

The resolution was approved shortly after the U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations, the Honorable Henry Cabot Lodge, had read a solemn message from the President of the United States to the effect that "if, at any time, the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico adopts a resolution in favour of more complete or even absolute independence", the President would immediately thereafter recommend to Congress that such independence be granted.

2. The resolution, sponsored by seven Latin American countries, won the support of 17 of the American Republics. It was a clear,

firm and eloquent demonstration of the true feelings of the community of American nations regarding the constitutional events that have given Puerto Rico a full measure of self government, within a close and friendly association with the U.S.A.

*Insert* → The people of Puerto Rico, whom it is my privilege to serve as Under Secretary of State, are deeply appreciative of the almost complete solidarity with which the Americas understood and supported the process of self-determination which led to the founding of the Commonwealth on July 25, 1952.

The people of Puerto Rico hold in high regard the ties of language, tradition and culture which bind them to the peoples of Hispanic America. They are also deeply proud of the fraternal association which they have established with the United States, based on mutual respect and mutual esteem and a common devotion to democratic self-determination.

This association, in its structure of political and economic relationships, is unique in the history of America. It had never happened before; it shall, most probably, not happen again. Within

the framework that has been created, a small country facing grave and difficult problems now marches securely on the path of freedom.

Puerto Rico is a small and busy beehive. In scarcely 10,000 square kilometers, there lives a tightly huddled community of two million and a quarter inhabitants. A thousand times smaller than our host country, Venezuela, Puerto Rico has almost half its population. It lacks oil and iron and gold. It can never dream ~~of carrying~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~through~~ the great accomplishments of the Venezuelan people. Not from an abundant land, but from strenuous work, hard sacrifice and creative imagination must the people of Puerto Rico earn their living.

The partnership, which Puerto Rico of its own free will has entered into with the United States, affords the necessary conditions of real freedom for its hope and progress.

Here are, briefly, its main characteristics:

The people of Puerto Rico, through their elected representative in Washington, who is also a member of the House of Representatives in the Federal Congress, proposed that the relationships between the United States and Puerto Rico should be derived from a compact based

on the principle of government by consent, and that in accordance with this principle, the people of Puerto Rico may organize a government pursuant to a constitution of their adoption. This proposal resulted in a law of the Congress of the United States which was submitted for ratification to the people of Puerto Rico in a free and democratic referendum. The law received overwhelming support from the voters, and delegates were accordingly elected to a Constitutional Convention which drafted the republican and democratic constitution now in effect. This Constitution gave to Puerto Rico *the right to have a* the flag, anthem and coat of arms, *as symbols of its culture and* ~~which had been its traditional~~ ~~and cultural symbols.~~ Once the Constitution was ratified by the Congress, in accordance with the principle of mutual consent, the basis was laid for the proclamation of the Commonwealth on July 25, 1952.

The sphere of relationships between the United States and Puerto Rico was clearly defined in a statute which, as part of the compact, continues to assure free trade between the island and the mainland,

as well as Puerto Rico's full sovereign powers in regard to its fiscal system. The association preserves a common United States citizenship, aside from the Commonwealth citizenship which the Puerto Ricans enjoy, provides for a common defense, and further stipulates that laws of the United States Congress which may include Puerto Rico shall apply as in the States of the Union and under the same limitations.

The association, therefore, is highly responsive to the free determination of the people of Puerto Rico. Since it is dynamic in nature, it may be modified and may call for further developments within its pattern of relationships or in the sense of complete separation, if such were someday the express majority will of the people.

But the real meaning of this association is more effectively understood if seen in the light of what the Puerto Rican people have accomplished in the increasing enjoyment of their political freedom.

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Puerto Rico undertook a vast agrarian reform which has almost trebled agricultural production in the last twelve years, and given lands in a large measure to the small farmer. During that same period, per capita income has doubled to the extent that, I understand, only three countries here present -- Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela -- <sup>show</sup> ~~can show~~ higher figures. More than <sup>270</sup> ~~250~~ new factories have been established since the end of the war under the government's industrialization program. Malaria has been practically eliminated, tuberculosis drastically reduced and the life expectancy of the average citizen has been increased, as a result of the local health programs, from 46 in 1940 to 61 in 1952.

The dramatic struggle of the Puerto Rican people to overcome extreme misery and ignorance from the land is clearly demonstrated by this fact: In the official Commonwealth budget for this coming year which adds up to 167 million dollars, nearly 90 millions are appropriated for education, health and social security. The people of Puerto Rico spend 50 million dollars a year in public education

and have started a campaign against illiteracy which it is hoped would reduce it from 22 percent today to a mere 10 percent by 1957.

What the people of Puerto Rico are, what they think and do is open for anyone to see in America. With local funds, the <sup>Commonwealth</sup> Government has established a training center under the Technical Cooperation Program to promote the exchange of ideas, methods and experiences, and to the great satisfaction of Puerto Rico more than 560 Latin American trainees have visited the island under this program.

We, in Puerto Rico, want everyone in the Americas to see and understand us as we really are: in the school which has been built to do away with ignorance; in the factory established to increase the worker's productivity and better his living standard; in the new housing developments covering thousands of units which provide comfort and spiritual well-being; in the small farm of the "parcelero" which adds to his pride and economic security; and finally and above all, in the free exercise of our democratic institutions, where the widest tolerance is granted to every idea which in respecting the law earns respect for itself.

As a result of very unique historical causes, a small American nationality has joined voluntarily with a great American nationality in a surprising experiment of fraternal cultural understanding. The people of Puerto Rico believe overwhelmingly in this association. They support it with their votes, firm in the knowledge that they could also change it with their votes. The fanatic bullet does not speak with the voice of Puerto Rico. For wherever stands a Puerto Rican who is true to a people old in history and old in suffering and steadfast hope, he shall voice his faith in democracy, his faith in the supreme dignity of man, his faith in the unity of the Americas.