

U.S. Wins a U.N. Victory on Puerto Rico

By PAUL HOFMANN
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UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Aug. 20 — A United Nations committee under strong pressure from the United States, voted today to put off indefinitely its consideration of a resolution affirming "the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence."

During the last few days Washington had cautioned on governments represented in the 24-country Decolonization Committee that a vote backing the resolution would be considered an "unfriendly act."

Implied in the American warnings was a clear threat of retaliation through such means as withholding of economic aid or other favors.

American officials were jubilant after the vote, describing it as "a great success" for the United States. During last fall's General Assembly the United States was repeatedly outvoted

Panel Defers Action on Resolution Citing 'Right to Self-Determination'

by a large coalition of Communist and third-world countries, and toward the end of the session, John A. Scali, who was then the chief United States representative, protested against what he termed the "tyranny of the majority" in the world organization.

The resolution on Puerto Rico essentially was the work of the Cuban delegation in close consultation with leaders of the small but militant movement for the island's independence. The Congo Republic, Iraq, Mali and Syria were co-sponsors.

The text urged the United States "to refrain from any measure which might obstruct or endanger" the right of the people of Puerto Rico to "self-determination and independence."

The draft resolution also called on the United States to abstain "from any act of political persecution" against persons or groups engaged in the fight for "liberation." It would furthermore have recognized "the national liberation movement of Puerto Rico as representing the legitimate aspirations of the Puerto Rican people struggling for independence," and called for a United Nations fact-finding mission to be sent to the island early next year.

The American administration rejected the Cuban-sponsored text because it was regarded as meddling with internal affairs of the United States and offering United Nations encouragement and legitimacy to a force—the Puerto Rican independence movement—that it regards as bent on violent subversion.

The Decolonization Committee and other United Nations

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U.N. BODY DEFERS PUERTO RICO VOTE

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bodies have discussed Puerto Rico's status off and on for several years. On each occasion, Communist and third-world delegations have accused the United States of practicing colonialism in the island.

This year, Cuba and her allies had prepared a draft resolution that would have given the Puerto Rican independence movement the status of permanent observer at the United Nations, a status now held by the Palestine Liberation Organization and various African liberation movements.

However, some black African delegates on the Decolonization Committee persuaded the sponsors to reword the text in less specific terms, dropping the demand for observer status.

The United States, which is not represented on the committee, made no public comment on the proceedings and did not avail itself of the procedural possibility of demanding to be heard as a party involved in an issue before the body.

American officials explained that the United States ostensibly was ignoring the Decolonization Committee because any statement might have been construed as an implicit admission of that body's competence to examine Puerto Rican affairs.

A spokesman for the government of Puerto Rico pointed out last week that only six of the 24 countries represented in the Decolonization Committee had freely elected governments. The statement noted that Puerto Rico's political parties must face free elections every four years, and said that less than 5 per cent of the island's electorate had supported independence in all polls during the last 20 years.

Vote Was Delayed

Last Friday, the chairman of the Decolonization Committee, Salim A. Salim of Tanzania, announced that a vote on the Cuban-sponsored draft resolution would be taken on Monday or yesterday. However, by last night the committee had not got around to considering the text.

This morning's meeting started after a delay of more than an hour and the Puerto Rican issue did not come up until about 1 P.M., a time when many diplomats usually have luncheon engagements.

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The Australian delegate, A. Duncan Campbell, asked for adjournment of the item, remarking that there was great uneasiness in the committee. But Ricardo Alarcon Quesada of Cuba Pressed for a vote, contending that the committee had agreed on such a procedure.

A discussion on procedural questions ensued, during which the Australian delegate sarcastically congratulated his Cuban colleague on the quality of his "elaborate cigarette-smoke-screen." Mr. Alarcon habitually smokes long Havana cigars during United Nations meetings.

The Cuban delegate remarked that "a great imperialist power" was resorting to every weapon to prevent the committee from taking a decision on Puerto Rico.

The committee vote was 11 to 9 with 2 abstentions. The Chinese delegate did not participate in the voting, and Ethiopia's representative was absent.

Voting in favor of adjournment were Afghanistan, Australia, Chile, Denmark, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Tunisia. Against adjournment were Bulgaria, the Congo Republic, Czechoslovakia, Iraq, Mali, Syria, the Soviet Union and Tanzania. Yugoslavia and Trinidad and Tobago abstained.

The motion introduced by Australia that was eventually approved called for postponement of consideration of the Puerto Rican situation until the committee's 1976 session. This means, according to United Nations experts, that critics of the United States will find it difficult to bring up the matter of Puerto Rican independence during the 30th General Assembly this fall.

The chief American representative at the United Nations, Daniel P. Moynihan, in a statement this afternoon, cited the "unassailable fact of the free condition of the people of Puerto Rico," and termed the Decolonization Committee's decision "a responsible action."

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