

THE COMMUNIST

"A Communist should have largeness of mind and he should be staunch and active, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and subordinating his personal interests to those of the revolution; always and everywhere he should adhere to principle and wage a tireless struggle against



all incorrect ideas and actions, so as to consolidate the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses; he should be more concerned about the Party and the masses than about any individual and more concerned about others than about himself. Only thus can he be considered a Communist."

Mao Tse Tung- "Combat Liberalism" SW, Vol. II p.33

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INDEPENDENCE FOR PUERTO RICO!

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." (Marx and Engels--"The Communist Manifesto" p.35, Peking Edition

On October 27, 1974, in New York City, a massive demonstration is planned by the "Puerto Rican Solidarity Day Committee" and supporters to demand the independence of Puerto Rico and freedom for all Puerto Rican political prisoners. In addition to giving our wholehearted support to this demonstration, the Black Workers Congress would like to take this opportunity to speak to the U.S. proletariat about the overall importance of the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And, more particularly, about the heroic history of struggle of the Puerto Rican people for national liberation and freedom from U.S. imperialism.

PUERTO RICO--A COLONY OF U.S. IMPERIALISM

In 1897, under pressure of the popular struggle against Spanish colonialism, autonomous government was "granted" to Puerto-Rico. Scarcely eight months later, American imperialism invaded the island and "liberated" it from Spanish rule.

The U.S. soldier, General Miles, arriving at San Juan, spoke on behalf of the U.S. government:

"We have not come to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but, on the contrary, to bring protection, not only to yourselves but to your property, to promote your prosperity, and to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government." (Congressional Record--Feb. 1898)

In typical fashion, the invasion was covered by this crude imperi-

alist propaganda intended to disguise the real nature of U.S. objectives and to weaken the people's resistance. General Miles, commander of U.S. occupation forces, had the nerve to tell the Puerto-Rican people that his invading army came "to bring protection" and their desire was only to "bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government." Sixty years later we witnessed the spectacle of another General, William Westmoreland, "bestowing similar blessings" to the Vietnamese people.

At the same time General Miles was "blessing" the Puerto Rican people, the U.S. was also busy "annexing" the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii, establishing its political and economic domination over Cuba. This period, beginning with the Spanish-American War, marked the entry of the U.S. as a rival imperialist power, competing with English, French and Japanese imperialists for a re-division of the world. Much of the essence of this period was expressed in the infamous "Manifest Destiny" doctrine proclaimed by President McKinley, and embodied in the "Monroe Doctrine", which stated:

"No nation of the Americas was open for colonization by any European power. Any action for this purpose would be considered the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."

In 1904, Teddy Roosevelt proclaimed that "the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly...to the exercise of international police power." (Cong. Recd. 1904)

Before 1898, the older colonial powers--Britain, France, Germany and Spain had divided the world amongst themselves. Over 90% of Latin America, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Pacific islands had been seized. Thus, war was the only means of acquiring new territories. Colonies had to be taken away from their former

"owners". At that time Spain "owned" the territories most needed by the U.S. imperialists--the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The U.S. therefore declared war against Spain and simply took them away from her. For an imperialist country, military success is the pathfinder for "direct foreign investments". As a result of the Spanish-American War the U.S. acquired the following territories and people:

U. S. COLONIAL POSSESSIONS			
Name	Date annexed	Square miles	Population, 1930
Philippines	1898	115,000	13,000,000
Hawaii	1898	6,450	350,000
Porto Rico	1898	3,435	1,500,000
Guam	1898	206	17,000
Wake and Midway Islands	1898	29	Varying naval and military detachments
American Samoa	1899	75	9,000
Virgin Islands	1917	133	21,000

Beginning with the theft of the land of Puerto-Rico, the U.S. imperialists have increased their domination step-by-step, over the last seventy years.

The "Foraker ACT" passed by Congress in 1900 was designed to provide for a puppet Puerto Rican legislature and Governor. This piece of legislation, which was much more reactionary than the Spanish legislative rule of 1897, was simply a cover for direct U.S. control over the island and its people. The Foraker ACT was the first of the "organic laws" to be imposed on Puerto Rico (an "organic law" is a Congressional charter which sets the legal and organizational structure for a colonial government). It served as a justification for further penetration of the country's wealth, in much the same way the infamous "Black Codes" were used to further enslave the Afro-American people and rob them of their rights and land. Only a few years before, the author of the bill, Senator Foraker (R. Ohio) said this of the Puerto Ricans:

"(the natives)... have not

been prepared for any kind of experience for participation in government" (Cong. Recd. 1900)

The Foraker Act was the first to define what sort of status the "newly acquired territories" would have in relation to the rest of the U.S. On the one hand they could not become states because the people were "not ready for statehood" and on the other they could not be simple "territories" — a usual first step toward statehood (Alaska and Hawaii). In the language of the bill itself these new territories were to be known simply as "possessions" of the U.S. having no rights to statehood or to independence. For example, in Section 32 of the bill it states:

"...all laws approved by the Legislative Assembly (of PR) should be remitted to the United States Congress, which by the present law reserves the right and the authority to annul them, if it considers that action suitable..."

Under pressure of a rising tide of struggle of the Puerto Rican people against U.S. domination, another "organic law" was enacted — the "Jones Act", in 1917. The "Jones Act" imposed U.S. citizenship on Puerto Ricans and turned the Legislative Assembly into an elective body. The law also established that the country would be "represented" in Congress by a resident commissioner who had no vote. But the Governor, the chief members of the executive branch and the judiciary, would be appointed by the President of the U.S. This third-class "citizenship" granted the Puerto Ricans, was also accompanied by the transformation of Puerto Rican currency into U.S. currency, with great profit to the U.S. banking interests. Additionally, with the "blessings" of citizenship came the recruitment of Puerto Rican youths into the U.S. military — cannonfodder for the future imperialist wars of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

The next stranglehold the U.S. used against sovereignty of Puerto Rico came in 1948, under the so-called: "Operation Bootstrap". Under the guise of "economic development" "operation Bootstrap" was actually a plan for the complete plundering of Puerto Rico's material and human resources. Profit on investments in Puerto Rico averaged 25% in 1967. The Administration of Economic Development, in a pamphlet published in 1967 stated:

"The availability of labor, the lower production costs, the tremendous savings in an atmosphere of excellent conditions and services — all within the control of the Federal Government of the United States — make Puerto Rico a unique opportunity for industrial development".

Between 1950 and 1970 almost 1500 new plants were established in Puerto Rico. As a result of this "progressive industrialization" the poor farmers have been driven off their land. In 1910, there were some 100,000 individually owned farms, by 1932 less than 25,000 remained, and today only a few thousand farmers are left. As a result of "Operation Bootstrap, (part of the Fomento Plan), the

entire country belongs to a handful of American trusts and rich Puerto Rican landowners. The bulk of the peasantry, deprived of the land they once owned, have been transformed into agricultural workers and reserves of cheap labor for U.S. factories. Today American firms make up 70% of the manufacturing output of the island and employ over 50% of the work force.

But in spite of this, Puerto Rico has to import from the United States approximately 90% of all essential goods — textiles, rice, appliances, cars, steel, wheat, flour, fertilizer, paper, food products, oil, and gasoline, making it the fifth largest importer of U.S. goods in the world! Imagine, "little" Puerto Rico, with a population of less than four million, surpasses even Brazil in volume of purchases of U.S. goods. Puerto Rico doesn't even have the right to negotiate business with other countries without U.S. permission. The U.S. is thus able to extract enormous superprofits from the country with no fear of competition whatsoever.



The lot of Puerto Rican workers is a disgrace. The average 1974 wage is less than \$1.25 an hour and working conditions are deplorable. Only 18% of the work force is unionized. Many of the unions are controlled directly by the AFL-CIO, who works hand-in-hand with the companies to keep the wages and standard of living of the workers down, and not to upset the "status quo".

In addition to serving as a lucrative market for U.S. goods and a source of cheap labor, Puerto Rico also provides the U.S. with abundant raw materials and hundreds of miles of coast line, which support ten U.S. military bases. Puerto Rico's resources include coffee, tobacco, sugar, oil, tin, nickel, platinum, copper, marble, and mercury. While keeping the country dependent on a one-crop sugar economy, the U.S. imperialists are busy searching for oil and other strategic raw materials like gold and platinum. Huge petrochemical complexes are being built by companies such as Phillips Petroleum, Sunoco, Texaco, Shell and others. As a result, copper mining and oil drilling have become the most important industries on the island.

Additionally, the country has a strategic military importance to the U.S. The little islands of Vieques and Culebra, which are part of Puerto Rico's territory are used as target practice for the U.S. Navy's gunboats — even though the islands are inhabited by hundreds of people! Scores have been injured and killed by flying missiles.

Fishermen have lost their livelihood because of the explosions which kill the fish. The U.S. Army also has a 999 year lease on a large tract of land at San Geronimo, which it uses as a base for launching operations into the rest of Latin America.

Puerto Rico is a colony in the classical sense of the term. This reality exposes the bare-faced lie that the U.S., unlike other countries in Europe, was never a colonial power. First of all, the U.S. has established an armed military occupation of the country and its people. Ten Army and Naval bases ring the island; at least 13% of the land is used by the U.S. military.

Secondly, the entire economy is in the hands of U.S. corporations and their Puerto Rican henchmen. Hundreds of millions of dollars are exported annually to the U.S. by these thieves, while the Puerto Rican people are forced to buy just about every single thing they need to survive on from the U.S. Chain stores — like Sears, Woolworth's, Franklin's, J.C. Penny's and others to consume what it does not produce and produce what it does not consume. Third, Puerto Rico serves as a reserve of cheap labor for U.S. industries both in Puerto Rico as well as the United States. And finally, the political life of the country is controlled in Washington not in San Juan.

PUERTO RICAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The theft and plunder of the land of Puerto Rico and the subsequent "industrialization" of the country, has also resulted in the tremendous mass migrations of Puerto Ricans to U.S. cities, particularly New York and Chicago. In 1910 there were only 15,000 Puerto Ricans living in the United States. After the beginning of "Operation Bootstrap" in 1948, the number of Puerto Ricans living here skyrocketed; in 1950 about 230,000, in 1960, about 800,000, and in 1970 close to two million Puerto Ricans were said to be living in the "Barrios" (slums) and migratory camps of the U.S.

The condition of the Puerto Rican population in the United States is not much better than that of the people on the island. Puerto Ricans are forced into the worst jobs with the lowest possible wages, averaging less than \$1.75 an hour in most cases. The worst possible housing, schools, health services, and hospitals are reserved for the Puerto Rican population in the U.S. Over 43% of the entire Puerto Rican people in New York City are on "mantengo" (welfare), while over 15% are chronically unemployed.

Puerto Ricans, both in the United States as well as within Puerto Rico itself are forced to speak English. The Spanish language, which has been spoken by the Puerto Rican people for over 400 years is being rooted out, along with other manifestations of the masses' culture, in order to "Americanize" the Puerto Rican. Like the Black, Chicano, Indian, and Asian peoples, Puerto Ricans here suffer a double exploitation — because of their overwhelming proletarian composition, they suffer super exploitation as an oppressed sector of the working class, and because of their national origin and skin color, they are victims of national and racial discrimination and are deprived of the ordinary

civil rights allotted to white Americans.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE AND THE TASKS OF THE U.S. PROLETARIAT

The Puerto Ricans are a proud people with a long history of struggle. They have opposed every scheme put forward by the U.S. gangsters to further enslave them -- from the phony legislature imposed by the Foraker Act, to the third-class, non-existent "citizenship" of the Jones Act, to the so-called "Puerto Rican Constitution" written by the US Congress in 1951, and all the other treacherous acts put forward by U.S. imperialism in order to check the rising national liberation movement in Puerto Rico.

Long before U.S. imperialism even arrived on the scene, the Puerto Rican people waged a tit-for-tat struggle against Spanish colonialism and slavery. Led by the famous Dr. Ramon Betances, the Puerto Rican people first raised the banner of national independence during the heroic "Grito de Lares" (Cry of Lares) struggle in 1868. According to Manuel Maldonado-Denis in his book, Puerto Rico: a Socio-Historic Interpretation:

"On September 23, 1868, the revolutionaries marched from Rojas in the Pezuela de Lares quarter to the town of Lares and under the motto VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE they declared the republic of Puerto Rico....The Republic of Puerto Rico, founded that twenty-third of September, 1868, lived only for a short time, but there remains for posterity the example of Borinquen, who had men no longer willing to accept the regime of inequity and exploitation imposed by Spain."
(pp. 42-43)

After the Spanish had been kicked out, the Puerto Rican people were forced to begin their struggle against a new, more powerful enemy, US imperialism. Under U.S. domination the struggle for national liberation intensified. National heroes such as Jose de Diego and Pedro Albizu Campos led and organized the growing independentistas movement. The ruthless repression of the U.S. imperialists and their local henchmen could not intimidate the developing revolutionary nationalist movement, but in fact helped to rally even more of the people to the struggle for independence. The independence movement spread into the remote towns and villages as workers, peasants, and students joined by the thousands. But U.S. imperialism would not loosen its iron grip on the country.

In 1948 the island was swept by a strike wave. There were strikes on the sugar plantations and in a number of industrial plants. Nearly 10,000 dock workers went on strike in the summer of the same year, paralyzing the whole shipping industry.

During the Korean War the independence movement took on an even more profound anti-imperialist character. During this struggle the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party opposed the draft and the compulsory participation of Puerto Ricans in the invasion of Korea. The independentistas served notice on the U.S. government that Puerto Ricans would rather die fighting for the independence of their country

than serve U.S. imperialism against other oppressed peoples. U.S. imperialism responded with bloodshed and terror against the masses. Outbreaks of violence against the people took place in areas such as Arecibo, Jayuya, Mayaguez, Ponce, Naranjito, and Utuado. Thousands were arrested and imprisoned under the pretext of "attempting to overthrow the US government by force," and breaking the infamous "Muzzle Law"---the equivalent to the McCarran Act here.

Through the sixties and the early part of the seventies the struggle continued. The struggle against the bombing of the island of Culebra, the rebellion and subsequent murder of students at the University of Puerto Rico who were protesting compulsory ROTC in 1969-1970; the struggle against increased police terror and repression; the struggle against the U.S. planned "SuperPort", and the rising strike wave of the Puerto Rican proletariat which is still in process, are just a few examples of the continuing momentum which the national liberation movement in Puerto Rico is gathering.

In Puerto Rico, as in Latin America, Asia, and Africa as a whole, armed liberation movements against the domination of imperialists and local reactionaries is becoming the order of the day. Armed struggle for freedom, independence and national liberation has assumed a broad, mass character in countries like Columbia, Brazil, Venezuela, Guatemala, Argentina, and Uruguay. All over Latin America today, Puerto Rico included, there exist various forms of national liberation movements which are in the process of growth and development. New Marxist-Leninist Communist Parties are being built to replace the old, sell-out Social Democratic, revisionist and Trotskyite ones. Careful preparation is being made to train the masses for the protracted struggle against the fascist military juntas and the various imperialist forces--particularly the two superpowers--the U.S. and Soviet Union, who back them up.

As we discuss in this month's editorial, the proletariat in the US as well as all progressive peoples, has a grave responsibility to the oppressed peoples of the world, especially to the peoples "its own" bourgeoisie oppresses--colonies of US imperialism. The US proletariat cannot even think of freeing itself from oppression and exploitation without actively supporting the struggle for freedom and liberation of the peoples and nations super-exploited and oppressed by Yankee imperialism. In particular, the support of the independence of Puerto Rico has to be coupled with the day-to-day support of the Puerto Rican national minority inside the U.S. for complete equality and respect for their national heritage, language, and culture. Only by resolutely carrying out this task can the struggles for national liberation and proletarian revolution be indestructibly bound up. And at the present time, the Black Workers Congress and the many other genuine Marxist-Leninist forces are working day-in and day-out to build a new Communist Party. The Party will prepare the U.S. proletariat to become a consistent fighter for proletarian internationalism and lead it in the task to overthrow monopoly capitalism in the United States and

build a socialist society under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The demonstration on October 2/th is a special event deserving our utmost support. But the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico will continue long beyond that day. That is why even though we wholeheartedly support the demonstration, we are critical of the slogan: "...A Bicentennial Without Colonies.", put forward by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). Of course it would be a good thing if Puerto Rico were free by 1976 and one cannot help but rejoice at the prospect. But the slogan, "Independence for Puerto Rico, A Bicentennial Without Colonies creates idealist and pacifist illusions amongst the masses. It is similar to the slogan put forward by many civil rights groups in the early 60's, "Free by '63!" Both lead the masses to believe that they can achieve their liberation peacefully. Though we stand for the immediate liberation of the Puerto Rican nation, the experience of all previous revolutions -- whether of the socialist or new democratic type -- teaches that revolutions are protracted processes which can only be accomplished through armed struggle led by the working class in alliance with the peasantry.

But one thing is certain. Such a great nation as Puerto Rico will never relent until its sovereign rights are guaranteed by national independence. This struggle will require sacrifices and privations. But a hundred and fifty years of struggle has already shown that the Puerto Rican people are quite prepared to make them, especially when they have been necessary for their freedom and independence. They will certainly be successful in uniting all who can be united in the fight against U.S. imperialism and the revisionists who serve them and will emerge victorious over their enemies.

VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

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