United Nations

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIFTEENTH SESSION

Official Records

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Agenda item 90:

Complaint by the Revolutionary Government of Cuba regarding the various plans of aggression and acts of intervention being executed by the Government of the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba, constituting a manifest violation of its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, and a clear threat to international peace and security (continued) .......................................................... 89

Chairman: Mr. Karel KURKA (Czechoslovakia).

AGENDA ITEM 90


1. Mr. SUBASINGHE (Ceylon) said that the fears of many that action might be organized to prevent the consolidation of the revolution in Cuba had been proved unjustified by events. The fact that such action had come from outside Cuba raised basic issues of vital importance to the world as a whole and to all of the United Nations as a world Organization. Although his delegation understood the sensitivity of the countries of the Western hemisphere to the social revolution which had taken place in Cuba, and for its own part it had not taken sides with respect to the Cuban complaint, it believed that the process of change in Cuba could not long be thwarted, and that Member States could facilitate the liberalization of such revolutions by refraining from attempts to strangle them.

2. The question under discussion was not one between the two major power groups alone, it was of direct concern to the many Member States which were small and weak and had just emerged as independent nations. The Governments of those States were endeavouring to catch up with the rest of the world so that their peoples might enjoy at least some of the elementary necessities of a civilized life. In some, the process of change was following a relatively peaceful course; in Cuba, for historical reasons, it had assumed a revolutionary character. Ceylon believed, however, that Cuba—like all nations, for that matter—had the right to decide what type of economic, social and political structure would enable it to achieve its objectives. While everyone was entitled to his opinions on the system Cuba had adopted, it must necessarily arouse deep forebodings when a Government officially condemned the Government of Cuba and said that it wished the latter to be overthrown, even by military action. What had happened in Cuba could happen elsewhere; Ceylon could not accept such a situation, and, in its opinion, neither could the United Nations.

3. Cuba was in the throes of revolutionary change, and its people should be allowed to work out their own institutions in keeping with their historical and cultural background and in accordance with their economic, social and national interests. Processes and institutions which had been developed in another country over a period of decades could not be transplanted to Cuba at a time when its revolution had not yet even been consolidated. Moreover, Cuba had the right to establish relations with other countries regardless of their political and social systems, if it deemed such relations to be in its national interest; and conversely, other countries had the right to trade, to enter into economic co-operation agreements or to establish friendly relations with Cuba.

4. It was to be regretted that the Cuban question was being approached as a mere by-product of the cold war and not as the natural outcome of the economic, social and political conditions which had prevailed in Cuba. Ceylon appealed to all States, and in particular to the great Powers, to take an objective attitude on the social forces which were at present asserting themselves not only in Cuba but in all under-developed countries, for only then would they be able to formulate correct policies towards those countries. The United Nations, for its part, should take decisive action to prevent the situation from deteriorating and to put an end to armed conflict and civil strife in Cuba; and all Member States should refrain from taking any action which might promote such strife. Ceylon hoped that invasion attempts would not be repeated. If it adopted the policy he had outlined, the United Nations would be safeguarding the fundamental rights of Cuba as a nation and establishing the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

5. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) said that the situation in Cuba was extremely serious and might touch off a world conflagration. The main concern of the United Nations must be to maintain peace. The problem should not be viewed in terms of the division of the world into Eastern and Western blocs or of support or opposition to the Castro régime. His country, having a policy of positive neutrality, approached the question with an independent mind. It was not committed to support either of the United States or the Soviet Union. The primary duty of all Member States was to observe the principle of non-intervention laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. Cuba was a fully sovereign State, and no one had the right to interfere in its affairs, whether militarily, politically, economically or ideologically. It was entitled to choose
whatever régime it pleased. If it committed a breach of the peace or violated human rights, the question could be examined by the United Nations.

6. Some delegations had criticized the Monroe Doctrine which had been mentioned in connexion with the dispute. That doctrine, however, had been misinterpreted; essentially, it was based on the principle of non-intervention, whether from inside or outside the hemisphere. It did not isolate the American continent from the rest of the world or make it an area reserved for United States influence. In any event, the whole idea of spheres or hemispheres of influence was anathema to the Saudi Arabian delegation.

7. The right to rebel against tyranny was established in international law. It was implicitly recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Cuban people had made use of that right, just as the United States had done, in the past. In addition, every State had the right to repel aggression and to prevent disorder. Intervention, however, was another matter. No State was permitted under international law to take military action in defence of a foreign régime, whether it was stable or not. Military intervention must be distinguished from military assistance. Any Member of the United Nations whose security or independence was in danger was entitled to request foreign assistance if the United Nations failed to defend it. Such assistance, for instance, was always permissible in support of a movement against colonialism.

8. The charges made against the United States by the representative of Cuba could all be dismissed as fictitious. On the other hand, the charges made by the United States against Cuba in document A/4725 were unjustified. The United States claimed that Cuba had betrayed its own revolution; but that was a matter which could be decided only by the Cuban people themselves. It was not for the United States or the United Nations to pass judgement. Similarly, the question of communist infiltration was irrelevant; the Cubans were entitled to have a communist party or relations with communist countries if they wanted to. No outsider could tell a country what international connexions it should maintain. The most serious thing in the United States document, however, was its penultimate paragraph, which in effect called upon the people of Cuba to rise against their Government. If the United States believed that it must destroy the régime in Cuba and must therefore support the régime's opponents, it would be more honourable to say so bluntly.

9. At a press conference on 17 April 1961 the United States Secretary of State had been asked a series of pertinent questions, namely: whether his Government had any contact with the so-called Revolutionary Council in New York; why the Press had not been allowed to see the pilot who had landed in Miami after allegedly defecting from the Cuban Air Force; what the policy of the United States was regarding material aid to the Cuban forces opposing Mr. Castro; and whether the Government had had any advance knowledge of the attack on Cuba. The Secretary of State had refused to answer those questions, on the ground that he did not wish to influence the United Nations debate on the matter. But it was extremely important that answers should be obtained, particularly to the last question, in order to establish how far the United States was involved. His delegation therefore called on the United States representative to give the answers.

10. The New York Times had reported that while the United States had for some time based its policy on the assumption that it might use its armed forces to give support to refugees from Cuba, the President of the United States, Mr. Kennedy, had recently decided against direct involvement in the operation. The Times had gone on to say that it had been agreed that the refugees should be free to take whatever action they deemed necessary to try to return to their homeland. In his letter to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. Khrushchev (The New York Times, 19 April 1961), President Kennedy had said that it was not surprising that the refugees had been using whatever means were available to return and support their countrymen in the continuing struggle for freedom. The Saudi Arabian delegation was glad to hear that the United States intended no military intervention in Cuba, but it could not avoid expressing the hope that the United States would also extend its sympathy and support to refugees from countries other than Cuba.

11. Although the United States had denied any intention of intervening, it was well known that it was giving assistance to the exiles. On 18 April 1961, The New York Times had stated that the United States Government had been helping them over a period of many months with arms, training and facilities on United States soil and in Guatemala. Statements made by the United States President and Secretary of State confirmed that that was true. In its issue of 20 April the same newspaper had reproduced a photograph allegedly showing members of the anti-Castro forces during recent manoeuvres in the Caribbean area. An explanation of that photograph must be given. The United States and Guatemala had both denied that the invasion had been launched from their territories; but if that was true, the Committee must be told where it had come from. It was not enough for the United States to announce that it was not going to intervene; it must explain how the invasion had taken place. If it believed that the invasion and its support of the exiles were justified, it must put forward its reasons. If they were not justified, the United Nations would be obliged to condemn them.

12. Mr. QUAISSON-SACKEY (Ghana) said that Ghana had followed with great admiration the efforts of the Cuban Government and people to transform the political, economic, social and cultural life of Cuba; his personal observations during a visit to Cuba had convinced him of the truth of the Cuban representative's statement at the fourteenth session of the General Assembly in 1959 (806th plenary meeting) that for the first time there was government by the people, for the people, in Cuba. At the same time, his country cherished the friendship existing between it and the United States; he recalled that only two days before, in an address to the National Assembly, the President of Ghana had expressed his pleasure at the sympathetic manner in which President Kennedy had listened to the views he had put forward at their recent meeting. His delegation was therefore participating in the present debate as a friend of both of the parties concerned; however, its object was not to please either of them but to make a constructive contribution to a solution of the problem.

13. His Government had always upheld the right of peoples to choose their political, economic and social system without being subjected to pressure by foreign
countries; in that connexion, it continued to support the provisions of paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 290 (IV). It was also committed to the principles of non-intervention and equality of rights in international relations and to the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

14. It was clear that the forces which had recently invaded Cuba had been transported there from elsewhere in the Western hemisphere. While his delegation welcomed the United States representative’s assurance that the United States would not intervene with its armed forces in Cuba and would do everything possible to prevent its territory from being used for attacks on Cuba, a further assurance must be given that the United States had not provided and did not intend to provide anti-Castro forces with money, equipment, arms and training so that they could launch an invasion from some country other than the United States.

15. Since both the United States and Cuban Governments had stated their belief that all international disputes should be settled through negotiation, there should be no obstacle to a peaceful solution of the present difficulty. The United States had no right to intervene in Cuba because developments in that country were not to its liking; as his delegation had made clear during the consideration of the Hungarian question in 1957, Ghana condemned the use of military power by one country to crush a movement for freedom in another country. The General Assembly must demand the cessation of all direct or indirect assistance to the armed invasion of Cuba and a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

16. His delegation was examining the various draft resolutions before the Committee in the light of the considerations which he had just put forward. It was already prepared to say that it found the provisions of the Mexican draft resolution (A/C.1/L.275) acceptable.

17. Mr. TCHOBANOV (Bulgaria) said that abundant proof had been adduced in the Committee to show that the United States was guilty of flagrant aggression against Cuba. Moreover, the publicity which had been given to the preparations for that aggression in the United States Press had been so extensive and detailed as to leave no doubt regarding the United States Government’s intentions. For example, two weeks before the debate had begun in the Committee, the State Department had published a document entitled “Cuba” of such a nature as to be a flagrant intervention in the internal affairs of a foreign State. In that publication, which had been circulated as document A/4725, the United States Government had arrogated to itself the right to dictate to the Cuban Government the political philosophy it should follow, and had let it be clearly understood what fate awaited the Cubans if they did not comply. United States newspapers had described the document as a warning; it was actually an ultimatum. On the eve of the debate in the United Nations, the peoples of the whole world had already been fully aware of the following facts: the Cuban mercenaries had organized a so-called Revolutionary Council, which had maintained overt contact with high United States Government officials and discussed with them the plans for an invasion of Cuba; Cuban mercenaries were being trained in United States territory or vassal territory by officers of the United States armed forces and of the Central Intelligence Agency; Cuban mercenaries were being furnished with United States military equipment and naval vessels for purposes of an armed attack against Cuba. The representative of the United States had never denied the accuracy of those facts. He had never succeeded in convincing the Committee that the issue was not one between Cubans and that the conflict was strictly of Cubans against Cubans. War was war, even when it was waged by using bands of foreign mercenaries.

18. The USSR Government, in fulfilment of its international obligations under the Charter, had declared its readiness to extend assistance to Cuba. The President of the United States had branded that gesture as a threat of aggression which his Government would not tolerate. That response created a situation of the utmost gravity, for the United States did not appear prepared to abandon its dangerous venture of its own accord.

19. In the circumstances, it was the responsibility of all Member States to make it clear to the United States Government that it must desist from its aggressive actions. Accordingly, Bulgaria would support the draft resolutions submitted by Romania (A/C.1/L.274) and the USSR (A/C.1/L.277).

20. The Bulgarian Government and people had great sympathy for the heroic struggle being waged by the people and Government of Cuba and congratulated them on the successes they had won over the invading mercenaries.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.
