Honorable Members of the Ad Hoc Committee:

I am submitting here a brief statement in support of the position maintained by the Puerto Rican members of the Ad Hoc Committee in the session held on November 11 of this year. I will try to speak in English in deference to our friends from the mainland. By the same token, allow me to say a few words about who I am. My name is Antonio J. Colorado. I am a graduate from the University of Puerto Rico, Clark University (Worcester, Massachusetts) and Universidad Central of Madrid, Spain. I have been professional writer for the Department of State, Washington, D. C. I was the first dean of the College of Social Sciences at the U. P. R., the first Director of the University of Puerto Rico Press and, likewise, of the Department of Education Press. I have also worked since early manhood as a journalist and was Editor of the Diario de Puerto Rico a local daily newspaper. In 1962 I was named President of the Labor Relations Board of Puerto Rico, and seven years later I retired. I have written and translated several books, amongst the translations I did a Brief History of the United States and a General History of the World for the schools of Puerto Rico. I wrote, in co-authorship with the noted Puerto Rican Historian Lidio Cruz Monclova a book about the political development of Puerto Rico from Spanish times up to 1952 in which I delve into the origin and creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
You, gentlemen, are entrusted with the task of re-examine the United States-Puerto Rican relationship within the framework of the Commonwealth, 75 years after the United States came to Puerto Rico.

For three quarters of a century, special and unique ties have evolved between the island and the mainland. An intricate web of political, economic and social factors have grown with the passing of time. The result has been a highly complex structural relationship which now should be re-examined and redefined.

Permit me to delve briefly into the historical background to make some points clear. The United States came to Puerto Rico at a time when the Union was rising to the status of a world power. President McKinley acceded to the pressure to take Puerto Rico in order to satisfy the cravings of jingo-imperialism at the turn of the century. A strategic conception which demanded key points and coal stations in the Caribbean and the Pacific seemed to have been the main drive behind the acquisition of the island.

Puerto Rico was ceded at the Treaty of Paris within the prevailing tenets of big power diplomacy. At that time, countries were bought, sold of taken as pieces of real estate. They were considered as mere possessions to be owned by the powers, and the peoples who inhabited them were traded with the territories. Their consent was seldom sought; their right to self-determination was not considered. The will of the dominant power was unquestioned. It was the hay-day of
the unprincipled principle that might makes right.

But as you well know, there was a long tradition in American political thought which questioned these assumptions, and felt that the continental republic had not been created to be a ruler of colonies. That tradition, unfortunately, lost the battle in 1898, and again when in the case of Puerto Rico the Foraker Act was passed after a bitter and long-drawn debate. Congress emerged as an absolute though benevolent sovereign. The will of the Congress was to be supreme, no matter what the Puerto Ricans thought.

During more than half of the 75 years which have elapsed, from 1898 to 1940, Puerto Ricans had not much to say as to the nature of their government and the trend of its policies. The period of congressional and federal quasi-absolutism brought some positive changes, but the picture was dark and gloomy by 1940, and the relations were pretty much strained.

After 1940, there was a gradual recognition of the Puerto Rican effort to full self-government. The period from 1940 to 1952 was highly creative. It was not only that there was an awakened resolve in the people of Puerto Rico. The old ideas of big power domination, of non-recognition of the rights of dependent peoples, were being questioned here and in the rest of the world. That we see then emerging is the clear, unmistakable notion, that the era of "possessions"
is over, that countries are no longer pieces of real estate or way stations, but communities with a soul and a purpose and hopes to be filled; that no king, no president, no parliament should have absolute powers over a different people, no matter how benevolent or well-meaning that ruler may be. This idea is embodied in the United Nations Charter; but is not an idea foreign to the best democratic thought in the United States. It is germane and I would say inseparable, to that which makes the United States great and not to what makes it big. It refers to the might of a principle and not to the principle of might.

Because times began to change rapidly as a result of the heart-rending lessons of two world wars, a new dialogue was possible between the United States Congress and Puerto Rico. To recognize the right of Puerto Ricans to self-determination, to respect the principle of government by consent, to speak of the new arrangement entered into as "in the nature of a compact" -as stated in Law 600, is clearly to begin to discard the era of "possessions" and of congressional absolutism, and to return to the basic streams in American democratic thought, including the key concept of a government of delegated powers.

This approach was fully applied to Puerto Rico in the 1950-1952 period as far as the internal powers of government were concerned. But the broad and intricate pattern of Puerto Rican-Federal relationship was placed on a new and more solid ground by virtue of the compact
principle. If the balance of the 1898-1940 period left much to be desired, the last 33 years have been on the whole years of hope and effort in Puerto Rico, in spite of our ups and downs. Ties with the United States in many fields have been strengthened rather than lessened. This is not to say that everything has been rosy. We owe it to candor to state our deep concern with the misunderstandings that may arise as, for instance, in the case of Culebra. Besides there is today, as a result of world events, a cloudy economic picture; furthermore attempts at redefining the relationship or enhance it has met with congressional lack of interest. In Puerto Rico, at times the will has wavered, buffeted by the winds of internal dissension.

To consider afresh the growth of our Commonwealth status is a matter that demands clarity of mind and of purpose, a sense of working together and that prudence which comes with experience, wisdom and firmness.

One evident fact has emerged: the majority of the people of Puerto Rico want the Commonwealth relationship to be so redefined and strengthened as to make it fully responsive to the principle which led to its creation. They want a solid enduring partnership with the United States in which authority is shared by mutual consent and is based on mutual respect and the ties of a common citizenship.

There is an important segment of opinion in Puerto Rico which would like this redefinition to lead to classical statehood. There
is also a small but active and vocalized minority which wants clear-cut separation. Neither of them have ever had the electoral support of the people when it comes to the status question; to that area in our political life where we have choose the system of relations we want with the United States. The minorities might decry the Commonwealth status. That is their unquestionable right in a pluralistic democracy such as ours. But the broad stream of Puerto Rican opinion, as reflected in the 1967 plebiscite and in our election record, leads to the Commonwealth solution, fortified with the lessons of experience. This is a case where the minority voice should be heard and considered, but the majority will should be heeded and fully respected. It would be ideal and certainly much easier for the Congress, if the people of Puerto Rico would speak with one solid voice. But in a democracy there is always -as it should be- a dim of discordant voices. To discover and implement the dominant trend is the task of wise and responsible statesmanship. Where majority resolve has been affirmed and reaffirmed -as in the case of Puerto Rico with Commonwealth status- majority resolve should be acknowledged and made the cornerstone of negotiation. Very rearely is democracy the product of overwhelming consensus. To request unanimity is to demand an impossibility. But there is a broad meeting ground where Congress and the representatives of Puerto Rico can pose problems, exchange thoughts and seek solutions that will do credit the great potential of commonwealth status as a
unique, imaginative avenue which can lead to a solid, just and	noble relationship between a big and a small country, between two
different cultural strains, between a continental republic and an
insular state, grounded this relationship on common aspirations and
ideals of a better life.

This dialogue between Puerto Rico and the United States is
a dialogue before outside spectators. Whatever we decide should not
be their decision; but we cannot ignore their presence. Latin America,
specially, looks to the U. S. -Puerto Rico situation with keener
eyes than Asia ever looked to Hawaii. To the Asians Hawaii is a
remote island in the Pacific; to Latin America Puerto Rico is a
next-door neighbor. There are historical and cultural links of great
import. Geography has helped in determining a kinship which cannot.
be easily obliterated. Puerto Rico is not a transient rootless group,
eager to be a carbon copy of a mainland community. It is a country,
a people, where the West Indian Afro-Hispanic strain is strong, where
the arts, the language, the folklore, the social experience are deeply
influenced by the presence of a long past. It is defined by the
Caribbean; it cannot escape the Caribbean. And the Caribbean is an
area where the United States is watched with anxiety, hope, fear, and
resentment.

There are long memories of the heavy hand the United States
has used at times in this region. There are short memories of
American instances of good-will, aid and good neighborliness. The giant is too strong and he is too deeply feared and many are eager to give credence to the tales of his ill-doings when the hate-monger comes around. Unfortunately this is happening throughout the world, and in many places the United States is at bay.

It is no wonder that many are ready to believe the worst when it comes to the United States relationship with Puerto Rico. The present situation at the United Nations is a case in point, and we all should be braced for a continuing attack. Puerto Rico is a convenient target to discredit the United States because of issues which are totally unrelated to the Puerto Rican situation.

We must certainly not lose our cool, but we should also be certain that we have no chinks in our armor. In its 1953 Resolution which acknowledge the new Puerto Rican status, the United Nations envisage a growing, not a static, Commonwealth. The Resolution among other things stated:

"The General Assembly:

9. Expresses its assurance that, in accordance with the spirit of the present resolution, the ideals embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, the traditions of the people of the United States of America and the political advancement attained by the people of Puerto Rico, due regard will be paid to the will of both the Puerto Rican and the
American peoples in the conduct of their relations under their present legal statute, and also in the eventuality that either of the parties to the mutually agreed association may desire any change in the terms of this association."

This was a crucial clause. It was drafted by the Peruvian delegate to make possible the sponsorship of the resolution by seven Latin American nations. Behind it was the key to Latin American unity. It was clear that those who supported it expected an evolving relationship where changes and modifications would be made by mutual agreement. Such was also the Puerto Rican intent and expectations, as clearly stated in Resolution #23 of our Constitutional Convention and in the answer given by the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico to Eisenhower's message to the United Nations on this matter.

Puerto Rican requests for reexamination and improvement of Commonwealth status if unheeded, will be sweet music to United States haters at the United Nations. Clearly our concern should not be so much with U. S. haters, but with U. S. friends, or rather with those who sincerely believe in a world of self-determination with evident respect of the small by the big and powerful. There is after all, "a decent opinion of mankind" - a body of opinion which believes in fair play, in human rights, in the recognition due to cultural diversity and minority differences, in the exercise of the principle
of government by consent. We should conduct ourselves as if this opinion matters; for the United States is not "an island into itself", but part of broader world. To forge strong, enduring links with Puerto Rico as a result of mutual accord is part of a much greater and difficult task elsewhere.

I have avoided in this short statement any reference to particular areas of growth regarding Commonwealth status. I am certain you will gather much technical advice and also conflicting opinions about them.

My concern has rather been to place the situation in a historical perspective and within a regional context. I am looking at the forest; not at the trees. We are entering the last quarter of the century. More than ever our past is really prologue, as we face the increasing and baffling complexities of a rapidly changing world. I am sure that the overwhelming number of the people of Puerto Rico want a permanent relationship with the United States and its political system, as we move into an uncertain future. But it is our duty to us and to those who will follow us to face this future with a clear pattern of consultation and as full a sharing of power and responsibility as are compatible with the meaning of a partnership which has grown out of a past, and in which the wishes and the hopes of nearly three millions American citizens are involved.

We have too many insular problems which cannot be solved with Washington formulas, no matter how well intentioned. We are a
crowded island in the old Spanish Main. We are not a piece of land in the vastness of a continental republic. We are an ethnic nationality, a people with a distinct cultural profile, spilling over our maritime borders. We are neither a submerged minority nor a drifting, amorphous social mass.

Yes, we are changing in many ways at a time when the American Union is also changing. We are all both here in the island and there on the mainland, in a fluid situation, where beyond the voices of unrest and discord there lies a horizon of hope and opportunity if we all try hard to make the best of them.

The Puerto Rican presentation before this Committee has been highly encouraging to Commonwealth supporters because of its breath and scope. The agenda is truly a diagram of growth. It is organic in conception; it provides a fair ground for analysis and negotiation, for the over-all objective of mutual accord. It is certainly in line with the express wishes of the majority of the people of Puerto Rico, as reflected in an unbroken line of electoral victories for the Commonwealth idea and specifically so in the 1967 plebiscite.

But no less encouraging has been the receptive mood of the mainland members of the Committee. It demonstrates that we all have come a long way from the 1898 real estate transaction. Gentlemen, you have now in your hands a task unfinished; a job to be done. I am sure that the Commonwealth supporters feel hopeful that this
Honorable Committee, with firmness and dedication, may point the way to a strengthening of the Commonwealth relationship that will be satisfying to the people of Puerto Rico and will do justice to the United States democratic tradition and fair-play. And this is certainly something devoutly to be wished.

I thank you.