



The Lords persuaded hundreds of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. not to serve in the U.S. military. They also awakened nationalist consciousness among Puerto Ricans in North America. They marched with the Nationalist Party in New York to commemorate the Ponce Massacre of 1937, and with 10,000 people demonstrated at the UN for Puerto Rican independence.

But the Lords did not neglect the immediate social and economic conditions that affected Puerto Ricans in the *Barrios* of New York. Their first major political action, the "Garbage Offensive," took place in the summer of 1969. The streets of East Harlem — an area housing thousands of Puerto Rican families — were filthy because the New York City Department of Sanitation never cleaned them. Late at night the Lords swept the streets and piled the garbage in a mound; traffic was blocked. In the morning the Sanitation Department was forced to remove the garbage. The "Garbage Offensive" dramatized the need of East Harlem residents for clean safe streets.



The Young Lords Party needed a community center. One of the main social institutions in the heart of *El Barrio* was the Methodist Church at Lexington Avenue and 111th Street—a Church, however, that contributed little to the Puerto Rican community. In October 1969 at a meeting of the church board the Lords asked for space. The Church called in the police. 13 Lords were arrested and jailed. In response, on December 28th the Party took over the Church. For eleven days the *Iglesia de la Gente*, the “Peoples’ Church,” was a center for the Lords Free Breakfast Program for children. *La Iglesia de la Gente* was a school, a concert and meeting hall, a place to share political ideas and express the culture of the community.



Thousands of people — Blacks, Whites, and Puerto Ricans — visited the church to express their solidarity, to provide food, clothing, and blankets, to listen to the Lords speak about Puerto Rican history, community and working class problems. One young Puerto Rican noted:

All my reading could not tell me what that week at the church made clear. In the words of one of the Lords: 'We're all part of something. It's a nation. It's been sleeping for a long time, hibernating, and now it's coming out.'

The police invaded *La Iglesia de la Gente* and arrested the Lords; the Methodist Church resumed control. But the Lords continued their political activity. They went from door to door in *El Barrio* and tested for lead poisoning — a disease common to children playing among the run-down buildings. In the spring and summer of 1970 the Lords worked with Lincoln Hospital doctors and nurses to open an addiction treatment center in the South Bronx — an area with one of the most severe drug addiction problems in the U.S. Patients were treated with the Chinese method of acupuncture, and educated about the political and economic causes of drug addiction. Many young people who might have become junkies joined the Young Lords Party.



The Lords were destroyed by both police repression and internal conflicts. But their example is still remembered. Their programs and their actions gave new significance to the struggle for national independence; the Lords developed the basis for strong ties between Puerto Ricans on the mainland and on the island.

Tengo Puerto Rico en mi Corazon
(I hold Puerto Rico in my heart)

the Lords proclaimed; they were a bridge between the people on the island and in the U.S.

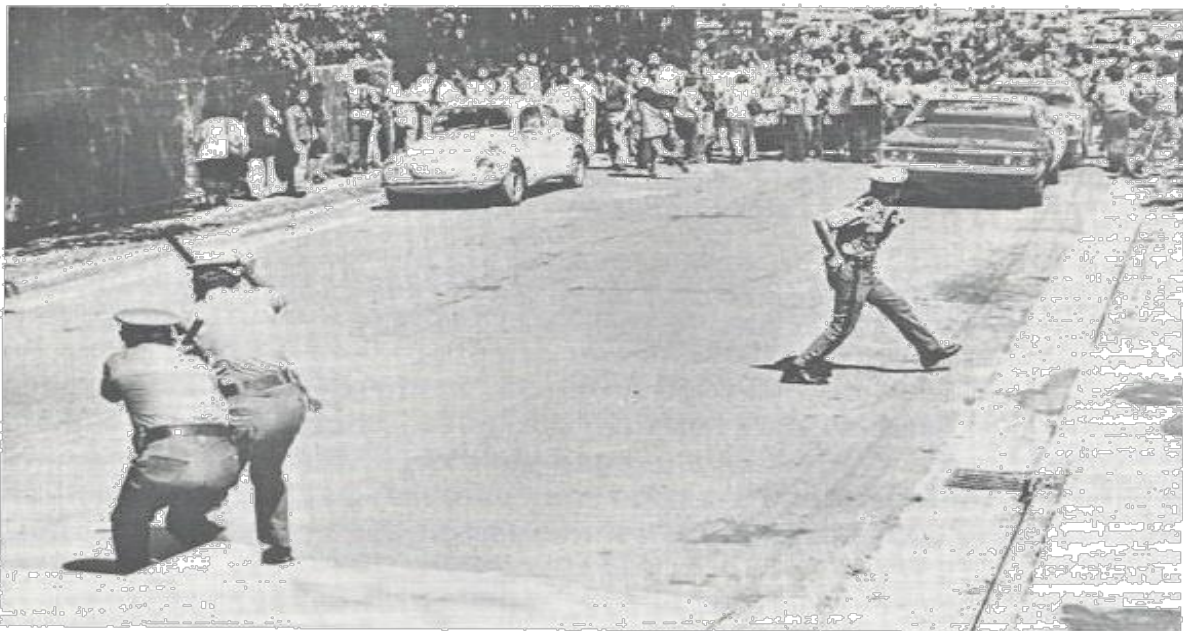
Imagine Manhattan as our Target Range

While the Lords were demonstrating in New York against the Viet Nam war, militancy rose on the island. In 1970 — the year that President Richard Nixon ordered the invasion of Cambodia, the year that anti-war demonstrations erupted across the U.S. and throughout the world — FUPI led an attack on the ROTC building on the Rio Piedras campus. Demonstrators battled the police; hundreds of students and teachers were beaten and arrested. Antonia Martinez, a 16 year old woman who was watching the confrontation from a second story window, was killed by a police bullet. That same year the U.S. National Guard massacred students at Jackson and Kent State colleges.

Thousands of people marched in the demonstration and attended Antonia Martinez's funeral to express their grief, anger and commitment to continue the struggle. Two days later, in retaliation for her murder, two U.S. marines were killed in San Juan. Antonio Caban Vale, known as "El Topo" ("The Mole"), wrote a popular song about Antonia:

*Antonia, tu nombre es una historia
de un pueblo que se busca
y se ha encontrado en tí.
Antonia, tu nombre es como un alba
Los pájaros desatan
La luz del porvenir.
Antonia, los pueblos no perdonan
Un día, esa ley se he de cumplir.
Tu muerte la juventud la canta
es bandera en sus labios
y es bala de fusil
Antonia aquí estamos presentes
para mostrale al mundo
la luz que nace en tí.*

(Antonia, your name is like a story
of a people who looked for
and found themselves in you.
Antonia, your name is like the dawn
the birds sing to the future
and announce the light to come
Antonia, the people won't forgive
one day the law of the people will prevail
Your death, a song sung by the youth
like a flag in their voices
a bullet and a gun
Antonia, here we are together
to sing and show the world
the light that's born through you.)



In 1971 — the year the U.S. invaded Laos, the year hundreds of Black, Latino, and White G.I.s went to Washington D.C. to protest the war — Puerto Rican students in Río Piedras burned the ROTC building to the ground. A specially trained police riot squad, armed with the latest U.S. weapons and equipment, invaded the campus. Students resisted; battles were heated. Before order was restored the chief of the University police and an ROTC cadet were killed. A few months later the ROTC program was moved off the Río Piedras campus.

One of the most dramatic confrontations with the U.S. military occurred on Culebra, a small island off Puerto Rico with a population of 800 people. On Culebra PIP and the Nationalists joined with residents to protest U.S. military occupation. The U.S. Navy used one third of the island as an artillery range; underwater mines were tested in the coastal waters. The shelling destroyed grazing land and the underwater mines destroyed lobster traps and fishing nets. Tons of dead fish washed ashore every month.

"Imagine if we had a navy and used Central Park, on the island of Manhattan, as our target range," Juan Mari Bras said. The U.S. Navy ordered the eviction of all Puerto Rican families, but they refused to move. Instead they organized a committee and the Mayor of Culebra sent an angry message to the U.S. Navy:

You have mined, bombed, and torpedoed our fish and our fishing areas. You have fire-rocketed and bombed napalm over our birds and their nests. Human and computer errors have misguided your missiles to our harbors and private lands, exposing us to death. Knowing of the presence of a civilian population in the center of the area where you carry on your maneuvers, you continue and plan to intensify these activities on and around the island of Culebra. The intensity, the frequency, and the type of maneuvers carried out by the Navy of the U.S. has created a situation that passes the limits of human tolerance.

In August 1971 the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, personally assured the Governor of Puerto Rico that the shelling would immediately stop. It stopped for a few days and then began again. Juan Mari Bras declared that Secretary of Defense Laird showed "an absolute lack of respect for the people of Puerto Rico, a complete disregard for international law and utter ignorance of the most elementary principles of human fellowship."



The resistance of the people of Culebra intensified. Their new demand was "Force the U.S. Navy, not only out of Culebra but out of Puerto Rico too."

U.S. federal marshals descended on Culebra and arrested and jailed demonstrators, including Ruben Berrios of the PIP. But the arrests only brought more support for the struggle. Demonstrations were held in San Juan; month after month the struggle continued. Finally, the Navy removed its bases from Culebra and the people won back their island.



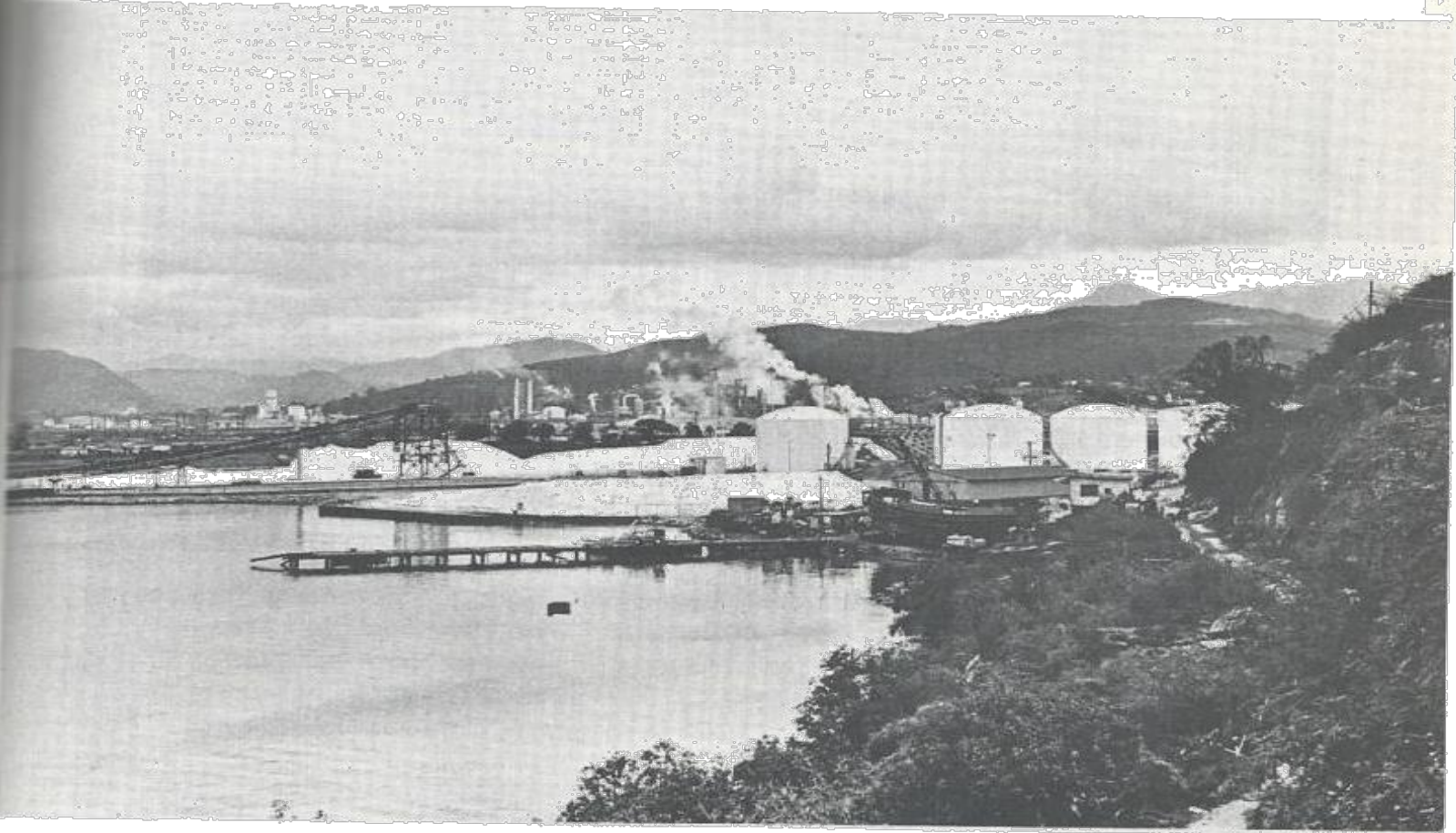


Villa Justicia

During this period of intense activity against the war in Viet Nam, and against the U.S. military presence in Puerto Rico, there were other crucial protests and political developments.

Even as the U.S. intensified its military and economic assault against Viet Nam, it intensified its assault against the people of Puerto Rico. In the mid-1960s Kennecott Copper and American Metal Climax held secret negotiations with the Commonwealth Government to build a gigantic mining and smelting complex at the center of the island. These negotiations were uncovered and publicized by *independentistas*. Students, radicals, members of MPI and PIP, went into the mountains and explained to the people that mining by the U.S. corporations would mean ecological disaster. The plans of Kennecott Copper and American Metal Climax meant the reduction of farm land, the erosion of mountain soil, the destruction of the natural beauty. Farmers from rural areas, and students and workers from the cities joined together to stop the plans of the copper corporations.

U.S. corporations also planned to build a Superport on the west coast of the island. Puerto Rico was selected as a site because the states of the northeast U.S. refused to allow a Superport to be built on their coastline. The Puerto Rican people saw that the Superport would displace thousands of families. It would pollute the air and the water; the entire west coast would be destroyed. There were meetings and demonstrations across the island and the Superport was stopped.



At the same time that the U.S. corporations intensified economic exploitation, there were cut-backs in the construction of low income housing, schools, hospitals, and reduction in social services. In housing the crisis was especially severe. 300,000 homeless Puerto Ricans seized government land and built their own houses. The "squatters" often built their houses at night; several families joined together to put up the frame and nail down the roof. When only two or three families squatted on government land it was relatively easy for the police to evict them. But when thousands became "squatters" the police were powerless.

Villa Justicia (Village of Justice) is one of the best known "squatters" communities. *Villa Justicia* sits on the outskirts of San Juan — between the ocean and the fields of sugar cane. "We arrived here in 1969," a woman noted. "My grandfather built this house from scraps of wood." "We moved in after he built another house next door," her neighbor added, "We had to fight the police with sticks and machetes to keep our homes."



The people of *Villa Justicia* received help from independence organizations. Together they blocked the streets that led into the community and fought the police. Moreover, *independentista* lawyers took the case of *Villa Justicia* to the courts. The colonial government backed down from a legal confrontation; today an uneasy truce exists between the village and the Commonwealth. Residents have not been evicted but they do not own the land or their homes.

Villa Justicia has its own mayor. The children attend the local school. It is a close-knit community because the houses were cooperatively built and defended. It is also united by national pride and by dreams of the future. The streets of the community, though unpaved, carry the names of Puerto Rican patriots and historical events. The main street is called *Calle Paz*, Peace Street. "We have seen much inequality and violence, but we envision a future of justice and peace," one resident said.



Grass roots resistance also led to an island-wide boycott of the Utility Authority, a corporation controlled by New York and Boston bankers, that charged the lowest rates for factories and hotels and the highest rates for poor and working households.

A few days after the boycott began, the utility company cut electricity to thousands of homes. But hundreds of families tapped into the main lines and by-passed the meters. Lights and radios went on again. The Utility Authority couldn't shut down the main lines. It was forced to turn on the current and to reduce rates. A special bill was passed in the Puerto Rican legislature authorizing a reduction in rates for home consumption of electricity. The people won another victory.



To lower the lights (prices), Don't pay! The boycott goes on!



We accuse
THE MEMBERS OF THE EMERGENCY
FINANCIAL CONTROL BOARD
of CRIMES against the COMMUNITY

DASH HOSTOS - Monday MAY 10 - 11 AM
with from 11th & 12th STS to 14th ST

11

**WE WILL
ATTAIN
VICTORY**

Throw Out the Capitalists

Probably the major political development in the early and mid-1970s was the rise of new, militant labor unions, and the decision on the part of *independentistas* to concentrate on working class struggles. In 1969 — the year workers went on a successful seven month strike against the General Electric Corporation — the MPI revised its strategy. It made working class organizing, and the fusion of the class struggle with the independence struggle its priority. Two years later in 1971, the MPI became the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), a workers' party dedicated to national independence and to socialism. In the *Socialist Alternative*, the PSP declared:

True independence cannot be imagined without a break with the whole colonial-capitalist structure, which serves as a foundation for our so-called 'Free Associated State.' We do not want an independent *capitalist* nation, since that would mean only a change of masters for the great majority of our people.

The PSP has had a tremendous impact. It is an important force in the trade unions and workers' movement, in community struggles and the schools. The PSP maintains its visibility to the people through its newspaper, *Claridad*, published in San Juan and New York City each week. *Claridad* provides news and analysis on the workers' and independence movement not available in the U.S. owned daily newspapers of San Juan.



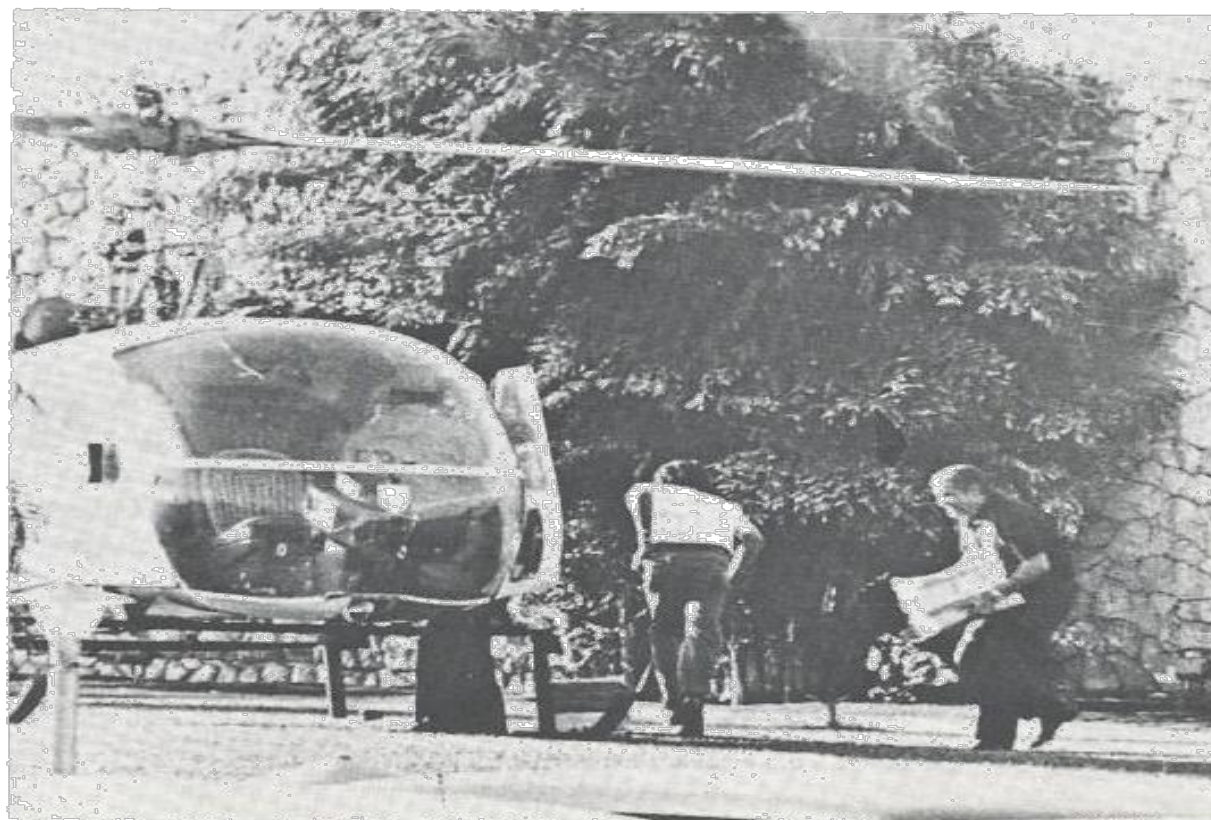
The PSP's success in reaching many people is due, in part, to its strategic commitment to support all forms of struggle including strikes, demonstrations, elections, international diplomatic pressure and armed resistance.

Juan Mari Bras, the leader of the PSP, explained that political independence would have to march hand in hand with economic independence, that there would have to be redistribution of wealth and that workers would have to control the machinery of production. "Every *independentista* must be a socialist and every socialist an *independentista*," he declared.

Strikes: Schools for Workers

The independence movement is supporting the workers movement and many of the most militant working class leaders are *independentistas*. From 1971 through 1976, there was an unbroken wave of strikes in Puerto Rico. They were a response to the political and economic crisis on the island — high unemployment, low wages, unsafe working conditions, poor housing, and poor medical care.

In 1972 workers at *El Mundo*, the U.S. owned newspaper, went on strike and closed down the building. Hundreds of *El Mundo* workers and *independentistas* marched and picketed. During the seven month strike there were repeated confrontations with both strike-breakers and the tactical police force. Dozens of workers were beaten and arrested, but the picket lines continued. The strikers blocked doors and exits, and made it impossible for the printed edition of the paper to leave the plant. *El Mundo* executives bought five helicopters and flew the paper over the heads of the demonstrators. But the *El Mundo* executives were outmaneuvered. Late one night all five helicopters were destroyed by sabotage. The strikers celebrated this victory; no one was ever accused of the bombing and no one ever claimed credit.





The strike wave grew; new sectors of the working class were drawn into the movement. In 1972 the United Workers Movement (MOU) was formed. Led by Pedro Grant, MOU grew into a federation of more than 40 unions and 100 locals that represented 18% of the organized workers on the island. MOU campaigned for workers' rights; it organized the unorganized, resisted laws against wild-cat strikes and open shops, and fought for the enforcement of the Federal Minimum Wage Law in Puerto Rico.

In 1973 the Independent Electrical Workers Union went on strike and shook the entire island. The Fireman's and the Sanitation Workers' Unions in San Juan also went on strike. In desperation, Governor Hernandez Colon called out the National Guard — the first time the Guard was called out since the 1950 rebellion. In 1974, for the first time in Puerto Rican history, the Teacher's Union went on strike for higher wages, and for a new curriculum that would celebrate Puerto Rican history and culture. The police occupied the schools, arrested and jailed union leaders.

In 1974 workers struck the Waterworks and Aqueducts Authority to demand not only higher wages but the right — outlawed by the U.S. Congress — of public employees to strike against city and federal governments. Again Governor Colon called in the National Guard; troops broke into workers' homes and arrested strike leaders.

In response, underground groups exploded bombs at International Telephone and Telegraph, Union Carbide, the Commonwealth Oil Refinery, Grand Union, CIT

Finance Company, and the U.S. Army Reserve Depot in Ponce. In communiqués delivered to the press, the underground groups indicted U.S. corporations for the misery of the Puerto Rican workers.

In 1975 the Independent Union of Telephone Employees (UIET) went on strike against the Bell Telephone System. The UIET officials were representative of the new, militant Puerto Rican union leadership. When the UIET went on strike, President Jose Juan Hernandez explained:

We arrived at the conclusion that it was better for us to be killed fighting than to go down without fighting.



Striking workers of the Waterworks and Aqueducts Authority (AAA) demonstrate: "Our Sacrifice is Victory"



The UIET went on strike, not only for economic demands, but for an end to company repression, the end of supervision through closed circuit TV, an end to lay-offs, a halt in the firing of union organizers, and the removal of the police from the factory grounds.

During the strike, the Telephone Company fired union president Hernandez and dozens of other workers. The police riot squad attacked demonstrators, arrested and jailed them. But the union held its ground. Oscar Pintado, the Vice President of the UIET said:

The government is trying to eliminate the unions . . . The government claims that the workers should be blamed for the economic crisis.

We understand that in order to counter-attack, we must create an organization, a workers' federation that can confront this kind of repression. Part of the battle to forge this federation involves taking on those international unions which don't defend the interests of the Puerto Rican workers.

Pintado defined the importance of workers' solidarity, and explained the importance of strikes:

Strikes are a great school for workers. It is there that class struggle is molded and dramatized. There the lines are drawn, with the bosses and their allies lined up on one side. The workers experience repression directly and see the role of the commercial press and the police.

In 1975 the Cement Workers Union went on strike against the Puerto Rican Cement Company, owned by Luis Ferre, multi-millionaire and an ex-governor of the island. The strike against Ferre lasted over a year. The families of strikers rallied behind the cause. The Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) threw its support behind the union; so did North American supporters of Puerto Rican independence.



Committee of the wives of striking Puerto Rico Cement workers rally in solidarity.

However, under the auspices of the AFL-CIO Seaman's International Union, scabs were hired to fill the strikers' jobs. The U.S. National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled in favor of the scab workers and against the Puerto Rican Cement Workers Union. The strike was broken. But the Ponce workers focused world attention on the exploitation of labor in, and the colonial status of Puerto Rico. They won new allies and inspired other workers across the island, and in the U.S. On May 1, 1975—International Workers Day—the Ponce Cement Workers led a militant demonstration of 10,000 workers. Banners demanded independence for Puerto Rico and indicted the U.S. corporations. The union and the independence movements successfully combined forces.

Women Organize

In 1975 women on the island formed the Federation of Puerto Rican Women (FMP), an organization that defended working class women. Norma Valle, the Coordinator of FMP, explained,

In this country women have experienced triple exploitation. We are exploited as Puerto Ricans by the existing capitalist-colonialist system, as workers, and as women. This takes place in the home, in the workplace, and in the society at large in different, and numerous ways. Women's oppression is economic, social and cultural. Our full self-realization as human beings is obstructed.

The Federation celebrated the Puerto Rican women of the past:

The women's liberation struggle is not new in Puerto Rico. Toward the end of the last century, women started to integrate into social production, to gain consciousness of their oppression, and to struggle for their rights as workers and as women. . . . Heroines of the liberation struggle such as Luisa Capetillo, Juana Pagan, Rivera Franca de Armino, Valentina Carrera, Juana Colon, knew how to march on equal terms next to men in the struggle for a just society for all. Today, we recognize these women as the vanguard, the example to follow.

Moreover, the Federation joined with women around the world who were combatting imperialism. The women of the FMP—like the people of Culebra, like students who protested ROTC, and like the Young Lords—were inspired by the Vietnamese people. In 1975, Norma Valle noted:

The Puerto Rican women . . . express their solidarity with the Vietnamese women who played an unsurpassed part in the liberation war of their country; on the battlefield, in production, in education, and every place where their contribution was needed. Following their example, women in the world who are struggling against colonialism, capitalism, discrimination, and oppression will move forward with the conviction that we will also attain victory with our people.

The Nationalists: Patriotism and Valor

Another factor in the battle for Puerto Rican independence is the renewed activity of the Nationalist Party. In 1965, with the death of Albizu Campos, the Party was deeply wounded. Albizu spent 24 of his last 28 years in prison: from 1937 to 1947, from 1950 to 1953, and then again from 1954 to 1965. During his last years in prison, Albizu was tortured by his jailers; he suffered three strokes, was paralyzed and deprived of his capacity to speak. When he died in 1965 one hundred thousand Puerto Ricans attended his funeral—the largest demonstration of grief ever expressed on the island.

Carlos Feliciano, a participant in the 1950 Jayuya rebellion, and a leader of the Nationalists today, was in prison with Albizu for a short time. He wrote:

In *La Princesa*, the prison in San Juan under the city wall near La Fortaleza, I have the honor, the privilege, to live with Albizu Campos in the same cell. Here we live together for several months like brothers.

Oh, he was a beautiful man. He was the most beautiful man I ever know. Never in my life have I seen a man like Albizu Campos. You know, his sister used to come to the prison, once or twice a week, to bring him things. He used to give them away to people in the prison. Nothing he owned. Nothing he wanted. Nothing belonged to him. One day the prisoners, they make a party for Albizu Campos with music and things like that. 'No,' he said. 'This party is not for Albizu Campos. This party is for everyone here.'

I don't have words to say how Albizu Campos was. Never I saw a man like that. A sweet man. He was something sweet. There was something sweet inside him.

If I tell you this you won't believe it. I was in prison five years. But I never was so free as the time I spent with Albizu Campos. I feel free. That is the truth.

The five Nationalist political prisoners — Lolita Lebron, Oscar Collazo, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores, and Andres Figueroa Cordero — have demanded their freedom decade after decade; they have received support from individuals and organizations around the world. The U.S. government offered the five their freedom if they would promise not to participate in political activity. They have refused to make that deal. "If freed I will keep on fighting the best way possible, even to death. That is a duty," Andres Figueroa Cordero declared. "I will never abandon the principles that brought me here."



Recent photograph of Lolita Lebron at Federal Penitentiary, Alderson, West Virginia.

Independence Movement: Deepening Roots

Today there are many independence organizations that workers are joining. The largest are the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. Other organizations include the Movimiento Socialista Popular (the Popular Socialist Movement), the Socialist League, the Puerto Rican Communist Party, the Nationalist Party, and the Puerto Rican Peace Council.

Most Puerto Rican independence organizations consider themselves anti-imperialist and socialist. They want a society in which the wealth is produced and shared equally, a society in which workers run the government, the factories, and offices. However, they offer different methods for the achievement of an independent, socialist society.



"Socialism: Jobs for Everyone"

The Puerto Rican independence movement is growing on the island as well as the United States. Organizations such as the US Branch of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Nationalist Party, El Comite and the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization are organizing thousands of Puerto Ricans in defense of their civil rights, for community control of the schools, bilingual education as well as independence for Puerto Rico. An underground group, the FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation), has claimed responsibility for a number of bombings in the U.S., to call attention to the independence struggle.



Day care centers and educational institutions were the first to go when the city of New York was hit by a financial crisis. Many Third World and working class communities were hit the hardest by the cutbacks in health, education and welfare. The Puerto Rican communities and many of its organizations were in the forefront of the struggles to hold the line against the cutbacks.



Members of El Comite march as a contingent in a New York demonstration. El Comite was started in 1970 as a community organization. During the last seven years the organization has become active in community and workers struggles as well as the movement for Puerto Rican Independence.

In 1976, students demonstrated against the closing of Hostos Community College, the only bilingual college in the U.S. Hostos students succeeded in reopening their college after a long struggle in which the entire Puerto Rican community in New York as well as supporters from other communities were mobilized.





The U.S. branch of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party is an active force in many U.S. cities, seeking to mobilize the Puerto Rican communities in support of independence and self-determination for Puerto Rico, and the rights of Puerto Ricans living in the U.S.

In addition, the independence movement has the support of the international community of nations. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Cubans aided the Puerto Rican struggle. In 1973 the UN Committee on Decolonization introduced a resolution on Puerto Rico that was approved by a majority of the nations in the General Assembly. The resolution affirmed "the inalienable right to independence and self-determination of the Puerto Rican people." It instructed the U.S. not to take any measures that would "obstruct the full and free exercise by the people of their inalienable right of self-determination . . . and in particular to prevent any violation of these rights by corporate bodies under its jurisdiction."

Carlos Feliciano, as a delegate to the Havana conference, summed up the sentiment of many independentistas who remembered past struggles of the Puerto Rican people:

I never dreamed the day would come where there would be so much international support as never before. You know, in years past, we were alone. We were in jail for many years and no one seemed to care. No one ever knew about us. But now it's all different.



12

**AGAINST
THE COMMON
ENEMY**

Noose and Neck

The U.S. Empire has tried to bury the truth about Puerto Rico. But the tree of Puerto Rican life and liberation proclaims the truth: the people have been colonized; they will be free.

As the Puerto Rican liberation movement intensifies, it becomes more important for people in the U.S. to learn the truth about Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican independence is a right that we should support; it is also a key part of our own struggle for economic and social justice.

Puerto Rico, like every nation in the world, has a right to independence. For four hundred years the Puerto Rican people have resisted foreign domination; they have fought to determine their own destiny. If the 1868 Lares uprising was the birth cry of the modern Puerto Rican nation, then today that nation, steeled in struggle, is reaching maturity. The independence movement is mobilizing against the deep exploitation and suffering caused by U.S. domination. At the United Nations Puerto Rico seeks its rightful place among the nations of the world.

The Declaration of Independence proclaims the right of a nation to take whatever means are necessary to throw off a colonial oppressor. School history books defend the right to independence because the 13 U.S. colonies defeated British colonialism in an independence war. Most people in the U.S. agree in principle that it is unjust for one nation to exercise colonial control over another nation.



But from the very beginning, the rulers of the U.S. conquered other nations; first moving west to fight the many Indian nations, and expanding their wealth with African slave labor, and land stolen from Mexico. Today the U.S. is a colonialist-imperialist power engaged in the exploitation of nations and peoples both around the world and inside the U.S. While proclaiming themselves the "champions of the Free World," U.S. rulers stand in the way of Puerto Rico's right to freedom and independence. Therefore, the people of the U.S. have an important role to play to help force U.S. imperialism out of Puerto Rico; they can help break the stranglehold the U.S. maintains over the Puerto Rican nation.

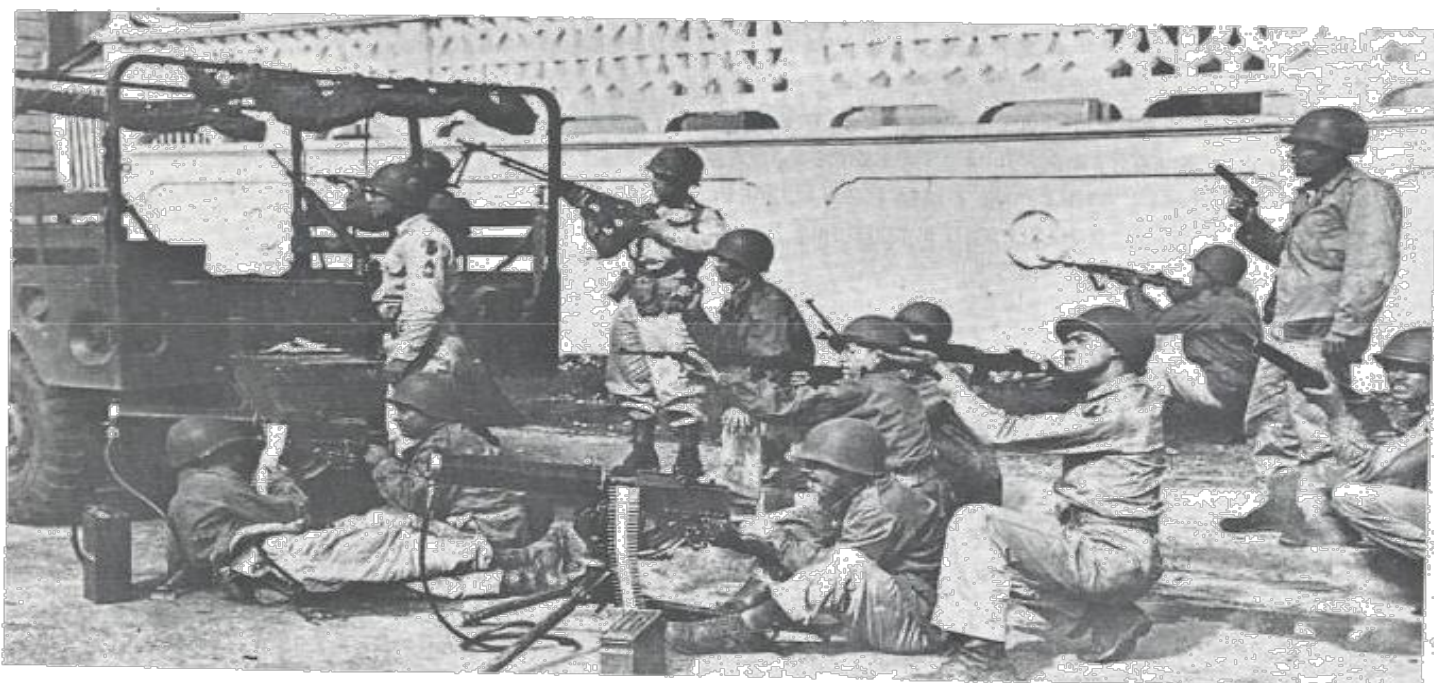
A stranglehold it has been for 100 years. When the Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen writes "Wall Street and Borinquen, noose and neck" he tells it like it is. The U.S. Army conquered the island; since 1898 the U.S. military has used force and the threat of force against the people and the independence movement. It has imposed North American culture and values. It has forced the use of the English language and denied the rich heritage and tradition of Puerto Rican national culture. It has sent Puerto Ricans to die in foreign wars. Imperialism has caused poverty, economic dislocation, and forced migration from the homeland. It engages in a genocidal sterilization campaign. It holds down a people who, like all peoples, want freedom and independence.

U.S. imperialism maintains total control over the Puerto Rican economy, the land and natural resources; it maintains almost total control of the government. All political decisions made in Puerto Rico are subject to final approval or rejection in Washington D.C. To insure its control, the U.S. denies Puerto Rico the right to have its own military, currency, commerce, and postal service. They are all under the jurisdiction of the U.S. government.



Puerto Rico is the most important U.S. colony. The domination of Puerto Rico means huge profits for U.S. imperialism. In the last decade 12 billion dollars in profits has been taken out of Puerto Rico, almost all of it tax-free. Puerto Rico is the fifth largest consumer of U.S.-produced goods in the world. Puerto Rican refineries produce 30% of the petroleum used in the eastern U.S. U.S. industry places profits above people, and contaminates the land and the water.

Puerto Rico serves a strategic purpose for the U.S. military. The island-nation stands at the gateway to Latin America. U.S. military bases usurp 13% of the best agricultural land. These bases exert force against the Puerto Rican independence movement; they threaten the Cuban Revolution, and help protect the U.S.-controlled Panama Canal Zone. The use of Puerto Rico as a military fortress helps to give the U.S. strategic control over Latin American nations seeking independence. It helps prop up U.S.-backed dictatorships from Central America to Chile and Brazil. Puerto Rico, like the Canal Zone, has been used as a staging area for U.S. military and CIA attacks on Latin America, including the U.S. Marine invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965.



Latin America is the continent most heavily exploited by U.S. imperialism. But the example of a socialist Cuba sets the stage for the liberation of all Latin America; an independent Latin America would signal the collapse of the U.S. Empire.

The Puerto Rican independence movement has its counterpart in the revolutionary traditions of Mexico, Central and South America and the other Caribbean nations. Latin America has given the world great liberation leaders: from Tupac Amaru, the Indian general who resisted Spanish conquest, to Chilean President Salvador Allende; from Bolivar and Marti to Che Guevara and Fidel Castro; from Emiliano Zapata to Augusto Cesar Sandino.

Despite setbacks, and the current wave of U.S.-sponsored repression, the Latin American liberation movement is destined to reach victory. Puerto Rico is above all a part of Latin America; its cause is the continental cause. Increasingly, Puerto Rican independence can count on the aid of Latin American nations.



*"Cuba points out
to Latin America
the road to
full freedom."*

~Che Guevara

"If There is no Struggle There is no Progress"

Puerto Rican independence would be a major setback to U.S. imperialism. It would mean the loss of a large market and immense profits; the loss of a large pool of cheap labor. It would mean the loss of a military base that is vital for the control of Latin America. It is obvious, then, that U.S. imperialism will not give up its colonial control of Puerto Rico without a struggle. As Frederick Douglass, the 19th century Black Abolitionist, wrote:

If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are those who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

The history of the Puerto Rican people is a history of struggle. Today, the Puerto Rican nation faces a powerful enemy, but it does not face that enemy alone. It can count on the support and solidarity of nations and peoples around the world; increasingly, it can count on the support of people inside the U.S.

U.S. imperialism is a world-wide system. The multinational corporations, backed by the Pentagon and the CIA, respect no national boundaries. They roam the world and reap profits from every continent. The struggle against U.S. imperialism is linked, interconnected. In the present era — since its defeat in Viet Nam — U.S. imperialism is in decline. Opposing forces confront each other. On one side are the great majority of the world's people; on the other side are the interests of a small minority who are determined to maximize their profits. Today, the balance of forces is in favor of the people.

Today, U.S. imperialism is on the defensive. Throughout the Third World, national liberation movements are on the rise. This development is a key factor in the decline of U.S. imperialism. From Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos to Palestine, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola, imperialism is suffering defeats.

Today, the continuing struggle against U.S. imperialism and white supremacy is manifested sharply in southern Africa. The Black majorities of Namibia and Zimbabwe are seizing control of their national destinies from the U.S.-backed, racist regimes that have held them captive for decades. In Azania (South Africa), the courageous Black resistance to *apartheid* is tearing apart the last bastion of white supremacy on the African continent.

A growing resistance to imperialism has also emerged among developing nations. The traditional looting of natural resources, super-exploitation of labor, and the unequal trade relations are being challenged by militant organizations and groups. We can see this in the movement of Non-Aligned nations, the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, and in the strength of the oil-producing countries. The deterioration of U.S. imperial control has also intensified the competition among the capitalist countries. Japan, West Germany, England and France have accelerated the fight for markets, raw materials, and cheap labor; the U.S. has been wounded by this fight.

The development of socialist societies and their support for national liberation in the Third World has also greatly weakened U.S. imperialism by reducing its area of domination. As imperialist exploitation, and imperialist failure to meet the needs of the people becomes more apparent, the nations of the world are finding in socialism the way to build a better life.

Amilcar Cabral, the African leader, wrote:

The liberation struggle is a revolution . . . it does not finish at the moment when the national flag is raised and the national anthem played. A nation's national liberation is the recovery of the historical personality of that nation . . . National liberation exists when, and only when, the national productive forces are completely freed of all kinds of foreign domination.



*"A nation's
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that nation."*

- Amilcar Cabral

This point speaks directly to the Puerto Rican situation. Some nations have won political independence, but have not yet won true self-determination. Their economies continue to be dominated by foreign imperialism. These nations have thrown off direct colonialism, but have not prevented the penetration of imperialism in new and more subtle ways as oppressive as the old.

Statehood

The Popular Democratic Party (PPD) supports the Commonwealth or "Associated Free State" currently under revision. The U.S. Congress is debating a bill called the Compact of Permanent Union, a variation on the present Commonwealth status. The "Compact" would continue the illusion that Puerto Rico is autonomous. In fact, it would tighten the U.S. grip on the island. It would also give the U.S. a pretext to tell the United Nations that Puerto Rico is an internal U.S. affair and of no concern to the nations of the world.

The New Progressive Party (NPP) has proposed that Puerto Rico become the 51st state of the U.S. Commonwealth supporters have long opposed Statehood for Puerto Rico on the grounds that it would force corporations to leave the island; rather than pay the Federal minimum wage laws, they argued, U.S. business would close their shops in Puerto Rico and move to other nations where wages are lower.

Another factor in the situation is oil. Large deposits of oil have recently been discovered off the coast of Puerto Rico. Statehood would give the U.S. oil corporations total control over these deposits; the Puerto Rican people would again be deprived of valuable natural resources.

But Statehood would not end poverty and unemployment in Puerto Rico. Rather it would intensify U.S. economic, political and cultural control of the island. Statehood would annex a separate nation into the U.S. Empire; if successful, it would mean the destruction of the people, their history, culture and national identity. Albizu Campos recognized this long ago when he said:

Statehood for Puerto Rico would be the death sentence of our nationality.

More recently, Oskar Collazo, the Nationalist political prisoner, noted:

Those who back the idea of Puerto Rican statehood and think it could become another state of the union while maintaining its Hispanic identity must abandon this illusion; Yankee imperialism has not maintained the tradition of national pluralism. In spite of the fact that this nation is made up of many races, ethnic identity has never been allowed to develop in the U.S. They should look at the fate of the Indians and the Chicanos who 200 years after being conquered and deprived of what was theirs, are subjected to the culture and language of the ruling nation by means of an inhuman and criminal process. Indian children are sent to boarding schools far from their homes so that little by little they may lose their affection for their people and their preference for their language. Chicano children are given bad grades in school, are not promoted and are even punished physically if they speak the language of their parents.

I refuse to believe that ours will be the only people in modern history to voluntarily accept their ethnic suicide. I also refuse to believe that in the light of the inspiring and great examples of heroism of the peoples of Viet Nam, Angola, Mozambique, Cuba and Zimbabwe today, our people will choose the path of submission and union with the most decadent and criminal empire in history.



The Puerto Rican independence forces demand the complete and total end of U.S. domination, and the building of socialism. Independence and self-determination would allow the Puerto Rican people to define their own national identity and political system. A socialist economy would redistribute the wealth to the great majority of the people; a socialist economy would provide jobs, and diversify both the industrial and agricultural base so that Puerto Rico could become more self-sufficient. A long and bitter heritage of dependency must be overcome; the first and most necessary step is to break free from foreign domination, to establish an independent nation.

There is no precise timetable of Puerto Rican independence. The Puerto Rican people face an imperialism in decline, and imperialism in decline is desperate; that desperation leads to brutality and genocide. As Oscar Collazo explained:

It has already been demonstrated many times that imperialism only gives way when they see a people that is really united behind a purpose of freedom, and when that principle of freedom gets the backing of other peoples of the world.

A Piece of Bread When You're Hungry

Imperialism does give way. U.S. imperialism has been and can be defeated. Nowhere was this shown more clearly than in Viet Nam. There, a people with a long tradition of resistance to foreign domination were subjected to U.S. war crimes that were among the most vicious in human history. Yet even against the bombing raids, the napalm and the defoliants, the genocide, the invasion by over 500,000 U.S. troops, the united people of Viet Nam waged a peoples' war that defeated the most powerful empire on earth. The world will never again be the same.

The victory in Viet Nam is the clearest sign of the decline of U.S. imperialism. The victory in Viet Nam inspired national liberation movements and progressive people all over the globe; it spurred on the freedom struggle inside the U.S.

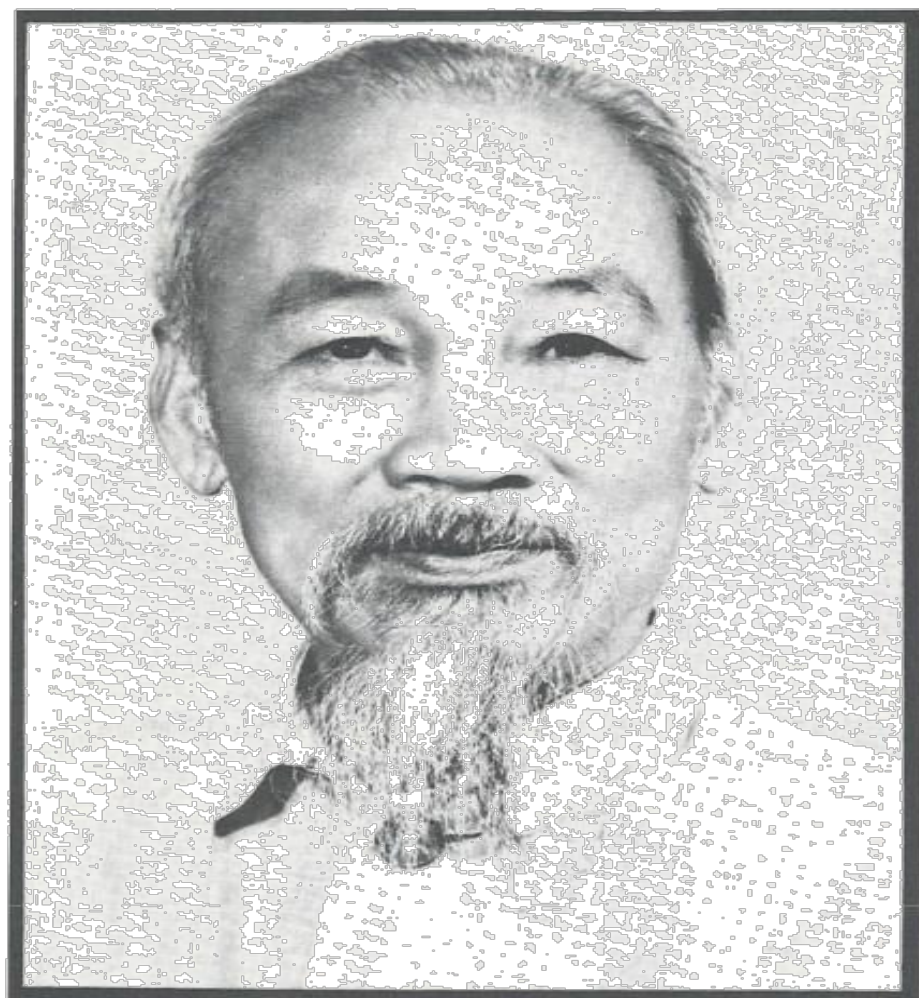
The Vietnamese people understand the importance of solidarity between the people of the U.S. and the people of Viet Nam. They always made a clear distinction between the U.S. government and the people of North America.

Ho Chi Minh was once asked if he had any special message for the people of the U.S. He said:

I would like to tell the American people that the aggressive war waged by the U.S. government in Viet Nam not only grossly violates the national fundamental right of the Vietnamese people, but also runs counter to the interests and aspirations of the American people. I wish to tell the American people about the determination of the entire Vietnamese people to fight the U.S. aggressors till complete victory. But as for the American people, we want to strengthen our relationship of friendship with them.

The Vietnamese people are strong because of their just cause, their unity and courage, and because they enjoy the support of all peace-loving peoples around the world, including the American people. It is because of their love of justice and humanity that many progressive Americans from all walks of life have courageously raised their voices and staged huge demonstrations. American youth have refused to be sent to Viet Nam as cannon-fodder for the U.S. imperialists. Our people highly value this struggle of the American people. I take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks. U.S. imperialism is the common enemy of our two peoples. With our united struggle it can certainly be defeated. Our peoples will be victorious.





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~ Ho Chi Minh*

Ho Chi Minh's words exemplify the importance which the Vietnamese national liberation movement placed on the support and solidarity of the people of the U.S. That solidarity played an important role in ending the war, in forcing the U.S. to withdraw from Viet Nam.

In 1972, Ly Van Sau, a representative of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Viet Nam, said:

We understand what solidarity means, no matter how small it may be. Among our people there is a saying: 'A piece of bread for you when you are hungry is more precious than a banquet when you are better.'

The example of the anti-war movement provides many lessons for other solidarity movements inside the U.S. — the movement in support of the liberation of southern Africa, the movement against the fascist dictatorship in Chile, the movement in support of the Palestinian people, and the growing movement in support of Puerto Rico's independence.

"U.S. imperialism is the common enemy of our two peoples," Ho Chi Minh said. This statement is the key to understanding why the people of the U.S. need to stand united in solidarity with Puerto Rican independence. U.S. imperialism not only exploits the people of other nations, it also exploits the people in the U.S., the land where it began.

Violence, colonization, exploitation and misery are the common experiences of peoples of color in the U.S. A long and vicious war of genocide was waged against Native American nations. Black people were kidnapped, enslaved, and lynched. Mexicans were robbed of a large part of their nation, their land and their labor. Chinese were worked to death building the railroads; Japanese were forced into concentration camps during World War II.

U.S. imperialism victimizes peoples within its borders. The many struggles of Third World people against this oppression — the civil rights/Black liberation movement, and the current resurgence of Native American resistance — are directed against U.S. imperialism — the same enemy that the Puerto Rican people are combatting.

Racism and subjugation of native peoples are weapons of imperialism. So is sexism and the exploitation of women. Women in the U.S. are underpaid, denied full access to democratic rights, assaulted by men, and deprived of jobs and control over their own bodies. Over 1.3 million women in the United States are sterilized each year. Sexism and male supremacy in U.S. society also mean continuing violence and discrimination against gay people. As the growing movement against sexism develops it targets U.S. imperialism as the main obstacle on the road to equality.

With the decline of U.S. imperialism, and the severe U.S. economic crisis, working people have demonstrated against their employers. There has been a sharp rise in strikes, increased militancy among rank-and-file laborers, and new efforts to organize the unorganized and the unemployed. While most of the trade union leadership and certain sectors of skilled workers enjoy a relatively privileged position, the majority of White and Third World workers have been hit hard by the economic crisis. As the decline of U.S. imperialism continues, as the Depression deepens, working class struggle is bound to intensify. It is bound to confront the big corporations, the monopolist, imperialist system.

A common enemy. The people of Puerto Rico and the people of the U.S. are exploited by the same small group of monopolies that make billions from the labor of working people. Colonial domination is heavier, workers in the Third World are paid much less than workers in the U.S. They are forced to live in much worse conditions. Still, it is the same monopolies who rob workers in both the developed and the underdeveloped worlds.

The same monopolies that exploit South Africa and Puerto Rico tell the U.S. people to accept lay-offs, unemployment, inflation, higher taxes, cutbacks in already inadequate social services like health care, child care, education, and care for the elderly. The same oil companies that cooked up the phony 1974 oil crisis to raise oil prices in the U.S. want to convert Puerto Rico into a petroleum factory. The same copper companies that robbed Chile of its valuable natural resources and who helped to engineer the CIA-sponsored coup against the Allende government exploit Chicano workers in the U.S. Southwest and strip mine the land in Kentucky. These copper companies plan to totally devour all the vast copper deposits in Puerto Rico's mountains.

The catalogue of crimes that the U.S. imperialists have committed against both the people of Puerto Rico and the people of the U.S. could go on and on. But the conclusion is already clear: our two peoples have a great deal in common, not the least of which is a common oppressor. It is in this common interest, this mutual resistance to oppression by the same enemy, that the deepest solidarity can be found.

Carlos Feliciano also defined the world-wide struggle against U.S. imperialism:

Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican communities in this country are not the only ones suffering under the yoke of U.S. imperialism. Our Black sisters and brothers also live under the same conditions of terror and violence, and the same applies to those White people and organizations in this country that struggle against U.S. imperialism. The same violence is also applied in other parts of the world, wherever U.S. imperialism exists: Asia, Africa, Latin America. The situation is the same worldwide: U.S. imperialism is the most brutal form of domination and violence that the world has ever known.

It is time that we start extending our struggles, learning from each other, teaching each other, uniting always against our common enemy.

"I am an Anti-Imperialist"

Since the 1890s there has been solidarity between the peoples of Puerto Rico and the peoples of the U.S. Anti-imperialists like Mark Twain, and W.E.B. DuBois, the Black scholar, historian, and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), condemned the Spanish-American War, and the U.S. conquest of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines. "I am an anti-imperialist," Mark Twain wrote. "I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land." Twain joined with others to form the Anti-Imperialist League. In January 1900, a few weeks after the Peace Treaty was signed in Paris, the President of the Anti-Imperialist League argued, "Allow Cuba, allow Puerto Rico, allow the Philippine Islands to setup governments for themselves free from any dictation by us."

In the 1930s, Vito Marcantonio, a Progressive Congressman from New York, denounced the U.S. colonization of Puerto Rico and supported the movement for independence. In the 1940s North Americans joined in solidarity with Albizu Campos and the Nationalists to form the American League for Puerto Rican Independence. In the 1960s and 1970s North Americans rallied behind the cause of Puerto Rican independence, both in the U.S. and on the island. Recently, California Congressman Ron Dellums introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives that stated:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all powers and authority presently exercised by the three branches of the Government of the United States, legislative, judicial and executive, and all its agencies and instrumentalities, including the Armed Forces of the United States, over the territory of Puerto Rico, are hereby relinquished and transferred unconditionally and without reservations to the people of Puerto Rico, in order to allow them to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire.

The most dramatic expression of the new solidarity movement was at Madison Square Garden in 1974. Twenty thousand people — Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Asians, Latinos, Native peoples, and Whites — rallied in support of Puerto Rican independence and self-determination. The Garden overflowed with respect and love for the Puerto Rican people.



Javier Rodriguez, President of the Mexican Workers Organization CASA, told the audience that thousands of Mexicans were "forced to migrate to the U.S. to look for work." He concluded that "the struggle for Puerto Rican independence is linked intrinsically with the struggle of the Mexican people for our second independence."

Philip Deer, a representative of the Native American movement and a medicine man, described U.S. conquest of native nations from the 16th through the 20th centuries. "Today our eyes are upon the evidence of the Western Hemisphere," he said. "We are the living evidence here. We are the people of this country . . . and we are here to support the Puerto Rican people because our struggles are the same."

Owusu Sadukai, then Chairperson of the African Liberation Support Committee, noted:

Those of us who work daily in the Black liberation struggle . . . are here as the concrete expression of our will to struggle against the barriers that divide our peoples and our struggles.

We place H. Rap Brown, Jim Grant, Joanne Chesimard [Black political prisoners inside the U.S.] and countless others alongside Lolita Lebron, Oscar Collazo, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irvin Flores, and Andres Figueroa Cordero. We place the Orangeburg massacre and the murder of the students at Jackson State alongside the Ponce Massacre. We place George Jackson alongside Griselio Torresola. It is clear that our solidarity with the Puerto Rican people is sealed in our blood, is sealed in our continuing contribution to the struggle against imperialism.

Barbara Schneider Reilly, a representative of the North American women's movement, declared:

As we understand it, the question of liberation for women is profoundly linked to the question of liberation for all oppressed peoples. As long as the actions of the exploiters and war-makers from ITT to Kissinger, from Gulf Oil to Rockefeller, are directed against people everywhere, our struggles are inextricably tied together. For it is their bombs, their racist laws, their sterilization programs for women, from Viet Nam to South Africa, Puerto Rico to Manhattan, that give our struggle its international character. But there is another link, a link more precious, more decisive for victory that connects us all: it is an idea. The idea of Freedom. The idea of Dignity. An idea that releases the best in us because it returns us to history. To making history. To living.

Solidarity can be expressed in many ways. Recognizing the truth about Puerto Rico is an important first step. Marching and demonstrating in support of Puerto Rican independence is a vital aspect of solidarity. On July 4th, 1976, tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Philadelphia, San Francisco and Los Angeles for "A Bicentennial Without Colonies," and to demand Puerto Rican independence.

Solidarity can also be expressed by combatting the sterilization campaign against women in Puerto Rico and the U.S. It can be expressed by supporting striking Puerto Rican workers. Solidarity can be expressed by demanding the release of the Five Puerto Rican Nationalist political prisoners. In the future, solidarity could well mean helping persuade the people of the U.S. to actively oppose U.S. military intervention against the rising Puerto Rican nation.

When the struggle in Puerto Rico advances, so too, the struggle advances at home. The powerful solidarity and support of the peoples of the U.S. is of crucial importance to the success of national liberation in Puerto Rico.





One of the foremost organizations in the U.S. working in solidarity with the national liberation struggle in Puerto Rico is the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee. Founded in 1974, the PRSC now has chapters throughout the country committed to the cause of self determination and independence for Puerto Rico.

The people in the U.S. who have the deepest ties to people on the island are the nearly two million Puerto Ricans who live and work in the U.S. Uprooted from their homeland and forced to struggle for survival in new and hostile surroundings, Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are among the most oppressed victims of the system. Some Puerto Ricans here view their struggle against imperialism as part of the national liberation of their country. Others see themselves primarily as part of the U.S. working class, also in solidarity with the independence movement in the homeland. In both cases, Puerto Ricans in the U.S. constitute a vital bridge between the struggle on the island, and the struggle of oppressed and working people in the U.S.

Flame of Resistance

The people of Puerto Rico have an inspiring history. Nothing can extinguish their desire for national independence. The tradition of resistance to foreign domination goes back five hundred years to the Taino Indians. Enslaved by the Spanish colonizers, the Taino resisted heroically, but were finally wiped out by the conquistadors. Spain then brought African slaves to Puerto Rico to work the mines and harvest the crops. As in many Caribbean and Latin American nations, as well as in the United States, slaves rebelled against their masters in Puerto Rico.

Following this tradition of resistance, African slaves, *jibaros* and *jornaleros*, led by dedicated patriots including Ramon Betances and Mariana Bracetti, proclaimed the First Free Republic of Puerto Rico in 1868. The Spanish defeated the rebellion, but the Cry of Lares was not forgotten.

Under U.S. rule, workers in the cane fields, the coffee plantations, and in the factories organized against U.S. sugar monopolies. Their struggle was supported by the Nationalist Party under the leadership of Don Pedro Albizu Campos. The Nationalists fought an uncompromising war for independence and self-determination throughout the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, especially at Jayuya in 1950, when the Second Republic was proclaimed. Albizu's words, "Before they take our country they will have to take our lives" are the living soul of the Nationalist commitment.

Today, the island of Borinquen is stirring again. There is a growing force of workers, students, women, intellectuals and youth who — in the tradition of Lares and Jayuya — are battling the U.S. Empire. They are demanding their right to self-determination and independence. As Lolita Lebron tells us:

The fire of Puerto Rican liberation has been lit and it will never be put out. Now flames must grow, not just in flashes but in full rays of light.

PERCI
MUERTE AL
IMPERIO JANKEE.



A Brief Chronology of Puerto Rican History

- 1493: Christopher Columbus arrives on Borinquen (Puerto Rico) and claims it for the Spanish Empire. (Chapter 1)
- 1511: The Taino Indians of Borinquen launch a major rebellion against the Spanish. Gold production on the island at a peak. (Chapter 1)
- 1514: Only 3,000 Taino Indians, of 50,000 original inhabitants, still alive after Spanish massacre. (Chapter 1)
- 1521: Only 600 surviving Taino Indians on Borinquen. (Chapter 1)
- 1520s: Beginning use of Africans as slave labor on Borinquen. (Chapter 1)
- 1527: First revolt of Black slaves on Borinquen. (Chapter 1)
- 1776: War for American Independence. United States is established. (Chapter 2)
- 1790: Slave uprising in Haiti led by Toussaint L'Ouverture. Republic of Haiti is established. (Chapter 2)
- 1820s: Triumph of Latin American wars of liberation against Spanish Empire, led by Simon Bolivar. (Chapter 2)
- 1822: Uprising of Black slaves in Puerto Rico. (Chapter 2)
- 1824: Insurrection led by Maria Mercedes Barbudo. (Chapter 2)
- 1827: Birth of Ramon Emeterio Betances, leader of independence movement. (Chapter 2)
- 1845: End of slave trade in Puerto Rico. (Chapter 2)
- 1848: Slave rebellions lead governor of Puerto Rico to issue Bando Negro (Black Code). (Chapter 2)
- 1865: Cuban and Puerto Rican patriots in New York form pro-independence Republican Society. (Chapter 2)
- 1867: Betances issues "The Ten Commandments of Liberty." (Chapter 2)
- 1868: Rebellion at Lares — *El Grito de Lares*. (Chapter 2)
- 1873: Abolition of slavery on Puerto Rico. (Chapter 2)
- 1887: Year of Terror against *independentistas*, patriots, reformers. (Chapter 2)
- 1891: Birth of Don Pedro Albizu Campos, leader of the Nationalist Party. (Chapter 5)
- 1895: Cuban war of independence led by Jose Martí. (Chapter 3)
- 1897: Spain grants Puerto Rico autonomy within the Empire. (Chapter 3)
- 1898: Spanish-American War; U.S. invades Puerto Rico. (Chapter 3)
- 1899: Treaty of Paris; Puerto Rico "awarded" to U.S. as spoils of war. (Chapter 3)
- 1900: Foraker Act passed. First U.S. governor appointed to Puerto Rico. (Chapter 3)
- 1910: Free Federation of Workers founded under leadership of Santiago Iglesias Partin. (Chapter 4)
- 1915: The Socialist Party of Puerto Rico founded. (Chapter 4)

- 1917: Passage of the Jones Act; Puerto Ricans made U.S. citizens.
U.S. enters World War I. (Chapter 3)
- 1922: Nationalist Party founded. (Chapter 5)
- 1929: Depression hits Puerto Rico. (Chapter 5)
- 1930: 40% of working population unemployed in Puerto Rico.
Albizu Campos elected President of Nationalist Party. (Chapter 5)
- 1933-1934: Major strikes by sugar cane workers. (Chapter 5)
- 1934: Puerto Rican Communist Party founded. (Chapter 5)
- 1935: Police kill Nationalists at the University of Puerto Rico. (Chapter 5)
- 1936: Two Nationalists assassinate the chief of police, and are murdered by the police.
Albizu Campos jailed. (Chapter 5)
- 1937: Ponce Massacre; police kill Nationalists. (Chapter 5)
- 1938: Muñoz Marín founds the Popular Democratic Party (PPD). (Chapter 5)
- 1940: General Confederation of Workers founded. (Chapter 6)
- 1941: U.S. enters World War II. (Chapter 6)
- 1947: Operation Bootstrap (industrialization plan) goes into effect.
Albizu Campos released from prison. (Chapter 6)
Beginning of migration to U.S. from Puerto Rico. (Chapter 9)
- 1948: Students strike at the University of Puerto Rico.
Muñoz Marín first elected governor of the island.
Puerto Rican Independence Party formed. (Chapter 7)
- 1950: President Truman signs Public Law 600
Jayuya uprising.
Nationalists try to kill Truman in Washington, D.C. (Chapter 7)
- 1952: Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is established. (Chapter 7)
- 1954: Four Nationalists open fire in the U.S. House of Representatives. (Chapter 7)
- 1959: Triumph of the Cuban Revolution.
Movimiento Pro-Independencia (MPI) formed. (Chapter 8)
- 1960: Students launch campaign against ROTC. (Chapter 10)
- 1965: Death of Albizu Campos. (Chapter 10)
- 1966-1972: Intensive Puerto Rican political activity against the war in Viet Nam. (Chapter 10)
- 1969: Young Lords Party founded in New York. (Chapter 10)
- 1971: MPI becomes the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. (Chapter 11)
- 1972-1975: Wave of workers' strikes on the island; National Guard mobilized.
Students strike at the University of Puerto Rico. (Chapter 11)
- 1974: 20,000 people attend rally in support of Puerto Rican independence in New York City.
(Chapter 12)
- 1975: Conference on international solidarity with Puerto Rican independence held in
Havana. (Chapter 11)
- 1976: Tens of thousands march in the U.S. for a "Bicentennial Without Colonies" and
independence for Puerto Rico. (Chapter 11)
- 1976: Nation-wide mobilization to free the 5 Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners.