

I am thankful of the opportunity to present to the Committee some views of the role of Puerto Rico in international relations, particularly as they refer to the Caribbean and Latin America. I shall base my brief remarks on my studies of the subject, as well as on my experience in both the federal and Commonwealth governments.

When I refer to international relations I do not limit my views to the formal, diplomatic pattern. International relations transcend today the traditional areas of concern. They grow out of the revolution in communications, the intricate web of world trade relations, the interpenetration of cultures, the close contacts in ^{as} such areas of sports and science, the need for closer cooperation to ^{fight} find the scourge of drugs and smuggling.

Some areas are more exposed to these shifting currents than others. Their ^{relative} exposure has to do with geography and history. Such is the case of Puerto Rico. Geographically located at the center of the West Indian chain of islands, its close contiguity to the rest of the Caribbean makes it one of the crossroads of this ^{region} area and one of its key strategic positions.

In the great struggles of the past for the dominion of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico played a crucial role under Spain, as a "key to the Indies," or the "strongest fortress of Spain in America." After the Spanish-American War, the noted American navalist, Alfred Mahan, called it a Caribbean Malta.

If it was extremely difficult for a European state to sustain operations in the eastern Mediterranean with a British fleet at Malta, similarly it would be very difficult "for a transatlantic state to maintain operations in the Western Caribbean with a U.S. fleet based upon Puerto Rico and the adjacent islands". During the Second World War, Puerto Rico was called an American Gibraltar and was one of the key elements in the so-called Rainbow Plans for hemispheric defense. In a recent paper written for a 1981-1982 seminar, Colonel Frank H. Butler ^{referred to} ~~called~~ the naval base at Roosevelt Roads "the most important U.S. installation in the Caribbean..." and emphasized the role of Puerto Rico for humanitarian relief efforts in the Caribbean, for the interdiction of illegal drugs and for important search and rescue missions. Furthermore, Puerto Rico is a ^{key} center of technological communications in the region.

Geography has dictated Puerto Rico's strategic role. But history has emphasized its ties with the Caribbean and ^{the} cultural profile of the people. In language, in cultural mores, in ethnic mixture, Puerto Rico is very much a part of the Caribbean. Historically, it has received and ^{is} receiving peoples from the area: Cubans, Dominicans, migrants from the ^{remainder of the} Antilles. The popular folklore is influenced by these human contacts; the ~~high~~ ^{past} ~~university~~ ^{past} culture, by the cross-currents of Spanish, Spanish-American trends, which merge with the powerful U.S. influences, whether in the field of sports or recreation, or in the area of artistic

and cultural expression, Puerto Rico has a distinctiveness,
a certain profile which, according to a State Department
expert, Kenneth W. Bleakley, to state "that there is,
indeed a unique Puerto Rican national character which,
far from being undermined, is in the midst of an
historical process of self-identification."

The view ^{held,}
there has been ^{traditionally,} in many circles
inside and outside Latin America, that the United
States has obliterated Puerto Rican culture. Visitors
to the island who ^{with} ~~have~~ a sense of fairness discover otherwise.

In certain periods, Puerto Rico has been a hub of
important Caribbean and inter-American meetings,
a training center for economic and social developers,
public administrators, social workers, labor leaders,
and others. During the Minors Marine Administration,
in the 50's and 60's, Puerto Rico became one of
the main third-country training areas in the international
field, and a place for educational and cultural
exchange programs which brought ^{more than} over 10,000 persons
~~people~~ from ^{more than} over 100 countries. Interest developed
in the Congress in this experience to the extent
that Frank Valeo, then assistant to Senior
Majority leader Mike Mansfield, and
later Secretary of the Senate was sent
to investigate. In a Report to the Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations, 85th Congress, 1st Session, Valeo observed,
[copied into]

Much of the momentum was lost after the Muñoz years, but Puerto Rico, in the Secretary's continued to have an interest in the Caribbean as exemplified in its collaboration with Caribbean economic organizations, such as

~~But even more than these official contacts,~~

Present trends push Puerto Rico towards an active international role even more than ^{in the} Muñoz years. In spite of several ^{negative} conditions in ~~Puerto Rico~~ ^{the island}, such as rising labor costs, unemployment and the increase of competitive areas, Puerto Rico has expanded in position in the world trade arena and has refined its manufacturing potential and its infrastructural know-how. Its services industries have expanded and its position as a Caribbean communications hub has been strengthened.

We all realize that the Caribbean Basin Initiative has fallen quite short of its original expectations. But today, Puerto Rico's support of this initiative through the imaginative town-plant concept is probably the most catalytic agent for the program.

On another aspect, Puerto Rico has increased its cultural role internationally. The Fifth Centenary of the ~~Discovery~~ Encounter of America is being ~~celebrated~~ ^{organized} throughout

the Ibero-American world. Puerto Rico, as one of the oldest Spanish settlements, has been not fully asked to participate, but will become host to an international congress in 1987. In the fields of sports and recreation, Puerto Ricans compete as islanders with an identity. In the field of higher education, Puerto Rico has also carved its ^{own} personality by collaborating with Caribbean and Latin American universities and developing a mutual flow of ideas and contacts.

These are all a few examples of a dynamic process underway propelling Puerto Rico into the varying areas of international relations, whether in the field of trade or economics, or in technical or scientific exchanges, or in the areas of cultural ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{arts, education} and recreation, it is to the advantage of Puerto Rico, to the long range interests of the United States and to better Caribbean ~~and~~ ^{relations}, to facilitate Puerto Rico's role.

A narrow view would hold that since Puerto Rico has not got a separate, juridical, international personality, it should remain within the straight jacket of traditional diplomacy, its course been dictated by the State Department.

A broader view would consider Puerto Rico's distinctiveness as an asset, its linkages to the Caribbean as a historic necessity and its drive for participation in trade, cultural and artistic exchanges, sports and recreation, as a force that would not

only provide a sense of pride to Puerto Ricans,
but would ^{assure} the economic, social and democratic
development of the island.

Under ~~the~~ ^{Puerto Rico's} present status arrangement, there
is no restriction to what imaginative men could do
to reconcile Puerto Rico's momentum with basic
American interests. Mechanisms for prior
consultation and collaboration should be
established between Puerto Rico and the State Depart-
ment and other U.S. agencies, not merely on
ad-hoc ^{but on a regular} basis. I would even go as far as
proposing ^{that} as a stipulation to the Federal
Relations Act. Periodic meetings, for example,
could be held ~~where~~ the chief executive of
Puerto Rico could express his special
vantage point with regard to American
foreign policies which may involve Puerto Rico.

I also fully support the view, expressed
several years ago by a great constitutionalist,
Carl J. Friedrich, that "there is no
reason why the Commonwealth might not
be represented at nonpolitical organizations,
boards and conferences which are
multiplying in the international field
today." (Puerto Rico: Middle Road to Freedom,
1959, 71) Rather than dealing with this
developing situation in piecemeal fashion,
it should be made a joint statement of
policy, a part of the 1952 compact.