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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, A/C.4/L.300) (*continued*)**

[Item 34 (b)]\*

1. Mr. MORALES (Panama) said that he had been happy to join in sponsoring the draft resolution (A/C.4/L.300) approving the cessation of the transmission of information on Puerto Rico.
2. The United States Government's communication of 19 January 1953 (A/AC.35/L.121) **announcing its** decision to cease transmitting information on Puerto Rico was the outcome of a request contained in a letter dated 17 January 1953 from the Governor of Puerto Rico (A/AC.35/L.121, annex III), based on the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Puerto Rican people, who had now attained a full measure of self-government, wanted Commonwealth status.
3. Puerto Rico's progress towards self-government had been gradual and the people had been consulted at each successive stage. In the general elections in 1948 the choice before them had been independence, statehood or the status of a free State associated with the United States, and they had, of their sovereign will, chosen the third alternative and had ratified their choice by an overwhelming majority in the referendum held in June 1951. In a further referendum in March 1952 they had ratified their new Constitution, which, as the Constitutional Convention had said, brought the people of Puerto Rico full and democratic self-government and did away with the last vestiges of colonialism.
4. By their free decision to be associated with the United States the Puerto Rican people had chosen their own international status through the exercise of their right to self-determination. In the Constitutional Convention, however, Mr. Muñoz Marín had made it quite clear that the status for which the Puerto Rican people had opted was not final and static. That statement might seem to be in contradiction with the Spanish text of paragraph 10 of the memorandum by the Government of the United States concerning the cessation of

the transmission of information with regard to Puerto Rico (A/AC.35/L.121, annex II) where reference was made to "*una relación permanente con los Estados Unidos*". The English text, however, was more correct in referring to "a continuing relationship with the United States". In the Constitutional Convention, an amendment to add the word "permanent" in the first paragraph of the preamble to the Puerto Rican Constitution had been defeated. On that occasion, Mr. Muñoz Marín had said that, while he personally was in favour of the permanent union of Puerto Rico and the United States, the people of Puerto Rico had made it quite clear that they did not intend to close the door on future developments. As Mr. Muñoz Marín had said, Public Law 600 established a better union with the United States and one which could at any time become permanent, if the people of Puerto Rico so desired. Nevertheless, under that law, the door remained open to other formulae such as Federal statehood or complete independence. The United Nations could not judge the Puerto Rican people's actions, but only note that they had been able freely to express their will and that the Constitution gave them supreme political power in their domestic affairs.

5. The association of Puerto Rico and the United States was governed by the Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act, which was a compact that could be amended only by mutual agreement of the two parties. That interpretation of the compact had been upheld by a United States Federal court, which had found that neither the United States Congress nor the people of Puerto Rico could amend Public Law 600 without the consent of the other party. Puerto Rico's imperative economic needs were one of the basic factors in the territory's decision to be associated with the United States. Both Mr. Muñoz Marín and Mr. Fernós Isern had recognized that association with the United States was essential for the economic development of Puerto Rico. The form of economic union was not the same as that linking the states of the Union together but, economically speaking, Commonwealth status and certain advantages and was not inferior to full statehood.
6. From everything he had said it was obvious that Puerto Rico could no longer be regarded as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. His delegation firmly believed that the fundamental purpose of the information transmitted under Article 73 e was to allow the United Nations to appraise the progressive development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and ensure international respect for the right of people to self-determination. The United Nations must in duty bound respect the self-determination of the Puerto Rican people and to insist on the transmission of information by a Power that was no longer the administering Power would be tantamount to acting against the very spirit of Chapter XI of the Charter.
7. Mr. PATTERSON (Canada) associated his delegation with those which had congratulated both the

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

United States and the Puerto Rican Governments on the progress that the Puerto Rican people had been able to achieve in the economic, social and educational, as well as in the political fields. The valuable information provided by the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in the United States (348th meeting) and by the United States Government in its comprehensive report helped the Committee to reach an objective opinion on the new constitutional status of Puerto Rico.

8. It had always been the Canadian view that the Non-Self-Governing Territories would normally advance towards self-government by stages and, at a given time, would reach a point at which the administering Powers in fact no longer exercised effective practical control over the social, economic and educational matters on which information had been submitted. The obligation to submit such information would then come to an end. After examining the documentation submitted by the United States on Puerto Rico in that light, the Canadian delegation had concluded that in economic, social and educational matters the Government of Puerto Rico now exercised the required effective control.

9. That conclusion had been borne out by the documentation, which showed how the Puerto Rican people had been given a full opportunity of deciding for themselves on their new constitutional status. There had been much discussion in the United Nations on self-determination and, despite disagreement on its exact nature and the means whereby it could best be implemented, a majority of the General Assembly had accepted the fundamental principle on which self-determination was based. The case of the Puerto Rican people was a good example of the application of that principle. They had been given a free choice between alternatives of independence, statehood within the Federal Union, and association with the United States as a free Commonwealth, and had chosen the last alternative by an overwhelming majority.

10. The Canadian delegation would not go into the question of the right of secession in connexion with the right of self-determination, but it did wish to refer to the suggestion made by a number of delegations that the Puerto Rican people had not been given a proper opportunity to pronounce on the issue of independence itself. In the election of 1948, the Puerto Rican people could, if they had wished, have supported the Puerto Rican Independence Party, the chief advocate of Puerto Rican independence, but instead they had elected the party which advocated the type of constitutional status now achieved in their country.

11. As a country which had reached its own present constitutional status through a succession of acts implementing the principle of self-determination, Canada regarded the most recent constitutional development of Puerto Rico, and the fact that the Puerto Rican people had reached that new stage of their own free will and choice, with particular gratification. It had no doubt that the desire of the United States Government was to see Puerto Rico continue to progress along the lines it had been following.

12. In those circumstances, the Canadian delegation would readily support any proposal designed to take note of that happy state of affairs.

13. Mr. DOBROSIELSKI (Poland) declared that the United States had not fulfilled its obligations under the Charter in respect of Puerto Rico. The ruling circles of the United States were wont to use fine phrases to

disguise the old policy of force and interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. Puerto Rico was a case in point. In the case of a territory under its rule, the United States called "Commonwealth" what was generally known as "colony". It was probably applying the neo-positivist method, whose partisans maintained that the knowledge of reality was confined to the study of words and sentences. But words and statements must be confirmed by facts, by economic, social and political realities. Despite the United States boast that its policy was anti-colonial, Puerto Rico was a striking example of its policy of colonization.

14. Puerto Rico's economic position was certainly far less favourable than had been asserted by the representative of Ecuador (351st meeting). The economic union of which, according to Mr. Fernós Isern, the foundations had been laid in 1900 and which remained unchanged, had enabled the United States to hand over the country's economy to American concerns, to seize its best land and its natural resources, to develop the sugar plantations and the sugar industry to the detriment of other branches of agriculture, to give the United States a monopoly of foreign trade and to deprive the island of any hope of industrialization or of developing an independent economy. The latest information concerning Puerto Rico transmitted by the United States Government (A/2414/Add.2) showed that all the mines in Puerto Rico were owned by an American company, that \$111 million of foreign capital were invested in the country and that imports greatly exceeded exports—a characteristic phenomenon of colonial countries. The United States had also a monopoly of air and sea transport.

15. He quoted information showing the harsh labour and living conditions of the Puerto Rican people, which had led to mass emigration. Those conditions could have been divulged by representatives of the Puerto Rican opposition parties that had asked for oral hearings (A/C.4/236 and A/C.4/239). The Polish delegation had strongly supported their requests. However, the United States delegation had opposed the granting of a hearing and its wishes had unfortunately carried the day. Nevertheless it had been unable to conceal certain facts, including the true nature of the new Constitution.

16. As a number of representatives had pointed out, that Constitution had not changed the economic, political or social relations between the United States and Puerto Rico. It had strengthened the grip of American monopolies and it in no way limited the rights and prerogatives of the United States Government, which included the maintenance of military, air and naval bases, the control of foreign policy and the monopoly of trade. The United States kept its legislative and juridical control over Puerto Rico and the United States Congress could change or annul the Constitution. The vaunted provision that Puerto Rico's status could be modified only by mutual agreement meant in fact that Puerto Rico was powerless to break away from the United States and made a mockery of the Puerto Rican people's right of self-determination. Furthermore, the United States could send Puerto Rican soldiers to fight for United States interests, and it had in fact done so during the Korean war.

17. Thus Puerto Rico, situated hundreds of miles away from the United States, whose people spoke a different language and had a different tradition and culture, remained a United States colony, a source of raw

materials and cheap labour, an export market and an outlet for capital investment.

18. For the reasons he had stated, the Polish delegation would be unable to support the resolution adopted by the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/2465, part one, para. 67) and

would also oppose the seven-Power draft resolution (A/C.4/L.300). It considered that the United States should be required to transmit information on Puerto Rico in accordance with Article 73 e until the time when the territory had attained genuine independence.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.