

and more particularly in the Third Committee at the seventh session, of the principle of self-determination. Though no one would venture to suggest that we of the United Nations are of one mind as to the exact nature of this principle, or as to the means by which it can best be implemented, it must be recognized that a majority of the Assembly has accepted the fundamental principle on which self-determination is based.

My Delegation would submit that Puerto Rico presents us with a good example of a people who were given the opportunity to benefit from the application of this principle of self-determination. The Puerto Rican people were in fact given a free choice among the three alternatives of independence, statehood within the Federal Union, and, finally, association with the United States as a free Commonwealth. The United States Delegate has informed us of the overwhelming majority which this people recorded in favour of the last named solution. There is no need to repeat here those impressive figures.

I have no intention, Mr. Chairman, in the course of this debate to go into the question as to whether or not the right of self-determination includes in all cases a right to secede; this might raise, as previous discussions in the United Nations have already shown, problems of a very difficult nature. I should like, however, to refer to the proposition advanced by a number of delegations to the effect that the Puerto Rican people were not given a proper chance to pronounce on the issue itself of independence. As the distinguished Delegate for the United States has already explained, among the political parties which in the elections of 1948 sought a mandate from the people of Puerto Rico was the Independence Party which, as its name might indicate, was the chief advocate of Puerto Rican independence. The Puerto Rican people in those elections were entirely free to place their trust in this particular political party, as they were entirely free to confer it on any of the other political parties which took part in the elections. It is the view of my Delegation that if the Puerto Rican people had wished to achieve complete independence, they would there and then have given their support to that party which had made the issue of independence the chief plank of its political platform. But as we have been told, they rejected the claims of that party for their support, and instead they placed their trust in the political party which advocated the type of constitutional status which has now been achieved by the Puerto Rican people and regarding which the United States Government has now informed the United Nations.

It is because a country like my own has reached its present constitutional status - as we have often pointed out - through successive acts of implementation of the principle of self-determination that we can regard with such gratification this latest constitutional evolution of Puerto Rico and the fact that the Puerto Rican people reached that new stage through its own freewill and choice. We have no doubt of the desire of the United States Government to see Puerto Rico continue to progress along the lines it has been following.

In these circumstances, Mr. Chairman, my Delegation will readily give its support to any proposal designed to take note of this happy state of affairs.