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

Letter dated 24 November 1982 from the representative of the  
United States of America to the United Nations addressed to  
the President of the General Assembly

At the 77th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, my delegation reserved the right of the Honourable Hernán Padilla, Mayor of San Juan, to make a written reply to the ad hominem attack upon him by the representative of Cuba on 23 November 1982.

I enclose Mr. Padilla's statement in exercise of the right of reply and request that it be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 18.

(Signed) William C. SHERMAN

ANNEX

Statement by the Honourable Hernán Padilla

The insulting, extemporaneous and vicious attack on the part of the Cuban Delegation is additional evidence of the intolerance of representatives of a dictatorial and totalitarian government that does not understand the concept of freedom.

During the last several weeks of my participation here with the distinguished and honorable representatives of the international community, I have come to know the caliber and feeling of dignity and respect with which the affairs that are discussed in the General Assembly are treated.

It is lamentable that persons who have never lived the experience of freedom would pretend to impose their personal style to barricade the process of discussion that is able to prevail in a high international forum.

Because of the respect I feel for the distinguished Delegates to the General Assembly, I will not descend to the same level of insults and provocations which permeates the life and thoughts of the Cuban Delegation.

It is not in Puerto Rico that fear is imposed to prevent people from leaving -- as was the case in Mariel.

It is not in Puerto Rico where people live in fear of oppression by popular militias and spies.

It is not in Puerto Rico where incarceration and torture occurs -- without the most elementary respect for human life -- as occurs in the Cuban process.

It is not in Puerto Rico where political parties are prohibited and where the right of the people to freely choose their political status is denied.

It is not in Puerto Rico where millions of dollars are spent on armies and military armaments for exporting revolution to other parts of the world.

It is not on our island where people live in fear of losing life and property without the most elementary rights of justice and due process.

Jose Marti never thought his beloved people would be so mistreated and so persecuted as they have been in the last few decades.

It is inconceivable and insulting to say that to present a speech in English is evidence of colonialism when the President of the General Assembly himself and many other Representatives here present speeches in that language.

My presence here is evidence of freedom and recognition.

This institution recognized my presence as a delegate of the United States and the General Assembly supported my position of "self-determination" against the Cuban position with a resounding defeat in their effort to inscribe the case of Puerto Rico.

To the international community I reiterate our right to decide for ourselves our present and future political status.

I am here and I will be here as a Puerto Rican -- with all my rights as an American citizen and the absolute freedom to determine my own future: freedom that the Cuban people do not have.

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