

# United Nations GENERAL ASSEMBLY

EIGHTEENTH SESSION

Official Records



FOURTH COMMITTEE, 1502<sup>nd</sup>  
MEETING

Thursday, 5 December 1963,  
at 10.55 a.m.

NEW YORK

## CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 78:</i>	
<i>Question of Oman (continued)</i>	
<i>General debate (continued) . . . . .</i>	487
<i>Chairman: Mr. ACHKAR Marof (Guinea).</i>	

## AGENDA ITEM 78

Question of Oman (A/5492 and Add.1, A/5562, A/C.4/604 and Add.1 and 2, A/C.4/619) (*continued*)

### GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. VEJVODA (Czechoslovakia) considered that the question of Oman, which had for years attracted the interest of world opinion, deserved the full attention of the United Nations. Having adopted the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, the United Nations, now that struggles for national liberation had gained universal respect, could not stand idly by while the people of Oman were denied their right to freedom and independence. The question of liquidating the remnants of the colonial system had become extremely pressing, since the very existence of colonialism endangered the peaceful and equitable arrangement of the world. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) applied fully to Oman and continued demonstrations of colonial aggression in that territory could not, therefore, be tolerated.

2. The Czechoslovak delegation had always given its support to the Omani people's struggle, which it considered absolutely justified. That struggle could not be viewed in isolation from world developments. The Arab countries had embarked upon the road of their own free development, and would not agree to leave any part of the Arabian peninsula under the colonial rule of the United Kingdom. The representative of Yemen had rightly noted, at the 1217th plenary meeting, that the United Kingdom had dominated several parts of the Arab homeland for too long and was lagging behind in recognizing the many developments which had occurred in all fields in the matter of relations among nations.

3. It was well known that the entire Arabian peninsula had always attracted the attention of imperialists, because of its abundant natural resources. The sole motive for United Kingdom activities in Oman was the defence of the economic interests of the British oil companies. The United Kingdom representative had always tried to present the position as if his country had no responsibility for events in Oman and as if it had always acted at the request of the Sultan of Muscat. Such statements, however, could not relieve the United Kingdom of its responsibility, for it was well known that the Sultan had been a puppet in the hands of the British, who were giving him financial and military aid and using his person as an excuse for their own interference. In reality, the British oil companies were at the bottom of United Kingdom policy

—as was shown, for instance, by the fact that the British Petroleum Company had an interest in Petroleum Development (Oman) Ltd., which in 1954 had illegally received concessions for the territory of Oman from the Sultan.

4. Apart from its efforts to obtain control of the natural resources of the territory, the United Kingdom was trying to continue its domination of Oman, which served it as a strategic base in the Arabian peninsula, because Oman was close to the Bahrain, which was an important oil centre. Finally, the fight against the people of Oman was also motivated by the fact that they were linked by strong feelings of solidarity to the peoples of the other Arab countries.

5. Those were the reasons which impelled the United Kingdom to intervene in Oman in disregard of the attitude of the United Nations. Powerful military forces under British officers were maintained in the territory—not for the purpose of military exercises, as had been stated, but in order to help in the fight against the patriots of Oman.

6. The discussion in the Fourth Committee had already thrown light on the situation in Oman by proving that there was in that region a very clear manifestation of colonialism and imperialism. The debate had also shown that the ideals of justice, freedom and independence were deeply rooted in the people of Oman, who had never recognized any foreign rule and who were continuing their struggle with the moral support of all peace-loving and justice-loving nations.

7. In his delegation's view, the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (A/5562) must be considered in the light of the information submitted to the Committee and of the fact that the United Nations mission which had visited Oman had been unable, despite its efforts, to fulfil its task in a satisfactory manner. The failure of the mission resulted, above all, from the fact that the voices of those fighting for freedom and independence had not been heard. That was why it had not been possible to reveal the reasons for the struggle or the obstacles standing in its way.

8. The Czechoslovak delegation believed that the General Assembly, when considering the question of Oman, should reaffirm the principles contained in resolution 1514 (XV) and request of all Member States their assistance in its implementation. It was necessary not only to condemn once again the activities of the United Kingdom in Oman as being incompatible with General Assembly resolutions on colonialism, but also to make the United Kingdom realize that such resolutions applied to the territory of Oman. The Czechoslovak delegation resolutely supported the demand, voiced by the Omani people and by other Arab States, that British colonial domination in Oman should be ended immediately and that the people of Oman should be given the right to a free and independent development.

9. Mr. MEHR (Afghanistan) said that his delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for having sent a fact-finding mission to Muscat and Oman, and regarded the report of the Special Representative (A/5562) as the first source of valuable information on the situation in Oman. Since Oman had for centuries been an independent and sovereign State, and since it was British colonialism which had destroyed the freedom of that country, his delegation took the view that the General Assembly had to deal with a colonial issue under the provisions of resolution 1514 (XV).

10. Some delegations had tried to prove that the Sultan of Muscat was the only legal ruler of Muscat and Oman. If that were so, it would be difficult to imagine why, in 1920, that ruler should have concluded a treaty with his own subjects. The capacity to conclude treaties was possessed only by sovereign States, and if Oman had been able to conclude the Treaty of Sib with the Sultan, it must be admitted that the territory had had sovereignty at that time. Since the independence of Oman was thus confirmed, the question of Oman should now be studied purely as a matter of colonialism.

11. Oman had been governed for more than 1,000 years under the system of the Imamate, which was one of the earliest types of democracy in that part of the world. It was the military power of colonialism which had ended that system and placed the people of Oman under the yoke of the Sultan of Muscat because they had refused to recognize oil concessions granted against their will. The question should therefore be considered on the basis of the right of peoples to self-determination.

12. At the two preceding sessions of the General Assembly, the Special Political Committee had adopted two draft resolutions<sup>1/</sup> calling for recognition of the right of the people of Oman to self-determination and for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Oman. His delegation had always given its full support to peoples struggling against alien domination, and would support any draft resolution which would serve the interest of the people of Oman in their just fight for freedom and independence.

13. Mr. GAZDIK (Hungary) said that the debate had introduced new factors which revealed the true nature of the question of Oman and proved that the Committee would be justified in demanding that the right of the Omani people to self-determination be recognized. It was clear from the petitioners' statements and from the speech of the Syrian representative that there was a definite question at issue and that it should be discussed by the Fourth Committee.

14. The fundamental question for the Committee to examine was that of the sovereignty and independence of the so-called Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. It was worth recalling that according to L. Oppenheim, the expert in international law, one of the characteristics of an independent and sovereign country was the existence in that country of a government elected by the representatives of the people. An independent country should not be dependent on any external authority; its mineral resources should belong to the State, and only the Government should be entitled to dispose of those resources. Finally, the conclusion

of international agreements was one of the prerogatives of a sovereign State.

15. From an examination of the agreements signed between the United Kingdom and the Sultan of Muscat, it could be seen that they were all of an essentially restrictive character. Thus the 1890 agreement had imposed on the Sultan a number of obligations, including that of accepting the advice of the British Government—thereby tying his hands and depriving him of some of the fundamental attributes of sovereignty. Under the agreement of 1898, the rights and privileges of the United Kingdom had further increased whilst those of the Sultan had diminished. In 1891, the Sultan had agreed that his territories should be occupied by British troops only. In the agreement of 1922 it had been stipulated that the Sultan would not himself exploit the oil deposits in his territory and would not authorize their exploitation without prior permission from the British Agent. Finally, under the terms of the 1951 Treaty, United Kingdom nationals enjoyed extraterritorial rights in the Sultanate and the Sultan was bound to take all political decisions in accordance with the advice tendered to him by his allies and friends.

16. As matters now stood, all the oil concessions were in the hands of foreign companies; the Sultan could not take any decisions in regard to their exploitation, and was therefore unable to exercise one of his inalienable rights.

17. As for the composition of the Government of the Sultanate—which should consist only of Omanis—it was known that the Minister of Defence, Brigadier Wakefield, was a British subject. It had been claimed that he had been appointed the Sultan's Minister of Defence in a purely private capacity, and that he took his orders not from the United Kingdom Government but from the Sultan alone. The Hungarian delegation did not think it normal that a country should have a foreigner as its Minister of Defence. A similar situation existed in the case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, two key posts were in the hands of British subjects and as, under the 1951 Treaty, British subjects enjoyed extraterritorial rights, certain members of the Omani Government were outside the Sultan's control. Comment on such a state of affairs was superfluous. Although Oman differed somewhat from the conventional colonies, it was none the less a regular colonial territory, since the Sultan could not take independent decisions in important matters.

18. It had also been stated that slavery continued to exist in Muscat—not a surprising fact, since colonialism and the slave trade had always gone hand in hand. In reality, no argument could be adduced to prove that the Committee was not competent to consider the question of Oman.

19. It had been shown during the debate that Imam Ghalib bin Ali had been very popular in the country, and it had been indicated that he had intended to introduce free education and health services in Oman. An abortive attempt had been made in 1955 to overthrow him, and in 1957, after two years of war during which the national liberation movement had been crushed, thanks only to United Kingdom aid and the modern weapons supplied to the Sultan's supporters, he had been obliged to leave his country. The United Nations should seek, by all means in its power, to restore the Imamate in the territory; the Imamate was the regime accepted by the people, who ought to receive back their right of self-determination.

<sup>1/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixteenth Session Annexes, agenda item 23, document A/5010, para. 10; and *ibid.*, Seventeenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 79, document A/5325, para. 8.

20. For those reasons the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was competent to study the question of Oman and report on it to the General Assembly. His delegation would support, on that point, the proposal of the Arab countries' representatives.

21. Mr. McCARTHY (Australia) said that his delegation approached with diffidence a question concerning a remote and little-known country about which it had not much detailed information. The dispute in large measure had its origin in a distant past, and his delegation did not think that the question could be unravelled in the circumstances in which the Committee was placed and in the time at its disposal.

22. Important statements had been made by the two petitioners whom the Committee had heard (1495th-1498th meetings) and by representatives of certain Arab States, whose concern over the problem of Oman was quite understandable. The United Kingdom representative had felt compelled to speak, not because he believed his Government to be responsible but because the United Kingdom had been named a party to the dispute by other Member States which had brought the matter before the United Nations. It had become apparent from the various speeches that the United Kingdom and the Arab States held opposite positions, and that the petitioners, who had not been in the area for some years, had taken the side of the Arab States.

23. In those circumstances, it was difficult to form a judgement, all the more so in that the fact that the dispute had been before the United Nations for some time could in itself be a cause of confusion; certain vital aspects of the question might well have changed, gaining or losing in importance in the meantime. It was therefore necessary to make a deliberate effort of adjustment, if the matter was to be judged impartially.

24. His delegation believed that there had been two important new developments. Firstly, the question of Oman had for the first time appeared on the agenda of the Fourth Committee, which was concerned with the problems inherent in the ending of colonialism. The Committee must therefore determine whether the question of Muscat and Oman was in fact a colonial question. Secondly, the United Nations had called upon an independent and impartial observer, having some experience of the area, to go on a mission to Oman and report his findings. The Australian delegation believed that the commissioning of Mr. de Ribbing by the Secretary-General had been very wise and that the suggestion to that end made by a number of delegations who honestly sought an answer to the problem of Muscat and Oman, had been very judicious. None of the views which the Committee had heard, either from the United Kingdom or from the Arab States or the petitioners, could be regarded as conclusive.

25. In the debates on other agenda items, most members of the Committee had acknowledged the value of a United Nations presence in a particular area. In his delegation's view, just as an African personality had emerged in recent years, so too had a United Nations personality; it was above considerations of race, religion or political ideology, and was derived from the principles written into the United Nations Charter. The concrete symbols of that personality had taken different forms, e.g., that of missions similar to Mr. de Ribbing's mission. For that reason his dele-

gation had been troubled by the reactions of some delegations to Mr. de Ribbing's report (A/5562).

26. In accordance with a decision of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had sent a representative to discover, on the spot, whether certain allegations were or were not well founded. Mr. de Ribbing's mission had therefore been to try to establish the facts in Oman, and that was what he had rightly endeavoured to do. In his assessment, Mr. de Ribbing had honestly stated what he had been unable to do, in regard both to matters which he considered to be beyond his competence and to action which it had not been possible for him to take. Thus he had been unable to ascertain the state or the numbers of whatever political prisoners there might have been in the Sultan's prisons, or to study the original text of the Treaty of Sib. He had not been able to travel throughout the length and breadth of the country, or speak to every person in it. But from what he had been able to accomplish during his visit to Oman, he had concluded that there was now peace in Oman; that the situation now prevailing was a relief to many of the people; that the general view was that there was no political oppression in Oman, although there had been occasional careful and cautious expressions of a certain amount of discontent and criticism; that the security situation was well under control; and that the areas visited by the mission were still very much ruled in the traditional way, with political power to a great extent in the hands of tribal chiefs, notables and religious leaders, although the political power of the central Government was growing.

27. The Australian delegation emphasized those conclusions because they seemed fundamental to the problem the Committee was studying, namely, the problem of colonialism and self-determination. In the Australian view, colonialism implied, *inter alia*, the imposition of alien government. However, despite some dubious aspects of the situation in Muscat and Oman over the last two centuries, and despite the existence of what were evidently special arrangements between the United Kingdom Government and the Sultan, a colonial situation, recognizable as such, did not exist. What did exist, and had existed for a long time, was a series of arrangements between the Sultan and the United Kingdom which the parties had considered to be of mutual advantage. Such arrangements were not necessarily sinister in themselves. Furthermore, the Sultan had also, over those years, concluded with other independent Powers arrangements which he had considered to be of benefit.

28. The question of self-determination presented as many, or more, difficulties. Mr. de Ribbing had observed in his report that the people of Oman were of the same racial stock, used the same language and practised the same religion; that Oman had witnessed a series of struggles for power between tribes of the interior and the Sultans of Muscat; that during those struggles the United Kingdom had on a number of occasions given support to the Sultan; and that, during long periods in the history of Oman, no Imam had functioned. His delegation was mindful of the fact that the present Government of Oman might not wholly conform to the pattern of self-determination, and that in certain other respects it might be open to criticism. Nevertheless, the form of government did not necessarily bear on the status of a territory. There was, indeed, no one form of independence or democratic government, and no single form for the expression of self-determination. Moreover, self-de-

termination must end at some point—where national unity and integrity were jeopardized by separatist tendencies. Those were a few of the considerations which his delegation had borne in mind in considering the question before the Committee.

29. Some had suggested that a screen had been thrown around Muscat and Oman in order to conceal the truth. His delegation did not believe that if war and oppression had been raging in Oman for the past year or two, it would have been possible to hide that fact from the British public, Press and Parliament, and from the world at large. Nor did it think that the Sultan and the United Kingdom could have concealed such a situation from a man of Mr. de Ribbing's calibre.

30. While the last 200 years in Muscat and Oman had been years of intrigue, armed struggle and struggles for power, there was now a large measure of peace and security. That was the conclusion reached by Mr. de Ribbing, and the Australian delegation accepted it in preference to other statements, because Mr. de Ribbing, apart from the fact that he belonged to no party to the dispute, had constituted the United Nations presence and had visited Muscat and Oman more recently than anyone else who had spoken to the Committee. It should not be forgotten that security and order had very great value, and where they existed efforts should be made to maintain them. They were good in themselves, and out of them would surely come progress towards a better future.

31. As far as colonialism was concerned, while it certainly existed in many forms, care must be taken not to affix that label to any situation which might be troublesome and which might involve relationships of particular kinds between particular groups of people. Indiscriminate use of the label might weaken the anti-colonialist movement, which should be directed against colonialism in its most unjust and most pervasive forms. By insisting on speaking of colonialism in all border-line cases, the Committee might allow itself to be drawn further than most of its members would wish to go.

32. His delegation did not, therefore, feel that the question of Oman should be referred to the Special Committee. That would constitute prejudgement of the situation as a "colonial" one, since the Special Committee derived its existence from General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Australia was a member of the Special Committee and, from experience of the latter, considered that if the peculiar factors present in the case of Muscat and Oman made of it a colonial situation, the Special Committee would have to extend the range of its investigations to many other parts of the world—in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where analogous situations existed.

33. His delegation hoped that, in the words used by Mr. de Ribbing in paragraph 173 of his report, "an amicable and peaceful solution between the parties concerned may be found through conciliation and negotiation"; and it believed, with Mr. de Ribbing, that the parties could contribute to that end by undertaking to refrain from any action which might further aggravate the situation.

34. Mr. BERNSTEIN (Chile) said that his Government attached great importance to the question of Oman, although it had no interests in the area of Oman or in the Arabian Peninsula. Chile's sole desire was that the inhabitants of the region might enjoy independence, peace and prosperity. His country had the most friend-

ly relations with the Arab countries which had requested the inclusion of the item on the agenda and with the United Kingdom; it was therefore able to approach the problem with complete impartiality.

35. It was difficult to form a judgement on such a controversial question in the absence of adequate information. That was why at the previous session his delegation had stressed in the Special Political Committee (355th meeting) the need for fully reliable information. It was a source of satisfaction to the Chilean delegation that the mission entrusted to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had perhaps been the result of its pleas.

36. He was glad that the mission had been entrusted to Mr. de Ribbing, in whom the Chilean Government had full confidence and whose nationality was a guarantee of neutrality and independence. His report (A/5562) did not claim to be exhaustive, but it was honest and objective and its conclusions were moderate. As was always the case, the report did not satisfy everyone. It had been criticized as imprecise and vague. That was perhaps because its preparation was the result of discussions that had taken place in the Special Political Committee, where the question had been approached from a different standpoint. In that body, as also in the Security Council and the General Assembly, the question of Oman had been regarded as an international problem concerning aggression by one State—Muscat—against another State—Oman—and conciliation of the parties by peaceful means had been sought. Now, however, it was not a matter of aggression but of colonialism and what was sought was the end of colonialism not only in Oman but also in Muscat. The memorandum (A/C.4/604/Add.1) submitted by Mr. Edwards, the Chairman of the Committee for the Rights of Oman, stated that Muscat was part of the Omani Imamate and that if its inhabitants could choose their own future they would reject the Sultan by an overwhelming majority and support the Imam Ghalib. The petitioners had confirmed that view. Until last year, Muscat had been regarded as the oppressor from which Oman should be liberated; what was now sought was self-determination and perhaps the unification of the two territories. That change in the aspect of the problem perhaps explained some of the omissions in the report and the confusion felt by some delegations.

37. He wished to raise an important question in connexion with the United Kingdom intervention in 1957. The representative of the United Kingdom argued that the intervention had been requested by the Sultan of Muscat and Oman and had therefore been legitimate, since the action had been agreed to by two sovereign States. As the representative of a Latin American State, he could not accept that argument. There was a principle of international law according to which no State had the right to intervene directly or indirectly, for whatever reason, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. In 1936, when it had been announced that a Latin American Government would request foreign assistance in overcoming domestic difficulties, Chile had protested against such action and had declared itself determined to do everything in its power to prevent the higher interests of the American Republics from being compromised in that way.

38. In view of the principle of non-intervention, the question of Oman should be examined with great caution. He considered it lamentable that the Security Council had taken no action in 1957, at the time of the armed intervention by the United Kingdom in affairs

which the United Kingdom itself regarded as domestic affairs of the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. While it was true that opinions differed on whether or not the intervention was still going on, Mr. de Ribbing's report did not speak of a British intervention but of a kind of British presence.

39. There were some strange circumstances surrounding the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, or at least the Sultan. It was curious that the latter should refuse to produce the only existing copy of the Treaty of Sib, which was in his possession, and that at the same time he should deny its validity. It was curious that, on the one hand, he should have great confidence in the British and that, on the other, he should not have been convinced by them of the need to emerge from his splendid isolation and place his trust in the United Nations.

40. If he was asked to state honestly what he thought of that distant land, he would say—somewhat influenced by English literature—that there was something rotten in the State of Muscat and Oman. Perhaps what he smelt was oil—that oil which usually smelt so foul when it was in the hands of foreign companies but so pleasant when, as in the case of Chile, it belonged to the sovereign State.

41. Whether it was viewed as an international problem, as a domestic problem or as a colonial problem, the question of Oman remained obscure. His delegation had not reached a definite opinion but it felt that Mr. de Ribbing's report had not exhausted the subject and that the Secretary-General should make more information available, by whatever means he saw fit, approaching the problem this time from the colonialist angle. The Chilean delegation had full confidence in the Secretary-General in that matter.

42. Mr. HOUAISS (Brazil), supported by Miss BROOKS (Liberia), requested that the full text of the Chilean representative's statement should be reproduced as an official document of the Committee.

*It was so decided.<sup>2/</sup>*

43. Mr. SOKOLOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) recalled that the question of Oman had been on the General Assembly's agenda for a number of years. His delegation had no doubt that the question was bound up with the elimination of colonialism in all its forms. The issue was whether the people of Oman did or did not have a right to self-determination and independence. The example of Oman showed once again how the colonial Powers—in the present instance, the United Kingdom—tried to prevent the implementation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). To suppress a subjugated population struggling for its independence, the United Kingdom was having recourse to all possible means, including colonial war—for it was a veritable colonial war that had been taking place in Oman for the past few years. The United Kingdom was trying to crush the national liberation movement. It was using the most modern weapons against an unarmed population and poorly equipped freedom fighters. Despite its military superiority, however, the British army had not succeeded in crushing the fierce resistance of the Omanis.

44. The purpose of the British aggression and military activities was to defend the Western monopolies which had been attracted to Oman by the hope of

making enormous profits from the exploitation of petroleum. Mr. Noel-Baker, a member of the United Kingdom Parliament, had rightly stated on 30 July 1959, in the House of Commons, that it was of course because of oil that military operations had been undertaken in Oman, and the history of the Oman question demonstrated clearly that it was to defend the interests of the monopolies that the United Kingdom had intervened. In 1937 the present Sultan had granted to a United Kingdom subsidiary of the powerful Iraq Petroleum Company concessions for oil prospecting and exploitation in Muscat and Oman. But that agreement had been concluded without the approval of the Imam, who was the legitimate sovereign of Oman. When the Imam, defending his country's sovereignty, had refused to recognize that illegal agreement, the British colonialists had invaded Oman in 1955. They had expelled the Imam, replacing him by a puppet régime, and had unleashed a colonial war.

45. The fact that a war was taking place in the territory was denied by the United Kingdom representatives, who claimed every year that peace and order reigned in the country and that the population was satisfied with the present régime. According to the United Kingdom, the United Nations had no reason to consider the question of Oman. The United Kingdom was thus trying to divert the attention of world opinion, to create a conspiracy of silence and to conceal what was happening in the territory. However, despite its efforts and those of the puppet Sultan, it was difficult to conceal the crimes committed. The information given by the petitioners had shown that the situation in Oman was not as stable as the United Kingdom claimed.

46. What most surprised his delegation was not so much the United Kingdom's assertions as the fact that they seemed to be reproduced in the report by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (A/5562). For instance, it was stated in paragraph 95 of the report that the mission had been unable to observe any evidence of active fighting in the area; and, in paragraph 98, that the Sultan and the Minister of the Interior had informed the mission that the situation recently had been quiet and peaceful. Those conclusions seemed to have been accepted by some delegations as a serious argument in defence of the United Kingdom position. Yet they represented nothing more than the opinion of the Sultan and the British authorities, for the Omani population and the Imam's representatives had not been able to state their views.

47. He wondered whether it had been necessary to send a mission to Oman to hear once again the arguments so long rehearsed by the United Kingdom. His delegation recognized that the Secretary-General's representative had found himself in a touchy situation. Being the Sultan's guest, he had had to content himself with whatever the latter had chosen to show or tell him, at the behest of his British advisers. The mission had thus not been in a position to produce a complete report, giving an exact picture of the situation. The reservations and criticisms, particularly those which appeared in the Imam's letter to the Secretary-General (A/5562, annex VI) and in the statements of a number of delegations, were thus fully justified.

48. In his delegation's view, the United Nations must therefore take immediate steps, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), to satisfy the legitimate claims of the population. The United Nations must recognize the right of the people of Oman to self-determination and independence, and demand an im-

<sup>2/</sup> See A/C.4/631.



mediate end to the colonial war and the withdrawal of United Kingdom troops. If those claims were met and if foreign intervention ceased, the people of Oman would be able to live as they wished. The United Nations must help them in their just struggle for freedom. His delegation wished to express its sympathy with the people of Oman, and would support any resolution corresponding to their legitimate aspirations.

49. Mr. ROBERTS (New Zealand) said that his delegation was speaking for the first time on the question of Oman because the Committee had to settle the crucial issue as to whether the question was a colonial one, and because first-hand information on Oman was now available for the first time.

50. His delegation was surprised to find that an item which had been treated for two years as a "political" question should now be referred to the Fourth Committee. He hoped that that decision would not be regarded as a precedent, for it would be damaging to the main work of the Fourth Committee, which was to assist in the implementation of the Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, if items extraneous to its primary purpose came to be debated there.

51. His delegation was glad at last to have some impartial information on Oman, thanks to the Secretary-General's decision to send a personal representative to study the situation on the spot. Statements made in the past by the United Kingdom delegation on the one hand and by the delegations of Arab countries on the other must of necessity be regarded as coming from interested parties. His delegation thanked Mr. de Ribbing for having undertaken what must have been a difficult mission and for submitting such a valuable report, and the Swedish Government for having made Mr. de Ribbing's services available to the United Nations.

52. The report of the Secretary-General's representative (A/5562) was a model of impartiality. In his letter transmitting the report, Mr. de Ribbing himself had stated that he had tried "to approach these questions with the utmost care, but a thorough evaluation of them would require much more time and experience than the mission had at its disposal". The mission seemed to have looked very carefully at the essential facts of the present situation, and in particular, according to paragraph 136, at "the most significant elements of the conflict which had been brought before the United Nations". As a result, some of its comments were no doubt displeasing to the interested parties. For example, the report noted that the Sultan had not permitted the mission to visit the prison, and had not given the mission official information on the number of political prisoners being held there; it also noted the unhappiness of tribesmen in the mountain village of Sayk, in the Jabal al Akdhar region. With regard to British influence, the report noted the exact number of British officers and men serving in the Sultan's army and air force; it also noted the military assistance which the United Kingdom Government had from time to time given the Sultan in his struggle with the tribes of the interior. Regarding the Imam, his brother and Sheikh Suleiman, it was stated in paragraph 135 that many of the persons interviewed by the mission had stated that they would not like to see them return "because they were trouble-makers"; others, however, had commented that they would not object to a return of those persons, provided that they "made their peace with the Sultan".

53. The report made it clear, in paragraph 86, that the mission "requested and obtained complete freedom of movement", and consequently the greatest weight should be attached to its conclusions about conditions in the country. Those questioned by Mr. de Ribbing had replied without exception that "there had been no fighting recently" (para. 95); the mission itself "did not encounter any incident, nor did it notice any act of sabotage during its visit" (para. 96) and it had not seen any sign "of 'rebel' activity" or "any evidence of areas not under the active control of the Sultan or his Government" (para. 100). Those statements refuted the assertion by one of the petitioners, Mr. Faris Glubb, that there was a well-equipped liberation army in Oman. The New Zealand delegation would have preferred it if the petitioner, who had spoken not as an eyewitness but as a scholar, had tried to see both sides of the question, instead of having nothing but good to say of the Imam and nothing but bad of the Sultan. It was quite clear from Mr. de Ribbing's report that the Sultan was in control of the whole area of Muscat and Oman for, according to paragraph 129 even in places where, in a cautious manner, discontent and reservations were expressed, it was frankly admitted that the present Power was concentrated in the hands of the Sultan.

54. It was also apparent from the report that the relationship between the Sultanate and the United Kingdom was not a colonial one. It was the Sultan who made the policy for his country, and although his administration seemed to be largely autocratic, he was in fact the ruler and not the ruled. The international status of the Sultanate was confirmed by the treaties it had concluded with several countries and by the fact that, as the United States representative had pointed out at the previous meeting, the United States conducted relations with the Sultanate directly and not through the United Kingdom Government.

55. The decision facing the Committee would undoubtedly have a profound effect on the peace and well-being of the people of the country, who, as stated in paragraph 172 (a) of the report, were all of the same racial stock, used the same language and practised the same religion.

56. He hoped that the Committee would not take any action which might increase the existing bitterness. It should encourage the parties to negotiate so that Oman, which was admittedly an under-developed country, could build itself up, with international assistance, into a united State of true international stature.

57. Mr. MONGONO (Nigeria) said that the item under discussion was highly controversial. Having studied carefully the report by the Secretary-General's personal representative (A/5562) and the memorandum of the Committee for the Rights of Oman (A/C.4/604/Add.1) and having listened to statements by several delegations and by petitioners, he thought it was clear that things were not what they should be in Oman, although it was far from clear who was responsible for that state of affairs.

58. Within the limitations of its terms of reference, Mr. de Ribbing's mission had done well. However, it was regrettable that Mr. de Ribbing had not been able to have all the available evidence produced. For instance, the Sultan of Oman had refused to show him a copy of a document of fundamental importance to the inquiry, and consequently the Committee did not have all the information essential to a proper consideration of the subject. He drew attention to paragraph 149 of Mr. de Ribbing's report, which stated that "a judgement

on the question of which interpretation of the Treaty (Agreement) of Sib is correct falls outside the specific terms of reference of the mission" and that "an authentic text should be the basis for a careful study, which is essential before any evaluation on this point can be made". Furthermore, the small number of people interviewed by the Secretary-General's representative in his opinion fell short of a true cross-section of the community in Oman; in fact, it was stated in paragraph 90 of the report that the mission itself was aware that its observation could not be fully comprehensive and that in order to ascertain beyond doubt the true wishes of the population, a much broader and more complete consultation of the people would be required.

59. In the view of his delegation, there was a case for further inquiry in order to establish the full facts of the situation in Oman, so that the United Nations could find a proper solution to the problem. His delegation was prepared to co-operate towards that end.

60. Mr. KING (United Kingdom), exercising his right of reply, stated that he wished to make some factual corrections and clear up some misunderstandings.

61. The Hungarian delegation and other delegations had accused the United Kingdom of supporting the slave-trade in Muscat and Oman. That very grave accusation was disgraceful and he greatly regretted that it had been made. Everyone knew the role of the United Kingdom in that part of the world. Since the early nineteenth century the United Kingdom had unceasingly tried to stamp out that evil, and for that reason it had concluded with the Sultan on 14 April 1873 a treaty for the abolition of the slave-trade. The present Sultan, like his predecessors, had honoured that treaty obligation.

62. The representatives of a number of Arab countries and the petitioners had asserted that the Sultan of Muscat and Oman was bound to be guided by the advice of the United Kingdom in foreign affairs. As Sir Patrick Dean had made perfectly clear at the 1499th meeting, the Sultan was under no obligation whatsoever to accept the advice of the United Kingdom Government. In his report (A/5562, para. 161) Mr. de Ribbing stated that in 1890 the Sultan "had undertaken to be 'guided' in all matters of policy by the advice of the British Government". In that connexion, he pointed out that on his accession in 1890 Sultan Faisal had confirmed that he would fulfil the undertakings and treaties concluded by his predecessor—the normal assurance often given between sovereign States when the Government or ruler changed—and had said at the same time that it was his desire to be "guided" in matters of policy by the British Government. That had been in no way an undertaking on his part or of his successor, and it had never been assumed to be so.

63. The British Government had also been accused of deposing the previous ruler, Sultan Taimur bin Faisal. That accusation was false: the Sultan had decided to abdicate owing to ill health.

64. One of the petitioners had said that the Omani rebels had shot down British aircraft, and he had shown photographs in support of that claim. In fact, no British aircraft had been shot down over the territory of the Sultanate.

65. Several speakers had said that the United Kingdom was sheltering behind Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter and that that in some way proved that Muscat and Oman was a colony. Sir Patrick Dean had pointed out in his statement at the 1499th meeting that such was not the position of the United Kingdom Government, and that the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman as an independent and sovereign country had the right to claim non-intervention in its internal affairs in the same way as other Governments.

66. A number of Arab representatives had remarked that Mr. de Ribbing should have been accompanied on his visit by a representative of the Imam. But the purpose of that visit had been to obtain first-hand information on the situation, and for that purpose the presence of a representative of the Imam had not been necessary. In that connexion, he wished to draw attention to the speech of the representative of Iraq at the 257th meeting of the Special Political Committee, on 20 April 1961. The representative of Iraq had proposed that "the United Nations should dispatch an impartial commission which would not include representatives of either the United Kingdom and its friends or the Arab States and their friends to investigate the situation and report to the General Assembly".<sup>3/</sup> It seemed to the United Kingdom delegation that the mission carried out by Mr. de Ribbing had exactly fulfilled what had been proposed by the Iraqi representative. The delegations of the Arab countries had all stressed the impartiality of Mr. de Ribbing. The Iraqi representative on the Special Political Committee had added that if the proposed commission's findings confirmed the United Kingdom assertions, the Arab States would be happy to drop the matter. The United Kingdom delegation considered that that was precisely what Mr. de Ribbing's report did, and it hoped that the Arab States would be as good as their word.

67. Mr. KHALAF (Iraq), exercising his right of reply, declared that he had made no such proposal in his statement to the Committee.

68. Mr. KING (United Kingdom) explained that the Iraqi representative whom he had quoted was Mr. Pachachi, and that the statement quoted appeared in document A/SPC/SR.257.

69. Mr. KHALAF (Iraq) said that he would reply to the United Kingdom representative at the following meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

<sup>3/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifteenth Session (Part II) Special Political Committee, 257th meeting, para. 16.