

Aug. 18, 1972

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Alarcon, representative of Cuba, took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: I call upon the representative of Cuba.

Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): First of all, of course, my delegation wishes to thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, as also the members of the Committee, for kindly allowing us to address the Committee at this juncture.

We are grateful to you for this favour also because, as far as Cuba is concerned, the work of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples is of the utmost importance. That is why my Government has supported and continues to support the work you are doing.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

Sir, it is also a subject of interest and satisfaction to us to be able to appear here in this Committee under your guidance, representative of the United Republic of Tanzania as you are. Yours is a government and yours is a people with which my own has enjoyed very close ties of fraternal co-operation for some time.

Addressing the United Nations, Commander Che Guevara described Puerto Rico as the problem that defines and makes clear the imperialist and anti-imperialist positions. The attitude that is adopted to the colonial problem of Puerto Rico is the touchstone for measuring the degree of respect for the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist tenets. This is true because of the very history of the struggle of the Puerto Rican people for their national emancipation and because too of the very history of the struggle to make this Organization and the international community adopt a consistent position on the Puerto Rican case.

Before I set forth the arguments of my delegation in support of the request we put before this Committee, we feel we should say some words regarding the reasons that have led the Revolutionary Government of Cuba and the Cuban people to fight indefatigably and consistently so that this Organization will do its duty towards Puerto Rico. We have fought, we continue to fight and we shall fight because my Government draws inspiration from a policy of principles, a policy of clear-cut and unambiguous adherence to the cause of the emancipation of all the oppressed peoples. This is a policy which over and above all is faithful to the Latin American cause, to internationalism, and which sets up no differentiation between the situations of one or another oppressed people. We proclaim and we struggle to ensure that universal principles are applied and respected universally in all circumstances.

But, aside from all this, between the peoples of Puerto Rico and Cuba there exist great ties of brotherhood that lie at the very roots of our history and of our nationality. For four full centuries both our peoples languished under Spanish colonial domination. Throughout the length of the 19th century both peoples fought shoulder to shoulder to reconquer our national independence from Spain. Together we organized the war of liberation in the 19th century. Together we fell under the North American aggression of 1898, and together from that time on both our peoples have continued our joint struggle for our full national independence.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

That common struggle also engendered a community of ideals and ideas among our two peoples to which Cuba has been, is and will always be faithful.

As far as Cuba is concerned, it is not only a matter of principle but a historical mandate that cannot be shirked -- one that we inherited from Jose Marti, one that was left to us by the Puerto Rican fighters that fell on the battlefields of Cuba in the struggle for the independence of the Caribbean islands -- to fight in this forum and in all other international forums for the just cause of the national independence of Puerto Rico.

My delegation also regards it as its inescapable duty to pay a tribute today to the people of Puerto Rico, a people that has never had the opportunity of exercising sovereignty and freedom, that has never been allowed even to achieve a formal independence, a people that has never been allowed even for a brief and fleeting historical moment to exercise its national rights, but yet through long centuries of foreign oppression has served as an example to the rest of the world of national resistance against foreign aggression, an outstanding example of the resistance of the national values of a people against attempts to destroy and assimilate it. It has been a devoted and heroic resistance against an all-powerful enemy in most unequal conditions of war. It is a people that has never ceased to fight for its rights from the very first uprisings in the 16th century to the present day, the people of Ostos and Albizu Campos, the people of Betanges and Diego, the people of Oscar Collazo, of Lolita Lebron, of Rafael Rangel Miranda, of Florez, of Andres Figueroa Cordero and of so many others that are still languishing in the prisons of Puerto Rico or in the metropolitan area, paying for the sole crime of fighting for the independence of their homeland and the crime of having proclaimed their willingness to fight for those principles which we would presume underlie the existence of this Committee. To that heroic people, to those who gave their lives in the course of this century to conquer their national rights, my people pay a humble and sincere tribute.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

The subject before this Committee today is not mere stubbornness on the part of the Cuban delegation. It is not a theoretical question. It is purely and simply the reflection of the struggle of a people that has developed and is developing and will develop beyond the walls of this conference room. Through its own struggle that people has already acquired and conquered the right to have the principle of self-determination and sovereignty recognized and reaffirmed, to have the right to independence recognized. My delegation also pays a tribute to the fighters of today, some of whom may be watching this discussion in this very room -- the representatives of the Socialist Party and the Independent Puerto Rican Party, as well as of trade unions, cultural and student organizations, as well as outstanding personalities that have come to New York to hear this discussion.

Puerto Rico was, is and will be a Latin American nation, the very last of our continent still subject to foreign colonialism. The colonial condition of Puerto Rico forbids the establishment between it and anyone else of any differentiation. The North American colonial control over that Territory is absolute in all aspects of its life -- political, economic, social, legislative, judicial, in questions of defence and foreign affairs: but this control also covers every one of the daily activities of the Puerto Rican people.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

There is not a single Puerto Rican who every day has not had to act or cease to act subject to decisions which are not adopted by Puerto Ricans, but which are handed down and imposed upon them by the federal structure of North American imperialism. It is the United States that possesses full jurisdiction over questions of citizenship, foreign affairs, defence, immigration, emigration, foreign trade, currency, maritime and air transport, postal services, radio, television, salaries, worker-management relations, housing, forest reserves, pollution of the environment, transportation, public health, standards of food and pharmaceutical products, enforced expropriation and alienation of land and other real estate possessions, organization of the banks and savings and loans associations, regulation of certain important professions, such as medicine. The list would be endless if I were to try to complete it.

But in this case it is not only that sovereignty is held by the North American Congress. It is not only that the United States fully exploits the Puerto Rican economy and controls its judicial machinery, governs -- in one word -- on behalf of that Territory over that Territory. But so far as central control over the island is concerned, there is not the slightest degree of delegation of authority over the so-called Puerto Rican administration or the Government of Puerto Rico. In other words the machinery of colonial servants, which has the name of "Government of Puerto Rico" does not have the slightest power or authority in all the fields I have mentioned; its power is reduced to the nomination of subaltern employees and to some strictly municipal administration measure.

In 1965 the University of Puerto Rico's School of Public Administration prepared a study on the United States administrative machinery in the island. According to that report 12 federal executive Departments with 53 subdivisions and 12 control organs were operating in Puerto Rico and were in charge of the application and implementation of a number of federal laws -- all, without exception, adopted without the consent of the Puerto Rican people. The Departments are as follows: Agriculture, Air Force, Army, Trade, Health, Interior, Justice, Labour, Navy, Post Office, State and Treasury.

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The control organs are the following: Atomic Energy, Civil Service, Aviation, Communications, Housing, General Services, Home Financing, Labour Relations, Public Housing, Compulsory Military Service, Small Business and Veterans.

To that study that was carried out by the University of Puerto Rico there must be added other organs that have been created and new federal subdivisions which have also started to exercise control and authority in Puerto Rico. Among them I shall mention the following: the Agency for Environmental Protection, the Commission for Equal Employment Opportunities, the Maritime Commission, the so-called Office of the Peace Corps and the Transportation Department.

All this goes to prove that we are confronted not only by a colonial case but also by a case of absolute centralized control over a colony, which is one of the key elements in understanding the Puerto Rican situation. Since 1898 the objective of North American imperialism has been to destroy the Puerto Rican nationality, to assimilate that Territory and liquidate it as a separate and distinct entity. If that has not taken place throughout these 74 years it is purely and simply because of the heroic struggle of the Puerto Rican people, to its obstinate resistance, to its determination to preserve its own spiritual values, a struggle which we must recognize has constituted not only one of the most encouraging examples to all subjected peoples, but also one that has gained an important victory since today no one can deny that there is such a thing as a Puerto Rican nation, that that Puerto Rican nation is different from the North American nation, that the Puerto Rican nation has not been able to exercise its sacred right to freedom, and that that nation, which has never had that opportunity, nevertheless continues to struggle to gain its inalienable right to independence.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

It is interesting to take note of what I have said here because it is well known that the imperialist argument against this Committee's doing its duty towards Puerto Rico is that that Territory has the status of self-government. But my delegation would ask a simple question of the members of the Committee. After the list I have just read out and whose existence I can prove by mentioning the administrative orders, ordinances, rules and laws which establish their authority over Puerto Rico, I would ask: Is there any other important activity that is not controlled by the administering Power? Or is that narrow margin of activities which might perhaps be left to the control of the local authority considered by this Committee as adequate proof of self-government, as adequate proof that there has been development towards self-government in the colonial Territory? The answer obviously is no.

If this Committee, which was created by the General Assembly to guarantee to all peoples that are non-self-governing or under trusteeship, or those that have not as yet achieved independence, the rights that they should enjoy, were to agree that such a monstrous creation as the so-called Associated Free State of Puerto Rico constitutes an acceptable form of the exercise of the right of peoples to freedom, then the Committee would be ignoring and violating the Declaration contained in resolution 1514 (XV) and would be destroying the very bases of its mandate and very reason for its existence.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

Thus far I have not mentioned certain dramatic aspects of the colonial domination of Puerto Rico to which my delegation has already referred in some detail before other organs of the General Assembly. However, I should like now to mention them briefly.

Economically speaking, Puerto Rico is the most exploited prey of North American imperialism on our continent. The volume of North American investments in that Territory is almost \$7,000 million. It will be noted that that amount is almost one-third of the total United States investments in the Latin American continent. In other words, in one of the smallest territories of Latin America -- also one of the smallest peoples of our continent -- the North American monopolies have concentrated an enormous percentage of their investments in that area of the world and of course derive the highest level of benefits and profits from this small people. This means that as far as the imperialist exploitation of Latin America is concerned, the people of Puerto Rico, one of the smallest people of our continent, is bearing the highest level of exploitation in the service of the North American monopolies.

This super-exploitation to which the people of Puerto Rico are subjected is reflected in concrete facts which imperialism cannot place in doubt.

One-third of the population of Puerto Rico has been constrained to emigrate to the North American mainland purely and simply because in its own land it lacks the opportunities to work and to live decently. It is not surprising to anyone that New York is probably the city with the highest Puerto Rican population in the world, including the capital of Puerto Rico. It is these thousands upon thousands of Puerto Ricans that all of you have had the opportunity to see in this city, and to see them always doing the most lowly jobs and receiving the lowest salaries, discriminated against to a degree that can be compared only with that of the most humiliated and exploited minorities of this country, which are living in truly degrading conditions. That is to say that colonialism has imposed upon that one-third of the population of Puerto Rico the necessity of having to leave its homeland in order to be able to survive, and then forces it to eke out an existence under inhuman conditions of discrimination, of harassment and of poverty in a typically racist society.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

Furthermore, according to official statistics put out by the officials of the colonial Puerto Rican authorities, a high proportion of the labour force still on the island is permanently unemployed. To that we must add that a very important and large segment of the Puerto Rican population is surviving on the island -- some 700,000 persons -- thanks to federal subsidies, programmes of food supplies, because they lack their own means to enable them to work and to live decently in their homeland. Consequently, as Josué de Castro has pointed out, a tiny privileged minority lives, surrounded by these dramatic conditions, growing rich and living in very different conditions from the rest thanks to the protection of foreign colonialism. This phenomenon is known to all those representatives who come from former colonial Territories, and it is this minority which is perfectly satisfied with the status quo, because this status allows them to grow fat and rich on the misery of the majority of the population. It is that minority only which can make statements and take actions favourable to the oppression of its homeland by imperialism, under which its own people is exploited.

Another element of this entire question to which I have not alluded this morning is also of crucial importance and should be taken into account by the Committee, that is, the military aspect of the situation in Puerto Rico. As a colonial Territory, Puerto Rico does not have its own armed forces and it has no autonomous machinery for its defence. At the same time, the Puerto Rican people is obliged, by one of the decisions which show dramatically not only the colonial but also the racist nature of the régime imposed by the United States on that Territory, to participate in the North American armed forces by means of the imposition of obligatory military service, an imposition that comes from Washington and which has nothing to do with the will, the desire or the feelings of the Puerto Rican people, as proved by the following facts.

Given their relatively small population, 3 million, the Puerto Ricans have given an enormous amount of their blood to North American imperialism in all its wars of aggression and all its imperialistic adventures around the world. In the First World War there were 200,000 Puerto Rican soldiers with the North American forces. In the Second World War there were 400,000 Puerto Rican soldiers, and 40,000 were forced to fight with the imperialist troops in the war of aggression

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against the People's Democratic Republic of Korea in 1950. At present, in the war of aggression against the people of Viet-Nam and the other Indo-Chinese peoples, the Puerto Ricans have been forced also to contribute to the North American forces, and, according to well-known facts published in Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican losses -- the number of Puerto Ricans that have fallen as a consequence of the war of aggression of the United States against the Viet-Nameese and Indo-Chinese peoples -- is incomparably larger than the number of losses suffered by other parts of the United States or other States of the mainland. According to data published in the Puerto Rican press on 31 March 1968 by none other than the State Director of Puerto Rico, Colonel Torres Masa -- the State Director of the selective service in Puerto Rico -- the number of Puerto Ricans who participate in that war is larger than the number of those participating from 29 States, territories or possessions of the United States of America. In other words, as part and parcel of its racist policy, the North American Government not only forces Puerto Rican youths to participate in its campaigns of aggression in the world but also uses them in more dangerous positions than its own North American citizens, and that is why the Puerto Rican losses are larger, proportionally, than those of other citizens of the States of the Union.

Earlier I said something about the North American manoeuvres to confuse this Organization by contending that although the Puerto Rican people live under the conditions I have summarized here, it has nevertheless exercised its right to self-determination and selected its own type of government. The most cursory glance at the constitutional, economic, political and legal realities in Puerto Rico can lead to only one conclusion: a categorical rejection of the North American contention.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

That is why this Committee must be urged, without any further delay, to take the only position consistent with its composition and status; that is, to decide upon the inclusion of this Territory among those which fall under its competence in order to fulfil for Puerto Rico too the categorical mandate which was entrusted by the General Assembly, to this Committee and which is the very life-blood of this organ.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to point out that the colonialist manoeuvre of the so-called freely associated State that was resorted to in 1952 by the United States Government in order to confuse the General Assembly has -- as a rotten structure, as a decadent and anti-historical creation -- because of its own weakness gradually fallen apart. And now that the Special Committee on decolonization is considering this question it so happens, by chance, that practically all the political forces in Puerto Rico -- and when I say this I include the whole gamut of colonial lackies who through the years of this century have "administered the Territory" on behalf of the United States -- at this moment have almost unanimously agreed to point out that the present status of the island is not one of self-government, and some have gone even further and stressed its colonial aspect.

But to anticipate any objection of the nature which is traditionally raised by the United States, and which -- according to the paragraph of the letter that you, Mr. Chairman, have read out -- the United States still resorts to, my delegation would like to comment in detail on this situation and to prove conclusively to this Committee the true nature of the 1952 manoeuvre -- and I say 1952 but it seems to be repeated today also, particularly by those who dirtied their hands in the foul moves of 1952.

First of all, the United States of North America has stated and reiterated that the case of Puerto Rico does not fall within the purview of this Committee, because Puerto Rico has already exercised its right to self-determination and the General Assembly so recognized, according to the United States, in its resolution 748 (VIII) of 27 November 1953 -- a resolution, incidentally, which is famous only because it has been one of the instruments used by United States imperialism to force the United Nations to obey its orders and to cease to exercise its sacred duties towards Puerto Rico. We have never

heard resolution mentioned in any other context, and I presume that very few delegations had even read the resolution until the United States delegation disinterred it in order to stand in the way of this Committee's doing its duty.

However, that 1952 situation occurred because it was based on a number of premises which my delegation has repeatedly stated were clumsy manoeuvres by the United States Government to hoodwink the international community, and what was put before us as a manifestation of the exercise of the right of self-determination of the people was in truth a shameful and nameless manoeuvre which negated and refused to the Puerto Ricans their most elementary rights.

According to the United States arguments, in 1952 the Puerto Rican people was, we are told, given the right to choose its political status and establish a new type of relationship with the United States of America. To do this the so-called plebiscite of 1952 is used as an argument to prove, ostensibly, that the Puerto Rican people exercised its right to self-determination. What we have not been told and what has not been mentioned is that that plebiscite was carried out in a way and under circumstances that must be labelled unacceptable by the United Nations and must be rejected by anyone who takes an even slightly anti-colonialist stand.

In 1952, as now in 1972, Puerto Rico was militarily occupied by United States forces. And it is not a light and benevolent military occupation; it is the occupation of a Territory 13 per cent of whose best lands is occupied by United States military bases of all branches. The Puerto Rican people was also forced to join the United States military forces. Secondly, the plebiscite was held under the most ferocious repression of the patriotic forces of Puerto Rico.

At the beginning of my statement I mentioned the names of some heroic Puerto Rican fighters, nationalist fighters who are still, today, held in colonialist gaols, precisely because of what they did in the days of the plebiscite when they were arrested by the colonial forces, forces which also arrested thousands of Puerto Rican patriots -- and all of those arrested patriots were condemned. But the campaign itself was condemned by the Commission set up by the so-called Governor of Puerto Rico as having violated elementary civic and political

rights. So the plebiscite was held under circumstances in which thousands of the independent Puerto Ricans were denied their rights, as the colonial authorities nine years later admitted. Despite all that, the so-called 1952 plebiscite of Puerto Rico was not based on any express, formal commitment by the Government of the United States to recognize the will of the Puerto Rican people, if or when expressed. In other words, it was not a consultation held subject to respect for its results; it was quite different.

I have before me a copy of the ballot that was circulated to the Puerto Rican people and I should like to know whether this Committee could accept such a shameful scrap of paper as an instrument for self-determination. Or is it the most bare-faced and shameful violation of that right?

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

You will see, Sir, that it is a document consisting of two columns: that on the left, which I shall read, says: "I vote in favour of Law No. 600 of the Eighty-First Congress" -- that is, of course, the United States Congress. The column on the right says: "I vote against acceptance of Law No. 600 of the Eighty-First Congress". There are no other columns. There is no room for a further check mark on the ballot paper for, as the heading indicates, one could only accept or reject the decision of the United States Congress. The heading says: "Referendum for the acceptance or rejection of Law No. 600 of the Eighty-First Congress".

In other words, the United States appeared before the United Nations to speak of a so-called plebiscite, to speak of a so-called decision of the Puerto Rican people, and to present it as the way in which that people had chosen its destiny when in reality the Puerto Rican people, with thousands of its citizens in prison and with thousands of North American soldiers on its territory, was merely asked whether it accepted or rejected Law No. 600 of the Eighty-First Congress.

And what is Law No. 600? What was the choice open to the people? Well, the law was: either accept the status, the way of life and the relations with the United States that I summarized earlier in my speech or agree to a régime very similar to that which existed prior to Law No. 600. If today Puerto Rico lacks authority and sovereignty in foreign affairs, defence and also in the mass media, environmental pollution, forestry and an endless list of other fields of activity, one can well imagine that the change from the previous colonialist régime to the present colonialist régime was no radical metamorphosis, and the Puerto Rican people were in fact being asked to vote in favour of colonialism regulated by the previous law or colonialism regulated by Law No. 600.

But, in order that there should be no room for doubt, beneath the two columns which I have mentioned is printed the text of Public Law No. 600, and again in order that there should be no doubt left whatsoever, article 4 of that law is also printed, saying quite clearly that the previous so-called law concerning federal regulations with Puerto Rico continues "in force and can in future be cited as the law governing federal relations" and so on. So that, except for a few minor

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differences, Law No. 600 did not abrogate the previous colonial law over Puerto Rico, which the United States regarded as the law defining the classic colonial status.

But I should like to stress that in that oft-vaunted 1952 plebiscite the Puerto Rican people were not given the opportunity to make any other choice, among which might be a complete separation from the United States and not merely acceptance or rejection of a law that the Eighty-First, Eighty-Second or Eighty-Third Congress might see fit to pass. In other words, this document is a ukase, it is a diktat by an imperialistic Power over a small nation; it cannot be defined as the expression of the will of a people. In any case, the result of this consultation on the acceptance or rejection of Law No. 600 cannot in any way be taken as the true reflection of the feelings of the Puerto Rican people regarding their future status since no one was asking for their opinion on it. They were merely asked to say whether they accepted or rejected a specific law handed down by the Eighty-First Congress of the United States of America.

Therefore, on the strength of this my delegation considers that it is impossible to entertain the North American argument, that is if we are to be consistent in our anti colonialism. To accept the Yankee argument that Puerto Rico has exercised its self-determination with this ballot paper under the circumstances I have described would be to jettison the principles set forth in the Declaration of the General Assembly, which engendered and gave birth to this Committee on decolonization.

But there is more. We are now meeting in 1972 and therefore it is of the utmost importance that we see how today, 20 years later, some spokesmen of the colonialist régime in Puerto Rico describe that manoeuvre for which they are guilty in the eyes of history. I have taken the liberty of bringing with me some cuttings from Puerto Rican newspapers and magazines. They are from neither the organ of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party nor the organ of the Puerto Rican Independent Party, but from publications that are subservient to the régime that colonizes this country. But I believe that they do have nuggets of importance.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

First of all I shall cite what was said regarding the Associated Free State on 1 July 1972 by El Imparcial of San Juan, which, I repeat, is not the spokesman for any of the patriotic organizations of Puerto Rico.

Referring to the debate which is taking place today here in the United Nations, the editorial asks: "What freely associated State is he going to defend?"

I want to interject here that this editorial apparently refers to a Mr. Ferré, who at that time apparently said that he wanted to be present at this discussion. According to information available to us, this Mr. Ferré is a local employee of the United States colonial administration. I return to the quotation:

"What freely associated State is he going to defend? This is because the freely associated State which was approved by the United Nations under the United States pressure has already been repudiated by all sectors of Puerto Rican opinion".

I repeat, and I am reading from El Imparcial in an editorial of last month:

"... the freely associated State which was approved by the United Nations under United States pressure has already been repudiated by all sectors of Puerto Rican opinion".

I continue with the quote:

"The PPD" ... this is apparently the Popular Democratic Party of Puerto Rico, which was the party of the colonialist employees in 1952 that came to the United Nations to defend this freely associated State as being the proof that Puerto Ricans were exercising self-determination. I return to the cutting:

"The PPD, which engendered this State, has termed it obsolete and inadequate. Time has borne out the strong opposition that surrounded its birth, when those who fought it called it a colonial measure".

In other words, the editors of El Imparcial of San Juan finally recognize and admit, twenty years later, the argument of thousands of Puerto Rican patriots, for which they paid with gaol sentences twenty years ago. Now they are recognizing what my delegation has constantly stressed in the United Nations.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

Apparently in the light of the news that this Committee was about to start this very debate, not only the Puerto Rican patriotic forces and independent personalities of the island but others also have expressed their views regarding the status of their country, and furthermore practically everybody has been called upon to stand up and be counted in these matters, including elements that were known for their adherence to the colonial régime in the Territory.

I have other cuttings here which also cite such personalities as the aforementioned Mr. Ferré, who presumably was coming here to defend the freely associated State as the expression of the Puerto Rican exercise of self-determination. But it appears that some indiscreet correspondents saw fit to recall in the newspapers of San Juan what Mr. Ferré had said about that freely associated State of Puerto Rico in Puerto Rico itself. I shall quote this also; it may add to the Committee's fund of knowledge regarding Mr. Ferré's position. The following appeared in a San Juan newspaper -- again El Imparcial -- on 19 June 1972:

"Governor Ferré will appear before the highest international forum to defend a status which at different times he has attacked because, as Ferré says, all it does is perpetuate the colony."

Mr. Ferré goes on:

"...because it does not allow the Puerto Ricans fully to exercise their rights as American citizens, and because the freely associated State is a puppet, a straw man, it is a deception for the good people of Puerto Rico."

As I mentioned before, the People's Democratic Party, which had as one of its leaders a gentleman who was employed by the United States to occupy a post termed "governor" -- I do not know what he governed, or what job that implied -- was going to come to the United States, to the United Nations, to urge this body to recognize and recndorse the 1952 manoeuvre. And with the adoption of its political platform for the next elections, this so-called gentleman came out with a pronunciamiento of Aguas Buenas, where he wanted to perpetuate the situation in the island and asked that the autonomous régime be widened so that it could acquire a level which, according to him, would no longer be obsolete or inadequate or deficient.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

The so-called People's Party, which is another party that takes the autonomous line, now also advocates a new agreement -- that is, a new régime for the island which will allow it to achieve a greater degree of autonomy. The so-called Democratic People's Party had as one of its leaders a gentleman who occupied the post of so-called Governor in 1952, when the United Nations approved General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII). The so-called People's Party is headed by another gentleman who occupied that same post of Governor of Puerto Rico between 1964 and 1968, and Mr. Ferré is at present receiving a salary for occupying that same post.

But the answer is very clear. The three colonial Governors of Puerto Rico, from 1952 to the present day, with different words, with slight variations in formulae, recognize that the freely associated State may be what you will but it is not an expression of the exercise of self-determination of the people of Puerto Rico. In other words, this Committee is meeting under most singular circumstances at a time when, unlike the case in 1952, it does not even have before it the request of the worst of the colonial lackeys that the status of the island be recognized. But even with timid and pusillanimous reformist voices all have agreed that one way or the other the present status of Puerto Rico is not the reflection of the will of the people of Puerto Rico.

Speaking as clearly as I possibly can in Spanish, I prefer to refer to Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States of America. It may be a very perfumed colony, and, as Governor Ferré called it, a rag doll. We do not agree that it is a perfumed colony, but we do say that the Governor is the best-paid employee in the colony.

May I quote something else, from a Puerto Rican member of the so-called constitutionalists, also a partisan of the present annexationist set-up.

Last month he spoke of the holding of a new referendum or plebiscite. He argued that the plebiscite of 1952 and later manouevres in 1967, to which I shall refer in due course, were violations of elementary human rights. May I cite this very enlightening sentence from this Puerto Rican constitutionalist. He said:

"I believe that very probably the 1967 plebiscite can justifiably be attacked in the United Nations, and I should not be surprised if it were cancelled, as was the plebiscite held by Great Britain in Gibraltar, which suffered from the same flaws and defects."

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

It would appear that the régime of 1952 which denied the inalienable and imprescriptible rights of the people of Puerto Rico, because of its very anti-historic, colonialist essence, had obviously to rot from the inside, and today we see this surprising though sorry spectacle of self-criticism, of loud mea culpas from those who at that decisive moment in the history of Puerto Rico allowed themselves to obey the will and the orders of the imperialist master and who now see that there is taking root an almost national consensus that the island is still a dependent and colonized Territory under United States domination.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

But we are talking of lackeys. It can be a motive of satisfaction or complacency to none. Nor can we cross our arms, we who are anti-colonialists, and say nothing. It is a moment of concern, of urgency, for this Committee to act and put an end to this Puerto Rican colonialism, because when gentlemen of the nature of those I have mentioned start mouthing in public the fact that Puerto Rico is a colony, that Puerto Rico has not achieved its self-determination or its autonomy, we can well suspect that behind such statements there lurks a new colonialist manoeuvre on the part of the United States, a new effort to refuse to grant the Puerto Rican peoples their true inalienable national rights. It is for this reason that this Committee is more than ever urged once and for all to adopt decisions which its very statutes and mandates call upon it to do, because at moments when they themselves, for reasons of an electoral or colonialist stamp minted in Washington, agree that Puerto Rico is not a territory where the people has exercised its right to self-determination, at this time it would be the acme of complacency if this Committee were to allow itself to endorse something which even the colonialist lackeys hesitate to define.

There are other elements in the case that my delegation feels should be mentioned when a Committee of this nature studies a subject of such importance. First of all, I would venture to read the text of a resolution approved yesterday by a North American organization. It is important because it expresses the position of a part of the people of the United States on the specific case of Puerto Rico, a stand which, as you will see, is diametrically different from that of the imperialist Government of their country. This resolution was approved yesterday at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It is an organization which brings together part of the coloured population of this country but which fights for civil rights, for equality and for the right to respect and human dignity of the coloured population of the United States. I will read the text of this resolution:
(spoke in English):

"The Southern Christian Leadership Conference wants to express its firm support to the principles embodied in the United Nations General Assembly

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 on the Granting of independence to colonial peoples, according to which it is necessary to put a rapid and unconditional end to colonialism in all its forms and manifestations.

"We further declare our conviction, in accordance with such resolution, that all peoples have an inalienable right to absolute freedom and that in all those remaining territories which have not yet attained independence measures should immediately be taken to transfer all powers to the people of those territories, without conditions or reservations, in order that they may enjoy absolute freedom and independence.

"The Southern Christian Leadership Conference wants to convey its feeling of solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico. It further wants to express its firm and unequivocal support to the struggle of Puerto Rican independence. It requests the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization to exercise its jurisdiction by declaring that Puerto Rico continues to live under a colonial status and that immediate steps be taken to transfer to the people of Puerto Rico unreservedly and unconditionally the powers to which it is entitled according to resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960."

(continued in Spanish):

That is signed by Rev. Ralph Abernathy, President of the Conference, and dated 17 August 1972. I have read this document which was approved yesterday, Mr. Chairman, because, as you will have noticed, in paragraph 3 the Conference does specifically address itself to this Committee and because the Conference is speaking in terms radically different from those that you cited from Ambassador Bush at the beginning of this meeting. It is logical that this be so, because the coloured population of the United States has lived through experiences that are extremely different from those of the diplomats from New England. They in their own country have lived through conditions of humiliation and harassment which are very similar to those of colonialism in Puerto Rico, and this document shows that the Puerto Rican people, despite all the difficulties raised on their road to independence and national freedom, do have the support of the peoples of the world, including a very significant portion of the United States citizens.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

My delegation would refer to other international instruments that may be borne in mind by the Committee when our request is being considered. I would also put before you, Mr. Chairman, other aspects of the Puerto Rican realities. However, before I do so, I would ask you what you intend to do in view of the time. The people of Puerto Rico has waited five centuries to exercise its inalienable rights, and, however much my delegation may try to synthesize to continue this argument, it could go on for quite a long time beyond the adjournment hour. Therefore I pause in my statement to ask what your intentions are, if I may.

The CHAIRMAN: The subject under discussion being an important one, it is the intention of the Committee to continue consideration of the item in the afternoon. So I believe the Cuban Ambassador could go on for another 15 minutes, and if he has not finished by then, he may continue his statement at the meeting this afternoon.

Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): I was speaking of other international instruments, which, I presume, this Committee also still has before it, or at least has in mind, and which very clearly define the responsibility of this organ as far as the case of Puerto Rico is concerned. First of all let me recall that in October 1964 the Second Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Cairo, unanimously and without reservations decided to address a note to this Committee, and I shall read the pertinent paragraphs of the Programme for Peace and International Co-operation adopted by the 47 Heads of State and Government of the non-aligned countries, meeting in Cairo:

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

"...draws the attention of the Ad Hoc Decolonization Commission of the United Nations to the case of Puerto Rico and calls upon that Commission to consider the situation of this territory in the light of resolution 1514 (XV) of the United Nations."

(A/5763, p. 10)

On the basis of this Cairo Conference Agreement and in accordance with a request from all the patriotic associations of Puerto Rico, it is known that the Cuban Revolutionary Government addressed a letter to the Special Committee in 1965, almost seven years ago now, formally requesting that Committee to include Puerto Rico in the list of Territories that fell under the purview of the Committee. The letter, which I had the honour to address to you in February of this year, Sir, is a reaffirmation and repetition of that earlier request issued by our Foreign Minister in October 1965. In other words the Committee is confronting a very old problem, one that has been examined or has been the subject of meditation by many for many years.

According to their position of repudiation of colonialism and their support for all countries and peoples under colonial domination, the Non-Aligned Countries, speaking through their Heads of State defined the position that was reflected in that paragraph of the 1964 communiqué from Cairo. Despite that specific request, despite later requests from my Government, despite the requests and appeals of all the political parties of Puerto Rico, despite Declaration 1514 (XV) which sets up the rights and duties of this Committee to consider the situation in all Non-Self-Governing Territories, despite all this, we have had no decision from the Committee and today, in August 1972, we are once again considering this same problem. The causes are no novelty to anyone. The reasons that have thus far hamstrung the Committee and stopped it from taking a consistent and clear-cut stand in the case of Puerto Rico are far too well known for me to have to repeat them or even mention them. But the opinion of the international community and the opinion of peoples are still clear in the case of Puerto Rico. These opinions are still categorical and are still there to urge the Committee to adopt consistent stands.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

As you know, hardly a week ago the most recent conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Countries was held and in the specific case of Puerto Rico they adopted three important decisions. The first was to agree to the participation of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in that conference with representatives of the movements of national liberation which had been recognized by the Organization of African Unity and the Arab League. Not only that, but the conference adopted the decision to raise the status of the patriotic associations of the three continents to that of observers for the forthcoming meetings and sessions of the Non-Aligned nations. Furthermore, the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned nations approved a specific resolution dealing with the case of Puerto Rico which reaffirms the fact that, like all other Non-Self-Governing Territories of the Caribbean area, Puerto Rico should be considered as being included among the Territories mentioned in resolution 1514 (XV).

The agreement at the Cairo Conference of 1964 was reaffirmed and once again this Committee was urged to adopt the pertinent decisions on the matter.

But apart from that, the Georgetown Final Declaration of the Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, approved on 12 August of this year, less than a week ago, a special paragraph dealing with Puerto Rico which I believe to be of great importance and which warrants inclusion in the records. It is contained in paragraph 19 of the Georgetown Declaration and I shall read it in English which is the original text. It was discussed in the Political Committee and in the Georgetown Conference. It states:

(Spoke in English)

"Meeting for the first time in the Caribbean area the Conference expressed full solidarity with the peoples of that region who are still subject to colonialism and demanded that their sacred and inalienable right to national independence be recognized.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

"In this respect the Conference reiterated the pertinent decisions concerning Puerto Rico taken at the Summit meeting of the Heads of State held in Cairo in October 1964. The Conference noted that in spite of the time which has elapsed and notwithstanding the 1964 appeal of the Heads of State of the Non-Aligned Countries the Special Committee set up to implement resolution 1514 (XV) has failed to take the necessary steps to this end. In the case of Puerto Rico and of all other territories under colonial rule in the Caribbean area. The Conference hoped that the United Nations Organization, and particularly the Special Committee on Decolonization, would expedite the relevant decisions to implement resolution 1514 (XV)."

(continued in Spanish)

In other words, you have before you a repetition and a reaffirmation of the request submitted to you by a large number of Heads of State that this Committee consider the situation in Puerto Rico. But something more has been added to that. The time that has elapsed since that Summit Conference in Cairo to the present day is stressed and this Committee is urged not only to consider the situation of Puerto Rico but also to adopt pertinent measures so that resolution 1514 (XV) will be made applicable to that country.

My delegation, which fully supports the Cairo Conference and the results of the Georgetown Conference, does in fact believe and feel that the time has struck not only for the Committee to include Puerto Rico among the Territories to be examined by it but that the Committee should speedily and without delay adopt the indispensable measures so that that Territory too will have recognized to it its right in national independence and that that national independence will be respected and the decisions of the General Assembly, particularly in resolution 1514 (XV), be made applicable to the Territory.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

Mr. Chairman, I believe I may have gone beyond the 15 minutes' grace you gave me, but again I am in your hands for the rest of this debate.

The CHAIRMAN: I believe that at this stage, if the representative of Cuba still has a considerable part of his statement to make, perhaps the Committee could adjourn now and he could finish his statement this afternoon. If, however, he intends to speak for only a few more minutes -- up to 15 minutes, I would say -- then the Committee is perfectly willing to listen to him now.

Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): After your explanation, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that I continue this afternoon.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Cuba. The first speaker this afternoon will therefore be the representative of Cuba. There are three other speakers inscribed for the item and there may be more. I therefore appeal to all those delegations wishing to take part in the consideration of this item to try to do so at our meeting this afternoon, if possible.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.