

## PUERTO RICO RICO DECADE 70

### A Summary Evaluation Of Political Development



Lorenzo Homar

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## THE POLITICAL OPTIONS

The great political achievement of the P.P.D. (Partido Popular Democratic) was the creation of expectations of "progress" and "eventual" political freedom that united a great number of Puerto Ricans for almost thirty years. The unrealized expectations were to cause its eventual downfall.

Luis Munoz Marin was the driving force behind this broad reformist movement. He was the first elected governor of the "Commonwealth" and undisputed leader of the party. In a brilliant political accomplishment Munoz was able in the early forties to rally behind him both the impoverished farm laborers and the "independentistas" in a coalition whose rallying cry was "Bread, Land, and Freedom".

When the decision to give total tax exemption to American companies as a means of attracting industry was made, the era of "progress" began. Almost simultaneously the more staunch "independentistas" dropped out of the party and accused Munoz of cowardice in his dealings with Washington and treason against the independence cause. They formed the "Partido Independentista Puertorriqueno" under the leadership of Gilberto Concepcion de Gracia. The new party did not greatly undermine Munoz's rural base of support, however the "independentistas" did come in second in the 1952 elections as well as those of 1956.

### TEMPORARY BOOM DECEPTIVE

The establishment of public corporations to build facilities to supply the island with water, sewers, electricity and roads as well as of a number of public services such as health, "welfare" and the huge public education department brought about a boom in island life, at least on the surface.

On the other side of this coin the situation is very sad indeed. Most of the services and development were concentrated in the city of San Juan causing a deterioration of rural life and the decay of many small island towns. Lack of work and the government sponsored emigration program forced a third of the population to leave with the hope of "making some money and coming back". Today more Puerto Ricans live in New York alone than in San Juan. Some 30,000 migrant farm workers leave the island yearly for camps in New Jersey. Moreover, after nearly thirty years of "progress" the population has become economically polarized, with the great majority getting poorer because of inflation and low wages and a

small minority getting richer.

While services are very inefficient, long lines and tons of red tape keep the huge government bureaucracy occupied. The education system is inadequate, un-Puerto Rican and alienating to the extent that although there are many students enrolled they are also grossly undereducated. As Pablo Casals once said "We teach them to add and that the capital of France is Paris."

The political favoritism and moral bankruptcy of the leadership of the P.P.D. as well as the necessity for expanding the limited power of the "Commonwealth" caused the party to start reform movements and attempts to "culminate" the "Commonwealth" by giving it more power. Both attempts failed miserably. Infighting between Munoz's lieutenants divided the party when he stepped down, and this, along with a generalized disillusionment with "progress" that never materialized brought about the defeat of the party in the 1968 elections, although they were able to retain control of the Senate.

### THE NEW PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND STATEHOOD

The New Progressive Party is a relatively new political organization headed by the island's wealthiest man, Luis Ferre, who is now governor. The party was formed in 1967 to support Statehood in that year's plebiscite on the island's status. It has so many former members of the defunct Statehood Republican Party (including Ferre) that it is considered to be essentially the same party with another name.

### THE PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE PARTY (P.I.P.)

The gross mistreatment of the nationalists and the fact that 4,000 Puerto Ricans died in Korea gave the pacifistic Puerto Rican Independence Party a great many new votes, and in both the 1952 and 1956 elections it was the principal contender against the P.P.D. Slander campaigns and anti-communist hysteria were used against the P.I.P., and this fact, together with the loss of a whole generation of young people by emigration, greatly reduced its votes. The apparent prosperity of the late 50's took the wind out of the party, and in the 1960 election its candidate came in third. The same happened in 1964 and 1968. In the last two years the P.I.P. has moved from the strictly electoral existence it once had into more militant action and involvement in civil disobedience.

### THE PRO INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT (M.P.I.)

The Pro Independence Movement (Movimiento Pro Independencia) is a non-electoral organization which

believes that votes have not up to now solved Puerto Rican problems and will not do so in the future. The fact that many qualified voters do not vote suggests a disenchantment with and indifference to the electoral process, at least on the part of a large part of the population.

Coalitions between P.I.P. and M.P.I. as well as other groups have proven effective in dealing with issues such as the Vietnam war and the draft. In the last Lares celebration thousands of draft cards were publicly burned with complete impunity, and not a single independentista of the several thousands that have refused induction into the armed forces of the United States has been convicted.

## STATEHOOD

The downfall of the P.P.D. and the failure of the "Commonwealth" to provide either bread, land or freedom to the great majority of the population have caused the dividing of Puerto Ricans into two opposed camps: those who consider themselves Americans and want statehood, and those who consider themselves Puerto Ricans and want independence.

Statehood for Puerto Rico has been an issue since the 1898 invasion, and the idea has received much support from the American governors. In 1917 it received an added boost when the American Congress unilaterally declared Puerto Ricans to be American citizens.

In the extremely corrupt electoral politics of the 1930s' (votes were bought and sold for two dollars) the pro-statehood people dominated the political scene. But their submission to the whims of Washington, the sugar companies, and American governors, alienated many people who saw in statehood a valid alternative to open colonialism. This bad reputation was skillfully played against the pro-statehooders by the P.P.D., and only after the disappearance of the old Republican party did they have a chance of electoral victory.

The 1968 campaign was interesting in that the New Progressive Party did not include Statehood as a plank in its platform and hardly mentioned it at all. Rather, the party concentrated on playing on the frustrations of the great masses of discontented poor people and the heavily indebted middle class. With the rallying call of "This has got to change" they won the governorship and a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives by a narrow margin. Divisions in the P.P.D. aided their efforts, and huge amounts of money were utilized to build up an image of Ferre as the champion of the poor.

Although Governor Ferre now says that those who voted for him also voted for statehood, this is the subject of much controversy. Many political observers say that people wanted a change and that social reform, not statehood, was the main issue.

Right now the New Progressive Party is swinging

steadily to the right and government programs have achieved less than their desired effectiveness because of the "popular" bureaucracy which the new government has been unable to get rid of. The foremost social reformer of the party, Representative Cerezo, has had much of his power taken away because of his push for reform and his anti-war activity. This action has disaffected many of the younger reformists. With prices getting higher, inflation rising, and the industrialization program slacking off at an alarming rate, the following question is now on everyone's mind: What will happen to the P.N.P. if by 1972 it does not deliver some of the things it promised?

## THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

In the late 1940's Don Pedro Albizu Campos was released from the Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia. Immediately the Nationalist party got on its feet and started the process of denouncing the current regime. Albizu said that in his opinion Puerto Ricans (referring to the Commonwealth) were doing Washington's dirty work. Side by side with the party's re-organization, the repression of the party began.

The situation reached a climax in October, 1950, when police repression touched off uprisings all over the island. Martial law was declared and a hunt for the nationalists began. The towns of Jayuya and Utuado, where the second Republic of Puerto Rico had a short existence, were assaulted by airplanes and troops. People were detained and held incommunicado for months. Police, soldiers, and nationalists fought gun battles in the streets. Griselio Torresola and Oscar Collazo bought one way tickets to Washington and New York and attempted to kill President Truman. Those of the nationalists not killed were given stiff jail sentences, including Albizu Campos.

In 1954, a group of four nationalists opened fire on the House of Representatives in Washington. The final blow against the remaining nationalists came with the passage of the infamous "muzzle law", which made almost any kind of anti-government statement subject to prosecution.

The delicate balance of illusions and half-truths by which one could be both Puerto Rican and American has been shattered. It is getting increasingly harder to walk the tightrope of being a "Commonwealth". Governor Ferre has tried to use his position as governor to advance the cause of statehood. The "populares" are bewildered but taking positions on either side of the independence-statehood struggle in increasing numbers. The "independentistas" are getting more radical and have expanded their numbers four-fold in less than three years.

A new addition to this already explosive mixture is the existence of several underground "independentista" or-

ganizations that have burned an admitted 25 million dollars worth of American business property. Violence from the right has been responded to by the underground movements with the pledge that four Americans will die for every "independentista" who is killed. The police have been impotent to stop the bombings and are taking out their frustration on the "legal independentistas", thereby

contributing to their radicalization.

Culebra, the mines, the Vietnam war and the draft, repression from the right, and a whole new generation of young Puerto Ricans (more than half the population is under twenty-five) who are demanding a better future, all these elements are building up into a great storm, now approaching the horizon of Puerto Rican life.

\* \* \*

## THE ROAD TO LARES: PEDRO ALBIZU-CAMPOS

Harold J. Lidin

The body of the late nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos lies near the sea in the old San Juan cemetery. Above his grave fly two flags, one the white-starred Puerto Rican flag, the other the Lares flag. There are other graves in Puerto Rico deocrated by the same two flags.

The public buildings in Puerto Rico also carry two flags, but these banners are the Puerto Rican flag and the stars and stripes of the United States.

The sight of the Lares flag, a four-squared banner in red and blue with two crossed white bars, says a lot about the man who lies beneath it. It means he is a man who looked up into the mountains of Puerto Rico for his inspiration instead of looking north for his instructions.

### SYMBOL OF LARES

Such a man was Pedro Albizu Campos, who was sent to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia in 1937 for conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government in Puerto Rico by force and violence. This is the same man whose Nationalist Party followers tried to assassinate President Truman in 1950 at Blair House, and who did shoot several U.S. Congressmen in 1954 on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Circumstances being what they are in Puerto Rico, most men who sleep under the Lares flag died apparent failures. Albizu, who in the 1930's thought he might secure independence for Puerto Rico, lived to see his party, his program, and his prestige all crushed under the weight of a Washington-supported commonwealth government. By the time Albizu's agony ended in 1965, he was only a symbol of Lares. All he had left of his dream was his cross.

But this is how it is for those who take the road to Lares. The pragmatic leaders, those who win friends in Washington and succeed in politics, have been those who follow the path to autonomy or to statehood.

Lares is a central mountain town. Like other mountain towns nestled in the Cordillera Central, Lares is clean, cool, and coffee-scented. What makes Lares different, and dangerous, is that it is a "sanctuary—the altar of the fatherhood."

Lares is the place where a group of patriots revolted in 1868 against Spain, and declared the short-lived Republica de Puerto Rico. The revolt was quashed, but the story survived. Half a century later, in 1930, Albizu inaugurated annual pilgrimages to Lares, and when a few years later he set up a shadow government, he proclaimed it the legitimate continuation of the republic proclaimed in Lares.

Today, as in Albizu's heyday, Lares is the rallying point for those men who recognize that Puerto Rico is a nation culturally, and who insist it should become a nation in law and in fact.

In hoisting the banner of Lares, Albizu was also answering a cry that has echoed down the seven decades of U.S. presence in Puerto Rico. In 1898, when U.S. regiments seized Puerto Rico from Spain, an old man dying in his Paris exile said with impotent rage, "I don't want a colony, not under Spain, nor under the United States. What are the Puerto Ricans doing that they don't revolt?" The question was the last recorded utterance of Ramon E. Betances, the man who had sparked the Lares uprising.

### INSPIRED BY BETANCES

Albizu took his inspiration from Betances, but his actions were forged by the events of the 20th century. He came of age at the time of the Irish nationalist uprising, and he became a vital factor in Puerto Rican politics just as the great depression was settling its misery over the hovels that pimpled the green, U.S. owned canebrakes.

Born in 1891 in Ponce, he was the illegitimate son of a Spanish Basque who ignored him and of a negress who died in childbirth. Albizu was raised in the shadow of the secular culture that flourished with the U.S. occupation. One of his patrons was the Masonic Lodge "La Aurora". Another patron was Charles Terry, the Ponce superintendent of schools, who opened for him a door to the off-island world with a scholarship to the University of Vermont. There the mulatto's gifted mind quickly won the attention of his professors, one of whom obtained for

him a scholarship to Harvard.

While in Boston Albizu became fascinated with Irish Republican tactics, including the phase that involved terrorist assaults on London. In addition he acquired a fervent Catholicism. For the Puerto Rican, as for many an Irish patriot, the Catholic faith was part of the national culture, a spiritual glue bolstering the Puerto Rican "personalidad" against the Anglo-Saxon occupiers. The Boston-spawned interest in Catholicism renewed an allegiance to a church that Albizu had been born into but not reared in.

An elementary teacher at Albizu's school in Ponce recalls him as "good in all subjects, particularly anxious to perfect his English." The lady, who belonged to that vanguard of young U.S. teachers sent to Puerto Rico at the turn of the century for the express purpose of Americanizing the island youth, also remembers Albizu as "the most pro-American boy you could imagine." For the teacher, Albizu's subsequent turn against the U.S. was a tragedy. "It's just reprehensible—anyone who would go against the U.S.—you just don't go along with that . . ."

She believes that racism twisted Albizu from the "most pro-American boy you could imagine" into an angry revolutionary. One explanation why Albizu changed is the belief that racial snubs twisted his psyche. Some persons have blamed his appointment to a colored battalion in World War I while others speak of social rebuffs at Harvard.

The racial explanation, which was given a boost by the Literary Digest in the mid-thirties, has, for the U.S., the advantage of focusing on a sociological situation that the U.S. acknowledges as evil.

#### NO RACE VICTIM

To write Albizu off as a racial case glosses over what he considered the major evil that confronted him: The possession of Puerto Rico by the United States. *This* is a situation that the United States did not then, and does not now acknowledge as evil. Moreover, the men who knew Albizu best, those in conspiracy with him and who shared jail cells with him, insist that Albizu was never hung up on the racial issue. The fact that he was chosen to head the Harvard student delegation that received Irish leader Eamon de Valera in 1921, and that he was spokesman for the student body when poet Rabindranath Tagore visited Harvard, suggests that race could not have hobbled Albizu very much on campus.

It was not hate, racial or even political, that fueled the passion of Albizu. "He who hates," Albizu warned, "becomes a brute." As a nationalist, the maestro taught: "Race has nothing to do with biology . . .; race is the permanence of virtues and of characteristic institutions." The spirit of nationalism, in Albizu's view, "is the fountain of world brotherhood." This Albizu preached in the 1930's at the same time that certain European nationalists were crowing the superiority of a particular

race of men.

Albizu's fixation was "patria", not race. His obsession flowed from the belief that Puerto Rico is a nation unto itself, a community of persons formed within the same tradition, with one language, one faith, one identity.

This conviction Albizu took with him when the U.S. government put him and the other Nationalist Party leaders away in Atlanta in 1937. It was the tail end of the 1940's when Albizu returned; some of his magic had faded, but not his faith. When the 1950 nationalist uprising fizzled, and he was being led away again to jail, Albizu said—"the patria is passing through its *transfiguracion gloriosa*."

#### COLONY ON A LEASH

This man dwelt on the peaks. But most Puerto Ricans were searching for the green valleys. They preferred the security they thought Commonwealth could give, even though the creator of Commonwealth, Governor Luis Munoz Marin, had in an earlier day described autonomy as "a colony on a long leash."

As a Commonwealth the island of Puerto Rico has only a bit more autonomy than when it rates simple territorial status. Congress still makes the laws that provide the framework for the island's activities, and Puerto Rico still has no vote in the making of those laws. Nor has Puerto Rico any veto power over their extension to the island, in contrast to its position in the last days of Spanish rule.

Washington decides who can enter and leave the island, what can be imported and exported, and who can be heard and what can be said on island television and radio. Washington also decides when Puerto Ricans should go to war, whom they should fight, and how many years Puerto Ricans must serve in prison if they refuse to fight in U.S. wars. During World War II the Federal Court sentenced the draft resisters in the territory of Puerto Rico; during the Vietnam war they try resisters who live in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The names on the arrest orders change, but the orders are still issued by the same courts. And they are enforced by the same FBI. A federal judge can work with an easier conscience than before, for in adopting Commonwealth status in 1952, most of the people of Puerto Rico agreed that Washington should have these powers. It was the price Puerto Rico accepted for "security": economic, political, and military.

For 15 years most people have continued to approve Commonwealth status. But Vietnam has come, and unrest has come, and inflation has come, and the terrorist bombs, and a lot of scared tourists no longer come.

This is a time of uncertainty in Puerto Rico. Pride in Commonwealth has crumbled. Many persons have turned to the goal of statehood in pursuit of that evasive "security and dignity". Many others are turning to Lares.

And those who walk the road to Lares all sing on the way "Viva Albizu Campos".

Camuy, and Ponce. The job of the committees was to educate and organize Puerto Ricans for revolution. Puerto Ricans then lived in their own country as second-class citizens to Spain just like Puerto Ricans today live as second-class citizens to the U.S. The committees also educated Puerto Ricans that they have the right to rebel against the government when it is working against their interests which is what we tell our people today.

Out of the Lares committee came the flag of EL GRITO DE LARES and the national anthem, la Borinquena, written by Lola Rodriguez del Tio whose revolutionary lyrics were later changed to fit the image of a docile Puerto Rican.

In the middle of July, 1868, a revolutionary brother, Pedro Garcia, who had been collecting money for the revolution, got caught with a list of names of people who were donating money for guns. The leaders were caught by surprise and arrested; all the revolutionary records were confiscated. They were betrayed by Juan Castenon, a captain of the militia of the Spanish army, who had infiltrated the movement.

The leaders in different towns were alerted. Some responded and others held back. However, they decided to mobilize their forces in Lares on September 23, in advance of the predetermined date of September 29.

Betances sailed for Curacao to pick up a shipment of rifles. He got them, but still needed more. He returned to St. Thomas where he organized an expedition to sail from there to reinforce the revolutionary forces in Puerto Rico. He could count on 10,000 warriors, armed only with 4 mortars, rifles and machetes. He was to leave with his expeditionary force aboard the steamer Telegrafo, but a message stopped him, telling him that the revolution had been discovered and that the entire coast of Puerto Rico

had been alerted and a landing was impossible.

On the afternoon of September 23, 1868, nearly 100 men from Mayaguez met with 400 men from Lares. Most of these men had no military experience. Some were armed with rifles, hand guns, and carbines; others, recruited from among the jibaro, didn't have anything but knives and machetes. They marched into Lares in formation with shouts of "Liberty or Death!" and "Long Live Puerto Rico!" and seized Lares. The revolutionaries held Lares for one day.

The following day the Spanish military came in and systematically crushed the rebellion from town to town. Everyone that was not killed was jailed. The jails of Arecibo and Aguadilla were packed. Even before coming to trial, 36 of these political prisoners died of a flu caused by the filthy, overcrowded, unsanitary conditions of the prisons. During the trials, seven revolutionaries were condemned to death and five others were sentenced to long terms in the prison of Ceuta in North Africa. For the time being, the movement was crushed, but the revolutionary spirit continued among the people.

September 23, 1868, proclaimed us to the world as a colonized nation fighting for independence. One hundred and two years later we are still a colonized nation continuing to struggle against the oppression of our people, this time by the U.S. We are the continuation of the struggle of EL GRITO DE LARES . . .

Iris Morales  
Education Captain  
YOUNG LORDS PARTY

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## LARES AND JAYUYA

Bishop Antulio Parrilla Bonilla, S.J.

September marks two important dates: The Lares Revolution on the 23rd and on the 12th the birth of Albizu Campos, who rescued the Lares Revolution from silence and forgetfulness. For more than seventy years, first the Spanish and then the American colonial regimes tried to erase the memory and the meaning of Lares from Puerto Rican history. The oppressive governments of both regimes had attempted to discredit the revolt and slander the patriots who participated in them. Yet the political genius of Albizu achieved just the contrary. He unveiled before the people the profound patriotic significance and social, economic and political consequences of the 1868 insurrection. He exposed to light the grandeur of the patriots who gave both life and property for the First

Republic. But above all he pointed out with great clarity that Lares was the culmination of the process of growing to maturity in our nationality, in Puerto Rican-ness.

The Jayuya revolt of October 30, 1950, was both a consequence of Lares and a reaffirmation of the reality and existence of our nationality. This is so true that once again the interventionist and oppressive powers have tried to discredit and silence the revolt. Just as with Lares, those persons who with arms in their hands tried to defend the honor and dignity of the fatherland and our right to freedom, thereby reconstituting the act of Lares, have been called "madmen". But the conscience of a people closely resembles that of an individual. It can not be silenced for long with sophisms or rationalizations.

That is why today the "Grito de Lares" is a spontaneous and free commemoration by multitudes of people. Albizu struck deep into the hearts of the masses to illustrate their own values, particularly those that cherish Lares. But in Jayuya he himself incarnated those values and dramatized them revolutionarily.

The spirit of Albizu is not dead. It lives. It is the spirit that awakens from time to time in the conscience of Puerto Ricans who are all, except for the denaturalized, who fortunately are the exception, naturally independentista by being Puerto Rican, by being different, by being born in this land and not another. That every Puerto Rican is a potential independentista, if not one already, is

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### ON POLITICAL PRISONERS

Political prisoners have been numerous in Puerto Rico for centuries. Right now, several dozen men and women are in prison for attempting to gain independence for our country. The only difference in treatment of political prisoners between Spanish colonial times and now is that the Americans and the "Puerto Rican" representatives have been, on the whole, more cruel than the Spanish.

Unarmed, brave men (Hiram Rosado, Elias Beauchamp, Angel Mario Martinez and others) have been shot in police stations. Decent citizens, arrested for their political beliefs, are treated like common criminals because American recognition of political crime would imply recognition of Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States. Through pressure, some have been released. Blanca Canales, one of the leaders of the Jayuya uprising, is the most well known but the majority remain in Federal and Puerto Rican prisons with sentences so long as to make parole impossible. It is well known that many have been approached and offered freedom in return for renouncing their political beliefs. None have given in.

The following is a letter written to Governor Roberto Sanchez Vilella in 1968 demanding the release of those persons who participated in the 1950 Jayuya revolt. Lolita Lebron and the others who took part in the 1954 attack on the U.S. Congress are not mentioned. A similar letter was sent to President Lyndon Johnson about them. They are still in prison, as are most of those mentioned here.

Estimado Senor Gobernador:

The 23rd of September last (1968) more than 25,000 Puerto Ricans gathered in Lares to commemorate the centennial of the Lares Revolution. They made a pilgrimage to remember and to participate in the acts commemorating the first attempt to liberate our nation from the chains of bondage and colonialism and to erect Puerto Rico as a free and sovereign nation. The net result of that act (in 1868) was a considerable number of dead and wounded and innumerable prisoners and exiles. Neverthe-

substantiated by the fact that the colonial regime trusts none of us, not even the denaturalized. That is why when the American president visits another country even the denaturalized Puerto Ricans in the area are detained as a security measure. They are not asked if they are independentista or colonialist. All Puerto Ricans are considered to be potential rebels.

Lares and Jayuya are two lessons, taught by two colossal teachers—Betances and Albizu, from which the Puerto Rican masses have learned much. Lares and Jayuya have kept the status question constantly open, and they have contributed in an impressive degree to the awakening in the people a natural desire for freedom.

less, two years later, the Spanish regime gave full amnesty to all prisoners.

On the 30th of October, 1950, 82 years later, other Puerto Ricans tried for a second time to gain the political liberation of Puerto Rico. The result was once again a considerable number of dead, wounded and prisoners. But, unfortunately, 18 years have passed and a number of Puerto Rican patriots are still incarcerated. Their crime was to follow the dictates of their conscience and to try to free their country. They are, therefore political prisoners in the eyes of the world. Will the government of Puerto Rico be less liberal than the Spanish of 1868?

By sincerely believing that you, Senor Governor, will act in accordance with the times we live in, the thousands of Puerto Ricans gathered in Lares last September 23rd unanimously resolved to ask that you intervene and give total and unconditional amnesty to the following political prisoners:

Juan Jaca Hernandez	Ramon Robles Torres
Elio Torresola Roura	Juan Antonio Cruz Colon
Ricardo Diaz Diaz	Jose Rodriguez Olivera
Ismael Diaz Matos	Manuel Mendez Gaudia
Bernardo Diaz Diaz	Justo Guzman Serrano
Rafael Molina Centeno	Octavio Ramos Serrano

The signer, in name of the Lares Centennial Committee, hopes that you can judge the situation that we bring before you and appreciate the true spirit of the patriots in prison. You already have made an incalculably valuable decision when you pardoned Blanca Canales who was in prison for the same deed. We ask that you Christianly expand to totality that unforgettable gesture. May history reserve for you the honorable mention that such gestures merit.

Thanking you profoundly for the careful consideration that we know you will give this call of the people,

Your servant,  
Antulio Parrilla Bonilla, S. J.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH BLANCA CANALES

On August 15, two members of the Central Committee of the YOUNG LORDS PARTY (Juan Gonzalez and Juan "Fi" Ortiz) went to Puerto Rico, on the first official trip of the Party, with the purpose of establishing communications with other progressive groups on the island. One of the groups we visited was the Nationalist Party.

We had an interview with Blanca Canales, one of the leaders of the 1950 rebellion. Dona Blanca was a social worker then, which put her in touch with many of the social problems of the island, problems which were then, as well as they are now symptoms of yanqui colonialism in Puerto Rico.

Dona Blanca became a disciple of Don Pedro Albizu Campos in the early 1930's. She met Don Pedro while she

was attending the University. She soon found that she was spending every free minute in his class. Visitors would come from every part of the island to hear and learn about such subjects as government, economics, mathematics and languages. Dona Blanca remembers that Don Pedro always caused a great sensation among the people wherever he went. His passion and love for Puerto Rico, became the passion and love of all his followers. The men and women who followed Don Pedro into the Nationalist Party felt and experienced the same love for their people and their island, as the Young Lords Party does now. An all consuming love that would drive us to fight and to die, to see our people free and our island liberated.

Following below, are some questions we asked Dona Blanca Canales during our interview.

\* \* \*

Question—Where were you born and how was life when you were younger?

I was born in Jayuya. My father was the Mayor of the town. I spent the first 13 years of my life at home, when I graduated from the eighth grade my parents sent me to a high school in Ponce. From there I went to the University of Puerto Rico where I received my Bachelors. My parents taught me the history of my country—They always believed Puerto Rico should be free and independent.

The schools I went to only taught Yanqui history. You know stuff like George "I never told a lie" Washington, Bunker Hill, Lincoln freed the slaves. The schools were run by Yanquis and vendepatrias and they discouraged the teaching of Puerto Rican history. But I had a teacher once, Carmen Maria Torres, who used to smuggle into the schools books on Puerto Rican history and she would spend time telling us about Puerto Rican heroes like Betances, and the revolution in Lares on September 23, 1868—I felt re-born.

Coupled with the stories my mother used to tell me about my grandfather who was also a revolutionary involved in the uprising in 1868, you can understand how I developed such a fierce love for my country and a desire to see it free and independent.

Question—From your own point of view, what was the tactical purpose of taking the police station in Jayuya?

This is a question of . . . how do you say it now . . . of 50 thousand dollars. This is a long history in the sense that to talk about it one would have to explain how we

gradually prepared and armed ourselves during the years and how we had thought of the type of revolution we would carry out and what things would be able to be done. Then October 30 came of which I would like to speak more and not only answer the question.

Before the 30th, Don Pedro had informed us of the fact that they had been arresting Nationalists all over the island and that we had to commence the revolution. We knew that we would not be victorious but we had to hit our oppressor hard to show our determination to struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico, to the other countries of the world.

We realized we were already in the midst of a revolution when we heard that the headquarters in Arecibo had been attacked and that shootings had begun among the Nationalists and the police. We thought it best to take advantage of the time and liberate the town of Jayuya. At that time there were only four police at the headquarters. It was pretty easy; to hit them unexpectedly was best. The troops that we gathered on the farms were led by my cousin and companero, Elio Torresola and Carlos Irrizary.

We sent these troops to attack the headquarters at noon and there and then the shoot-out began. We ran out of bullets and then seized the headquarters with molotov cocktails. One policeman died and the others escaped. In the meantime I was in the middle of the town, next to a hotel. I raised the flag of Puerto Rico and screamed "Viva PUERTO RICO Libre" to establish the fact that we had proclaimed the Republic.

The town of Jayuya united, some applauded us, some cried and screamed and others stood around in admiration.

Question—You were in jail for many years. How did they treat you in jail as a political prisoner, especially in relation to the other prisoners?

I was in jail for 16 years and 10 months, almost 17 years. The empire does not give recognition to the political prisoner. I was treated like a common prisoner. During the first eight months I was incomunicada. Perhaps I can say that because of my age—I was 44 years old when I was first incarcerated—I was able to relate well with the other prisoners.

First they took me to the United States. They kept me at the Augusta Reformatory for 5½ years and then brought me back to Puerto Rico. The only well treated prisoner is the stool-pigeon, all others are treated badly. In fact we didn't even have the right to talk. Time and time again they tried to destroy my revolutionary spirit and to do away with the love I had for my country and the right to fight for her.

Question—Being in the southern part of the United States, were all the prisoners Black?

There was racial separation in jail. In one section the white prisoners, in another section the Black prisoners; I was placed with the whites. After a few years they passed

an integration law in the jail. The white prisoners refused to abide by that law. I and a group of white communist prisoners decided to struggle against this racism and show those people some decency and the reality that we are all the same. We were the first to integrate. From then on, united with my Black companeras, I enjoyed the best years I had to do in that prison.

Question—What is the role of the woman in the revolution?

The role of the woman is as important as of the man. The revolutionary woman must act accordingly with the demands of the revolution, be it to arm herself, educate her people or whatever is necessary.

Question—What do you think of the contemporary independence movement?

I believe that all of today's movements are important. What is needed is unity to achieve the independence of our nation. Some times posters, other times fires, strikes, votes, all that is necessary. My hopes lie with the youth, because you have the ability to carry the word onward.

Source: PALANTE  
(See address on page 8)

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## RESISTANCE TO COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE IN PUERTO RICO

Rene Santiago Vega

The Selective Service System is an administrative body belonging to the Executive branch of the government of the United States. It was created by the military draft legislation of that country to mobilize manpower and thus contribute to the defense of the nation. It is headed by a national director appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate. A headquarters, appeal boards and local boards are maintained in every state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The applicability to Puerto Rico of the U.S. military draft law, intimately linked with the Selective Service System is tied directly to our political condition and our relationship to the U.S. government. This constitutes a juridical, moral and political problem that goes back to Spain's surrender of our territory to the United States in 1898; and ever since then it has been the subject of serious problems and disagreements in Puerto Rico.

Today, the U.S. District Court in Puerto Rico maintains the legality of the application of this law to Puerto Rican youth, thus authorizing the operation of the Selective Service System in Puerto Rico.

### NO OBLIGATION UNDER SPAIN

The first U.S. federal draft law in war time was approved in 1863, during the Civil War. Puerto Rico was then under Spanish colonization. However, we were not obliged to serve in the armed forces of the Spanish Empire. When in 1897, Spain granted us the Autonomous Charter, it excluded from the powers strictly reserved to the Spanish Cortes (Parliament), that of obliging Puerto Ricans to serve in the Spanish armed forces.

In 1898 the Spanish-American war took place. At the end of the hostilities, representatives of the governments of the United States and Spain met in Paris and, without the Puerto Ricans knowing it, they signed the Treaty of December 10, 1898, by which Spain ceded Puerto Rico to

the United States. It is extremely curious to observe that according to the agreement of the Autonomous Charter, there were three indispensable conditions in order for Spain to cede Puerto Rico to any other nation: 1) the Puerto Rican Parliament had to ask the Spanish Cortes to do so (article 2, additional articles); 2) after receiving such a petition from the island government, the Spanish Cortes would authorize the King to approve the cession; 3) only after the aforementioned procedure was carried out according to article 54 (1) of the Spanish Monarchy, could the King "alienate, cede or interchange any part of the Spanish territory." Even though such conditions were not fulfilled in the Paris Treaty, it was ratified April 1, 1899. Puerto Rico has been subject since then to the legislation passed by the U.S. Congress which states that the Congress may enact or proclaim all necessary rules and regulations concerning any territory or property belonging to the United States. (Article IV, section 3, paragraph 2).

In 1917, the U.S. Congress approved a new Selective Service law extending it to Puerto Rico (Law of May 18, 1917, 40 U.S. Statutes at Large 76). From that moment on began what we have called resistance to compulsory military service in Puerto Rico.

When the bureaucratic structure that was to enforce the law of 1917 in Puerto Rico was organized, one of the men called, Jose Lopez Garcia, when sent to the Military Camp of Las Cases, appealed to *habeas corpus*, questioning the lawfulness of his being drafted into the U.S. Army. The appeal to *habeas corpus* was argued before Judge Peter J. Hamilton of the Federal District Court in Puerto Rico, discrediting the court itself. (*Report of the adjutant general to the governor of Porto Rico on the operation of the military registration and selective draft in Porto Rico*, Porto Rico office of the adjutant general (San Juan, P.R. 1924, pag.94). This appeal however, questioned the legality of the procedures observed by the Selective Service System without attacking directly the legality of the obligation of serving in a foreign army. That same year another young man, Florencio Romero, was condemned to two years in a federal prison for disobeying his draft order.

#### REAL RESISTANCE BEGINS

In the decade 1940-50, the real resistance against the unlawfulness of this kind of slavery began. The national party condemned the compulsory military system in a 1940 resolution. Those who tried to arouse the Puerto Rican people were arrested and eventually jailed in federal prisons. Another group of young men who refused to be drafted in the armed forces were accused and convicted of violating the Selective Service law. When the case was presented to the U.S. First Circuit Court of Appeals, it

was decided that the law was equally applicable to Puerto Rico. (Ruiz Alicea et al United States, 80 F. 2nd 870 (1950). Juan Antonio Corretjer, President of the Socialist coalition of Puerto Rico in his book *The Strike of Blood* (Guaynabo, P.R., 1966), exposes the incidents that characterized this form of resistance. He falls into error, in my judgment, when he points out that the application to Puerto Ricans of the 1917 law was implied in the imposition of the U.S. citizenship on Puerto Rico that same year. It is a clear fact not requiring submission to historical verifications that there was a communication from Washington, October 18, 1918, notifying the Puerto Rican authorities that those Puerto Ricans who declared their intention of disregarding the imposition of the U.S. citizenship in Puerto Rico, were equally subject to be drafted to serve in the U.S. army. (*Report of the adjutant general. . . pag.93*).

#### '60s SEE ESCALATION

In the 1960's resistance to military service had already reached great proportions. This may have followed from the United States involvement in the Viet Nam war and the constant protest of young Americans.

In 1966, 639 young people signed a public declaration pointing out their "firm and determined purpose . . . not to serve under any circumstances in the armed forces of the United States." (*El Imparcial*, October 26, 1966). The first signature on that long list belonged to Sixto Alvelo accused of resisting the draft. In November of the same year, the Alvelo Committee was organized to gather funds to make the defense of this young man possible. Once the case of Alvelo was finished, the committee reorganized and called itself the Alvelo Committee for the Defense of Puerto Rican Youth, to advise young men who resisted compulsory military service. Recently, the Legal Institute of Puerto Rico was created to take care of the legal defense of draft resisters who refused induction and who will be charged with criminal violation of the law.

#### 80 REFUSE TO OBEY ORDERS

According to the national press, in the Summer of 1968, 80 young men refused to obey their draft orders. (*El Mundo*, Wednesday July 10, 1968). At this time, too, the Federal Grand Jury had put together a likely case against 21 of these young men and the federal prosecutor had accused some 50 of them but did not submit their cases to a Grand Jury. (Santiago Vega, Rene, *Adjudicative Process in the Selective Service System and the Judiciary Revision of it Determinatives*. University of Puerto Rico, 1969, page 8).

On July 19, 1969, *El Mundo* reported there were 95 young men awaiting trial by a federal court.

## RESISTANCE AT PEAK

Since 1968, the resistance to compulsory military service has reached its peak. During the electoral campaign of that year, the Independent Puerto Rican Party publicly condemned the draft and invested a considerable amount of money in press, radio and television advertising, as well as in brochures decrying the unlawfulness and the immorality of the U.S. government's action in forcing Puerto Ricans to serve in its army. The number of persons who have publicly made known their disagreement with military service is also increasing. Among them is Bishop Antulio Parrilla-Bonilla, who, addressing around three thousand students of the Puerto Rican University declared that "the peaceful forms of protest against compulsory military service and the Yankee imperialism should be multiplied. The refusal to serve in the U.S. armed forces, regardless of the consequences of ignominy, incarceration, or persecution, is a form of efficient protest. All sacrifices imposed on the young people will not be useless. In Puerto Rico, an anti-compulsory military service mentality is being created. How impressive is the heroism of dozens of young Puerto Ricans, their moral strength, and the rightness of their consciences, in defying an apparently almighty, military and warlike, inhuman and arrogant machinery." In his speech, Bishop Parrilla mentioned other public and clerical personalities of the country who have protested the compulsory military service: Among them, the ex-Governor of Puerto Rico, Roberto Sanchez Vilella who declared that there was no reason "our young men should be forced to serve in the U.S. army." (*El Dia*, April 18, 1969). The Episcopalian Puerto Rican Church in its 62nd. Diocesan Convention, approved a resolution condemning both the war and compulsory military service for Puerto Ricans. (*El Mundo*, April 19, 1969). Much earlier, some 20 seminarians from different Protestant denominations of the Rio de las Piedras Evangelical Seminary, publicized a courageous manifesto against the Viet Nam war and the compulsory military service (*El Imparcial*, October 31, 1968). ("The Protest Against the Compulsory Military Service"—Address to the University Students—Theater of the University of Puerto Rico, April 23, 1969, mimeographed, page 3).

A high ex-public official of the Justice Department of Puerto Rico and an ex-Assistant Federal Prosecutor, have also publicly declared themselves in favor of a thorough joint study by both the U.S. government and the Puerto Rican government of the U.S. draft law, considering the well-founded legal reason presented to the Federal Court of the United States in Puerto Rico.

Why this resistance to compulsory military service in Puerto Rico? Bishop Antulio Parrilla offers us a good answer in his speech to the university students: "Besides

humanitarian reasons"—he points out—"Puerto Rico has strong political reasons to refuse to put itself at the service of the great military-industrial interests: its colonial condition, a condition they pretend to consecrate by a false lawfulness. But neither the years, nor the apparent acquiescence of many, nor the colonial power, plus the cowardice of others, can legalize a situation which has its roots in an imperialist warlike action. Compulsory military service in Puerto Rico is illegal because the colonial status is illegal. Also illegal is the presence of armed forces in our country without our consent. The ROTC is illegal (school for military training), as well as militarism and the use of force."

It is interesting to note that this resistance, started by the faction which openly fights for the national liberation of Puerto Rico, has spread. At the present time a group of university students belonging to the New Progressive Party (Partido Nuevo Progresista), which came to power after the last elections in Puerto Rico and which advocates the annexation of our island by the United States, has organized as the Committee for Democratic Action (Comite Accion Democratica), opposing compulsory military service and indicating that in the near future they are going to begin a campaign against it. (*El Imparcial*, July 18, 1969; *El Mundo*, July 21, 1969).

## FIGHT FOR LIBERATION

Undoubtedly, the fight against compulsory military service in Puerto Rico is going through the same critical and significant stages as the fight for Puerto Rican liberation via legal means. The question is not merely compulsory military service in the U.S. army. That also includes an implicit obligation on the Puerto Ricans to submit for two long years to a constant assimilation of a foreign language, English, and to the loss of the Puerto Rican social values while confronting American ones.

Despite the limitation of the fight to the juridical forum, and acts accompanying this, such as meetings, picketing in front of the federal court, marching, etc. these actions are fruitful. In a surprising decision the presiding Judge of the Federal District Court of Puerto Rico, Hiram Cancio, recently signed a restraining order prohibiting three high federal officials' continuing the process against a university student. (*El Mundo*, July 10, 1969). This Judge required that three constitutional questions be decided first. One of them is the use of English in the trials of those who refuse to serve in the U.S. army. Judge Cancio declared, in a meeting of the Federal Commission (Comision de Practica Federal), that Spanish should be used instead of English in the Federal District Court. Even though "he admitted that a project presented to the U.S. Congress to bring about the change was not approved, he thought it wise to institute such a

measure in order to revive the question." (*El Mundo*, July 7, 1969). The governing body of the Council of Lawyers of Puerto Rico, met in an extraordinary session and unanimously endorsed the declarations of Judge Cancio. (*El Imparcial*, July 8, 1969).

The trial of another university student accused of refusing compulsory military service was suspended for an indefinite time. It was supposed to have taken place July 7, 1969. The federal prosecutor requested the suspension and turned the proceedings over to the State Director of the Selective Service "in order to be reexamined, together with forty other cases which, according to the federal prosecutor should also be reexamined in the light of the decisions of the courts and the present status of the accused." (*El Imparcial*, July 8, 1969).

We have seen, then, how resistance to compulsory military service has been created in Puerto Rico. We immediately perceive the emphasis given the compulsory

nature of this servitude and therefore it is logical to ask if the resistance follows from the fact that it is an obligation to serve without our Puerto Rican consent, or if in its wider expression it is an overt fight against the colonial regime that Puerto Rico endures. The young people who initiated the real confrontation did it doubtless bearing in mind the colonial status of Puerto Rico. Those of us who continued have the problem well-defined and thus the compulsory nature of this servitude is even more insulting. The obligation to serve in the U.S. army is a logical consequence of the colonial power over Puerto Rico. If we succeed in creating a national consciousness of this problem, if we succeed in making Puerto Rican youth recognize that the greatest immorality is being perpetrated against it by the U.S. government, we will have advanced in the fight towards our national freedom.

(Source: CIDOC Dossier)

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## PUERTO RICO: OUR BACKYARD COLONY

By Michael Meyerson (Excerpts)

Citizens of San Juan were not surprised when they awakened one morning early this February to find that the Selective Service office, the local branch of General Electric and a portion of the El San Juan Hilton Hotel had all been bombed. Such attacks, carried out by a group calling itself Armed Commandos for Liberation (CAL), have become a fact of daily life in Puerto Rico.

As the movement for independence from the U.S. has gained in momentum, more than a hundred bombings, the majority aimed at American corporations, have shaken the island over the past year alone. Of all the targets for this assault, one of the most obvious has been the popular image of Puerto Rico as the "happy commonwealth"—a sultry playground for American tourists and the showcase of U.S.-guided progress in the Caribbean. While the dust from the first pro-independence explosions was still settling, more and more Puerto Ricans, especially the young, were beginning to see how this tourbook rhetoric was used to conceal the bitter fact that their island was and is the only classic colony in American experience. . .

Over one million *borinqueños* have left their native land for the *barrios* of East Harlem and South Bronx. That one third of a nation would escape into exile to the slums of New York testifies to the living conditions in the Caribbean "paradise." . .

Four out of every five Puerto Rican families earn less than \$3000 per year; one half receive less than \$1000 annually. Oscar Lewis put unemployment at 14 per cent;

knowledgeable Puerto Ricans insist that a figure as high as 30 per cent is more realistic. That is a permanent condition twice as bad as the depths of the Great Depression in this country. Per capita income in Mississippi, our poorest state, was 81 per cent higher than in Puerto Rico in 1960. Whereas wages are a fraction of those on the mainland, the cost of living on the island is higher than those in New York, Chicago or Boston. . .

A prominently displayed painting dominates the offices of the MPI in San Juan. The picture, depicting the Ponce Massacre of March 1937 when police beat and killed nationalist demonstrators, was painted by Fran Cervoni, one of Puerto Rico's most important artists and a member of MPI's Political Commission. Only part of the painting remains as the artist rendered it, the canvas having been salvaged from the fire which destroyed the MPI headquarters in November 1965. Nobody one encounters has the slightest doubt that the arsonists were agents of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. . .

Today, new fires are being set in Puerto Rico, but this time the flames are spreading in a different direction. Since New Year's Eve 1967, at least 75 fires aimed at North American properties have caused damage ranging in estimates from 25 to 75 million dollars. No one has been caught; no evidence has been found; no witnesses have come forth.

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