

Oct-19, 1972

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The Assembly must now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Third Committee in paragraph 15 of its report, document A/8842. The administrative and financial implications of this draft resolution appear in document A/8852. The draft resolution was adopted in the Third Committee by acclamation, and we have just heard a statement in this connexion by the representative of Cyprus. I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt this draft resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted. [resolution 2906 (XXVII)]

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): We have now concluded our consideration of agenda item 60.

AGENDA ITEM 22

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE (A/8723 and Add.1-7)
(continued)

Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): First of all I should like to say that my delegation is pleased that this year the Assembly has decided to give top priority to agenda item 22. Such a request has been made repeatedly every year by the delegation of Cuba. We consider that those States that are decidedly anti-colonialist should endeavour to support the work of the Committee on Decolonization, should see to it that its recommendations are implemented, and should oppose imperialist manoeuvres designed to bring to a standstill what the United Nations is doing in support of the oppressed peoples of the world. Today's circumstances may be decisive for the anti-colonialist cause. The battle lines are drawn, and there is a clear dividing line between those who advocate the complete and immediate lifting of the yoke still weighing on millions of human beings in Africa, Asia and Latin America and those who do their utmost to deny these peoples their right to national independence. In Guinea (Bissau), Angola and Mozambique, in Zimbabwe, Namibia and Puerto Rico and in other Territories which are still subjected to colonialism, the peoples of the world are strengthening their

their fight against the oppressors. The colonialist and racist forces, led by United States imperialism, have organized reactionary resistance and are equipping international armies, consolidating their interests along a common front, and endeavouring to put a brake on international action in support of the oppressed peoples.

Last year the Special Committee on Decolonization pursued its effective work in support of the emancipation of all those who have not yet achieved independence. In this way the Committee discharged the mandate assigned to it by the General Assembly in resolution 1514 (XV). At the same time, as representatives are aware, the Committee has been the target of consistently hostile policies on the part of the colonialist Powers, which are trying to reduce its effectiveness, which boycott its activities and which assert that what the United Nations is doing to bring about decolonization is at a standstill. Thus, they are acting in contradiction with the principles set forth in resolution 1514 (XV).

For these reasons we believe that the Assembly was very right to assign top priority to the report of the Committee on Decolonization. In the course of the year the Committee has adopted important decisions which reflect its determination to continue to discharge the mandate assigned to it by the General Assembly, to continue its efforts to bring about the complete exercise, on the part of those peoples that have not yet achieved independence, of their right to self-determination. We welcome the results of the visiting mission of the Committee which travelled through the liberated areas of Guinea (Bissau). That trip established that the liberation movement of that country, the African Party for the Liberation of Guinea and Cape Verde, controls three quarters of the Territory, exercises real administration over the liberated areas and, in a word, is the sole de facto and de jure authority in the Territory. In this connexion, my delegation wishes to reiterate the views which we have already put forward in the Committee. It is our opinion that the General Assembly, sitting in plenary, should hear Mr. Amilcar Cabral, the Secretary of the above-mentioned Party.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

The national liberation movements in the colonial territories, we believe, are the ones that have the exclusive right to represent those territories at the international level. We have heard for many years in the Assembly those who oppress millions of human beings in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Now that the Assembly has established that the triumphant liberation movement in Guinea (Bissau) exercises sole control over the territory, it is only fitting and proper that the spokesmen of that movement should speak before this Assembly. That would be an act of consistency on our part. It would also be proof of the fact that the anti-colonialist policies asserted here and repeated year after year are not mere words but are principles which reflect political decisions supported by the overwhelming majority of Member States.

In the course of this year also the group of non-aligned countries proclaimed at their most recent international conference in Georgetown, Guyana, last August, their determination to continue to work for the anti-colonialist cause within this Organization until complete victory. The final act of the conference, which was signed by all the leaders of the non-aligned countries, urged that concrete action be adopted to make it possible to expedite the process of decolonization, and in that way the conference accurately reflected the situation as it exists.

In this connexion, I should like to quote from part of the final declaration of the conference in Georgetown, Guyana, in which the Foreign Ministers of the non-aligned countries categorically stated their position on colonialism as follows:

"The Liberation process in countries under colonial rule has reached a decisive stage. The colonial régimes, firmly backed by some of the major western powers, are savagely repressing national liberation movements, ignore the anti-colonial decisions adopted by the international community, organize and support international colonialism and racism, and encourage and promote intrigues and stratagems in order to perpetuate their rule over oppressed peoples and prevent them from asserting their inalienable rights. The colonialist and the racist régimes in Southern Africa, aided and abetted by international imperialism, are promoting conspiracies, provocations, interference and subversions against independent African nations, such as the Republic of Guinea, the United Republic of Tanzania,

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

Zambia, the People's Republic of Congo, and Senegal. The Conference expressed full solidarity with these nations which are or have been the target of hostile action on the part of imperialism, colonialism, and racism, and brings to the attention of the United Nations Organization, and particularly to the attention of the Security Council, the aggressive nature of such policies which clearly violate international law and obviously threaten international peace and security, inasmuch as it is the duty of the United Nations Organization to guarantee the security, peace and territorial integrity of all independent African States, to halt the aggressive acts being committed by imperialism, colonialism and racism, and fully and promptly eradicate all these evils from the African Continent."

The Georgetown declaration goes on to state:

"Faced with a reactionary escalation led by colonialism and racism with the support of international imperialism, this Conference appeals to all independent and progressive nations to strengthen their solidarity and mutual assistance, to intensify their political, moral and material support, in every field, for the national liberation movements, to go on fighting unceasingly until colonialism and racism are completely wiped out, and to take concerted action on an international level, particularly within the framework of the United Nations Organization, so that the resolutions adopted in favour of all oppressed people are enforced forthwith, and colonialism, racism and all that they bring in their wake are finally eliminated. For that purpose, the participating members agreed to maintain close co-ordination among themselves during the 27th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization. They also resolved to work together to strengthen the activities of the Special Committee responsible for the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV) as well as the work of the Special Committee on Apartheid and that of the United Nations Council on Namibia; to make every effort to give full effect and high priority to all items on the General Assembly agenda relating to the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism, and racism until each and every manifestation thereof is completely eliminated, and to oppose vigorously every intent to eliminate or reduce the importance of such items, or to deprive the United Nations Organization of its political nature and role."

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

In Georgetown, Guyana, my delegation fully endorsed that text and we wish to repeat here our full support of it. At that conference the non-aligned countries reaffirmed their unanimous decision to continue their fight for the complete elimination of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations and expressed complete solidarity with all those peoples which have not yet achieved independence, from Puerto Rico to Mozambique, in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, and reaffirmed their determination to combine their action within this Organization to guarantee the full exercise of that right. That has been the consistent position of our delegation within this Organization.

We have already expressed our complete support for the struggle of all peoples oppressed by colonialism anywhere in the world. We have insisted that if the anti-colonialist struggle is to be successful it must receive consistent support and must be viewed as a universal problem, and that the right of all peoples of the world to emancipation, regardless of their geographical location or of the administering Power, must be ensured.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

For this reason the Cuban delegation believes that the draft resolution adopted by the Special Committee in connexion with Puerto Rico is an important step towards seeing that this Organization discharges its responsibilities in regard to that Territory and ensures the exercise by the people of Puerto Rico of their inalienable right to independence. The people of Puerto Rico have a right to self-determination and independence, and in this connexion the Special Committee adopted a historic decision, strengthening its prestige and increasing the trust which the oppressed peoples of the world place in it. My delegation is confident that next year the Committee will come forward with concrete proposals to implement resolution 1514 (XV) in the case of Puerto Rico.

The fight against American colonialism in Puerto Rico is important for reasons of principle, but in addition it is important because the United States has become the staunch supporter of colonialism throughout the world. Not only is the United States acting as a direct colonizer of the people of Puerto Rico it is also primarily responsible for the fact that colonialism still exist in many parts of the African continent. The adoption of the draft resolution on Puerto Rico by the Special Committee has, in addition, served to bring to light all the underlying contradictions in that Caribbean colony. The accusing finger of the international community needs only to be raised to show that the shaky foundations of the entire edifice could come tumbling down. The people of the Territory must be allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence; but the people of Puerto Rico have never been allowed to exercise that right which the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1514 (XV) recognize as the right of all peoples of the world.

Ever since the invasion by America in 1898 the United States Congress has been usurping the sovereignty of the people of Puerto Rico. The United States has absolute control over the majority of the activities of the island. The United States exercises exclusive jurisdiction in all matters relating to citizenship, foreign affairs, defence, immigration and emigration, foreign trade, currency, maritime and air transport, postal services, radio and television, wages, labour-management relations, housing, forestry reserves, environmental pollution, transportation, public health, levels of sanitation, food stocks and pharmaceuticals, closing down of businesses, forced expropriation of land and other immovable property, organization of banks, savings and loan associations

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

and the regulation of certain important professions, such as the medical profession. The list could go on and on, but I think this is enough to show that a political entity which cannot act in the matters just mentioned cannot be considered a State and cannot be considered free or to have been constituted on the basis of equality. Such an entity cannot be considered to be in accordance with the principles of this Organization and is but a colony. For these reasons my delegation welcomed the draft resolution adopted by the Special Committee at its last session in August of this year.

We believe that support for this Organization in its defence of the cause of Puerto Rican independence is not only important as regards that nation, but is also extremely important for the effectiveness of the process of decolonization which is promoted by this Organization.

The case of Puerto Rico daily acquires increased importance for peoples which are oppressed by colonialism and subjected to foreign domination and racial discrimination in other areas of the world. Here I should like to draw attention to some of the aspects of colonial development in Puerto Rico which make conditions there ever more similar to conditions in southern Africa. What is being done there is very similar to what is being done to the people of southern Africa to deny their right to independence.

In a document published by this Organization, by the section concerned with policies of apartheid, in February of this year we read that early in 1970 it was reported that the Government of the Republic of South Africa had sent groups of experts to Puerto Rico to carry out a secret study on its development and its political and economic ties with the United States. The case of Puerto Rico was considered to be a possible model for the theory of separate development in southern Africa and emphasis was laid on the economic development of Bantustans and their relations with white South Africa, at least as regards migrant labour, industrialization and other matters. This report, commented on in the United Nations document, appeared in the daily Cape Town of 4 March 1970.

As a result of the colonial oppression of the people of Puerto Rico a third of the indigenous population has had to emigrate to United States territory and thousands of migrant workers have had to come to this country to work part of the year here. Together with this process of draining the

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(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

population of Puerto Rico, increasing numbers have gone from United States territory to Puerto Rico. The percentage of the indigenous population has decreased, the percentage of foreign population has increased, and there are similarities with the case of Rhodesia. If it is realized also that in questions of emigration and immigration all power resides with the United Nations Congress, it is easy to see the link which experts on apartheid saw between that country and the island in the Caribbean and the goal which imperialists and racists are pursuing by extending experiences in the Caribbean to South Africa.

As appears in the report submitted this year by the Special Committee, my delegation has stressed the duty of the General Assembly to act in the case of Puerto Rico. This is a people which has for a long time fought to exercise its sacred right to national independence. After an heroic struggle over the centuries, the people of Puerto Rico are still the only people of Latin America who have not yet achieved political independence, who have never been in a position to exercise their sovereign rights. At the same time, the people have managed to preserve their national identity and to resist all the plans to have Puerto Rico absorbed or liquidated and to annex it to American territory. In order to preserve their nationality, to maintain their national spirit, to preserve their right to independence, the people of Puerto Rico have had to struggle in the most difficult circumstances, to confront the most powerful imperialist Power, the most powerful colonialist Power, of the modern world and to face the most brutal forms of imperialist suppression.

In one of its communications to the Special Committee my delegation described the situation prevailing in that territory with respect to political oppression. We described how, after 20 years, a number of Puerto Rican patriots remained in American imperialist gaols, and others in other colonial gaols on the island. At the time we stressed, as we wish to stress today, the duty of all independent and progressive States, the duty of all those who advocate the liquidation of colonialism throughout the world, to demand that the American Government release the nine nationalists who have already been in Yankee prisons for 20 years, subjected to outrageous and discriminatory conditions which the American prison system reserves for Negroes, mestizos and Latins. Isolated from the outside world, deprived of their most elementary rights as human beings, our companions continue to symbolize for the entire world the spirit of resistance of a Latin American nation in the face of American imperialism. They continue to be an expression of the Puerto Rican national spirit, of the inevitability of the victory of the cause of independence for Puerto Rico, a symbol of the stubborn resistance of a people

which refuses to bow to its oppressors. My delegation wishes to take this opportunity once again to reiterate its complete support for all Puerto Rican fighters who have been deprived of their freedom for more than 20 years, some of whom have been condemned to many, many years in prison, some of whom are in an exceedingly poor state of health, including Andres Figueroa Cordero, who is a victim of cancer.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The representative of the United States wishes to raise a point of order. I call upon him to raise his point of order.

Mr. McGEE (United States of America): I am reluctant to delay the proceedings of this body at this moment, but my delegation feels compelled to raise a point of order relating to the speaker's remarks. It is our firm belief that they are totally and completely out of order, a judgement which we shall explain a little later in exercising our right of reply. Also, at the time of our reply, as we exercise that privilege, we shall address ourselves to the substance of the speaker's remarks in relation to Puerto Rico.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I would ask the representative of Cuba to continue his statement.

Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): I do not know whether the representative of the United States has an accurate version of the first part of the document that I have been referring to, A/8723. At least we have a copy of it. We can give him some assistance and provide him with a copy. I might say that on pages 35 and 36 and from page 101 to page 116 there is quite a considerable description of the item that we have been discussing. In addition, as regards the question of taking up the time

of the Assembly, I would have completed my statement if I had not been interrupted by the point of order. The Secretariat is well aware of the estimated time of our statement, which we gave before the statement, and we would have completed our statement by now had the United States representative not come to the rostrum. It is interesting that the United States representative felt prompted to come to the rostrum only as we were referring to the political prisoners in Puerto Rico. My delegation can assure the Assembly that as long as they continue to be subjected to the imperialist prison régime, here and elsewhere, we will demand their release.

The American Government, furthermore, may rest assured that if its representative comes to this rostrum and says that they will be released, that this system of repression and discrimination, this policy of denying nine patriots who have been in prison solely for having demanded independence and their rights has been brought to an end, then the United States will no longer have to hear denunciations. It is solely in the hands of the colonialists and racists. It is in their hands whether the debates in the Assembly will stress certain matters or not.

Year after year many delegations have felt obliged to repeat that they condemn apartheid, that they demand the right to independence for one country or another oppressed by colonialism, and always the colonialist régimes react with the same form of logic. They do not like it that such disagreeable subjects should come up for discussion from this rostrum. But those States which have always had a consistent anti-colonialist policy will never fail to make such statements as long as colonialism continues to exist, either in southern Africa or in the heart of the Caribbean.

The anti-colonialist States, those delegations which attached no reservations to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), those who have voted year after year for the resolutions which support the work of the Committee, who have voted in favour of resolutions against colonialism and racism -- all those of us will continue to fight against colonialism and racism; and we shall certainly not remain silent simply because our statements are displeasing to the defenders of racism and colonialism, as our statement was displeasing to the representative who interrupted me earlier.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

We would conclude by reaffirming our consistent anti-colonialist policies, and our support for the Special Committee and the report that has been submitted this year. We would reiterate our full support for all those peoples fighting for their national emancipation anywhere in the world, and we would repeat our pledge to continue at their side until they fully exercise their sacred right to independence. Furthermore, we shall await the statement of the representative of the United States. Will the representative of the administering Power in Puerto Rico for the first time reply to just one of the arguments which Cuba year after year has put forward in this Assembly, which show the colonial nature of United States oppression in the island?

Mr. MONDJO (Congo) (interpretation from French): I come to the rostrum not on command but with the determination to participate positively in this great debate that the General Assembly means to devote to the problem of colonialism and racism. I should like however to begin my remarks by reassuring the Assembly: it is not my intention, believe me, to speak at length. In particular, it is not my intention to go into the details of colonialism and racism, on which the autopsy has already been so masterfully and eloquently carried out by several speakers.

At this point in our debate, and after the statement made from this rostrum by the head of my delegation, Comrade Minister Henri Lopes, who, on 28 September last, reaffirmed in his special style -- so given is he to irony -- the consistent position of the Government of the People's Republic of the Congo, which has made the anti-colonialist, anti-neo-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggle a corner-stone of its foreign policy resolutely bent on the quest for peace, understanding and friendship among all the peoples of the world -- my delegation's contribution will appear to be modest, since we mean to confine ourselves to taking up one or two key ideas which for everybody present should constitute a subject for common reflection in the search for the best means of applying without ambiguity resolutions 1514 (XV) and 3136 (XX) of the General Assembly, which remain to a large extent unimplemented.

(Mr. Hulinsky, Czechoslovakia)

resolution which the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly will adopt with regard to the report of the Special Committee on its activities. It is clearly evident from the considerations of the Special Committee that it pays its primary attention -- with regard to the struggle for full implementation of the Declaration in all Territories which have not yet reached independence -- to the effort to put an end to the impasse in the colonial Territories in Africa, where no less than 18 million dependent peoples live under conditions of ruthless discrimination and repression.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): Before giving the floor to the representatives who have asked to exercise their right of reply, I should like to remind the Assembly that, yesterday morning, it decided that speeches in the exercise of right of reply would be limited to ten minutes.

Mr. McGEE (United States of America): Mr. President, I want to assure you that we do not intend to use our generous allotment of time. We hope that we might be permitted a refund for the unused portion that will accrue this afternoon. But earlier on this occasion we listened to the usual harangue by the representative of Cuba about the so-called condition of the people of Puerto Rico. The Assembly has heard these half-truths, non-truths and outright lies before. The United States delegation has had occasion to refute the arguments and to correct the distortion of facts made by the representative of Cuba on numerous occasions, the most recent occasion being just last week.

Now, I shall not attempt to dignify the calumnies and the charges made by the representative of Cuba since I do not believe them to be worthy of serious response. It is regrettable, however, that he has chosen to lower the standard of this debate on an issue which is not even inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly. Let me repeat that: It is not on the agenda of this session of the Assembly.

(Mr. McGee, United States)

I wish to remind the representatives that with the adoption of resolution 748 (VIII) in 1953, the Assembly chose to remove Puerto Rico from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The reason was that the 1952 Constitution of Puerto Rico and its direct election of a Governor made it self-governing through an act of self-determination. It should not be necessary, either, to remind the members of the Assembly that only a year ago first the General Committee, and then the General Assembly, decided by an overwhelming majority that the so-called case of Puerto Rico should not be placed on the agenda of the twenty-sixth session.

Also, let me say that as far as the delegation of the United States is concerned, we do indeed question whether the representative of Cuba was in order when he made his statement earlier today.

(Mr. McGee, United States)

There is no item on Puerto Rico before this Assembly. What is before the Plenary is a report by the Special Committee on decolonization stating that its Working Group should submit a report to that Committee relating to the procedure to be followed for the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV). Thus there has been no recommendation to the Assembly as yet. A procedural decision was taken in the Special Committee, and until otherwise informed, this Assembly has nothing before it which would justify a discussion on the substance of the question of Puerto Rico.

Finally, I cannot conclude these informal comments without saying again what the policy of the United States is. It is plain and simple: If the people of Puerto Rico vote for commonwealth status, so be it. If they vote for statehood, so shall it be. If they vote for independence, so shall it be.

That is not a determination subject to the decision of Cuba, and in that sense it is not subject to the decision even of this body. That decision belongs to the people of Puerto Rico alone.

Mr. ALARCON (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): When he interrupted me a moment ago, I would have sworn that the representative of the United States had promised to make a substantive reply. Instead, he merely repeated the same fallacious arguments to which the General Assembly is well accustomed. So my statement in right of reply need not be very long.

With respect to what he alleged -- that regardless of the decision adopted by the people of Puerto Rico as regards their future, that would depend on the Puerto Rican people themselves -- it is logical that an American Senator should say that, considering the legislation in force in the United States, and specifically paragraph 1 of the law on federal relations with Puerto Rico -- with which, I imagine, the Senator is familiar -- which reads:

"The provisions of this law shall apply to the island of Puerto Rico, and adjacent islands belonging to the United States."

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

The Senator from Wyoming has, of course, every right to speak about the future of Puerto Rico, since its future is in his hands and indeed in the hands of the rest of the members of the United States Congress. That is the way it has been, without any changes, since American forces invaded the island in 1898. Nothing has changed since that time; nothing has modified that status, not even the deceit which the American delegation has indulged in from this very rostrum, including the famous statement of Ambassador Cabot Lodge in 1953, which was as categorical as the one we heard today, and which was belied by subsequent events in Puerto Rican history.

There are any number of things which I could discuss with you, in the albeit illusory hope that we might get a substantive reply.

I have before me, for example, what was said last month by an American diplomat -- you can see it, Mr. President:

"Ex-diplomat reveals error in the case of the United Nations concerning the island in 1953"; Mr. Mason Sears, who came here in 1953 and recited the same fallacies about Puerto Rico, today reveals that that conduct was incorrect, that Puerto Rico was and is a colony and that it deserves independence.

I have here statements by none other than the Governor of the colony, Mr. Ferré, who said:

"I affirm that tomorrow Congress" -- the Congress of the Senator from Wyoming -- "can change all the fiscal laws of Puerto Rico without Puerto Rico being able to do anything, because the Congress can impose quotas on the people of Puerto Rico, which it cannot impose on any of its States. At this very time it is imposing a quota on refined sugar, which no state has; if it can impose a quota on refined sugar it can impose a quota on the production of machinery, etc. ...".

That is what the present Governor said on 19 April 1967. But since there has been no substantive reply to what I said before, there is no need for me to give a substantive counter-reply.

(Mr. Alarcon, Cuba)

I would merely invite Senator McGee, who is such an ardent defender of self-determination and freedom of peoples, to concern himself with bringing this spirit, which he proclaimed so demagogically here, to the American Senate, where he has offered other illustrations of his sympathy for the cause of the emancipation of peoples. My delegation has available for distribution to all Members page S/14301 of the Congressional Record of 14 September 1971, which contains a vehement, eloquent and drastic statement by the Senator from Wyoming in which he welcomed a delegation from the racist Government of South Africa.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I should like to inform Members of a slight change in tomorrow's agenda: the elections to the Economic and Social Council, scheduled for tomorrow afternoon, will be postponed to next week. I therefore appeal to those delegations whose names are inscribed on the list for Monday and Tuesday of next week to be so kind as to consider the possibility of speaking tomorrow afternoon so that we can use the free time remaining to us. I would remind you that we have already lost one meeting because of the lack of speakers, and I should like to avoid the necessity of a night meeting as a result of the failure of speakers to participate in the debate.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.