

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Official Records

**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 355th
MEETING**



Monday, 26 November 1962,
at 10.55 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
Agenda item 79:	
Question of Oman (continued)	151

Chairman: Mr. Leopoldo BENITES (Ecuador).

AGENDA ITEM 79

Question of Oman (A/5149, A/5284; A/SPC/73) (continued)

1. Mr. KREACIC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation had supported the just demands of the Omani people for independence and self-determination at the sixteenth session (303rd meeting) of the General Assembly. It had stressed on that occasion that particular attention should be paid to the political aspects of the problem of Oman, in addition to the legal, humanitarian and economic considerations. Its position was unchanged.

2. During the present debate, many speakers, in particular the representatives of a number of Arab States, had shed further light on the struggles of the Omani people for independence by well-documented accounts of events in that area. The Yugoslav delegation would merely announce, therefore, that in accordance with its constant support for the struggles of peoples for independence all over the world, it would support the struggle of the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula for independence and freedom from all forms of interference, particularly that military interference by the great Powers which had for so long hindered the free development and progress of the Arab countries.

3. The struggle of the Omani people was part of the irresistible process of emancipation to which the United Nations was committed. The people of Oman demanded independence, the withdrawal of foreign forces, and a peaceful settlement of the situation so that normal conditions could be re-established. Those demands were based on the principles of the Charter and were in keeping with the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples contained in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV); the Yugoslav delegation hoped that they would meet with wide understanding and support in the Committee.

4. Mr. HASEGANU (Romania) said that he would not dwell on the historical aspects of the question of Oman as they were already well known. In his delegation's view the colonialist policy of the United Kingdom towards the people of Oman was the essence of the matter. The arguments which the United Kingdom (353rd meeting) had used to justify its aggression of 1954 were not convincing. It had been unable to deny the historical fact that Oman had been an independent State for more than eleven centuries, under the rule

of its chosen Imams, or the validity of the Treaty of Sib concluded in 1920^{1/} between the Sultan of Muscat and the Imam of Oman in the presence of a representative of the United Kingdom. The existence of a treaty of alliance and mutual assistance between the United Kingdom and the Sultan of Muscat could not serve as justification for the aggression committed against Oman. A number of Arab representatives, in particular those of Saudi Arabia and Iraq (351st meeting), had proved that the Sultan of Muscat was a mere colonial puppet of the United Kingdom. The so-called alliance between the United Kingdom and Muscat had served as a pretext for the invasion and conquest of the neighbouring territory of Oman in order to exploit the recently discovered oil fields, since the people of Oman had been unwilling to grant the United Kingdom a concession. In keeping with the imperialist principle of "divide and rule", the United Kingdom had created a number of artificial territories in the Arabian peninsula. Their régimes varied but they were all typically colonial. The United Kingdom had been able to establish military bases in those territories and to intervene in conflicts which it had itself created. The aggression against Oman was part of the general pattern of United Kingdom colonial domination over the entire area for strategic and economic purposes.

5. The representative of the United Kingdom (353rd meeting) had tried to convince the Committee that the people of Oman were satisfied with the situation, that only a handful of rebels were disturbing the peace and that there was thus no question for the United Nations to discuss. The colonial Powers always tried to persuade the General Assembly that the peoples under their yoke were happy with their lot and did not want liberation, and that any movement for independence was foreign-inspired. The Assembly was unlikely to be deceived.

6. The aggressive actions of the United Kingdom against the people of Oman were contrary to the Charter and to General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1654 (XVI) which condemned every attempt to deprive the dependent peoples of their right to complete independence in peace and freedom. The people of Oman, like colonial peoples everywhere, demanded independence. The Romanian delegation supported them in their struggle and condemned the armed aggression of the United Kingdom. It would vote in favour of any draft resolution calling for an end to the aggression against Oman, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the restoration of that country's independence.

7. Mr. TABIBI (Afghanistan) said that there was no need to dwell on the historical relationship of Muscat and Oman. It was a well-known fact that Oman was an

^{1/} See Royal Institute of International Affairs: *The Western Powers and the Middle East; a documentary record* (Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 46.

independent entity and not a dependency of Muscat. The whole problem was a creation of colonialism and Oman was by no means a unique case. History was full of instances of peoples united or divided against their will and of colonial treaties imposed upon feudal rulers against the wishes of their peoples, often by military force. The case of Oman should be studied as a part of colonialism, for it came under General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). It might well form a subject for the consideration of the Special Committee on the situation with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

8. Under international law, only States possessed the capacity to conclude treaties. If it was admitted that the Treaty of Sib had been concluded freely, it should follow that if Oman had the capacity to conclude a treaty, its people were entitled to exercise their right to self-determination. Every provision of the Treaty of Sib referred to two parties and the Sultan was nowhere referred to as the Sultan of Oman and Muscat.

9. According to the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all peoples and nations possessed the right to self-determination. The people of Oman also possessed that right. The Sultan of Muscat, however, instead of recognizing the legitimate aspirations of the Omani people, had invaded Oman with the help of foreign troops, crushed the Omani people and gaoled their rightful leaders. The United Kingdom claimed that there was no Omani independence movement but it admitted sending forces to help the Sultan to crush the movement. There had been references in the House of Commons to intervention against the people of Oman, and in 1957 there had been newspaper reports of the use of jet fighters against the defenceless population. It was regrettable that at a time when the cause of independence was progressing elsewhere, the people of Oman should be suffering from foreign aggression because of their struggle for liberation.

10. Afghanistan had consistently supported the cause of peoples subjected to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, and it believed that the Omani people also deserved its support. It would vote in favour of any draft resolution which would serve the interests of the people and leaders of Oman in their struggle for independence.

11. Mr. JARGALSAIKHAN (Mongolia) said that the question of Oman not only entailed putting an end to foreign military intervention and preserving peace in the Middle East but also liberating the people of Oman from the colonialist yoke and enabling them to achieve their freedom and independence. The Omani people had every right to refuse concessions to United Kingdom companies to exploit Oman's oil resources and that refusal did not give the United Kingdom grounds for intervening by force of arms in the country's affairs. Yet that was what it had done by alleging that it was coming to the support of the Sultan of Muscat. In Oman it had encountered the entirely justified resistance of the Omani patriots.

12. As the Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated (1152nd plenary meeting) in the General Assembly, the situation in the unhappy country of Oman was still serious and the Omani people were courageously fighting to attain their independence and freedom from colonial rule. World opinion condemned the policy of brute force used by the United Kingdom in defence of the profits of the oil companies. Those

aggressive measures were an overt attempt to maintain colonial rule in the Middle East by imposing puppet régimes and sowing dissension among the peoples of the area. The Mongolian people were in sympathy with the just struggle of the Omani people and supported their lawful demands that they should be masters of their own country and its natural resources. The right of the Imamate to self-determination and independence had been confirmed by the Treaty of Sib and recognized by many States Members of the United Nations, as attested by the results of the voting in the Committee on the question of Oman at the sixteenth session of the General Assembly (306th meeting). The United Nations should not lose a single opportunity to press for the application of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples and should do everything in its power to help the people of Oman in their struggle to assert their inalienable right to independence. The armed intervention by the United Kingdom in Oman, threatening as it did the peace of the Middle East, demonstrated the correctness of the Assembly's assertion in resolution 1654 (XVI) that further delay in the application of the Declaration was a continuing source of international conflict and was creating an increasingly dangerous situation in many parts of the world which might threaten international peace and security. The other countries of the Middle East were accordingly justified in their apprehensions as expressed by the delegations of the Arab countries.

13. Despite the efforts of the United Kingdom authorities to isolate Oman from the rest of the world and conceal the true situation in that country, news of the serious clashes between the colonialist troops and the Omani patriots and the increasing strength of the national liberation movement was steadily seeping through. The Mongolian people fully shared the apprehension of the Arab countries with regard to the situation in Oman and considered that the United Nations should lose no time in taking steps to establish peace in that area in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter. It should put an immediate end to the colonialist war, cause all foreign armed forces to be withdrawn and restore normal conditions in Oman. The Omani people would then be able to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with their own wishes and those of the people of all the Arab countries.

14. Mr. JANCZEWSKI (Poland) said that Oman came under the general question of the liquidation of the remnants of colonialism. The arguments of the Arab delegations in support of the Omani case were clear and convincing. The pattern of events in Oman was one that had often been repeated in the history of the United Nations. There was a popular movement demanding independence and a colonial Power which denied the validity of their cause, calling them rebels and a handful of extremists with no popular support. Many of the representatives of the newly-independent nations had once been called rebels, yet they had won independence and also recognition from the very countries which had so vigorously denied them any international status.

15. The Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples clearly prohibited armed action or repressive measures of any kind against dependent peoples; it stipulated that they should be enabled to exercise their right to complete independence peacefully and freely and that the integrity

of their national territory should be respected. The armed intervention of the United Kingdom was therefore quite indefensible. The United Kingdom, however, averred that no armed intervention had taken place and that the Sultan's rights over Oman had merely been reasserted. That was a clear example of colonialism by proxy, whereby a subservient local ruler was kept in office in order to protect the interests of the colonial Power, or more precisely the interests of the oil monopolies. The United Nations must reject such colonialism by proxy and defend the rights of the peoples and not the vested interests of the colonial Powers. It had long been the custom of the Western Powers to treat the Arabian peninsula as a pawn in their political game, specially since the discovery of oil in that region. The historical period in which such a policy was possible was now over. The Polish delegation felt deep sympathy for the people of Oman and supported their just aspirations to national independence. It would second any draft resolution calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Oman and the restoration of that country's independence.

16. Mr. BERNSTEIN (Chile) said that although his country was situated half-way round the world from Oman he was intervening in the debate because his delegation considered that in the absence of a regional agency which could solve the problem all Member States should take an interest in it and express their views. It had accordingly followed the debate with the keenest interest and sought as much information as it could obtain from the available documents. Had it been able to reach a satisfactory conclusion it might have found it sufficient to make known its views simply by its vote. The fact was, however, that the longer the debate went on the more difficult it became to take a position. For that reason his delegation could not express an opinion but only its perplexity with regard to a number of questions which remained unanswered. Perhaps the difficulty lay not so much in the complicated nature of the issue as in the absence of information from sources other than the Arab States and the United Kingdom. Both these sources were familiar with the area and with the whole question, yet their accounts of it were contradictory in every respect. As a result his delegation found that there were at least eight questions to which it did not have a clear answer.

17. First of all, since the matter was of direct concern to the Sultan of Muscat and he had objected to what he had described as intervention (A/5284) by the Assembly in the domestic affairs of his country, it was puzzling that he had not sent a representative to the Assembly to defend his case. The Chilean delegation did not know whether that was because the Sultan, as had been suggested, was not independent, because he sought thus to emphasize his displeasure at the Assembly's action or because he wished to give complete freedom of action to his very capable and efficient defenders.

18. Secondly, there was the question whether Talib bin Ali Al-Hanai was the representative of Oman, as the delegations of the Arab States maintained, or simply a rebel, as claimed by the United Kingdom delegation. Not having satisfied itself as to the correct answer to that question, his delegation had abstained when the vote had been taken (351st meeting) on the request for a hearing contained in document A/SPC/73, for the question was a very delicate one: if Talib bin Ali Al-Hanai was in fact a rebel, a vote in favour of

granting him a hearing would set a very dangerous precedent.

19. The third question was whether Oman and Muscat constituted a single State or were two separate entities.

20. Fourthly, it was not clear whether it was the principle of self-determination or the dismemberment of a sovereign State that was at issue: if the former, his delegation could not but support that principle, as it did whenever it was raised in any part of the world; if the latter, he would fully endorse the opinion of the representative of India (1141st plenary meeting) as recalled by the United Kingdom (353rd meeting) representative at an earlier meeting to the effect that in a world which was striving for political and economic unity secessionism could not be encouraged.

21. Fifthly, it must be asked whether the Treaty of Sib was really an international treaty between two sovereign independent States or was simply an agreement between the Government of the Sultan and Omani tribal chiefs concerning the solution of certain internal matters. He had read the text very carefully and found that in some respects it had the characteristics of an international treaty but in others it would appear to be simply an internal agreement. In any case, it was his impression that the importance of the Treaty of Sib lay not so much in its text or scope as in the circumstances in which it had been concluded. For example, it was important to know whether the two parties to the Treaty had been sovereign at the time it was signed.

22. The sixth question related to the charge of intervention by the United Kingdom in the domestic affairs of Oman, or of Muscat and Oman, in 1957. The United Kingdom representative maintained (353rd meeting) that British troops had been introduced into Oman in that year at the express request of the Sultan for the purpose of putting down a rebellion fomented from outside the Sultanate. The question was therefore to determine whether there had actually been foreign intervention in the territory of the Sultanate prior to the admitted introduction of United Kingdom troops. In any case, he wished to make clear his Government's opposition to intervention even in response to a request by a Government faced with the task of putting down an internal rebellion. Although the Charter did not prohibit such intervention, international law was not, to his knowledge, as liberal in that respect as the United Kingdom delegation had maintained.

23. The seventh question was whether it was true that United Kingdom troops were still in Oman at the present time.

24. Finally, the situation actually prevailing in Oman had still to be ascertained: the Committee did not know for sure whether there was oppression in Oman and the inhabitants were fighting against foreign troops, as maintained by the delegations of the Arab States, or whether peace prevailed in the country, as the United Kingdom representative insisted.

25. If his delegation had been convinced that the problem was a colonial one it would have been prepared to vote in favour of any draft resolution that would further the cause of the people not only of Oman but of Muscat, for both would have the right to freedom. If it had been convinced that there was armed intervention in Oman it would have condemned it, whether that intervention had been committed by the

United Kingdom or any other country. If, on the other hand, it had been convinced that the issue was not self-determination but the dismemberment of an independent State, it would have been opposed to any draft resolution aimed at furthering that process. The fact was, however, that in the light of the contradictory statements which had been put before the Committee his delegation was unable to take a stand. There was always, of course, the possibility of taking a position based on political considerations, but when questions of colonialism, self-determination or non-intervention were involved, his delegation could not in good conscience be guided simply by a political criterion. He could not commit his country to one position or another without having the indispensable minimum of background information and if such information was not forthcoming his delegation would be obliged to abstain when the matter was put to a vote. Yet it was not by abstaining that delegations could best fulfil their obligations as Members of the United Nations; for that reason he asked if it might not be possible to find a means of obtaining full and objective information about what was happening in Muscat and Oman and about the attitude of the inhabitants of those Territories—not of the nobles and tribal chiefs but of the people themselves. In that way the Committee might be in a much better position to take a decision at the next session than was now the case. It was not for a country such as his, situated as it was so far from the scene, to make any specific proposals with regard to the situation, but perhaps the ideas he had suggested would provide food for thought on the basis of which other delegations could propose a solution.

26. Mr. HORVATH (Hungary) remarked that there might be more typical issues arising out of British colonial policies but the question of Oman was clearly part of the struggle for the complete liquidation of the colonial system. Even if the oil resources of the territory had been secured by means of treaties, that was no less a manifestation of colonial expansion since the United Kingdom had wielded sufficient political influence over local organs to conclude such treaties without difficulty. It was hard, however, to accept the United Kingdom's contention that any designs on the oil resources of the territory were to be attributed not to the British but to a third party. If that were so, it would imply that the United Kingdom wished to forestall the independence of Oman merely for the sake of the Sultan—a view unlikely to be shared by British capital.

27. There could be no doubt that the people of Oman had the right to be independent—and to be independent of the United Kingdom, since their freedom was not threatened from any other quarter. Nor could the secessionist moves in Katange be compared with Omani aspirations since the obstacles to Congolese unity were of a very different character. Furthermore, there was ample proof that the British had committed aggression against the people of Oman in order to secure economic advantages, thereby endangering the peace of the whole Middle East. The United Nations must clearly refuse to support a colonial Power in such designs, even if that Power posed as a protector. For the people of Oman would surely find better protection in independence.

28. The Hungarian representative agreed with the Arab representative that had sponsored the item (A/5149), that the matter called for discussion. Such discussion was necessary because of the increasingly

negative attitude of the United Kingdom, which continued to pursue its aggressive policies. The United Kingdom representative had suggested that it would be preferable "if we addressed ourselves to the present and to the future". In that, the Hungarian delegation fully concurred, for it was precisely the present age, which was marked by the disintegration of the colonial system, that made it possible for the future of Oman to be secured—but for the people of Oman themselves, and not for British colonial interests. It was therefore to be hoped that the majority of Member States would support the people of Oman.

29. Mr. ANDONI (Albania) observed that for more than seven years, the United Kingdom had been waging a relentless war against the valiant people of Oman. Previous speakers had made it quite clear that the struggle of the Omani people against British intervention constituted a war of national liberation. It was also certain that the noble efforts of the Omani people to gain their rights, their independence and their sovereignty would be crowned with success. The cause of United Kingdom imperialism, on the other hand, was ignoble, for it was designed to protect the interests of British oil monopolies and to exploit the strategic position of Oman in the Middle East. The various pretexts used by the United Kingdom to justify its aggression were quite unconvincing for, whatever the circumstances, there could be no justification for attacking a defenceless people. By so doing, the United Kingdom had violated the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and was endangering world peace and security. It therefore deserved to be condemned by the United Nations. It would also be noted that the question of Oman was being discussed at a time when the General Assembly was also dealing with the question of the liquidation of the colonialist system. The struggle of the Omani people for their independence must therefore be viewed as part of the struggle of all colonial people to rid themselves of colonialist oppression. The Albanian people and Government had followed with great concern the situation in Oman, resulting from the aggression of a great Power against the independence, sovereignty and the very existence of a smaller State. It was the duty of the General Assembly to give serious consideration to the question of Oman, to condemn the aggressive acts of the United Kingdom and to take the necessary steps to assist the people of Oman to assert their rights to independence, sovereignty and freedom. The Albanian delegation was prepared to support any draft resolution to that effect.

30. Mr. MAURTUA (Peru) said that his delegation always adopted a conciliatory position in such discussions, in a firm belief in the need for peaceful and amicable solutions. A further reason was the fact that it enjoyed friendly relations with the parties directly concerned.

31. The representative of the United Kingdom had stated (353rd meeting) that the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman constituted an independent State which was not occupied, since United Kingdom troops were there at the request of that State. Such forms of intervention were certainly not prohibited by the United Nations Charter. Another important factor to determine was the extent of the rebel movement in Oman. If the rebel forces controlled any part of the territory, they would automatically acquire a status of their own.

32. In order to take any action in the question of Oman, the Committee needed a minimum knowledge of the facts. In view of the many doubts and uncertainties, therefore, it should be ascertained, firstly whether the territory was at present occupied by foreign troops; secondly, whether Muscat and Oman constituted a single territorial and political entity and, lastly, whether the rebel forces controlled any part of that territory and what were their aims. If light were thrown on those questions it should be possible to determine whether the issue was one of self-determination or of secession. In order to clarify those points, the Committee might consider appointing a United Nations Commission or Commissioner to inquire into the question.

33. The CHAIRMAN, inquired if the representative of Peru wished to submit a specific proposal under rule 121 of the rules of procedure.

34. Mr. MAURTUA (Peru) explained that he had merely been prompted by the points raised by the representative of Chile to put forward a few suggestions for the consideration of the Committee. His delegation did not feel sufficiently acquainted with the matter to submit concrete proposals.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.