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**Chairman: Mr. Santiago PEREZ PEREZ (Venezuela).**

**Cessation of the transmission of information under Article 73 e of the Charter on Puerto Rico: report of the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/2465) (*continued*)**

[Item 34 (b)]\*

1. Mr. TRUJILLO (Ecuador), continuing the statement he had begun at the previous meeting, said that the adoption of the Puerto Rican Constitution had radically changed the source of authority of the Government, which was now vested in the Puerto Rican people, and the basis of the relations between Puerto Rico and the United States, which were now regulated by bilateral agreements. The last vestiges of colonialism had been liquidated.

2. The attainment of sovereignty by the Puerto Rican people was the culmination of a long process. The Puerto Rican people had acquired certain limited legislative powers in 1949, although judicial and executive authority had been retained by the United States Government. Among the most forbidding problems facing them had been over-population, a single-crop economy, a shortage of labour opportunities with resulting wide-scale unemployment, and inadequate urban and rural public services. By 1950, thanks to their industry, those problems no longer seemed insurmountable.

3. The Democratic Popular Party, under Mr. Muñoz-Marín's leadership, had put into effect a vigorous legislative programme, aimed at liquidating the remaining elements of colonialism, and had laid a solid foundation for economic and social progress. One of the most striking economic advances had been an agrarian reform law directed at removing absentee landlordism, and despite concerted opposition on the part of the large landowners, including the United States sugar corporations, the United States Government and Congress had not impeded the expropriation of the land, and Puerto Rico's right to implement its agrarian policy had been upheld by the United States Supreme Court. Compensation had been paid out of the revenue derived from the taxes paid by United States consumers of

Puerto Rican products, as in the case of most of the economic and social welfare projects in Puerto Rico. The land expropriated had been distributed among farmers, each of whom had been given a plot of land and a house. Hence, the rural workers were no longer dependent on landlords and could vote as they pleased, as free men.

4. The land reform in Puerto Rico had paved the way for other economic and social reforms, such as the building of cheap housing units. The importance of the sugar industry as a public industry had been recognized and a new labour relations act adopted. A large-scale programme of industrial development had been put into effect and an industrial development company and a government development bank started. It was hoped to reach the target of 80,000 new jobs by 1960, by which time the average take-home pay of the Puerto Rican worker should be \$2,000 a year. Economic progress had been possible only because of the industry of the Puerto Rican people and their ties with the United States, which provided a market for Puerto Rican products and supplied material and technical assistance. Puerto Rico had provided some investment capital and offered such inducements to foreign capital as tax exemption. The fact that Puerto Rican economic progress was impossible unless Puerto Rican products had free access to the American market was one very strong argument in favour of commonwealth status for Puerto Rico, which had now achieved what the Benelux countries were still striving for.

5. He quoted figures to show the great progress made in industrialization during the past ten years and in social conditions and public health. The mortality rate had reached a figure which compared favourably with those of certain more industrialized countries. Tremendous advances had been made in the field of public health mainly as a result of the efforts of the Puerto Ricans themselves, although some assistance had been received from the United States. Drinking water had been brought to most of the villages and electric power was available throughout the country. Many Latin-American countries would, in fact, be happy to be able to boast of comparable achievements.

6. Mr. Trujillo then quoted facts and figures to show the great progress made in the field of education between 1940 and 1950. Spanish was the medium of instruction and English had been added as a necessary instrument for the cultural and economic advancement of the people. Under the United Nations technical assistance programme and the Point Four programme, scholarship holders from a number of countries, including Ecuador, went to Puerto Rico to study economic, social and educational development. The University of San Juan was a fine institution. Puerto Rico was to be congratulated on having respected its traditions, language and religion, which made it spiritually akin to the other Latin-American countries.

\* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

7. In the light of the list of factors adopted by the Committee (A/C.4/L.279), no international organization could modify the status of a people as defined by an agreement between them and another people, freely entered into by both parties. Puerto Rico had entered into a voluntary association with the United States and could no longer be regarded as a territory that did not enjoy a full measure of self-government and with regard to which information should be transmitted in accordance with Article 73 e. In his opinion Puerto Rico had derived no benefit from the transmission of information to the United Nations and to continue to transmit such information would imply that Puerto Rico was still a dependent territory.
8. Owing perhaps to lack of time or technical difficulties, the instruments left room for improvement in certain respects. A few vestiges of the former system remained, but they were not such that the United Nations could deny that the people of Puerto Rico had self-governing status. He was at a loss to see how any delegation could do so. One of the main purposes of the United Nations was to encourage the peoples to strive for self-government, and if Puerto Rico's right to that status were contested, the effect on the people of that territory and on other non-self-governing peoples would be extremely discouraging.
9. Comparisons had been drawn in the course of the debate between the situation of Puerto Rico on the one hand and that of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam on the other, but the two cases were entirely different. Each should be judged on its merits. The *Ad Hoc* Committee on Factors (Non-Self-Governing Territories) had wisely emphasized in its report (A/2428) that the list of factors should serve merely as a guide.
10. In view of the historical, social, economic, cultural and juridical factors to which he had referred, Chapter XI of the Charter no longer applied to Puerto Rico.
11. At the 349th meeting the representative of Mexico had said that since the main problem facing Puerto Rico was economic, the majority of its people had unfortunately been obliged to renounce their individuality to some extent, and that he hoped that the case of that territory would throw into relief the need to ensure that no peoples should be forced to sacrifice their dignity in order to live. The speaker wondered whether the Mexican representative had sufficiently pondered the significance of his words. He could not agree that the people of Puerto Rico had lost dignity by using their right to self-determination, and he appealed to the Mexican representative to elucidate or else to modify his statement.
12. The Mexican representative had further said that when the Puerto Rican people had become the legal as well as the intellectual equals of the other Latin-American peoples and of the people of the United States, the Latin-American countries would send students to the University of San Juan and would grant scholarships to Puerto Rican students to attend their universities. In fact, however, the Point Four programme was being successfully carried out in Puerto Rico and students from many Latin-American countries, including Mexico, had gone there to study. The people of Puerto Rico had fully maintained their Hispanic traditions and the assertions of the Mexican representative showed that he was insufficiently informed on the subject.
13. The Latin-American nations should make a gesture of solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico and should welcome them as partners in the work of consolidating justice and law throughout the continent they had inherited.
14. Mr. ESPINOSA Y PRIETO (Mexico) in reply to the representative of Ecuador, declined to modify the statement he had made at the 349th meeting; he added that his words should not be interpreted as expressing anything but admiration and affection for the Puerto Rican people.
15. Mr. MENDOZA (Guatemala) said that at the previous meeting the United States representative had drawn his attention to a serious mistake he had made when quoting the letter from Mr. Muñoz Marín. He apologized for the mistake, which had been due to a faulty translation from English; unfortunately, he had not had the Spanish text with him at the time.
16. On the other hand, he objected because the Ecuadorian representative had exaggerated the mistake, for it would have been childish to attempt to falsify a document which was in the hands of all Committee members. He likewise rejected the claim that he had attacked the Government and peoples of the United States and of Puerto Rico and left it to the parties concerned to judge his remarks.
17. Moreover, he wished to reaffirm that his correction of the mistake in no way affected the other quotations given in his original statement.
18. The CHAIRMAN appealed to the members of the Committee to maintain the debate on the high level demanded by its subject and to avoid allusions and references which not only were irrelevant to the substance of the question but might lead to misunderstanding.
19. Mr. TRUJILLO (Ecuador) thanked the Mexican representative for his reply.
20. With reference to the remarks of the representative of Guatemala, he disclaimed any intention of giving offence; he had merely said that that representative was probably misinformed. His only desire was to serve the interests of truth.
21. The CHAIRMAN called on the members of the Committee to continue the debate without further explanations or replies.
22. Mr. DE MARCHENA (Dominican Republic) said that the documentation submitted in support of the United States notification (A/AC.35/L.121) of its intention to cease to transmit information on Puerto Rico showed that Puerto Rico had achieved a full measure of self-government in choosing, after popular consultation, free association with the United States of America. The documents also showed the various stages in the political advancement of Puerto Rico, the relationship of the various provisions adopted with the Constitution of the administering Power and the ratification by the people of Puerto Rico themselves of the general political relationship between the former metropolitan country and the new Commonwealth.
23. In the case of Puerto Rico it should be borne in mind that self-government was not a sudden departure, but the culmination of the political maturity achieved by the people of Puerto Rico after many years of the democratic exercise of all the rights that had been accorded to them by the administering Power; even those delegations which considered that the cessation

of information was not justified would not disagree that all honour should be rendered to the United States in that respect.

24. The Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories had adopted a resolution (A/2465, part one, para. 67) expressing the opinion that the provisions of Article 73 e of the Charter were no longer applicable to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and noting the declaration of the United States Government that it considered that it was no longer necessary or appropriate to transmit information on Puerto Rico.

25. The delegation of the Dominican Republic, in its turn, had particular satisfaction in declaring the conviction of its Government that Puerto Rico had achieved a full measure of self-government. That opinion was based not only on legal considerations but also on the fact that the Dominican Republic's traditional relations with Puerto Rico and its position as a close neighbour made it peculiarly well qualified to appreciate the advances which the Puerto Rican people had made in all fields of activity. It was those advances which the General Assembly was now to consider.

26. The Dominican delegation believed that the General Assembly was entirely competent to give a decision on the question of the cessation of the transmission of information. It was therefore entitled to consider the conditions in which the Non-Self-Governing Territory had achieved self-government, and to determine whether they were such as to release the administering Power from its obligation to transmit information under Article 73 e. In considering the self-government inherent in the political Constitution of Puerto Rico, many factors must be taken into account. It should be borne in mind that Puerto Rico, by its culture, its political traditions, its social unity and educational advancement, was entitled to demand the recognition by the United Nations of its present status.

27. Quoting paragraphs a and b of Article 73 of the Charter, which reaffirmed as a sacred trust certain guarantees which had been included in the Covenant of the League of Nations, he pointed out that Chapter XI set forth clearly and unmistakably the obligation of the administering Powers gradually to promote the political development of the dependent territories so that they might one day enter the international community in full control of their own destinies, having freely chosen that form of democratic government which they found most suitable.

28. In the case of Puerto Rico, the purposes of the Charter, as stated in the Declaration regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories contained in Chapter XI, or even as analysed in the list of factors approved by the General Assembly (resolution 648 (VII), annex), had been fulfilled. Even as a dependent territory of the United States, Puerto Rico had been a community whose social, educational, economic and political advancement deserved the fullest recognition, particularly from those countries united to it by bonds of race, religion and culture. Only a complete disregard of the conditions prevailing in Puerto Rico could explain a refusal to recognise its autonomy. Moreover, the Constitution adopted by Puerto Rico guaranteed human rights and the protection of all classes of society, thus reflecting the aims of the Charter of the United Nations. While the General Assembly had been preparing a list of factors indicative of self-government, despite the fact that no definition of self-government

had been agreed upon, in the practical field Puerto Rico had been reaffirming its own political stability, preparing its new Constitution and putting into effect the essential features of that autonomy which now justified the cessation of information under Article 73 e of the Charter.

29. The delegation of the Dominican Republic intended to vote in favour of accepting the decision of the United States to cease to transmit information on the territory of Puerto Rico, on the grounds that it had achieved a full measure of self-government and had become a commonwealth freely associated with the United States. That decision was an expression of the Dominican Government's conviction that Puerto Rico had become a self-governing State and that its Government was entitled to consider that the transmission of information on the territory would be improper. He wished to place on record the traditional friendship of the Dominican Republic towards the neighbouring people of Puerto Rico, its belief that the new awakening of national and patriotic ideals in Puerto Rico constituted a cause of pride for the family of American nations, and its hope that the people of Puerto Rico would go forward on their path of democratic achievement moved by that solidarity which was and had been a source of strength in the struggle against dividing and disturbing doctrines and events in the world outside.

30. Mr. SHTOKALO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the consideration by the Fourth Committee of the question of factors and its study of the reports on the Non-Self-Governing Territories had shown that conditions in those territories were far from satisfactory and that the colonial Powers were not carrying out their obligations under Article 73 of the Charter to promote economic, social and political advancement. The delegation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic had already adduced irrefutable facts showing that the information supplied by the administering Powers did not give a true picture of the position in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In order to conceal their failure to fulfil their obligations from international public opinion, certain administering Powers, in violation of their responsibilities, had gone even further and had ceased altogether to transmit information on economic, social and cultural conditions in the territories under their administration. The cessation of the transmission of information was not justified until a Non-Self-Governing Territory had become an independent sovereign State and legislative, executive and judicial power was exercised by the indigenous inhabitants.

31. When the United States notification on the cessation of the transmission of information on Puerto Rico had been discussed in the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories, the representative of India had concluded that the present status of Puerto Rico did not entirely comply with any of the elements of an independent or fully self-governing State. The Ukrainian delegation agreed with that conclusion. The motive behind the United States action was to give American monopolists a free hand in their control of the economy of Puerto Rico. Consequently, the documentation allegedly proving the propriety of the United States decision deliberately gave a distorted picture of the position in Puerto Rico. The political farce of the adoption of the Constitution of Puerto Rico could not disguise the fact that it continued to be a

United States colony. The colonial rule which had started in 1898 remained unchanged. Laws which were promulgated in the United States still had effect in Puerto Rico. The status of the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in the United States was also unchanged. The United States Supreme Court enjoyed the same power in Puerto Rico as it did in the United States itself. Defence matters and foreign affairs were still under the control of the United States. United States laws on shipping and tariffs remained in force in Puerto Rico. The Constitution did not ensure the rights of the indigenous inhabitants to govern themselves, and it had been clearly stated in the United States Congress that any amendment or revision of the Constitution would require the approval of the United States Congress.

32. It was clear that the situation in Puerto Rico did not warrant a decision by the General Assembly in favour of the cessation of the transmission of information. The United States was not fulfilling its obligations towards Puerto Rico, either in the matter of political advancement or in economic, social and educational advancement. The economic life of Puerto Rico was in the hands of American monopolists. Foreign capital owned 80 per cent of the agricultural land in Puerto Rico and small producers were being swallowed up by large American companies. Many of the so-called tenant farmers had lost their land to American undertakings or seen it used for the construction of military bases by the United States. One-fifth of the land engaged in sugar production was owned by American companies and 40 per cent of the refined sugar produced by such companies. The Puerto Rican banking system was controlled from New York and American capitalists were drawing ever increasing profits from

their investments in Puerto Rico, 43 per cent of the national income of Puerto Rico having gone to American investors in 1950.

33. Unemployment was rife in Puerto Rico and wages were low. The cost of living on the other hand was constantly rising. There was a serious food shortage in Puerto Rico and 60 per cent of the food consumed had to be imported. Furthermore, owing to customs limitations, that food had to be imported from the most expensive market, namely, the United States. It had been admitted in the American Press that the poverty of Puerto Rico was due in part to its imprisonment behind the United States tariff barrier.

34. The situation from the point of view of health and nutrition was equally unsatisfactory. Medical facilities were inadequate and housing and sanitation deplorable. The rate of illiteracy in Puerto Rico was high: 46 per cent of the children of school age were unable to attend school. Section 5 of article II of the Constitution of Puerto Rico made education free and compulsory to the extent permitted by the facilities of the State. The purpose of the article was thus vitiated from the outset. Unemployment at home had led to large-scale emigration to the United States.

35. In view of the conditions obtaining under the United States administration, it was not surprising that the United States sought to conceal its shortcomings by ceasing to transmit information on Puerto Rico. The Ukrainian SSR considered that there were no grounds for a decision by the General Assembly that information on Puerto Rico was no longer required. The Assembly would be entitled to take such a decision only when Puerto Rico had become a truly sovereign State and its people exercised full authority.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.