



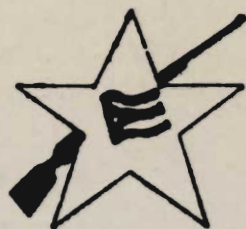
There are men who struggle for a day
and are good
There are others who struggle for a year
and are better
There are those who struggle many years
and they are very good
But there are some who struggle all their lives

These are....



the indispensables

THE STRUGGLE AND THE IDEALS of Puerto Rican prisoners of war Edwin Cortés, Alejandrina Torres and Alberto Rodríguez and of political prisoner José Luis Rodríguez



This publication is dedicated to the future of our homeland and to the children of the three new Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, Liza Beth and Catalina Torres; Yazmín Elena and Ricardo Alberto Rodríguez; and Noemí and Carlos Alberto Cortés.

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**“...all the children of
the world are
the reason I will fight
to the death
to destroy
colonialism...”**

—Alberto Rodríguez

**AUTOBIOGRAPHIES
OF THE 4**

ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ

“I...reaffirm the right of the Puerto Rican people to wage armed struggle against U.S. imperialism.”

I was born in Bronx, New York on April 14, 1953. My parents, Manuel Rodríguez and Carmen Santana were forced to leave their beloved Puerto Rico due to the depressed colonial economy and widespread repression against workers. Before my first birthday, my parents left New York and came to Chicago.

I remember my father working in various low-paying jobs, which were the only ones available to Puerto Ricans. Slowly, he was able to save enough money to bring the rest of our family from Puerto Rico. With the six born and living in Puerto Rico and another eight born in the States, my family grew to fourteen.

Like so many working-class Puerto Rican families, we were constantly moving, always one step ahead of the wrecking ball. We lived in neighborhoods which were destroyed to make room for the Carl Sandburg Village, Old Town Condos, Kennedy Expressway and the University of Illinois - Chicago Campus. Finally, by 1967, after years of hard work and deprivation, my parents were able to buy a house in the Puerto Rican barrio on the south side of Chicago.

At the age of 15, I committed my first political act. The Black students at the high school that I attended, Tilden Tech, had planned a massive walkout to protest the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Black student leadership had asked for support from the Puerto Rican students. At a pre-determined time, fire alarms were pulled

and we walked out. Once outside, we were attacked by the police and gangs of white racists. After a brief but determined battle, we had to abandon the school grounds and retreat to our communities. A similar incident occurred in 1969. It was done to protest the deaths of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, Black Panther Party members killed by a FBI/Chicago Police Task Force. In 1970 and 1971, several others were organized, this time by the Latino student body. This was done to force a reluctant school administration to hire a Latino counselor and provide courses which addressed the particular needs of Latino students.

During the early 1970's, the Puerto Rican community, especially its youth, was swept by a wave of nationalist sentiments. Young people began to outwardly identify themselves as Puerto Ricans. These were the times of the Young Lords, who were attempting to address the needs of the Puerto Rican community. Though the Young Lords were not active on the south side, we did receive literature from them. This had a profound impact on me. I began to see myself not just as a street gang member defending some isolated turf, but as part of a whole nation and community struggling to be free. It was this that brought me and several other young people together to discuss the need for community organizing and developing support for Puerto Rican independence.

In 1972, I enrolled in the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus. I was shock-

ed to find that out of a total student population of twenty thousand, there were less than ten Puerto Rican and twenty-five Mexican students enrolled. The same year, a Latino student movement was formed to confront the University administration on the issues of recruitment and the development of a Latin American Studies Program. Due to our lack of experience in political organizing and clear direction, several student organizations were formed and disbanded. Finally, in 1974, the Union for Puerto Rican Students was formed. This organization began to do work among students around the issues of concern to Latino students, support for the Five Nationalist Prisoners and independence for Puerto Rico. The Union became instrumental in the establishment of programs such as the Latin American Studies Program, Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services and the Rafael Cintrón-Ortiz Cultural Center. It was through this process that I began to learn political organizing skills. I also became aware that while concessions and reforms could be forced from institutions like the University of Illinois, the fundamental contradictions would continue. I began to see the need for more radical approaches to our reality and was attracted to the ideas of Marxism.

In 1976, the year I graduated from college, the whole independence movement was in a period of turmoil and redefinition. On the one hand, you had the reformist tendency headed by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's decision to participate in the colonial elections of Puerto Rico. On the other hand, you had a growing movement engaging in armed struggle, particularly by the **Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN)** here in the United States. This conflict came to a head in Chicago at a Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee Conference. I participated in this

conference as a member of a newly founded organization called the Colectiva Don Pedro Albizu Campos which was organized on the south side of Chicago. The Colectiva, along a sector of the independence movement which was very active on the north side and worked out of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and other Puerto Ricans from New York, formed a coalition which called itself the March First Bloc. The March First Bloc, which had attracted the more radical elements of the North American left, confronted the liberal PSP-dominated PRSC and forced it to deal with the need for revolutionary action to free Puerto Rico.

During this period, federal grand juries were being convened in Chicago and New York purportedly investigating the **FALN**. Four members of the Colectiva were subpoenaed along with other activists from Chicago, New York and the Southwest. Out of the need to confront this repression and to present an alternative to the reformism permeating the independence movement, the **Movimiento de Liberación Nacional** was formed. The Colectiva became part of this new organization.

Between 1977 and 1980, I worked with the following organizations: The Workers' Rights Center, National Committee to End Grand Jury Repression, Committee to Free the Five Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners, and the Comité Pro-Orientación Comunal. This latter group was formed after the brutal 1977 murder of two Puerto Ricans in Humboldt Park in Chicago. The murders of Rafael Cruz and Julio Osorio highlighted the need to fight against police repression in our communities. A week after the murders, the Comité, along with the **MLN**, organized a huge demonstration and rally to protest the murders. Also, a Peoples Tribunal was organized which offered the people an oppor-

tunity to come before their community and denounce the police murders. An intensive and successful campaign was launched against police repression and many members of the Comité were harassed and arrested by police. I was arrested with another Comité member on the eve of a conference against police repression. At that conference, several community members were attacked by Police task force units, but this did not dampen our commitment to struggle to end repression.

In 1977, I began working as a Counselor/Coordinator at the Borinqueña Learning Center; which is an integral part of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. My three years at Borinqueña were some of the most difficult and time-consuming, while at the same time the most rewarding. Borinqueña was a unique experiment in higher education. It provided community people an opportunity to develop necessary skills as well as political education. Many of its students went on to become active in various community struggles. Borinqueña was also significant in that it destroyed the myth that the Puerto Rican community must rely on the state to provide it with services and guidance. The college program, along with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center which houses it, continue today as a model of struggle and self-determination.

In 1980, I left Borinqueña Campus and began working at Northeastern Illinois University as a counselor for Black and Latino students. I also began working with the Colectiva Comunal. This collective of people work on the south side of Chicago and struggle for human rights and social justice. The Colectiva was also able to establish the Latino Cultural Center on south Ashland Avenue. This accomplishment represented the realization of a dream to find a center where the community could come together

to struggle and confront the reality of oppression and poverty that it faces. At this Center I did everything from bricklaying to carpentry and painting. Everything that was done at this Center was done by the community and truly represents a collective endeavor. Besides manual labor, I also contributed to the publication of the Center's Newsletter **La Voz del Barrio** and the development of a theatre group called **Teatro Guanín**.

On June 29, 1983, I was arrested, along with three other comrades, accused of being members of the **FALN** and charged with the political offense of "**sedition conspiracy**." I have assumed before the federal court and before my people the position of Prisoner of War. I did this to reaffirm the right of Puerto Rican people to wage armed struggle against U.S. imperialism. My claim to POW status is a continuation of my commitment and dedication to a free and socialist Puerto Rico and to contribute to the end of U.S. imperialism, which the world has condemned as a crime against humanity and world peace. As a POW, I challenge the moral integrity of the imperialist courts to bring to trial Puerto Ricans who fight for freedom and justice.

As in any autobiography, the writer must omit many aspects of his life. But in conclusion, there are two other aspects of my life that I would like to share with you. First, is my marriage of nine years to my beloved compañera, Carmen Santana. Over the years our relationship has grown and developed into one of love, respect and dedication to a struggle. Carmen represents my fountain of strength and commitment which every day makes me a better man. The second aspect is the birth of my daughter, Yazmín Elena and my son, Ricardo Alberto. They are my future and our nation's future. For me, Yazmín,

Ricardo and all the children of the world are the reason I will fight to the death to destroy colonialism and establish a democratic

and socialist Puerto Rico. By doing this, we will drive one more nail into the coffin of U.S. imperialism.

EDWIN CORTES

“I have lived in a society where racism and discrimination are rampant...I have felt the human suffering of my people.”

I was born on March 27, 1955, on the west side of Chicago, the son of Gregorio Cortés and Natalia Acevedo. I have eight sisters: Lucy, Mary, Janet, Anna, Yolanda, Juanita, Carmen and Magdalena and six brothers: Jesús, Miguel, Julio, Jaime, Pedro and Frank. My loving wife is Alva Isabel Santiago. We have two beautiful children: Noemí Natalia, age 6, and Carlos Alberto, age 4.

My parents were driven from our homeland in 1952, by the depressed colonial economy. In Puerto Rico my father was a sugar cane cutter, an occupation with no future. This forced migration was a direct result of the destruction of the agricultural economy by U.S. colonialism. My father and some relatives arrived in Chicago together and immediately became dishwashers. He soon left that job to become a worker in the same factory for the next twenty-three years. My mother has been a housewife all her life. In 1975, they were able to realize the dream of thousands of Puerto Ricans and return to their homeland to live.

My first knowledge of the revolutionary struggle was a research project on the study of Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist party. I had to do the research project for

a history class while a senior at Kelly High School. I was encouraged to investigate this subject by Alberto Rodríguez, my incarcerated comrade and patriot and my beloved brother Julio Cortés. I was further encouraged because I remember asking a history teacher why we were not taught Puerto Rican history. His response was **Puerto Rico has no history.** Upon completion of my research, I was required to give a written presentation before the class. The teacher and students were impacted and surprised upon hearing my presentation because they had heard my teacher say that Puerto Rico did not have a history.

I continued to pursue my studies at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus. I arrived at the University in 1974, at the height of a community and student struggle for a Latin American recruitment program.

Soon after, I was involved in the founding of the Union for Puerto Rican Students. This student organization was involved in sponsoring political and cultural events as well as providing political direction to the Latin American student movement in particular, and the overall student movement in general.

Our first victorious student and community struggle was the establishment of the

Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services Program (LARES). This program was instituted to guarantee the enrollment and continued progress of Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Latin American students.

In September of 1976, the Latin American students forced the racist and repressive administration to grant us a Latin American Cultural Center. This center was named the Rafael Cintrón-Ortiz Cultural Center. Rafael was a Puerto Rican professor assassinated here in Chicago.

It was at the University that I became aware and involved in other Third World peoples' liberation struggles. I met and became personal friends with members of the Iranian Students Association, supporters of the Organization of Iranian Peoples Fedayee Guerrillas (OIPFG), the Organization of Arab Students, supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Eritrean Students Association, supporters of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF). These organizations uphold the necessity of armed struggle through a prolonged peoples' war to liberate themselves from a common enemy.

My first involvement in a political organization was my participation in the founding of the Colectiva Don Pedro Albizu Campos, a pro-independence grouping. This was one of the first public organizations in Chicago to unconditionally support the armed actions of the **Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN)**, never questioning its legitimacy.

In November of 1976, I along with three other members of our organization, were subpoenaed to appear before a Grand Jury attacking the Puerto Rican independence movement. Our subpoenas were subsequently dropped. However, we were prepared to go to prison to defend the principled position

of non-collaboration.

In June of 1977, our organization was dissolved to form the **Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN)**, a national organization composed of Puerto Rican and Mexican activists.

During the same year (1977), I was also involved in establishing a community group called the Colectiva Comunal. This organization is active in the day to day human rights struggles of the Puerto Rican and Mexican community of the south side of Chicago. It sponsored a Youth Awareness Program for five years. This program provided summer employment for youth between the ages of 14-21. The program sponsored a Latino Cultural Festival each year to demonstrate the talents of our youth and to bring the community together in a cultural and social event.

The Colectiva Comunal established the Latino Cultural Center in 1981, located on South Ashland Avenue. This Center has developed a theatre and singing group called **Teatro Guanín**. It also houses a bookstore named after Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal, a Puerto Rican patriot and martyr who was assassinated by the U.S. government in a cell at the federal prison in Tallahassee, Florida. It also serves as a resource and information center. The Center has been under constant attack by the government to force its closing. Its survival is due to community support.

On June 29, 1983, I was captured along with three comrades Alberto Rodríguez, Alejandrina Torres and José Luis Rodríguez. We are charged with "**sedition conspiracy**," an attempt to overthrow the authority of the U.S. government by force "to obtain the independence of Puerto Rico." We are presently held in isolation under the most inhuman and barbaric conditions. We are locked up 23 hours per day, denied regular visiting privi-

leges, denied the use of the telephone to call family and friends, and our mail and reading material is censored.

Alberto Rodríguez, Alejandrina Torres and myself have assumed the position of Prisoner of War. We do not recognize the authority of the United States government over Puerto Rico nor over combatants captured in the struggle for freedom and independence. We have been treated and will be tried as common criminals. However, we have demanded that our case be transferred to an international tribunal of competent jurisdiction such as the Human Rights Com-

mission of the United Nations.

I have lived in a society where racism and discrimination are rampant. I have seen and experienced the severe conditions of poverty, unemployment, substandard housing and police brutality in the ghettos of Amerikkka. I have felt the human suffering of my people here in the rearguard and in Puerto Rico.

Since all of our genuine aspirations for freedom have been repressed by the brute military force of North American imperialism, I am convinced that only through a prolonged armed struggle will Puerto Rico achieve independence and socialism.

ALEJANDRINA TORRES

“...a people who struggle and will continue to struggle for independence and justice, eradicating the yankees from our soil once and for all.”

I was born in the community of Florida in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico on July 18, 1939, the ninth child in a family of ten. My father died a year after my birth, causing my mother to work outside the home to provide for us. I was aware of our situation at a very early age, although I could not identify the source of our problems. My mother worked in a tobacco factory and I remember seeing her come home from work sick and tired. My mother's illness worsened and she was hospitalized for a year. My older sister had to leave school to take care of us. Although the memories of going to bed hungry are still fresh in my mind, we

never lacked motherly love and affection. This precarious situation and my mother's failing health forced us to emigrate to the United States.

I was only eleven years old when we moved to New York in 1950. My oldest sister already lived there and my two brothers were migrant workers in Illinois. I was demoted for one year when I entered public school, supposedly because I had never studied in the U.S. and spoke little English, although I learned to speak English during my first month at school. It was then that I became aware of the racial discrimination that our children are subjected

to daily in the American educational system. I still remember a very bitter experience that occurred during my first school year. One of my classmates lost his money and the teacher asked if anyone had seen it. Since I was the only Latina in the room, the teacher immediately called me in front of the class and began searching my pockets and bookbag. I was often punished for speaking Spanish in school and the teacher even dared to tell me to go back where I came from.

I always enjoyed any type of work that involved helping others. When I was 14 years old, I began to work as a volunteer in a community social service agency. It was an honor for me to do this work because of the great need that existed.

After my high school graduation, I worked as a secretary in my neighborhood church, the Martha Memorial Evangelical Church. I continued working there until 1963. During this time I tried to enroll in evening college courses but discovered that I had not taken the required courses. In other words, because I was Puerto Rican the high school had prepared me to work but not to continue my studies. However, I enrolled in a Junior College and took the courses that I needed. It was then that I decided to move to Chicago with my sister.

Once in Chicago, I began working for the Illinois Department of Public Aid, in the Cuban Refugee Unit. I saw how the U.S. government discriminated against the Puerto Rican people and how they perfected the reactionary tendencies of the counter revolutionary groups that they very selectively allowed into their country. I became aware of the discrimination and injustices committed against the Puerto Rican and Black people in comparison to the benefits that these anti-Castro Cuban emigres re-

ceived.

In 1964, I married the Rev. José Alberto Torres, my faithful compañero and mentor. He gave meaning to many of my preoccupations with his knowledge of history and his great love of social justice - an essential factor that we both share.

We struggled and shared this commitment with our children, Norma, who was 13 years old, Carlos Alberto 12 and Nitza 11, (from his first marriage) and later with our daughters Liza Beth and Catalina, who were born in 1966 and 1972, respectively. Our married life and the experiences that we shared were a unique experience in which we all learned much, shared everything and were enriched by our national heritage and our right to defend our homeland. In the years that followed we dedicated ourselves, as a family nucleus, to working in the community for the rights that belonged to, but were not enjoyed by our people.

Our children grew up and continued their studies. Norma enrolled at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras, Carlos Alberto studied at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and later transferred to the Chicago Circle Campus. Nitza decided against college and chose marriage instead. A year later, she gave birth to our first grandchild, María. At present, Liza Beth is in her senior year of high school and Catalina is in the fifth grade.

In 1965, I became a member of the First Congregational Church where my beloved husband serves as pastor. Through the church our family continued its commitment to our community by struggling for quality education in the neighboring schools and providing social services to help alleviate the poor economic conditions of our people.

From 1972-1973, I worked as a counselor at ASSPA (Association of Spanish

Speaking People of America), an organization that sponsored seminars on leadership development and served as a resource and referral center in the areas of housing, education and employment.

In 1973, I had the honor of being a founding member of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. This Center is dedicated to teaching the richness of our culture and history, one that many have forgotten or never knew about. To this day the Center provides the community with a child care center, a high school program, and adult evening classes, in addition to a showcase of historical artifacts, arts and crafts and a 10,000 volume library. My support for this Center grew from an understanding for the need to develop an alternative educational system where our children can learn and feel good about themselves and others. I taught Typing and General Business courses at the Center on a volunteer basis. I also served as treasurer for a brief period in 1975.

During 1975-1978, I worked with the First Congregational Church. We initiated a community research project to identify the immediate needs of our people, create programs to fulfill those needs, and identify resources already in existence. As a result of the study, we organized GED and English classes, a tutoring program for children, ballet and folkloric dance classes, a summer youth employment program, a food pantry and various seminars on community issues. In 1977, our church group and other

dedicated community people founded the Betances Free Clinic. The Clinic provided free medical services to needy people who otherwise would not have had access to quality medical care. Many years after its closing (due to a lack of volunteer doctors) the benefits provided by this Clinic can still be seen and appreciated. Many of the Clinic's former patients now receive treatment at the People's Clinic, which provides high quality dental care for children of all ages.

During 1979-1981, I again had the privilege of working at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, this time as a counselor. I worked closely with students and their families, counseling them concerning vocational and educational opportunities and sensitive family matters such as alcoholism, drug abuse, premature pregnancies, child abuse, etc.

I began working as an executive secretary in the Department of Child Psychology at the University of Illinois Medical Center in 1982. I continued working there until my arrest on June 29, 1983, when I was brutally yanked from my office by federal agents and accused of "**sedition conspiracy**" for the sole crime of loving my homeland and my people, a people who struggle and will continue to struggle for independence and justice, eradicating the yankees from our soil once and for all.

JOSE LUIS RODRIGUEZ

“The charge(Seditious Conspiracy) only creates the illusion that we are part of the U.S. and therefore an internal problem.”

I was born in Chicago on November 12, 1960. I grew up in the small Puerto Rican community on the south side known as “El Barrio.” Though many Puerto Rican families were moving to the north side or out of Chicago, as a result of the poor conditions that existed in our community, our family chose to remain on the south side. In my 22 years we have moved nine times. Four of those occasions were within the same building, from one apartment to the next.

In comparison to the majority of Puerto Rican families, my family is unique. I do not come from a broken home. Most Puerto Rican households are headed by a single parent. The father is absent, so the mother is responsible for raising the children. It is this type of relationship within the family that causes many hardships on our people. But this relationship itself is a result of colonialism, a relationship between colonizer and colonized, dominator and dominated. The response on the part of the dominated is not directed against those who perpetuate this relationship, but directed at our own people. In particular, man seeks to dominate woman in order to reassert the manhood that he has been stripped of by the colonizer.

I come from a family of five. I have a younger brother and sister, Johnny and Yvette and an older half-brother and sister, Mariano and Olga from my father's previous marriage. My father, Juan Rodríguez, is from San Lorenzo and my mo-

ther, Santa Iris Rodríguez, is from Juncos. As did thousands of other Puerto Ricans, my father came to the U.S. as a migrant worker, picking fruit in Florida. He eventually made his way along the coast to New York. He remained there with his family for a short period of time. Since New York was not “paved with gold” as the colonial propaganda had said to encourage our people to migrate, he made his way to Chicago with no money, and hitch hiking all the way. To this day, thousands still migrate to the U.S. in search of work.

My father found a job as a laborer in a factory. He has been working for over 25 years. My mother and father were friends in Puerto Rico. She came to Chicago and stayed with his sister. She too started working at the same factory with my father and other relatives. They were married and settled permanently here in Chicago.

In speaking with my father, I was struck by many of the hardships that he experienced coming to the U.S. In particular, that of racism, the treatment and condition of migrant workers and the wretched living conditions of our people. My parents' decision to come to the U.S., as that of many Puerto Rican parents, was based on the colonial conditions that exist in Puerto Rico and the U.S. government's need to force our people off the island. This was done to stem the growing revolutionary movement. Though they will argue that it was an individual decision to leave, (which it was, just as one

moves from one neighborhood to the next), the material base of colonialism played a major part in their decision to leave; to come to the "land of opportunity" where opportunity for our people has meant and means a society where our children are mis-educated, our women mistreated, health, housing and employment are inadequate for our people to survive, and where our identity as a people is being destroyed.

I attended Libby grammar school. My experience there is similar to that of many Puerto Rican, Black, Mexican and other oppressed people. In kindergarten, my parents were told by the teacher that they should not talk to me in Spanish. The reason for this was that I would not grow up to be a good American if I did not understand the language. In second grade I was locked in the closet by the teacher for about an hour for talking in Spanish to another student. I hated the teacher so much that I would run out of the class and go home. It got to the point that I would fake being sick. If that did not work, I would jump from the 2nd floor to the landing between the two floors and fake a sprained ankle. I would think of anything just so that I would not have to go to school.

In grammar school the teachers would compare the Puerto Rican students to the white students. I can not say that I received an education. It was more of a miseducation than anything at all. It was and still is a process of degradation and assimilation. We are reduced to the level of an animal and then told that in order to move out of this "savage" or "ignorant" state we must follow the example of the forefathers of this country. It is because of the miseducation, the denial of our identity as a people, that Puerto Ricans lack an understanding of the colonial relationship that exists between this country and our homeland, Puerto Rico.

In high school I was apolitical. My only concern, being young, was just what was going on in the streets. I was aware of the status question of Puerto Rico and out of ignorance more than awareness, I supported statehood. At that point in my life I was not involved in any type of political movement.

I entered the University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus in January 1979. This is my fifth year at the University where I'm completing a double-major in Political Science and Latin American History. I am a member of the Union for Puerto Rican Students, an organization that has been on campus since 1974 and developed as a result of many issues that concerned Latino students. The UPRS is still active on campus and has dealt with problems that affect the Puerto Rican student body. The UPRS is a vehicle which is geared to raising the collective consciousness of our people concerning our colonial conditions in Puerto Rico and in the U.S.

In my first year, I was not very active in the organization, but became increasingly aware of the problems that affected our people in this country as a direct result of the colonial relationship that exists between Puerto Rico and the United States. Puerto Rican Prisoner of War Luis Rosa, an intelligent and principled individual whom I greatly admire, was the president of the Union at that time. There were many differences that existed between us, but I learned a great deal from him; these differences were out of ignorance about Puerto Rico, rather than any knowledge about my country. It wasn't until his arrest in April of 1980, along with 10 other Puerto Rican revolutionaries including Alfredo Mendez, (who later betrayed the independence movement due to his lack of faith in his peoples' ability to free them-

selves from colonial domination) that I had to rethink many of the things that I had learned. That year, I made a commitment to support the POWs and the struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

In the community, I joined The Colectiva Comunal, a community organization on the south side of Chicago. This was my first experience in organizing the community around issues that affect their daily lives. I also participated in the founding of the Centro Cultural Latino, an independent institution which seeks to address the many needs of our people, everything from health-education and pre-natal care to a G.E.D. program. The state, aware of our commitment to our people, has tried to close the center down. I have also worked on a community newsletter, **La Voz Del Barrio** that emphasizes the importance of supporting Puerto Rican independence and community organizing instead of the traditional means of electing Puerto Ricans

into office to change our plight. **Major** focus is also placed on the need to create community controlled institutions to serve our people independent from the city, state and federal governments. These are the institutions that will change our conditions, not perpetuate them.

I was arrested on June 29th, 1983 along with three compañeros and charged with "**sedition conspiracy.**" It is a ridiculous charge when placed against Puerto Ricans because Puerto Rico is not a part of the federal state. The charge only creates the illusion that we are a part of the U.S. and therefore an internal problem. Puerto Rico is a colony, therefore, it is an international issue of a people struggling against colonialism. I am a political prisoner and presently free on \$25,000 bond. I have re-integrated myself in the movement to continue struggling for the independence of my homeland.

**“Only through a prolonged,
determined and fierce armed struggle
will the United States be
forced to pull out of Puerto Rico.”**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHY DO YOU WANT AN INDEPENDENT PUERTO RICO ?

After 85 years of North American colonialism, the only solution is national independence and socialism.

In 1898, the Puerto Rican people controlled and owned 93% of the land. We enjoyed some semblance of sovereignty with the Autonomous Charter of 1897 granted by Spain.

On July 25, 1898, North American imperialism violated our sovereignty through military conquest. Since that time it has exerted absolute control over the political, economic, social and cultural life of the Puerto Rican people. All decisions concerning our future are made in Washington to benefit the U.S. ruling class, not in San Juan as we are made to believe.

At present, the supermilitarization and the announcement of the Plan 2020, which envision turning our island into eleven industrial/military complexes by the year 2020, demonstrate yankee imperialism's intentions: the physical destruction of our homeland.

The Puerto Rican people have resisted U.S. colonial domination and aggression. In order to silence our demand for independence the U.S. has resorted to brute military force and a conscious program of genocide.

This has manifested itself in massacres, assassinations and incarcerations, the forced emigration of our people to the ghettos of Amerika, the sterilization of 40% of the Puerto Rican women and 20 percent of the men. We have been forced to fight in imperialist wars due to the imposition of U.S. citizenship.

The colonizers have attempted to destroy all symbols of nationhood; the Puerto Rican flag, our national anthem, our language and culture are just a few examples.

The only alternative for Puerto Rico to control its own resources and national identity is through independence. It will only be through independence that we may join the free nations of the world, and this will only be achieved through people's war and revolutionary struggle.

WHY DO YOU WANT A SOCIALIST PUERTO RICO ?

Socialism is the only system that will begin to address and resolve the social and economic problems of our society.

In Puerto Rico, we presently have a 40% unemployment rate, 80% of our population receives welfare assistance and the rate of illiteracy is very high. The Puerto Rican people have the highest rate of infant mortality, alcoholism and suicide. Health care and a viable housing program are virtually non-existent.

This has been the case because United States imperialism has imposed upon us a capitalist/colonial system that benefits the U.S. ruling class and a small comprador bourgeoisie.

This system of class oppression and exploitation has been successfully combatted and transformed in other socialist countries such as Cuba, Vietnam and presently in a liberated Nicaragua.

The only alternative for Puerto Rico is the abolition of capitalism and the construction of socialism.

Socialism is the changing of relations among men, a society where the instruments and means of production are owned by the working class. The working class also become the owners and distributors of production.

All aspects of society are reorganized for the benefit of all the people. For example, education becomes a fundamental right and not a privilege. Education is not an abstract process, but is incorporated with work experience to enhance our appreciation of nature and human life.

Free health care is established throughout the country, based not on profit motives but on a genuine concern for the mental and physical well-being of the people.

In Puerto Rico, this would mean the establishment of a true democracy, the rule by the many.

WHY IS ARMED STRUGGLE THE ONLY ROAD TO FOLLOW IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE AND SOCIALISM ?

In order to understand the primacy of armed struggle over other forms of struggle, we must recognize certain realities. We must recognize that Puerto Rico is a colony, an intervened nation, and we must recognize the importance that our island has in the overall U.S. strategy to maintain its hegemony in the Americas.

The U.S. invaded Puerto Rico in 1898 and usurped the political, economic and social life of the island. In reaction to resistance by the Puerto Rican people, the U.S. has reformed the colonial-political system, but true political and economic control is still jealously held by the U.S. capitalist class.

Colonialism is the subjugation by the capitalist class of one country over all the peoples and natural resources of another. That capitalist class, as history has shown us, will not relinquish that power without a bloody and determined struggle. In a colonial relationship where the antagonism is of a class and national character, that struggle is elevated to its most brutal and naked form.

Puerto Rico has the added dimension that at the time the U.S. imposed its colonial rule, our island had reached a level of nationhood. Spain was forced to recognize Puerto Rico's nationhood by granting the island the Autonomous Charter of 1897. Puerto Rico had entered into a process of decolonization which was terminated by the U.S. invasion. Although the U.S. destroyed the island's national economy, embarked on a ruthless program of genocide

and usurped the political rights of Puerto Ricans, our island today still has a psychological, cultural, religious, linguistic and spiritual separation from the colonizing power. In other words, Puerto Rico still maintains its nationhood. As a nation, Puerto Rico has the moral and political right to wage armed resistance against the foreign occupiers.

We can probably find no better description of the importance that U.S. imperialism places on its continued colonial rule over Puerto Rico than a statement by Jeanne Kirkpatrick, a leading ideologue of imperialism. She states, "*Puerto Rico is neither a domestic nor an international matter. It is a geopolitical bastion of the United States.*" When we look at the increased militarization in Puerto Rico and the implementation of Plan 2020 this statement is clearly substantiated.

What all this represents is that Puerto Rico is an intervened nation where the colonizing power holds absolute authority over its destiny. Puerto Rico is also the cornerstone of U.S. imperialism's strategy to maintain hegemony over Latin America and the Caribbean.

Only through a prolonged, determined and fierce armed struggle will the United States be forced to pull out of Puerto Rico. This does not mean that other forms of struggle are abandoned. War is an extension of politics; it is a method whereby the enemy is forced to comply with your political demands. All other forms of struggle can be waged as long as they prepare the necessary psychological, moral and material conditions for war. Puerto Rico will be free and socialist when the United States has been inflicted with such great injuries that it loses its will to continue the war in Puerto Rico.

WHAT IS SEDITIOUS CONSPIRACY ?

The charge of "**seditious conspiracy**" has its origins in the Alien and Sedition Act of 1798. It was used by the U.S. government to silence its opponents who were sympathetic with the French revolution. There was so much popular resentment against this law to suppress political dissent that it forced the government to pardon all those convicted of this charge. For over one hundred years, federal sedition laws were not used.

During the 1800s, confronted with slave insurrections, individual states implemented their own sedition laws. Many slaves who participated or planned to overthrow their white masters and become free were executed under these sedition laws.

The present day "**seditious conspiracy**" laws came into being in the early 1900s. They were used to silence anti-imperialists, particularly leaders and members of the International Workers of the World. The IWW, known as the "Wobblies," opposed U.S. involvement in World War I.

From 1937 to the present, "**seditious conspiracy**" has been used exclusively against the Puerto Rican independence movement. In 1937, it was used against the leadership of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. In 1954, it was used to silence the Nationalist Party after the heroic attack on Blair House in 1950 and on the U.S. Congress in 1954. In the last

several years it has been used against Puerto Rican revolutionaries captured in the United States and accused of being members of the **FALN**.

The charge of "**sedition conspiracy**" is the "*agreement among two or more to oppose the authority of the U.S. government by force.*" The interpretation of this law can be so broad and vague that it affords the U.S. government a handy tool to repress the Puerto Rican independence movement. No actual violent act is necessary to charge someone with this offense.

The U.S. government has declared that the struggle for Puerto Rican independence is an act of sedition which carries a 20 year sentence. "**Seditious conspiracy**" is a crime of thought and represents one of the broadest and severest laws of political repression in the world. It is an affront to international views on the right of political dissent and the right to fight colonialism.

WHY IS SEDITIOUS CONSPIRACY THE IMPOSSIBLE CRIME ?

In a recent newspaper article, Don Juan Antonio Corretjer, in his usual eloquent simplicity, called "**sedition conspiracy**" the "*impossible crime.*" There are three basic reasons why this charge cannot be applied to Puerto Ricans fighting for the independence of their nation.

The law of Sedition, from which **sedition conspiracy** originated is the "*... raising of commotions and disturbances in the state; it is a revolt against legitimate government. . .*" The key terms in this passage are "**state**" - "**legitimate government.**"

In looking at the question of "**state**" we must first recognize that Puerto Rico is not part of the federal state. All three branches of the United States' government recognize the unique status that Puerto Rico has with the United States. In 1922, the Supreme Court declared that Puerto Rico "*belongs to, but is not part of, the United States.*" Since sedition implies the opposition to the authority of a state by its citizens, and Puerto Ricans are not part of that state and citizenship has been imposed on them against their consent, then **sedition conspiracy** cannot be used against Puerto Rican freedom fighters.

The term "**legitimate government**" means the right of a nation/state to exercise sovereignty over its citizens. The United States does not have sovereignty over Puerto Rico, meaning legitimate and freely accepted authority over the island. Puerto Rico became a possession of the United States through an act of war and military occupation. The continuation of U.S. control over Puerto Rico is accomplished through absolute North American domination of its political and economic life and ultimately rests on military force. This status is against the expressed will of the Puerto Rican people who have waged armed struggle to end this relationship.

Puerto Rico is both a colony of the United States as well as a militarily intervened nation. Puerto Ricans have the legal, moral and political right and obligation to oppose this relationship by any means necessary. The use of armed struggle by colonial subjects

to end colonialism has historical precedent and is recognized as legitimate by the international community.

It follows from these stated facts that Puerto Ricans who struggle to free their country, a legitimate political right, cannot be criminally prosecuted by the colonizing power for exercising that right.

The following is an interview with Political Prisoner José Luis Rodríguez, conducted by the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War.

GIVEN YOUR AGE, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE TASK OF PUERTO RICAN YOUTH ?

I believe that Puerto Rican youth must involve themselves in the day to day struggle to liberate our homeland from yankee imperialism. As a result of the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, decisions that affect our lives and society economically and politically, are determined by the occupying power.

We must keep in mind that in 1917, the U.S. imposed the Jones Act on Puerto Ricans, making us United States citizens. This act in itself is an attempt to deny us our true identity as a people. In particular it is an act which has been directed against Puerto Rican youth. It was because of this act that our youth was drafted to fight in W.W.I. This has been repeated over and over again with W.W. II., Korea, Vietnam and now Lebanon.

The whole colonization process in Puerto Rico has been designed not only to exploit and oppress our people, but as a genocidal plan to eliminate us as a nation. The educational system only miseducates and confuses our youth. The indoctrination of bourgeois vices the rewards for many of those who complete an "education" and who are not conscious of being part of a nation. Being forced out of the alienating educational system only means the beginning of the lumpenization of our youth.

Miseducated, unemployed, alienated and idle, our youth is forced into the use of drugs, gang involvement and other vices that become increasingly difficult to combat and which only deny our movement future combatants.

As the imperialist crisis deepens, many of our youth are forced to join the U.S. military believing that they will acquire an education and job experience. In reality the only experience and education they receive is how to combat growing liberation movements of oppressed people. The future of any society depends on the youth. The future of our continuing struggle to liberate our homeland and for the construction of socialism also depends on the ability of our youth to accept the challenge and move forward.

Puerto Rican youth must be conscious and clear about what problems affect our homeland and understand why they exist in order to struggle against them. There is no future for our youth, our people, our nation under capitalism. Yankee imperialism does not give up

anything, it only strips and robs us, and it robs our nation of the most precious element of nature, our youth, who fight and die for U.S. imperialism, in short -- for nothing. We should ask ourselves, what do we have? To be honest, we have a nation that must be free.

WHY IS THE U.S. WAGING SUCH A FIERCE ATTACK ON THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT AND ITS SUPPORTERS AT THIS PARTICULAR HISTORICAL JUNCTURE ?

The material base has always existed in Puerto Rico for our people to struggle to reclaim our national sovereignty. In 1898, the U.S. occupied and colonized Puerto Rico. This invasion was violent, as have been all imperialist invasions.

The U.S. invasion was met with resistance by the *Aguila Blanca*, a guerrilla army which had fought the yankee colonizers for over two years. By the early 1900s, this guerrilla army was almost non-existent a result of the balance of forces at that historical moment. The next three decades led to the United States consolidation of Puerto Rico as a colonial possession economically, politically and militarily.

The issue of independence was brought to its height in the 1930s with Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party. The next two decades were great examples of revolutionary struggle. Politically, the Nationalist Party put into practice the concept of **RETRAIMIENTO** (non-recognition of the colonial power) and used armed struggle to rid our homeland of yankee colonialism.

The strategy of the U.S. at that time was two fold: (1) to repress the revolutionary movement in order to annihilate any and all sentiment of independence and (2) to encourage the development of reformist leaders, who would serve yankee imperialism without questioning the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States.

The rearguard struggle developed after the heroic actions of the *Grito de Jayuya*, the attack on Blair House and the attack on Congress. The latter actions opened up a new front of struggle for the Puerto Rican people. We must add that after these actions, the repressive apparatus of the United States was successful in destroying the Nationalist Party. However, this did not destroy the aspirations and will of our people to be free.

Sectors of the independence movement reevaluated past forms of struggle and recognized that yankee imperialism would destroy any movement for independence. A new strategy had to be developed to guarantee the survival of our just movement.

In the late 60s, we saw the emergence of the new movement for Puerto Rican independence. The Young Lords Organization was a militant and revolutionary group which organized the Puerto Rican community around issues that affected our daily lives and linked them with the cause of colonialism. There was also the emergence of two clandestine

formations **CAL (Comandos Armados de Liberación)** and **MIRA (Movimiento de Independencia Revolucionario Armado)** which raised the independence movement to a higher level of struggle. These two organizations were the impetus for the formation of five political-military organizations operating in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico. These organizations, the **FALN, FARP, EPB—Macheteros, OVRP** and the **CRP** are guided by a Marxist-Leninist ideology and fight from clandestinity.

Geo-politically, Puerto Rico is economically and militarily strategic to U.S. imperialism. There are two reasons for this: (1) U.S. imperialism is in a crisis from which it has been unable to recover. The North American bourgeoisie has chosen to dig their trenches in Latin America as is evidenced by the invasion of Grenada and the attacks upon the Nicaraguan revolution. (2) The U.S. is in the process of stripping our nation of its natural resources. Plan 2020 is a plan to convert Puerto Rico into 11 industrial parks, to provide the yankees precious metals for the continuing development of its war machinery. This is to be done at the cost of our people and our nation. Puerto Rico will thus become a terreplain unfit for human habitation. Puerto Rico is becoming the center of this retrenchment. The transferring of the School of the Americas from Panama to Puerto Rico, the reopening of Ramey Air Force Base, the construction of 17 National Guard Garrisons in the center of the island, the training of armies of other Caribbean nations in Puerto Rico, all point to this fact. The increasing militarization of our nation as a springboard to quash any struggle of popular resistance reinforces this proposition.

In order for the U.S. to continue with its imperialist plans, it must reduce the revolutionary sector to a level of impotence. The assassination, incarceration and intimidation of our people is the policy that is being used. Yankee imperialism understands the historical ties that our people have with the people of Latin America. The destruction of 9 fighter jets at Muñiz Air Base, ready to be used in El Salvador was an action carried out by the Macheteros and an example of the revolutionary movement's love and solidarity for the peoples of Latin America.

Foreign domination means genocide. The invasion of our homeland and continual colonization has been and is a violent one. The yankee bourgeoisie has determined that they will fight tooth and nail to continue colonizing Puerto Rico. They have opted for the physical liquidation of the revolutionary independence movement.

The response of our people must be to accept the challenge and counter that force with revolutionary struggle -- to bring the war home, here in the U.S. where the bourgeoisie lives comfortably. We must prepare ourselves for a prolonged struggle to fight with all our passion and audacity to make their lives miserable.

WHY DID YOU TAKE THE POSITION OF POLITICAL PRISONER ?

There are two reasons, first and foremost it was a collective decision made by my three compañeros and myself. This decision is based on the understanding that all Puerto Ricans

may not necessarily become Prisoners of War, but definitely all Puerto Ricans may become Political Prisoners. This is determined by the historical juncture that the movement has reached. All those who struggle in clandestinity, either are engaged in political work or armed action or both. Regardless, what is of the utmost importance is the development of a clandestine mentality, one which will move the independence movement from where it can be seen, to where the enemy can no longer see it, but can only feel the movement. In essence, what the movement possesses is a sword and shield.

As a political prisoner. I am a shield that protects and defends the life of our revolutionary movement. The sword, our combatants attack the enemy where it can be felt, according to a timetable; determined by the material conditions, never on the defensive, a position determined by the enemy but always on the offensive. We are the arms of a body that once synthesized in history is natural and becomes one.

Secondly, it is a position taken not because I am defending myself, but one taken to defend the right of my people to be free. At no point should we have faith in this criminal empire's legal system. Having faith in the system leads one to believe that there is justice. This is an illusion.

DON'T YOU THINK THE POSITION OF POLITICAL PRISONER CONTRADICTS THE POSITION OF RETRAIMIENTO ?

No. The independence movement is not at the level where mass struggle and armed struggle have reached an equilibrium. The existence of public revolutionary organizations and of political prisoners are a result of the historical juncture that we find ourselves in. The public organizations exist because of the need to explain the armed actions to the masses. The armed struggle has not reached the level where a guerrilla army can take over a radio station and mobilize the masses to a national strike. Although the clandestine movement has engaged in armed propaganda, this has not been enough. The public organizations themselves work with the masses in raising their consciousness in support of the armed struggle. This can be done once the masses begin to overcome their fears. Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal stated, "*When you struggle for something just, there is nothing to fear.*"

The U.S. will be forced, by increasing deteriorating economic conditions in Puerto Rico and the militancy of the independence movement, to limit the legal perimeters. There will be many more political prisoners. Fascism is further developing and consolidating. Civil liberties are being curtailed as evidenced by the use of criminal contempt and anonymous juries in the case of the five **MLN** grand jury resisters.

Those of us who are struggling in the above ground movement, are targets of the vicious and merciless attacks of the state. No longer will there be those who struggle by choice, many will struggle out of necessity. Once armed struggle and mass struggle have become consolidated where the entire population is mobilized in a prolonged struggle, there will no longer be the need for the public movement. The vanguard will have emerged. Until that time, we have to protect the movement, even if it means our freedom or our lives.

DECLARATIONS TO THE COURT

BY

EDWIN CORTES,

ALEJANDRINA TORRES

AND

ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ

“ we will continue to resist colonialism until death do us part.”

—Edwín Cortès

I have assumed the position as a Prisoner of War based on the following historical reasons. Puerto Rico is a Latin American nation with its own national territory, language, social and cultural makeup. It has a distinct national character.

The colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States begins on July 25, 1898, when the United States military forces invaded Puerto Rico and toppled its duly elected government.

This act of war violated the Charter of Autonomy of 1897, which conferred upon the nation of Puerto Rico full sovereign powers. It also began a process of decolonization.

On December 10, 1898, Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States in the Treaty of Paris. This treaty is illegal since it was negotiated without the consultation or representation of the Puerto Rican people.

In order to consolidate its colonial control of Puerto Rico, the United States Congress passed the Foraker Act of 1900. This act replaced military rule with a civilian colonial administration. The governors were appointed by the United States President as a reward. Puerto Rico was subjected to all U.S. laws. Puerto Rico could not make treaties with other nations.

In 1917, the United States Congress

passed the Jones Act. This act imposed citizenship on the Puerto Rican people against our will and against the decision of the Puerto Rican House of Delegates. Puerto Ricans were used as cannonfodder for imperialist wars beginning with World War I. It is important to note that prior to the military invasion, the Puerto Rican people owned 93 percent of the land and had their own currency. They had a self-sufficient agricultural economy with sugar cane, tobacco and coffee as profitable exports.

After the invasion, our land was literally robbed, our currency devalued and replaced with the American dollar and our economy was destroyed. By 1928 four U.S. corporations own 80 percent of the sugar industry and other arable land was used for military bases.

During the 1930s through the 1950s a strong independence and labor movement emerged in Puerto Rico to resist colonialism. The Nationalist Party and its leadership were annihilated by the U.S. government's armed and repressive forces. Thus the United States embarked upon a new economic and political plan to transform Puerto Rico.

In the 1940s, it implemented Operation Bootstrap. Our economy was transformed from a one crop sugar economy and light industry to an economy based on heavy

industry (pharmaceutical and petrochemical plants) which required highly technical workers. This plan did not improve our economic conditions. Its results were an unemployment rate of 40 percent, the sterilization of 40 percent of all Puerto Rican women of child bearing age and the forced emigration of half of our population to the slums of the United States, where they are subjected to social and institutionalized racism.

In this country, Puerto Ricans have the highest level of unemployment, the lowest per capita income, the highest rate of infant mortality, the highest percentage of school dropouts and other social ills such as alcoholism and drug addiction. This clearly depicts a successful policy of genocide.

In 1948, the United States Congress passed the Muzzle Law 53, which made it a crime to advocate independence. This is similar to the charge of "seditious conspiracy."

In 1950, Public Law 600 was passed, which converted Puerto Rico into the so-called "Free Associated State". This was an act to disguise the imposition of military rule. The United States still maintained com-

plete political and economic domination of Puerto Rico.

In 1953, under threats of economic blackmail, the United States forced the United Nations to take Puerto Rico off the list of its colonial territories.

By the close of the 1970s one fifth of all U.S. investment in the Third World, and one-third of its investment in Latin America, was in Puerto Rico. Today U.S. capital controls 80 percent of Puerto Rico's manufacturing, 60 percent of its banking, and 90 percent of its industrial imports.

Puerto Rico is a captive market for U.S. goods, it produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce.

It is clear that none of the economic or political models implemented by the United States have resolved the problems of Puerto Rico. Our problems have increased ten fold.

Today a new economic model called the 2020 Plan, named for the year of its inception, will bring the total destruction of Puerto Rico. However, we will continue to resist colonialism until death do us part.

**"As imperial repression heightens, so will our resistance.
It is our only means of survival."**

—Alejandrina Torres

Colonialism is first and foremost a system that relies upon force — a military conquest by an imperialist power to impose an economic-political-social order upon an oppressed nation disregarding the historic

values of the subjugated people. It is this antagonistic relationship that brings about necessary confrontation between two violent forces — the dominating force with its army and police, and the colony in response to

the systematic and escalating repression.

In his book, the **Struggle for the Independence of Puerto Rico**, Juan Antonio Corretjer indicates:

Certainly when the fleet bombarded our capital in May, 1898, Puerto Ricans had committed no violence against the government, when they entered at Guanica, Puerto Ricans had committed no violence that could justify their violence. Keeping our country in their hands by force of arms, the kidnapping of our sovereignty, the attempt to destroy our language and our culture — these are acts of violence committed by imperialism that resorts to violence, murder and massacre, prison and exile each time the Puerto Ricans begin a new stage of struggle in defense of the country.

Our history is full of examples of resistance by the Puerto Rican people against colonial aggression.

The U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898, was met with resistance by small bands of guerrillas whose only weapon was the machete in comparison to the military strength of the invading forces. However, this did not wane their determination. These small bands of rebels spread to different parts of the island and on August 13, 1898, Puerto Rican patriots proclaimed the second Republic of Puerto Rico in Ciales. (The first was proclaimed in Lares under Spanish colonial rule in 1868).

The Foraker Act of 1900 replaced military rule with a garrison regime of appointed military governors for the next twenty years. The popular resistance became even greater with the imposition of stringent

restrictions on all aspects of Puerto Rican society, especially on its culture, economy and national identity.

The Jones Act of 1917 imposed U.S. citizenship on Puerto Ricans. This idea was debated as early as 1900 and was opposed by several senators, and the House of Delegates, at that time the only body elected by the Puerto Rican people. It was finally passed before World War I as it included mandatory conscription in the military service of the U.S. armed forces. In 1922, the second class nature of the imposed citizenship was revealed when the Supreme Court ruled that "Puerto Rico belonged to but was not part of the United States."

Significant organization and leadership emerged as the Puerto Ricans continued their resistance against U.S. colonial rule. The nationalist movement was organized in 1922 and reached its peak in the 30s under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party whose policy of **Retraimiento** espoused non-collaboration with the colonial regime including its military service.

Repression began to intensify and in 1935, under orders from Governor Blanton Winship, Puerto Rican police opened fire at a Nationalist Party rally killing four persons. (This became known as the Rio Piedras Massacre). In response to this attack, the U.S. Chief of Police, Colonel Francis Riggs was executed by two Nationalists who were also killed at the police station in Rio Piedras.

In 1936, Albizu Campos, Juan A. Corretjer and the whole governing board of the Nationalist Party were imprisoned on charges of **sedition conspiracy**.

In 1937, Puerto Rican police, again under orders from Governor Winship opened fire at a peaceful demonstration in Ponce killing 21 persons and wounding 150 more —

mostly women and children. This brutal attack became known as the Ponce Massacre.

In 1947, Albizu Campos secured observer status from the United Nations and had Puerto Rico placed on the list of colonial territories.

Also in 1947, the Jones Act of 1917 was amended to allow the Puerto Rican people to elect their own governor for the first time since the U.S. invasion in 1898.

The Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act of 1950 allowed the people of Puerto Rico to draft their own constitution to pave the way for U.S. Law 600 which would give the colony a new guise with its new "Commonwealth" status.

As the repression intensified during the 40s, 50s, and 60s, so did the resistance. Upon learning of a secret meeting between Governor Muñoz Marin and the U.S. Secretary of Defense with the purpose of destroying the Nationalist Party, armed attacks were carried out in various cities by the Nationalists. In Jayuya, the Police headquarters was seized and the first free territory of the Republic was proclaimed there on October 30, 1950. The U.S. media projected it as a civil war between Puerto Ricans when in reality U.S. military forces were massively involved, wounding hundreds and arresting and incarcerating over 3,000.

In response to the false accounts that were given by the media, the Nationalist Party extended the cry for independence to the heart of the empire to bring to the attention of the American people what was really happening in Puerto Rico. On November 1, 1950, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola went to see the President of the U.S. and in the attempt Torresola, along with a secret service agent, was killed and Collazo seriously wounded. Collazo served 29 years in prison. That date marked the beginning of the rear-

guard struggle of the Puerto Rican revolutionary independence movement inside the borders of the dominating power.

In 1954 the attention of the world was again focused on the true nature of the new colonial status when on March 1, U.S. based Nationalists Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores and Andres Figueroa Cordero attacked the U.S. House of Representatives wounding 5 congressmen. They were imprisoned for over 25 years — Cordero died of cancer due to medical neglect.

In 1954, the leader of the Nationalist Party Pedro Albizu Campos was once more arrested and imprisoned on charges of "**sedition conspiracy**" and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

1967-69 marked the emergence of the revolutionary clandestine organizations in Puerto Rico and in the United States (**CAL & MIRA**).

During the 1970s, the people of Culebra organized a resistance movement in response to the U.S. Navy's constant bombing of their island.

Five revolutionary clandestine organizations; the **CRP**, **OVRP**, **FARP** and the **Macheteros** also emerged in Puerto Rico during this period. Meanwhile, the **FALN** have assumed responsibility for over 100 armed actions in the United States to date.

The struggle of the people of Vieques also intensified and continues today in response to the U.S. Navy's occupation of 75 percent of their small island for naval bases and the use of its shores for bombing practices. Many confrontations have taken place but the most significant was the takeover of the United States' Camp García. In May of 1979, twenty one persons were arrested, seven of whom were tried and

sentenced to six month prison terms in the U.S. federal prisons.

On November 11, 1979, Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal, a member of the **Liga Socialista Puertorriqueña** and one of the seven arrested in Vieques, was found hung in his cell at the federal penitentiary in Tallahassee, Florida. In retaliation for his murder, a coordinated attack on a Navy personnel bus was carried out in Sabana Seca by a combined revolutionary strike force. The attack, which took place on December 2, 1979, left two technicians dead and ten others wounded.

The Federal Grand Jury is one of the aspects of the current wave of repression expressly directed at isolating and destroying the revolutionary independence forces who stand in the way of U.S. efforts to deal with the current economic and political crisis of its commonwealth status. It is used as an information gathering device and to imprison independentistas and activists for refusing to talk. In 1982, a new strategy

was devised by the Department of Justice to charge Grand Jury resisters with contempt of court, a charge that carries a maximum sentence of up to life imprisonment in comparison to the previous maximum sentence of 18 months for civil contempt. Between 1975-77, 10 persons (6 in New York and 4 in Chicago) were imprisoned for refusal to collaborate with a Federal Grand Jury investigating the independence movement. Between 1978-1981, the Grand Jury exiled four Puerto Ricans from their homeland to serve sentences in the U.S. At present, four members of the **Movimiento de Liberación Nacional** and another Puerto Rican activist are awaiting a Court of Appeals decision on their case.

The continued pattern of repression and resistance is the real aspect of colonialism. We understand that repression will be constant although it may vary according to the course of the political struggle. As imperial repression heightens so will our resistance. It is our only means of survival.

“This is why Puerto Rican men and women of conscience and courage risk everything to end this genocide and free Puerto Rico from colonial rule.”

—Alberto Rodríguez

The U.S. government is implementing a comprehensive military and industrial policy for Puerto Rico which will completely trans-

form the island. This project called Plan 2020, envisions that between the years 1985 and 2020, Puerto Rico will be transformed into a

military-industrial complex unlike any other in the world. Plan 2020 calls for the mining of strategic minerals in the central mountains of Puerto Rico, the establishment of eleven industrial parks, and the expansion of the present U.S. military presence on the island to 17 military bases circling the island's coastline.

According to Plan 2020, open-pit or strip mining will be utilized to extract strategic minerals from Puerto Rican soil. These strategic minerals such as nickel, cobalt, chromium, manganese and copper are important in the manufacture of weapons, especially aircrafts and nuclear bombs. These mining sites, which already number 17, are in the preparatory stage. Road construction from coast areas to the mining sites have already begun. This year alone, 150 million dollars in loans and grants have been earmarked by the U.S. government for mineral exploration and studies. Two mining sites have already been deforested.

This type of mining will have a disastrous effect on the ecology of Puerto Rico. The open-pit mining alone would create enormous craters 2,000 feet deep and a mile wide. It is expected that 7.3 million tons of earth would be removed leaving behind vast barren deserts. Eighty percent of the island's fresh water supply will be contaminated. The U.S. Corps of Engineers are presently constructing two massive dams and other waterworks to supply the large amounts of water that these mining operations require. This rerouting of Puerto Rico's natural waterways, especially its underground rivers, will create wastelands where lush vegetation exists today. Unuseable ore will be dumped into the sea after it has been mixed with chemicals to extract the mineral content from the rock. This will seriously disrupt the balance of nature and raise the temperature of the surrounding ocean by ten percent.

A second component of Plan 2020 is the creation of eleven industrial parks. These parks will be involved in the processing of minerals mined in Puerto Rico as well as other areas. Petro-chemical and pharmaceutical companies, some of which already have plants on the island, will also be part of these parks. The benefit of these plants operating on the island is that since Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, local government will have no jurisdiction over these industries, while at the same time, they are exempt from labor, safety and environmental laws which regulate U.S. factories.

The ecological and human damage caused by these industrial parks will be enormous. At present due to pharmaceutical and petrochemical plants belching pollution into the air and water, serious health hazards exist on the island. Over 2,000 young children are suffering early sexual development due to high estrogen levels in the air. Fifteen percent of all second grade children in the town of Barceloneta are mentally retarded due to contamination from nearby pharmaceutical plants. Elderly people suffer high levels of cancer, heart and lung ailments.

A third and important part of Plan 2020 is the super-militarization of the island, adding to the already heavy military presence. Since 1898, Puerto Rico has been an important outpost for the U.S. military. This is due to its geographic location which makes it ideal to control important sea lanes and launch interventions in other Caribbean and Central American nations.

Plan 2020 entails the expansion of Roosevelt Roads, already the largest U.S. naval base in the world. Thirteen percent of the best lands are occupied by U.S. bases. The island of Vieques forms an important part of the Roosevelt Roads naval base. Vieques is a small island which is part of Puerto Rico and

lies to its immediate east. Despite the fierce opposition of its 7,000 inhabitants, the U.S. Navy has occupied more than 2/3 of the island. It is used primarily for military exercises and bombardment practice with live ammunition. In 1981, a military exercise called Ocean Venture 81 was conducted in Vieques. An invasion of Cuba and Grenada was simulated in this exercise. Using this experience, the U.S. military illegally and criminally invaded the island-nation of Grenada several weeks ago.

In conjunction with these plans the U.S. intends to transfer powerful communication towers from Panama to Puerto Rico, expand the size and role of the national guard, place nuclear weapons on the island and after 10 years, re-open Ramey Air Force Base.

One of the most salient results of Plan 2020 will be the drastic depopulation of the island. Plan 2020 requires that by the year 2020, the population of Puerto Rico will be reduced from over four million to 1.5 million people. This depopulation will be achieved by forced emigration from the island to the U.S. and sterilization. It is estimated that

within the next five years 146,000 Puerto Ricans will leave the island.

On the sterilization front, U.S. "family planning programs" have already sterilized forty percent of all women of child-bearing age and twenty five percent of the men. Plan 2020 calls for the acceleration of this number even though Puerto Rico now has the highest rate of sterilization in the world. 17 villages located in mining areas are experiencing zero growth rates.

While Plan 2020 has a futuristic sound, it is a present threat and reality. U.S. policy toward Puerto Rico has always had as its goal the destruction of the national character of Puerto Rico. Plan 2020 takes this policy one step further, for it calls for the total destruction of the physical existence of the island and the elimination of its people.

While Plan 2020 may mean super profits and military security for the U.S., it represents genocide for Puerto Rico. This is why Puerto Rican men and women of conscience and courage, risk everything to end this genocide and free Puerto Rico from colonial rule.

Political Prisoner José Luis Rodríguez delivered the following speech on October 30, 1983, at an activity commemorating the 33rd anniversary of the Grito de Jayuya.

“...when I made the commitment to struggle and defend my people three years ago, I was clear about what would happen and what the consequences of my participation would be.”

—Jose Luíś Rodríguez

Greetings to all of you who are here this afternoon. Today we are commemorating the Grito de Jayuya and also a new strategy of struggle—prolonged armed struggle in the rear-guard.

Our case, the case of the 4, is part of the international case of Puerto Rico. The enemy, now, as in the past, is trying to destroy the revolutionary movement. To do this, the yankees are trying to intimidate our people and our struggle.

I am a political prisoner and a defendant in this case. I am defending the right of my people to be free. The enemy will try to use this position against my comrades, against the movement. They want to hold back the political work, they want to create divisions and destroy the revolutionary movement. It is very important that we understand that we do not control the legal elements, but we do control the political elements. We cannot have faith in this legal system. We have to have faith in the Puerto Rican people, in the capacity of our people to be free.

I am young. I am 22 years old and when I made the commitment to struggle and to defend my people three years ago, I was clear about what would happen and what were the consequences of my participation. I know that our struggle is just, the enemy cannot deny it no matter how much they try.

Everything that is happening in the world has an explanation. There are only two world systems, capitalism and socialism. We have to decide which system we are going to defend. Capitalism is a system that oppresses humanity; socialism is a system that humanizes. I am a socialist and part of the historical process that battles against imperialism. I am not in Beirut or Grenada like other young men defending imperialism. I am not part of this capitalist system that oppresses the entire world.

If the state puts me in jail or kills me, history will recognize that I was part of that human liberation process and that I defended my beloved homeland, hand and fist against imperialism.

We have to study the world and nature, the victories and errors of other movements. We have to internalize and apply them in our lives. We have to support the FALN and the other clandestine formations in Puerto Rico. They represent the best example of the Puerto Rican people in struggle.

Imperialism is in crisis. Each day this system becomes more repressive. Fascism is developing and the preparations for a Third World War are being realized. We cannot wait. We must continue moving forward, bringing the independence movement to the highest possible

level. We can be sure that in Puerto Rico -- as in Latin America -- the armed struggle is being prepared.

Puerto Rico is part of a world process, an inevitable historical process. Our homeland is a colony and it is on the road to decolonization. We should understand North American imperialism so that we can understand why there is an FALN in the rearguard as part of the anti-colonial process.

The revolutionary movement has an appointment with imperialism. This time we will not postpone it.

UNTIL VICTORY ALWAYS!
LONG LIVE FREE AND SOCIALIST PUERTO RICO!