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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE
TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Note verbale dated 5 December 1980 from the Permanent Mission of
Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to request that the attached document be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 18.

ANNEX

Memorandum to the General Assembly of the United Nations submitted by
the Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño as a petitioner before the
Special Committee on Decolonization

On 6 August 1980, the Special Committee on Decolonization adopted a resolution on Puerto Rico (A/AC.109/628), the operative part of which reads as follows:

"1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and its full applicability with respect to Puerto Rico, as asserted by its previous resolutions and decisions on Puerto Rico;

"2. Urges once again the Government of the United States of America to adopt all necessary measures for the full transfer of all powers to the people of Puerto Rico, and to this end, requests that Government to present, as soon as possible, a plan for the decolonization of Puerto Rico, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV):

"3. Declares as unacceptable any measure attempting to change the status of Puerto Rico without the explicit consent and participation of the people of that Territory, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV);

"4. Condemns the persecution, imprisonment and repressive measures to which organizations and persons struggling for the self-determination and independence of Puerto Rico are subjected;

"5. Welcomes the release of the four Puerto Rican nationalist prisoners;

"6. Condemns the manoeuvres and provocations of the United States Navy on Vieques and the repression against patriots struggling to end the military intervention of the United States in the island municipality of Vieques;

"7. Demands that the Government of the United States terminate all its military activities in Puerto Rico and allow the people of Puerto Rico to live in peace in their own Territory;

"8. Reiterates its request to the Government of the United States to allow a fact-finding mission of the Special Committee to visit Puerto Rico, in order to collect all pertinent data including, in particular, information relative to the persecution, harassment and repression of Puerto Rican patriots;

"9. Decides to keep the question of Puerto Rico under review."

This resolution, and the debate which preceded its adoption, should form part of the report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly, which is to be discussed soon.

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In the absence of an opportunity to make a statement directly to the Assembly, we hereby submit for the Assembly's consideration various developments which are, in our view, important and which have taken place since the most recent debate on Puerto Rico in the Special Committee.

When we appeared before the Special Committee in August 1980, we drew attention to the position and programme with regard to Puerto Rico of the Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party of the United States, which had nominated him as a candidate for the Presidency. In particular, we stated the following:

"The first one to meet was the Republican Party, in Detroit, and in its programme or platform, as it is called in American political lingo, we find the following with reference to Puerto Rico in the context of a section entitled "The Americas".

'The Republicans recognize the special importance of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands in the defence of freedom in the Caribbean. We believe that Puerto Rico's admission to the Union would demonstrate our common purpose in the face of growing Soviet and Cuban pressure in that area.'

It is obvious that there is total disregard of the principle of self-determination in that unprecedented statement by a political party whose candidate, according to press reports, surveys and polls, has a good chance of becoming President of this country.

Perhaps there is no point in explaining to people so well versed in political processes as are the members of this Committee that when one speaks, in the language of the imperialists, about "the defence of freedom in the Caribbean", it means the defence of Yankee hegemony in the Caribbean. This is a clear statement of the aim of incorporating Puerto Rico into the United States as a State or province, by way of fulfilling a geo-political objective of the United States and without any kind of consideration or respect for the rights of the Puerto Rican people and the fundamental principles which prevail in today's world with regard to decolonization.

The section of the Republican Party platform which specifically deals with Puerto Rico states the following:

"Puerto Rico has been a Territory of the United States since 1898. The Republican Party vigorously supports the right of the United States citizens of Puerto Rico to be admitted into the Union as a fully sovereign state, after they freely so determine. We believe that the statehood alternative is the only logical solution to the problem of the inequality of the United States citizens of Puerto Rico within the framework of the Federal Constitution."

In that statement one can detect very clearly not only disdain for the principle of self-determination on the part of the Republicans of the United States who adopted that paragraph, but also the obvious purpose of ignoring the historical and social fact that Puerto Rico is a Latin American nation, with all the elements which make up a nation. An attempt is being made to change the focus of the problem through subterfuge and through the ruse of referring to the American citizens of Puerto Rico as being the ones who have a right to determine the destiny of our country. No concept could violate more or be more contrary to the spirit and the letter of international legislation on decolonization than that disregard of that reality and that attempt to impose the concept of metropolitan country citizenship as a determining factor in deciding the future of our land.

This Republican platform has been termed by those advocating the annexation of the island of Puerto Rico as an express line to statehood or the annexation of Puerto Rico. They call it "an express line" because it does not use other recognized alternatives as a cover to give credence to self-determination; rather, by using the same hegemonistic and imperialist language which typifies the statements on international policy by candidate Reagan, it clearly and unambiguously establishes that irrespective of international principles, irrespective of the will of the Puerto Rican people, there will be encouragement and promotion of and an effort made to see to it that the Puerto Rican people join the United States as a State.

Now a new situation has arisen as a result of the elections held in the United States and in Puerto Rico on 4 November 1980.

In the United States, as is known, Mr. Reagan was elected President. In Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican people clearly rejected annexation. It was the annexationists themselves who attempted to treat the election as a kind of pre-plebiscite. The annexationist Governor, Carlos Romero, had said that, if his party obtained a majority, even a majority of only one vote over 50 per cent of the votes cast, he would call for a plebiscite in 1981 with a view to obtaining authorization from the electorate to request the United States Congress to approve the annexation of Puerto Rico as a State of the United States.

On the very night of the election, when it had become clear that the Governor and his party would not obtain a majority of more than 50 per cent, the Governor himself, announced that the plans for a plebiscite in 1981 had been suspended.

However, a few weeks after the election, it was still not known who had been elected Governor and who had been elected to the legislative bodies of Puerto Rico. The reason for this is that once the Romero Government knew that it was losing the election, it interrupted the vote-counting process of the Elections Commission, which it dominated, and forced it to suspend the preliminary count, which, in accordance with the law, should have been carried out within 72 hours of the election. Since that time and up to the present, the Government has resorted to all sorts of manoeuvres, tricks and intrigues to prevent the speedy certification of the elected candidates, although they know they have lost the election, and are seeking feverishly to overturn the true election results.

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However, the whole of Puerto Rico knows that the people forcefully rejected the annexationist aims of Romero's colonial Government. Although the opposition was divided into various parties with different ideological positions, it united in order to form a majority in support of the candidature for the governorship of Rafael Hernández Colón, of the Partido Popular Democrático.* Hernández Colón himself has acknowledged that his victory was attributable to the support of thousands of advocates of independence and autonomy, who, although they were not members of his party, voted for him in order to defeat annexationism.

It is even clearer today than it was in August of this year that any attempt on the part of the Reagan Government to implement the Republican programme regarding Puerto Rico would be in blatant violation of the desire expressed by the Puerto Rican people. The request of the Decolonization Committee that the Government of the United States should present a plan for the decolonization of Puerto Rico that is in keeping with the principles set forth in resolution 1514 (XV) and that, in the meantime, it should refrain from forcing through any unilateral plan to solve the problem of the status of Puerto Rico has acquired even greater validity at the current time.

At the same time, it is the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1514 (XV), whose adoption represented a historic landmark of world-wide importance in the struggle for global decolonization. Puerto Rico is one of the last bastions of colonialism, in its basest form, remaining in the world. The decolonization of Puerto Rico must be accelerated, and the only way to do so is to apply the principles set forth in resolution 1514 (XV).

It is the duty of the United Nations to promote the acceleration of the decolonization of Puerto Rico and to see that that process takes place in accordance with the principles laid down in international law, particularly in resolution 1514 (XV) and subsequent resolutions on Puerto Rico adopted by the Special Committee on Decolonization in recent years, all of which the General Assembly has ratified in adopting the relevant reports of the Special Committee.

* The Partido Independentista obtained over 5 per cent of the votes (over 83,000 votes in the preliminary counts), and, although the candidate of the Partido Socialista for the governorship obtained only approximately 5,000 votes, that party's candidates for the Legislature, Juan Mari Bras for the Senate and Carlos Gallisá for the House, obtained over 80,000 votes (over 5 per cent). As is well known, there are other independence movements that do not participate in the elections, since they consider rejection of elections a question of principle. That is so in the case of the Partido Nacionalista de Puerto Rico.

On the other hand, on the eve of the election former Governor Roberto Sánchez Vilella, a prominent advocate of autonomism and a dissident from the Partido Popular, called on the population to vote for that party.

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For the reasons explained in brief above, we urge delegations representing the friends of Puerto Rico in the General Assembly to make this information known in the debate on the question of decolonization at the current session of the Assembly, and to make it clear in drafting the omnibus resolution to be submitted and adopted once that debate has been concluded, that the Assembly expects the Government of the United States to respond to the request addressed to it by the Decolonization Committee in its resolution adopted this year (A/AC.109/628) that it should present a plan for the decolonization of Puerto Rico that fulfils the requirements set forth in resolution 1514 (XV).

San Juan, Puerto Rico
25 November 1980
Juan Maria Bras