

# U.N. Unit Terms Puerto Rico Colony Entitled to Independence

From News Dispatches

UNITED NATIONS, Aug. 28—A United Nations committee voted today to put Puerto Rico under study as a colonial territory of the United States entitled to independence.

The action by the Special Committee on Colonialism on a resolution backed by Cuba, the Soviet Union and China does not change Puerto Rico's status as a free commonwealth associated with the United States.

But the 12-0 vote with 10 abstentions was a considerable embarrassment for Washington, which contends that U.N. consideration of the question constitutes meddling in domestic American affairs.

The U.N. committee set up a working group to decide how to extend to the Caribbean island provisions of the United Nations Declaration against Colonialism.

In Washington, State Department officials called the U.N. committee action "an insult to the people of Puerto Rico who have chosen to live in a democracy under a constitution of their own choosing in free association with the United States."

The officials cited the most recent referendum in 1967, when 425,081 Puerto Ricans voted for continued commonwealth status, 273,315 for statehood, and 4,205 for independence.

In Puerto Rico, Gov. Luis A. Ferre said the Soviet Union, China and Cuba should have proposed a U.N. declaration favoring freedom for Communist-ruled Cuba instead of trying to brand Puerto Rico a colony.

The Cuban delegate, Ricardo Alarcon, had described Puerto Rico as "the most exploited prey of North American imperialism."

Alarcon charged that the elections in Puerto Rico were conducted in an atmosphere of military occupation.

The Soviet delegate, Vasily S. Safronchuk, told the committee, "We are dealing with the fate of 3 million people subjected to ruthless exploitation" by the United States.

And China's counselor,

Chang Yun-kuan, told the committee: "Puerto Rico is in fact a colony of the United States and the Puerto Rican people's struggle for national independence is a just one . . ."

The import of the vote was subject to conflicting interpretations.

Juan Mari-Bras, a leader of the Puerto Rican independence movement, said he considered the action a clear statement that Puerto Rico is a colonial territory of the United States.

But a U.S. spokesman termed the wording ambiguous, stressing that part of the resolution refers the matter to a working group.

Cuba tried last year to bring the matter before the entire 132-nation U.N. General Assembly, but failed by an over-

whelming margin to get it onto the agenda.

But in the small anticolonialism committee, which the United States recently quit in disagreement over policies, backers of the resolution were able to muster a majority.

Voting in favor of the resolution were China, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Ecuador, India, Iraq, Mali, Sierra Leone, Syria and Tanzania. Cuba, which is not a committee member, could not vote. The resolution was introduced on Cuba's behalf by Iraq.

The vote caused unhappiness in the U.S. delegation, which by coincidence has just launched a campaign to get the American assessment for the United Nations reduced from 31.52 per cent of the budget to 25 per cent.

## Puerto Rican Reaction Mixed on Vote at U.N.

By Ronald Walker

Special to The Washington Post

SAN JUAN, Aug. 28—A United Nations committee's action in terming Puerto Rico, a U.S. colonial territory entitled to independence was hailed by pro-independence forces here tonight as a "great victory."

But the more numerous advocates of Puerto Rico's current commonwealth status and those who would like to see the island become the 51st American state denounced the action by the U.N. Special Committee on Colonialism.

In the most recent referendum held here in 1967, 425,081 Puerto Ricans voted in favor of the existing commonwealth status, 273,315 voted for statehood and 4,205 for independence.

But most supporters of independence boycotted that plebiscite. Latest polls in Puerto Rico indicate that the pro-independence forces will win about 10 per cent of the vote in November's election.

Carlos Gallisa, vice president of the Puerto Rico Independence Party, called the

U.N. unit's action a "tremendous blow to the U.S. imperialists in Puerto Rico and their collaborators, the Popular Democratic and the New Progressive parties."

Gov. Luis A. Ferre, the New Progressive Party leader who favors statehood for Puerto Rico, said the nations that supported the resolution should have concerned themselves instead with obtaining freedom for Communist-ruled Cuba.

Rafael Hernandez Colon, an advocate of commonwealth status who is the Popular Democratic party candidate opposing Ferre in the November gubernatorial election, termed the U.N. action "undue intervention" in Puerto Rico's relations with the United States.

Former Gov. Roberto Sanchez Zilella, who advocates a more autonomous commonwealth status, said the United Nations "cannot decide the political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States."