INDEPENDENCE FOR PUERTO RICO!

"A Communist should have the same concern as any other person for the security of his person and property, and he should be a citizen of his country. But he should always be alert to the dangers that may exist.


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.

"Monroe Doctrine". At that time Spain "owned" the territories most needed by the U.S. imperialists—the Philippines, the Virgin Islands, 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 peoples:

U.S. Colonial Possessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date annexed</th>
<th>Square miles Population, 1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>112,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>6,409,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porto Rico</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>3,455,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guam</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin Islands</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippine Islands</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Varying naval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Samoa</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin Islands</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 statute 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 labor 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. Rec. 1900).

The Foraker Act was the first to define a new sort of status the "nearly acquired territories" would have in relation to the rest of the U.S. On the one hand they could not become states, the people were "not ready for statehood" and on the other they could not be simple "territories"—a usual first step toward statehood. The bill set the stage and Alaskan and Hawaiian. In the language of the bill itself these new territories were to be "not being possessed" 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 submitted to the United States Congress, which by the present law reserves the right to ratify or reject. But the Governor and the members of the executive branch and the judiciary, would be appointed by the President of the U.S. This three-cornered "citizenship" granted the Puerto Ricans, was further accompanied by the transformation of the local government, to U.S. currency, with direct profit to the U.S. banking interests. Additionally, with the "blessings" of the imperialists, theconflict of interest for the development of Puerto Rican youths into the U.S. military—cannon fodder for the future imperialists Wars of WW II, Korea, and Vietnam.

The next stronghold the U.S. used against sovereignty of Puerto Rico was a term 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 30% in 1967. The Administration of Economic Development, in a pamphlet published in 1967 stated:

"The availability of labor, the lower production costs, the transportation costs, the atmosphere of excellence of 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. Another term of the "progressive industrialization" the poor farmers have been driven off their land. In 1910, there were around 400 individually owned farms, by 1932 less than 25,000 remained, and today only a few 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 land they once owned has 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 U.S. law Puerto Rico has to import from the United States approximately 90% of all essential goods—textiles, rice, appliances, cars, steel, wool, flour, fertilizers, 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 in the market with other countries without U.S. permission. The U.S. is thus able to extract enormous profits from the country with no fear of competition whatsoever.

Fishermen have lost their livelihood because of the explosion which killed the fish. The U.S. Army also has a 999 year lease on a large tract of land at San Gerónimo, which it uses for "operational purposes" 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 Latin America, has no colonial power. First of all, the U.S. has established an armed military occupation of the entire country and its people. The Army and Navy bases ring the island; at least 13% of the land is used by the U.S. military. Secondly, the economy is in the hands of U.S. corporations and their Puerto Rican henchmen. Hundreds of millions of dollars are exported annually to these thieves, while the Puerto Rican people are forced to buy just about every single thing they need to survive on from these same chain stores—like Sears, Woolworth's, Franklin's, J.C. Penny's and others. The absolute waste what it does not produce and produce what it does not consume. Third, Puerto Rico serves as a reservoir of cheap labor for U.S. industries in Puerto Rico as well as the United States. And finally, the political life of the country is run by the U.S. government 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 migration of Puerto Ricans to U.S. cities, particularly New York and Chicago. In 1910 there were only 10,000 Puerto Ricans living in the United States. After the beginning of "Operation Bootstrap" in 1949, the number of Puerto Ricans living in the United States increased in 1950 to 230,000, in 1960, about 800,000, and in 1970 to close two million Puerto Ricans who had to be living in the "Barrios" (slums) and migratory camps of the US.

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 many low paid jobs with the lowest possible wages amounting 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 "welfare" (welfare), while over 1/3 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 indicators in the demise of the masses' culture, in order to "Americanize" the Puerto Rican. Take the Black, the Mexican, the Latin, and Asian peoples, Puerto Ricans here suffer a double exploitation—because of both the "exploiting" proletariat composition, the Puerto Rican is forced to super exploitation as an oppressed sector of the working class, and because of the loss of its original and skin color, they are victim to the new national and racial discrimination and are deprived of the ordinary

The Puerto Ricans are a proud people with a long history of struggle against oppression. They have fought against every scheme put forward by the U.S. government to further enslave them—from the plagiary legislature imposed by the U.S. Congress to the third class, non-existent "citizenship" of the Jones Act, to the so-called "status" of "free association" written by the U.S. Congress in 1951, and all the other treachery acts put forward by U.S. imperialism in order to crushing national liberation movement in Puerto Rico.

Long before U.S. imperialism even arrived on the island, the Puerto Rican people waged a tit-for-tat struggle against Spanish colonialism and slavery. Led by the famous Dr. Ramón Betances, the Puerto Rican people first raised the banner of national independence during the heroic Ten Days' Insurrection (Coy de Lares) struggle in 1868. According to Manuel Maldonado-Tenías in his book, Puerto Rico: A Socio-Historical Interpretation, "In September 23, 1868, the revolutionaries marched from桌上 de Lardes quarter to the town of Lardes 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 few days, but its short life remains for posterity the example of Borinquen, who had no longer a liberty, but still thought 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—U.S. imperialism. The campaign for national liberation intensified. National heroes such as Jose de Diego and Pedro Albizu Campos led and organized the growing independenceists' movement. The relentless repression of the U.S. imperialists and their local hirelings 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 well as to the hundreds. But U.S. imperialism would not leave 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 network of industrial plants. Near-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 revolutionary character. During this struggle the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party opposed the war 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 Ancoy, Jayuya, Mayagüez, Ponce, Naranjito, and Utuado. Thousands were arrested and imprisoned under the slogan "to overthrow the US government by force," and breaking the infamous "Muzzle Law"—the equivalent to the McGurn Act here.

Through the sixties and the early part of the seventies the struggle continued to grow with the bombing of the island of Culebra, the rebellion and subsequent murder of students at the University of Puerto Rico, and the plotting of the so-called "Movi"—the struggles against the bombing of the island of Culebra, the rebellion and subsequent murder of students at the University of Puerto Rico, and the plotting of the so-called "Movi"—the struggle against increased police terror and repression. The struggle gathered strength—first the Movi planned "Superpot," 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 are advancing the cause of imperialists and local reactionaries is becoming the order of the day. Armed struggle for the liberation of Puerto Rico has assumed a broad mass character in countries like Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Guatemala, Argentina, and Uruguay. All over Latin America today, Puerto Rico included, there exist various national liberation movements which are in the process of growth and development. New Marxist-Leninist Communist Parties are being born to take the old, sell-out Social Democratic, revisionist and Trotskyite cases. Careful preparation is being made to train the masses for the protracted struggle against the fascist military junta's and the various imperialists forces, particularly the superpowers—the U.S. and Soviet Union, who back them up.

As we go to press in this month's editorial, the pro-independence mass movement in the U.S. has even more progressive masses, has a grave responsibility to the peoples of the world, especially to the peoples "its own" miserable oppressors—colonies of U.S. imperialism. The U.S. imperialists cannot even think of freeing itself from oppression and exploitation without actively supporting the struggle for national liberation and participation of the peoples and nations super-exploited and oppressed by Yankee imperialism. Particularly, 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 accomplishing this task can the struggles for national liberation and proletarian revolution be indestructibly bound up. And at the same time, the Black Workers Congress and the many other genuine Marxist-Leninist forces are working day-in and day-out to build a new Congress of the Working Party will prepare the U.S. proletariat to become a consistent fighter for proletarian internationalism and lead 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 27th 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 Bi-centric Without Colonies," put forward by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSR). 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 Bicentral 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 '68:" 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 peasants.

But one thing is certain. Such a great nation as Puerto Rico will never remain silent 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 initiating 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!

Sources:
Lenin, "Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism"
Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," "The National Question Pressed to the Limit"
Juan Angel Silen: "We the Puerto Rican People"
Manuel Maldonado: "Puerto Rico—A Socio Historical Interpretation" PFRO, "Resolutions of the First Congress"

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