

## **Puerto Rican independence movement, 1898–present**

*Michael Staudenmaier*

For more than a century the movement for independence from the United States has been a prominent feature of political life among Puerto Ricans. The uniqueness of the movement relative to other nationalist efforts lies partly in the way Puerto Rico straddles North America and Latin America: it is a Caribbean island sharing

common historical and cultural roots with the former colonies that make up the vast territory of Spanish-speaking Latin America, but those paths diverged after the Treaty of Paris in 1898 ceded control of the island from Spain to the United States. The subsequent diaspora, which eventually resulted in a situation where half of all Puerto Ricans live in the US, has only added to the complexity. As a result, the Puerto Rican independence movement has long synthesized a set of disparate elements more commonly associated with protest struggles in the United States or with revolutionary efforts in Latin America.

The historical antecedents of the independence movement lie in the struggle against Spanish rule, especially during the last half of the nineteenth century. Resistance to colonialism was continuous among the indigenous Taino population from the earliest arrival of the conquistadors, and the introduction of African slaves only increased the necessity and opportunity for struggle, particularly through the creation of maroon communities in the mountainous center of the island. But a specifically Puerto Rican identity did not develop until sometime during the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, following the general pattern among Spain's new world colonies described by Anderson (2006). This emerging national identity produced a movement for independence fraught with all the contradictions that plagued parallel – if more successful – movements throughout Latin America. The drive for bourgeois home-rule coexisted uneasily with broad demands for freedom and equality. The most prominent early advocate for the latter option in Puerto Rico was Ramon Emeterio Betances, who led the unsuccessful 1868 uprising against Spanish rule known as the Grito de Lares. More than two decades later, sections of the local bourgeoisie successfully negotiated substantial autonomy from Madrid, only to see this short-lived experiment nullified by the Spanish-American War and the subsequent handover to the US.

### **1898–1920: Rise and Fall of the Early Bourgeois Independence Movement**

Puerto Rico at the end of the nineteenth century was contested terrain in multiple ways. On one level, the war resulted in a new colonial power and a military occupation. This was opposed by

some sectors of the local population, although as Pico (2004) notes, reports of armed resistance to US occupation seem to have been exaggerated. Some of the strongest challenges to the incoming regime came from among the leading intellectuals and industrialists of the time, because this segment of the population faced the most immediate risk when autonomy under Spanish rule gave way to direct military occupation by the United States. The US quickly outlawed Spanish for use in official business and imposed English as the language of instruction in schools. In a society where literacy rates hovered below 10 percent, the small literary community produced most of the early pro-independence sentiment, often dramatizing its position with vivid depictions of oppression and the assault on Puerto Rican cultural identity. At the same time, however, there was necessarily a striking disconnection between the well-documented political and literary agitation of the educated classes and the limited record of the activities of the great bulk of the population, which is much more difficult to reconstruct.

The intentions of the US government in regards to Puerto Rico were ambiguous from the time of the war until the passage of the Jones Act in 1917, which mandated citizenship for all Puerto Ricans and signaled official intent to retain permanent possession of the island. One result of this temporary uncertainty was a cautiously experimental approach to politics within the elite spheres of Puerto Rican society during the first two decades of US rule, with some sectors advocating “annexation” as a state within the US, others arguing for an “autonomist” vision of home rule, and smaller numbers demanding full independence. Unifying these diverse proposals was a willingness to work within the limitations imposed by the new colonial reality.

At the same time, class struggle was no stranger to the island at the turn of the century. The largest labor union of the time, the Free Workers Federation (FLT), routinely positioned itself in opposition to the perspectives of the bourgeois political class, but often did so from the right rather than the left. Since the FLT was strongest among skilled craft workers like typesetters and bricklayers, and weakest among the much more numerous sugarcane workers, it was unable to capitalize on the contradiction between the bourgeois proposals and the aspirations of the

Puerto Rican working class. After aligning itself with the American Federation of Labor in 1901, the FLT took a militant but increasingly conservative approach to labor struggle. For example, it supported the Jones Act, which the nascent independence movement opposed, as did most other factions of the local bourgeoisie. When citizenship was mandated by the US Congress in 1917, the failure of the early bourgeois independence movement was as obvious as the complicity of the labor leadership with US rule, and both movements fell into decline.

### **1920–1960: Rising Nationalist Sentiment**

The eclipse of these movements cleared the stage for the emergence of a new political force, Puerto Rican nationalism. Embodied by (but not limited to) the Nationalist Party, nationalism combined militant struggle for full independence with the promotion of a specifically Puerto Rican national identity that was intended to unify popular sentiment around separation from the United States. The result was a distinctive revolutionary ideology that forever changed the Puerto Rican political landscape. An unintended but similarly important consequence was the intense repression visited upon the movement by the US government, which used Puerto Rico as a proving ground for later repressive efforts both within the US and throughout Latin America.

The Nationalist Party began as a modest effort, focused largely on the same cautious and deferential approach that also marked the other bourgeois parties of the era. Beginning in 1930, however, under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos, the party shifted gears and began to emphasize the importance of self-determination by the Puerto Rican people, as opposed to the endless effort to persuade the US government to grant polite requests. Given Albizu Campos' encounters with Irish republicanism in the United States, the extensive parallels between the two movements are unsurprising: both emphasized the cultural distinctiveness of their island societies and the moral grounding offered by Catholicism, both encouraged militant struggle and sponsored the formation of paramilitary formations within the movement, and both embraced an ethic of self-sacrifice on behalf of the struggle, up to and including martyrdom. Of course, there were significant differences, not the

least of which was the well-established character of the Irish movement as contrasted with the novelty of the nationalist approach within the Puerto Rican context. Furthermore, the rise of the US and the decline of the British state on the world stage in the early twentieth century created a profoundly different set of circumstances, and the nationalists were fully aware of the uniqueness of the Puerto Rican situation.

During the 1930's the Nationalist Party developed a theory of *restraint* (non-collaboration), rejecting electoral participation and embracing armed struggle as a right of all peoples pursuing self-determination. The party engaged in an escalating series of confrontations with the US government and US-based business interests, including support for militant strikes by sugarcane workers and longshoremen, as well as gun battles with the police, and even assassinations. These activities generated sympathy and support for the nationalists from broad sectors of the Puerto Rican population, both on the island and in the ever-growing diaspora. The most high-profile victim of assassination was E. Francis Riggs, an unpopular police commissioner. The US response included not only the summary execution of Riggs' killers, but also the broad repression of the nationalist movement. Albizu Campos and several others were arrested, charged, and convicted of conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States. Mass gatherings and marches of nationalists were suppressed, and on March 21, 1937 an unarmed march of several hundred nationalists, including dozens of women and children, was attacked by police in the southern city of Ponce. Twenty people were killed and as many as 200 were injured in what became instantly known as the Ponce Massacre. As the cycles of violence continued, nationalist sentiment gained in popularity even as government repression limited the ability of the Nationalist Party to function with much of its leadership in prison.

At the same time, the party attempted to sharpen the focus of the developing national consciousness. It romanticized the pre-1898 era of Spanish control, highlighting the autonomy agreement reached in 1897 and deemphasizing the undeniable brutality of the Spanish regime. It promoted an idealized notion of Puerto Rican culture as Spanish-speaking, Roman Catholic, and, above all, European, while obscuring not only the indigenous influence on Puerto Rican music,

food, and language (among other cultural forms) but also the successive waves of immigration that brought French, Italian, Irish, and especially African influences into the equation. This conservative cultural nationalism, along with the paramilitary aspect of the Nationalist Party, have led commentators such as Lewis (1963) to describe the party as fascist, but this categorization is false. Not only was the party internally anti-racist (a significant portion of the membership, including Albizu Campos himself, was black) and heavily oriented toward the working class, it was also broadly internationalist in outlook, sympathizing with anti-imperialist struggles from Algeria and Ethiopia to India and China. Further, the party's cultural conservatism was complicated by the leadership roles assigned to women, and by its advocacy of an activist Catholicism that in retrospect is more reminiscent of later developments in liberation theology than of the reactionary clericalism then prominent in Spain. Again, as Ayala and Bernabe (2007) argue, the model for the Nationalist Party was not fascism but Irish republicanism. Nonetheless, a substantial cult of personality did develop within the party around Albizu Campos as a consequence of his charisma and the repression visited upon him personally.

Other political formations influenced by nationalism included the Puerto Rican Communist Party and the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP). The communists built a strong organization with members both in New York and on the island, but were limited by their strict adherence to the dictates of Stalin's Third International. The PIP was founded in the 1940s with a mandate to achieve its stated goal legally and peacefully. While adopting the cultural approach promoted by the nationalists, it rejected *restraint* as an organizing principle and participated in island-wide elections. At the same time, the stark colonial repression and economic depression of the 1930s had given way to postwar economic growth and the expanded home rule arrangement known as the Freely Associated State (ELA), backed by the newly created Popular Democratic Party (PPD) under the leadership of former independence activist Luis Muñoz Marín.

After a relative lull in activity during World War II the party began to formulate a precise strategy for independence when Albizu Campos returned to Puerto Rico after serving his first sentence. Perhaps drawing upon the Irish

experience of the Easter Rising, the nationalists prepared for an armed insurrection against US rule. The goal was to create both a domestic crisis for the newly inaugurated Puerto Rican government and an international embarrassment for the United States. But with the Ponce Massacre a receding memory, much popular support shifted from the nationalists to the PPD, and the Nationalist Party was left to plan its uprising in a context where support for independence on the island was falling rather than rising, and where pro-independence sentiment was now divided between the nationalists and the PIP.

What had been a long-term strategy for a multi-faceted insurrection became an emergency plan in October 1950, when the party leadership became convinced that mass arrests of independence activists were imminent. On October 30 nationalist militias attacked police stations in several smaller communities, as well as the governor's mansion in the island capital of San Juan. Party members in New York traveled to Washington, DC and unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate President Harry Truman. Only in the small mountain town of Jayuya did the combatants have any success, fighting on for four days, after which it was clear that the uprising had not gained popular support. In the interim, party militants in Jayuya had declared the establishment of an independent republic in Puerto Rico, the second time (after the Grito de Lares) that independence had been publicly proclaimed in the island's history. The insurrection as a whole has become known within the independence movement as the Grito de Jayuya (Cry of Jayuya).

In the aftermath the entire repressive apparatus of the US government was brought to bear on the independence movement generally and the Nationalist Party in particular. The leadership of the party was again incarcerated, with Albizu Campos destined to spend all but a few months of the rest of his life in prison. The US government's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), later to be made infamous in the context of domestic surveillance and disruption of the US left, was initially devised by FBI agents in Puerto Rico in order to cripple the Nationalist Party structure. The party was thus unable to respond to the massive changes then sweeping Puerto Rico: the new ELA status, the major influx of US business interests under the

development plan named Operation Bootstrap, and the consequent explosion of outmigration from the island to industrial cities like New York and Chicago.

In 1954 members of the Nationalist Party fired shots at the ceiling of the US Capitol while the House of Representatives was in session. No one was injured, and the nationalists responsible claimed that their goal was to call public attention to the many party members languishing in prison four years after Jayuya. Ironically, the four shooters, Lolita Lebron, Andres Figueroa Cordero, Andres Flores, and Rafael Cancel Miranda, would themselves spend the next 25 years in prison, joining the surviving would-be assassin of President Truman, Oscar Collazo, as longtime political prisoners whose continued incarceration would help inspire a future generation of independence activists in the 1970s. But at the time of Albizu Campos' death in 1965 the Nationalist Party was a shell of its former self, and the plight of "the Five," as Lebron and her comrades were later known, was largely forgotten by Puerto Ricans both inside and outside the independence movement.

### **1960–1990: Independence and Socialism for Puerto Rico**

The Nationalist Party never identified with any precise class struggle ideology, although it had cordial relations with a variety of socialists and communists, including several who were at times key members of the party. One of these was Juan Antonio Corretjer, who was convicted with Albizu Campos in 1936 and later became an ardent if unorthodox Leninist. Corretjer and others like him throughout the independence movement were profoundly influenced by the Cuban Revolution at the end of the 1950s. The success of the revolution seemed to validate the possibility of armed struggle in the Caribbean, despite the obvious differences between mass opposition to the despotic rule of Bautista in Cuba and the broad popularity of Munoz Marin in Puerto Rico. More important, however, was Fidel Castro's public embrace of Marxism-Leninism, and his broad support for anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist revolution in all corners of the developing world. In Puerto Rico, with its direct historical and cultural ties to Cuba, a new generation of activists was drawn toward the twin goals of independence and socialism that would

guide the most militant sectors of the movement for decades to come.

The most prominent group to emerge during this period was the Movement for Independence (MPI), which grew rapidly during the second half of the 1960s, embracing a socialist and eventually Marxist-Leninist approach to struggle. In the early 1970s the MPI transformed itself into the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), which became a major force on the Puerto Rican left for the next decade. Heavily involved in both student and union organizing, the MPI/PSP also published the newspaper *Claridad* (Clarity). Following the tradition of the Nationalist Party, it rejected electoral participation, but emphasized the necessity for mass struggle that had been neglected by the nationalists in later years. The growth of the MPI/PSP was facilitated by an upsurge of labor activity beginning at the end of the 1960s, and by the stagnation of Puerto Rico's economy in the aftermath of Operation Bootstrap.

The rise of the New Left in the United States, along with the rapid growth in the Puerto Rican population on the mainland during the 1950s, also contributed to the unique character of the independence movement during the 1960s and 1970s. Puerto Rican radicals living in New York, Chicago, and elsewhere were witness to the emergence of the black civil rights movement in the US, and to the expansion of student and anti-war struggles. As these movements became increasingly radical in outlook, independence activists in the diaspora adopted a similar trajectory. Thus, the Young Lords Organization, initially a Puerto Rican street gang in Chicago, adopted a militant community organizing framework inspired by the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s. This attracted a number of Puerto Rican student radicals in New York City, who merged with the Chicago grouping under the name Young Lords Party (another nod to the Panthers). The Chicago grouping was eventually expelled for political reasons, and the New York branch declined into sectarian obscurity, but the effect on the movement both in the mainland and on the island was significant.

As long as the broader movements of the 1960s maintained their vitality, the PSP and other groups continued to thrive. But the mass organization aspect of the PSP's politics left the question of armed struggle unresolved. Some activists within the PSP wished to distance

themselves from what they viewed as the adventurist legacy of the Nationalist Party, while others began highlighting the plight of the five nationalist prisoners as an organizing tool within the Puerto Rican community. Around the same time, the question of armed struggle ceased to be merely historical as several small clandestine organizations initiated armed campaigns for independence. The most prominent of these were the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), which operated primarily on the mainland from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, and the Macheteros (literally, the machete wielders), which was active largely on the island from the late 1970s until the late 1980s. The notoriety of the FALN in the mid-1970s forced a discussion of armed struggle within the independence movement, especially in the diaspora, leading to the creation of the Movement for National Liberation (MLN), which was strongest in Chicago but included sections in New York and other cities. The MLN also incorporated a unique dual nationalism that tied the struggle for Puerto Rican independence to the radical Chicano demand for “socialist reunification” of Mexico on the basis of the border prior to the Mexican–American War of 1848, when California and several other southwestern states had been part of Mexico. The MLN was always small compared to the PSP, but the group’s legacy within the diaspora was in many ways out of proportion to its limited size.

The MLN’s respect for the Nationalist Party was only augmented when it also came under intense government repression on the basis of its vocal support for the FALN. Within a year of the MLN’s founding, its entire leadership was incarcerated for failure to testify before a federal grand jury investigating the activities of the FALN. The grand jury resistance campaign became one of the main organizing areas for the MLN, along with public support for the release of the five nationalist prisoners. This effort bore fruit in the late 1970s, as broad sectors of Puerto Rican society embraced the campaign for their release on humanitarian grounds. President Jimmy Carter first released Andres Figueroa, who was dying of cancer, in 1978, and subsequently pardoned the remaining four prisoners in 1979. During this period the MLN and other groups were also invited to testify before the United Nations Decolonization Committee on the colonial status of Puerto Rico. This was a major

breakthrough because the island’s ELA status had previously satisfied much of the international community that Puerto Rico was no longer a colony. As the 1970s progressed, it became increasingly clear that the colonial status persisted.

The FALN was especially active in the latter half of the decade, claiming responsibility for more than 100 bombings of government and corporate offices. The Macheteros group did not limit itself to bombings, engaging in assassinations and armed expropriations as well, including a major armored car robbery in Connecticut in 1983. The two groups, and the other assorted armed organizations of the same era, had political differences with one another, but they did occasionally collaborate on armed actions, and they agreed on the legitimacy of armed struggle in general. While the armed groups lacked a broad base of mass support, they did have sizable peripheries they could call upon for support, as indicated by Fernandez (1987). In this sense it is wrong to equate the Puerto Rican armed struggle with the actions of white clandestine armed organizations in the United States, such as the Weather Underground, which were far more marginal. The communiqués of the armed organizations indicate a two-pronged strategy: embolden the Puerto Rican people with a sense of their untapped potential for radical action, and create a crisis of control that could force the US government to rethink its colonial policies. There is little evidence that either outcome was achieved, although the armed struggle can be thought of as a productive error, insofar as it advanced discussion among Puerto Rican revolutionaries and helped inspire several lasting social movements on the island and in the diaspora.

The MLN developed relationships with island-based groups as well. Smaller organizations dotted the left landscape outside the orbit of the PSP, and one of these was the Puerto Rican Socialist League (LSP) founded by Corretjer. The LSP supported many of the same mass struggles as the PSP, but it viewed the latter’s equivocation on the question of armed struggle as a fatal flaw in strategizing for revolution. Corretjer wrote an influential essay entitled “Problems of People’s War in Puerto Rico,” which situated the island’s independence within the broader context of the revolutionary upsurge then sweeping Latin America. The pamphlet included a favorable introduction by the Spanish/Argentine anarchist Abraham Guillen, an advocate for the

urban guerrilla movement in the southern cone of South America. The LSP was strongly supportive of the emergence of the FALN on the mainland and as a result came into contact with the MLN. The groups established a formal fraternal relationship, with the LSP operating on the island and the MLN working within the diaspora communities. Both organizations were involved in the campaign against forced sterilization of Puerto Rican women, an ongoing crisis abetted directly by the US government.

The LSP gained its greatest notoriety during protests on Vieques, a small island off the eastern coast of the main island that is considered part of Puerto Rico. For decades, the vast majority of Vieques was occupied by the US navy, which used it as a training ground for aerial and amphibious combat. Local residents had opposed the occupation from the beginning, but in the mid-1970s the movement gained some traction within the broader Puerto Rican left and the independence movement in particular. The LSP was one of the organizations most heavily involved in pushing for militant direct action to actively disrupt the training activities, and when a group of protesters was arrested in 1979 for trespassing on navy property, one of those convicted was Angel Rodriguez Cristobal, a young militant of the LSP. Rodriguez was subsequently killed in a federal prison in Florida while serving his sentence. This came on the heels of the cold-blooded murder by police in 1978 of two young independence activists who were lured to a mountaintop, and the two events again shocked the mainstream of Puerto Rican society into awareness of the repression visited upon the independence movement.

During the 1980s, however, the strain of repression and of internal divisions in the movement began to show and the organized independence movement began a significant decline. The PSP split over the question of electoral participation and alliance with one of the larger parties; by 1985 it was a shell of its former self. The Puerto Rican Independence Party remained what it had always been, a relatively large but still marginal political party committed to avoiding confrontation. Groups like the MLN and LSP survived for a time, but as the broader social movements of the 1970s shrank, so did the ability of such smaller groups to influence them. The armed movement suffered significant losses, including the capture of more

than a dozen combatants each from the FALN and the Macheteros, and by the end of the 1980s both organizations had effectively ceased to exist. One major legacy of this period, however, was the cause of the prisoners, all of whom identified themselves as prisoners of war or as political prisoners. Just as the five nationalist prisoners had created a link between the independence movements of the 1950s and the 1970s, so did the plight of the new set of prisoners beginning in the early 1980s eventually inspire a generation of activists a decade later.

### 1990–Present: New Directions

In the aftermath of the 1980s the independence movement regrouped both on the island and in the diaspora. Instead of prioritizing the reconstruction of the organizations of the previous era, many independence activists focused their energy directly on involvement in the rising social movements of the time, of which three stand out: the rising anti-privatization movement, the campaign to free the political prisoners and prisoners of war, and the struggle around the navy's continued use of Vieques.

In 1992 the pro-statehood party gained control of the island government, promising to push for Puerto Rico's admission as the 51st state. One important aspect of this effort was the imposition of neoliberal economic measures designed to move the island rapidly toward parity with the mainland. These changes were actually more reflective of the neoliberal craze then sweeping the rest of Latin America than they were of any economic policies in place within the United States at the time. Nonetheless, in a context where President Bill Clinton was dismantling welfare programs domestically and enacting free trade agreements internationally, it was politically savvy for statehood advocates to privatize as quickly as possible the massive public sector in Puerto Rico. While these maneuvers may have been popular in Washington, they prompted massive resistance among Puerto Ricans.

The battles around privatization came to a head in 1997 and 1998, in a struggle over the sale of the Puerto Rican Telephone Company. Resistance came from a variety of sectors, including unions, student groups, the independence movement, environmentalists, and more, who collaborated in staging strikes and protests aimed

at stopping the sale. The guiding slogan of this campaign, “Puerto Rico no se vende,” had strong pro-independence implications, since it translated as both “Puerto Rico is not for sale” and “Puerto Rico doesn’t sell out.” But while the independence movement devoted considerable resources to the struggle, the real backbone of the resistance was organized labor, which did not take a formal position on independence. The campaign culminated in a massive general strike in the summer of 1998, but when disagreements emerged among the unions involved, the effort floundered. In the end the phone company was privatized as planned, and the independence movement was not strong enough to change the outcome.

A more successful arena for the movement in the 1990s was the campaign to free the remaining political prisoners and prisoners of war from the FALN and the Macheteros. This campaign was spearheaded almost entirely by radical independence activists, and once again Puerto Ricans in the diaspora were centrally involved. The prisoners had received outrageously long sentences, in some cases as much as 100 years, although none of their convictions had been for crimes of violence. Seizing on the human rights aspect of their continuing incarceration, the campaign to free the prisoners gained momentum as the decade progressed, drawing support from religious organizations and professional associations both on the mainland and in Puerto Rico. The seditious conspiracy charge, which produced the bulk of the prison sentences meted out to the prisoners, had been used exclusively against Puerto Ricans during the twentieth century, beginning with Albizu Campos himself. This only heightened the sense that the prisoners were being punished for loving their homeland, which in turn broadened support for their release among all sectors of Puerto Rican society.

Building upon this expanding popular mobilization, the campaign to free the prisoners petitioned the Clinton administration to release them unconditionally. In doing so, they deliberately downplayed the armed struggle aspect of the prisoners’ history, focusing instead upon the humanitarian issues raised by their continued incarceration and the non-violent nature of the crimes for which they were convicted. This narrative was difficult to sustain in discussions with the same US government that had declared the prisoners “terrorists” when they were first

captured, but the growing support for the campaign from religious, legal, and humanitarian groups made it possible. In the end, President Clinton approved the release of most of the prisoners in the summer of 1999. This constituted a massive victory for the independence movement, although it was clear that the road to success required jettisoning, at least temporarily, the more militant forms of rhetoric and action that had been traditionally associated with the movement.

A few months before the release of the prisoners, the small island of Vieques again became a flashpoint for social struggle in Puerto Rico, when, during combat training for the US navy, a bomb accidentally killed a Puerto Rican civilian named David Sanes. The independence movement, having been involved consistently in the struggle against the navy, was well positioned to respond to the sudden and broad-based public outrage. But once again there were other contributors to the struggle: environmental activists opposed the ecological devastation visited on Vieques, while pacifists and anti-militarists campaigned against combat training as a precursor to wars abroad. But community control was the dominant discourse of the movement, and in this arena the independence movement’s demand for self-determination throughout Puerto Rico drew increasing support from others involved in the struggle.

Immediately after Sanes’ death the navy shut down the training grounds while it investigated the situation. Protestors from throughout Puerto Rico subsequently occupied the naval property, establishing dozens of squatter encampments designed to prevent the resumption of activity by the navy. Some of the squatters were independence activists, but others came from student and environmental movements well-steeped in the tactics of militant direct action. These same movements helped coordinate a rally in San Juan in 2000 demanding the immediate departure of the navy from Vieques; with an estimated 150,000 people, it was one of the largest demonstrations in the history of Puerto Rico. With virtually the entire island siding against the navy, the US government eventually agreed to withdraw from Vieques within four years, while insisting that combat training would continue during that time. This extended timetable satisfied no one, and direct action and civil disobedience continued until the final cessation of training in

2003. Once again, the independence movement was integral to the victory, this time in large part due to its embrace of direct action.

Throughout these various campaigns the independence movement was also involved in a variety of other struggles, from anti-gentrification efforts in diaspora communities such as Chicago and New York, to environmental and community struggles in various parts of Puerto Rico. The preservation of historical awareness was also a continuing concern, and the movement coordinated annual commemorations of events like the Grito de Lares, the Ponce Massacre, and the Grito de Jayuya. On September 23, 2005, while many independence activists were attending activities in Lares, the FBI killed Filiberto Ojeda Rios, a leading Machetero and a longtime fugitive, at his home in western Puerto Rico. As had happened several times before, the repression of the independence movement by the US government stimulated an outpouring of sympathy for the movement among broader sectors of Puerto Rican society. The murder of Ojeda Rios refocused the attention of Puerto Ricans on the historical legacy of the independence movement, while inspiring the movement itself to regroup and move forward in the twenty-first century.

## Conclusion

The independence movement in Puerto Rico has contributed significantly to a broad range of social struggles both in Puerto Rico and in the United States over the past 110 years. This legacy has been addressed by historians from a variety of perspectives, although no comprehensive history of the movement exists in English or in Spanish. Many general histories of Puerto Rico engage such major figures as Albizu Campos, within the context of broader trends. The recent work of Ayala and Bernabe (2007) represents the most sophisticated contextualized analysis of the independence movement's historical trajectory currently available in English. Other works in English address thematic or chronological aspects of the movement, either in the diaspora or on the island itself, including Quintero-Rivera (1976), Flores (1993), Fernandez (1994), Ramos-Zayas (2003), Rivera (2003), and Pico (2004), among many others.

The future of the independence movement is uncertain. The longer colonial status continues, the less likely full independence seems from a

geopolitical perspective. But the fortunes of the movement as such are more likely to be tied to the ebb and flow of the broader social movements of the coming years, as has been the case historically. If and when these movements resurge, the demand for independence from the United States will almost certainly gain support. But the political content of the independence argument, which in the past has evolved from bourgeois home rule to populist nationalism to revolutionary socialism, will determine the ability of the movement to surpass the limits of previous incarnations.

SEE ALSO: Anarchism, Puerto Rico; Cuban Revolution, 1953–1959; Easter Rising and the Irish Civil War; Imperialism, Historical Evolution; Irish Nationalism; Student Movements, Global South; Vieques; Women's Movement, Latin America

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