August 1971 - Cuban delegation circulated document on Puerto Rico and requested that "the colonial case of Puerto Rico" be included in the agenda of the 26th General Assembly. (You have the document)

September 23, 1971 - The General Committee took up and turned down Cuba's request. (Enclosed is summary of debate)

September 24, 1971 - The General Assembly approved the General Committee's recommendation that the item not be included in the agenda. (Notice on Assembly vote is enclosed)

February 9, 1972 - Letter from Cuban Representative requests inclusion of the "colonial question of Puerto Rico" in the Agenda of the Committee on Decolonization. (Text attached)

February 28, 1972 - United States Delegation replied to Cuba's request. (Document enclosed)

Related press releases
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE CONTINUES DEBATE ON ITS WORK PROGRAMME

Chairman Calls Attention to Cuban Request for Discussion on Puerto Rico and United States Objection to Request

The Special Committee of 24 on decolonization continued this morning the consideration of its work programme for this year, including proposals for a series of meetings in Africa. Ten delegations took part in the discussion.

The Chairman, Salim A. Salim (United Republic of Tanzania), said he hoped the Committee could conclude consideration of its work programme at the next meeting, scheduled for 10:30 a.m. tomorrow, 2 March, or at latest on the following day, so that it could begin substantive work next week.

The Chairman drew attention to a letter received from Cuba (document A/AC.109/392), asking that the Committee decide immediately to include the question of Puerto Rico in its agenda and to give "due priority" to the discussion of this question. He also drew attention to a letter from the United States (document A/AC.109/395), "protesting, in the most unequivocal terms, this Cuban act of interference in the affairs of the United States of America and of Puerto Rico", and urging the Committee to reject the Cuban request.

At the start of this morning's meeting, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Ilja Hulinsky (Czechoslovakia), said that during the recent visit to New York of Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Chairman of the African National Council of Southern Rhodesia, he had extended the Committee's best wishes to the Bishop for his efforts on behalf of the people of Southern Rhodesia.

He added that the Bishop, who had addressed the Security Council during his stay, had expressed regret that he was unable to speak before the Committee of 24 because of the briefness of his visit to New York.
Debate on Work Programme

In the discussion this morning on the Committee's work programme, Riyadh Al-Qaysi (Iraq) said that the tasks of the Committee were heavy ones but that there was no reason for despair. The Committee, he was confident, could play a positive role. Efforts should be made to complete work on all the items on the agenda. Regarding the proposed meetings away from Headquarters, his delegation would abide by the majority will.

YILMA TADESE (Ethiopia) said that priority should be given to the questions of Southern Rhodesia, Namibia and the Portuguese-administered Territories, and that those questions should be discussed in Africa. As the meetings of the Security Council in Addis Ababa had shown, such visits helped to focus world opinion on the problems. The Committee should travel to as few capitals as possible in Africa, and should start towards the end of this month. More time should be allotted this year to the question of the small Territories.

FRANK O. ABDULA (Trinidad and Tobago) said his delegation believed the Committee's meetings away from Headquarters should begin no later than mid-April and should not exceed two or three weeks. The Committee should visit no more than three places, as close as possible to the Territories concerned. Greater effort should be made to disseminate information on decolonization, and background papers should be prepared well in advance of their consideration.

ZANA DAO (Mali) said he did not think a few weeks in Africa would be enough. The Committee should be there at least a month and should discuss African problems there. Visits should be paid to liberated areas, "as discreetly as possible". He regretted that Bishop Muzorewa had not addressed the Committee during his stay, and said he hoped that in the future measures would be taken to ensure that the Committee was given precedence over other bodies when persons like the Bishop were in New York.

MATTHEW B. GANDA (Sierra Leone) said that priority in the Committee's work should be given to the question of Southern Rhodesia, and that the matter should not be left in abeyance until the Committee went to Africa. The present momentum should be kept up in every international forum. The Committee would not be duplicating the work of the Security Council, he said. The Council had adopted a resolution on sanctions, "but the less said about that resolution the better". The Committee, which was not "hamstrung by the fear or use of the veto", could act by majority or consensus when there was no unanimity, and it should consider further measures, like the possibility of invoking Article 41 of the Charter against Southern Rhodesia. He supported the proposed trip to Africa, and said he understood that invitations had been received so far from three countries: Ethiopia, Guinea and Zambia. He favoured going to all three, and also sending a mission to the liberated areas.

(more)
RAFIC JOUEJATI (Syria) said the Committee should work for United Nations recognition of the liberation movements as the only valid spokesmen for the people of their countries. Giving them legal status would boost the efforts to get assistance for them from the specialized agencies and other sources. The needs of the liberation movements should be studied, and ways explored for giving them effective aid. He supported the idea of visits to liberated areas.

KOUAME KOFTI (Ivory Coast) said the Committee could hold a general debate on the African questions before going to Africa, where it could limit itself to hearing statements by petitioners and representatives of liberation movements, and comment on their statements. The Committee's Working Group should serve as a steering committee in planning the Committee's activities, and should consult with all members, he said.

CHANG YUNG-KUAN (China) said that the national liberation movements, following "a great irresistible current", were surging ahead. The peoples of the world wanted revolution; this was "an inevitable historical trend". Colonial empires were fading, and "United States imperialism, which considered itself the overlord of the world, has crumbled". The political consciousness of the African peoples was greater than ever before, and they were gaining one victory after another against colonialism and neo-colonialism, joining their efforts with other peoples in the struggle against the super-Powers. The Committee of 24 should support the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania and other regions in their fight against "aggression, subversion, interference and bullying". No "reactionary force" ever stepped down of its own accord, and the colonialists were still trying "new tricks and manoeuvres". The "social-imperialists" were also trying to "infiltrate" Africa for their own benefit. The Chinese Government and people firmly supported the revolutionary struggle of all peoples and were "ready to exert efforts to this end". He supported the proposed trip to Africa.

JAMAL SHEMIRANI (Iran) said that in principle it was a good idea for the Committee to meet in Africa. However, since the Security Council had just returned from there, he did not think the Committee should go to Africa very soon. Perhaps the second half of April would be a good time. He had no objection to the idea that the discussion of African questions should be left to the African trip, but was flexible on the matter. He urged the Committee to take its decisions soon.

MILJAN KOMATINA (Yugoslavia) supported the idea of giving priority to the situation in southern Africa, which was, he said, "a grave threat to peace". He favoured regular sessions of the Committee away from Headquarters, but thought that since the Security Council had just been to Africa, it might be better for the Committee to go there only in 1973. If there was to be a trip to Africa in 1972, it should be later in the year. Regarding the small Territories, he said that they should have the full right to self-determination, without restriction. He suggested that the Secretariat survey problems of this kind and offer ideas for solutions.