

# PORTO RICANS DEMAND RIGHT TO RULE SELF

## *Political Party Demands Independence*

By MANUEL GOMEZ, Sec'y.

All-America Anti-Imperialist League.

Another link is being forged in the solid chain of all-American resistance to the imperialist domination of Wall Street. Porto Rico, for 27 years a stronghold of imperialism, is being converted into a strategic point in the struggle against imperialism. That is the full significance of news just received in this country of the formation of the Nationalist Party of Porto Rico, with Federico Acosta Velarde as president. The headquarters of the new party is at San Juan; there are branches at Ponce, Mayaguez and all other important towns on the island.

The organization of the party is of great historical importance. For the first time since Porto Rico became a United States possession a political party is in the field openly declaring itself separatist, and demanding immediate and unconditional independence. The "Union de Puerto Rico," founded in 1904, never took such a categorical stand; it was dominated by political trimmers and had no clear program, coming out first in favor of "autonomy," then of statehood within the U. S. republic, then of mere American "citizenship." Systematic betrayal by the leaders caused the union practically to disappear. The newly formed Nationalist Party is pledged to unceasing warfare with the imperialist oppressor of the Porto Rican people. Its membership consists principally of peasants, students and small business men, with a large mixture of workers, whereas the "Union" never was a mass organization but rather a collection of committees of professional politicians.

### **Thoroly Disillusioned.**

President Acosta Velarde of the Nationalist Party has issued a ringing manifesto, a veritable call to struggle which will be received with sympathy not only by the people of other American colonies and semi-colonies but also by the working class in the United States. The All-America Anti-Imperialist League has received a copy. It calls attention to the machinations of the American sugar and tobacco trusts in Porto Rico and to the sufferings of the Porto Rican people under American rule. It declares that the Porto Ricans, who in 1898 welcomed enthusiastically the United States soldiers that were "to deliver them from Spain," have now become thoroly disillusioned.

"Not until now," continues the manifesto, "has our country created a serious liberation movement, that by its character, program and vigor could take its place in history as the expression of a resolute people determined to conquer their independence. . . . Upon us depends the triumph."

### **Fight Against Oppression.**

Indicative of the strong consciousness of purpose of the Nationalist Party, the manifesto calls for a united front with other peoples oppressed by American imperialism.

"It is our intention," declares President Acosta Velarde, "to enter into close relations with the Nationalist

(Continued on page 3)

# Porto Ricans Make Demand for Right to Rule Themselves

(Continued from page 1)

Party of the Philippines, whose ability and will to take up the struggle for the independence of those islands is a worthy example for us. There is no doubt that between Filipino and Porto Rican nationalists there can and must be the most intimate understanding for mutual aid, identified as we are with a common cause against a common enemy."

The spirit of anti-imperialist solidarity behind those words carries full warning to the imperialist oligarchy in Wall Street of the new epoch of struggle that is already dawning. The Porto Rican Nationalist Party is not a mere duplicate of the party in the Philippines. The program and present social composition of the new party are reason to believe that the Porto Rican nationalists will follow quite a different line from the confused and vacillating movement of the Philippines. It is, however, too early to make such a prediction with any degree of confidence. Whatever the ultimate role of the party may be the fact remains that a political party has been created in Porto Rico standing on the unequivocal program of independence from American rule—and the party has stretched out its hand to another party, many thousands of miles away, on the basis of a community of struggle against a common enemy. These facts alone are of significance.

## **Socialists Support Imperialists.**

The coming of age of the national liberation movement in Porto Rico brings into bold relief the treachery of the socialists, who here as elsewhere have shown themselves handmaidens of imperialism. Porto Rico has a powerful socialist party, but this party has no connection with the nationalist movement. Under the leadership of Santiago Iglesias (an officer of the so-called Pan-American Federation of Labor and always one of Gompers' right hand men in Latin America), it comes out openly in favor of continued American domination. Its program calls for "autonomy" within the American empire. This down right betrayal of the Porto Rican people by the "socialist" leaders rather than any disgust with socialism has led the working masses to desert the socialist party in large numbers. There is a movement on foot in Mayaguez and Rio Piedras for the organization of a Communist Party, which would fight side by side with the nationalist movement for independence from American imperialism.

The section of the All-America Anti-Imperialist League that was organized a few months ago in Porto Rico has received a message of fraternal greeting from President Acosta Velarde of the Nationalist Party of Porto Rico.