

INDEPENDENCE FOR PUERTO RICO!

DEFEAT STATEHOOD PLANS!

"In order for them to take away our homeland, they must first take away our lives!" That is the war cry of the popular masses in Puerto Rico in answer to the news that the yankee imperialists are considering the possibility of annexing Puerto Rico as the 51st state of the union. We have no doubt at all about the Puerto Rican nation's potential and capacity to struggle, 77 years of continuous struggle against the economic, political and military control of their country by yankee imperialists have tempered this heroic people. If the yankee imperialists persist in their annexationist plans they are doomed to an even faster defeat at the hands of this Latin American country.

President Ford's announcement definitely establishes a new policy of the U.S. towards its colony, Puerto Rico. The purpose of this article is to explain the reasons for this change. Let us go back a little.

Since 1952, when the "Commonwealth" of Puerto Rico was established, until the early 1970's all sectors of the imperialist bourgeoisie declared themselves consistently in favor of this type of relations and against statehood for Puerto Rico. They were so much in favor of the "Commonwealth" (the "Free, Associated State") as the best formula for the Island's status, that in 1968 after the electoral triumph of the "New Progressive Party" (PNP) (a party that advocates statehood for the island) the U.S. Congress saw fit to immediately clarify that the fact that the statehooders were in power did not at all mean, for them, a change in relations. Before the 1972 elections in Puerto Rico, it was clear that the CIA was directly involved in the electoral strife and that millions of dollars had been provided to the "Popular Democratic Party" (which advocates the status quo) to put it back in control of colonial government.

Today however, the PNP is again the party in control, with Carlos Romero Barcelo as the colonial governor. (This is the same Romero Barcelo, mayor of San Juan in 1975, who was then denied entrance in People's China as part of a U.S. delegation of mayors -- clearly establishing China's firm stand against Puerto Rico's colonial status, which Romero Barcelo represented as a "U.S. mayor".)

Why do Yankee imperialists benefit from the so-called "Commonwealth" colonial status? These are some of the reasons:

1. While belonging to the U.S., but not being a part of the U.S. (such is the way in which the U.S. Supreme Court defined Puerto Ricans' status in the 20's) the island is a real paradise for yankee investors. They don't have to pay a cent in taxes for the profits they make in the island, to the Puerto Rican, or U.S. government. After the "change of status" of 1952 tax exemption was maintained through a bill of the colonial "congress", which allows 27 years in tax exception to any yankee investor who establishes a factory in Puerto Rico.
2. To keep Puerto Rico as a cheap source of labor is another weighty reason for the Yankee imperialists to maintain the "Commonwealth". According to the (unilateral) "agreements" between Puerto Rico and the U.S., any law which the U.S. Congress signs, applies there, unless congress declares the contrary. Naturally, one of the laws which Congress decided shouldn't apply, is the Federally established minimum wage. This means that the average worker in P.R. gets between 1/3 and 1/2 the salary of a worker in the U.S. doing the same job. Add to this 30% unemployment, a workforce which is less than 15% unionized (and the fact that most of these are grouped within "international" unions such as the Teamsters, etc.), and you can see why Commonwealth colonial status is preferable to Yankee capitalists. If P.R. were a state, Federal tax and minimum wage laws would apply.

3. Imperialism holds almost absolute economic, political, and military control over P.R. More than 90% of its industry is owned by Yankee imperialists (Puerto Rico is the fifth largest buyer of North American goods in this continent) 13% of the land is taken up by U.S. military installations. Besides:



Despite its economic development, Puerto Rico does not rule itself, it is politically and economically tied to the U.S., all vital state functions are in the hands of the imperialist U.S. bourgeoisie, which controls customs, communications, postal service, currency, mass media, air and sea transportation, the highest court of appeals for Puerto Ricans resides in Boston, USA, the army is the U.S. army into which Puerto Ricans are drafted, U.S. Congress has veto power over Puerto Rico's rubber stamp legislature, and so on.

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The military aspect is, of course, very important. There are airforce, naval, and atomic bases in P.R. The military capability of these bases is so great, that P.R. is definitely a key point of military strategy in the case of world war, or a war of aggression like those the yankee imperialists so often unleash. Also, her geographic position near Cuba, Santo Domingo, Haiti, Panama Canal, etc., makes of P.R. the seat of Yankee military power in Latin America. From there, came the greater part of the troops which invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965. There, Green Berets are trained in anti-guerrilla warfare. During the Vietnam War many planes were sent from the now dismantled Ramey airfield, to bomb, and drop napalm on the heroic Vietnamese people.

4. Furthermore, all types of espionage, cultural aggression as well as intervention by the C.I.A. in the internal affairs of Latin American countries is co-ordinated from Puerto Rican soil. Military plots such as the aggression against the Cuban people in 1961 (The Bay of Pigs), the overthrow of the Popular Unity Government of Chile, are part and parcel of the military and political role which Puerto Rico plays in the strategic plans of the imperialists.

Another question then follows: If it all works so well for the yankee imperialists, why are they now talking about making Puerto Rico a state? We will try to answer this briefly by dealing with all the aspects of the questions.

The current international situation: The principle contradiction in the world today is between the two superpowers - the United States and the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the nations and oppressed people of the world on the other. The people of the third world and their struggles for liberation is the principal force shaping the world today. Revolution is the main trend in the world today. This trend can be summarized by the slogan of Chairman Mao "Countries want independence, Nations want liberation, People want revolution". Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States, and an integral part of the third world, is also an integral part of this force, moving history forward.

In their struggle to dominate the world each of the two superpowers try to maintain a tight grip on areas under their control while at the same time gaining influence in the areas under the control of the other

super-power. In Puerto Rico, for example, the principal contradiction against whom all the forces that can be united must be united is Yankee imperialism.

The Soviet Social-Imperialists, on the other hand, are attempting to increase their influence. Proof of this fact is the Conference in Solidarity with The Independence of Puerto Rico, held in Havana in 1975. (See our analysis of the Havana Conference). The influence of the Soviet revisionists in Puerto Rico is principally exercised through the revisionist Puerto Rican Socialist Party (P.S.P.) who holds the bankrupt theories of peaceful transition to socialism, the "Divided Nation theory, The multi-party vanguard, etc.)

The fact that Yankee imperialism is on the decline is a secret to nobody. The time in which they could parade themselves as the Muhammad Ali of the world ended a long time ago. In the 1950's the tiny Korean Nation decisively defeated the giant North American imperialists. They were kicked out of Cuba in 1959 by the Cuban Revolution (unfortunately this revolution was betrayed and today Cuba is a Soviet neo-colony). The heroic peoples of Laos, Cambodia and Viet-Nam inflicted a costly military defeat which sent the imperialists reeling from Indo-China. Doubtlessly, a small nation can defeat a large one if it is willing to struggle and sacrifice. The Yankee imperialists are fully aware of the fact that Puerto Rico has struggled in the past, and will continue to do so until victory.

The danger of a third world war hangs above all humanity. Either revolution will prevent war or war will bring about revolution. No matter in which of the two directions events unfold, Puerto Rico is an appetizing "morsel" for both superpowers. The U.S. which controls it, is willing to do anything to keep it, including complete annexation.

The Soviet Social Imperialists, on the other hand, are equally willing to do anything in order to gain another power base in the Caribbean.

The danger of a third World War, its strategic military value, the weakness of imperialism, the deep economic crisis which the United States is undergoing, the upsurge of the revolutionary struggle of the masses in Puerto Rico, the discovery of rich oil deposits in Puerto Rico, as well as the shadow of Soviet Social imperialism, is what motivates the Yankee imperialists to move to better secure their colonial possession. Puerto Rican Revolutionaries must make sure that as they defeat the enemy which has oppressed them since 1898 (The U.S.) they don't allow Soviet imperialists, disguised as socialist, to sneak through the back door. We are aware of the existence of serious Marxist-Leninists in Puerto Rico who put forth the building of a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of the Puerto Rican Proletariat as their principal task. This party is to lead the United Front of all Revolutionary classes (with the Proletariat as their vanguard) as well as the people's army, in a long and protracted war which will defeat Yankee imperialism establish New Democracy in the People's Republic of Puerto Rico and continue the revolution on to victory.

The attempts of the Yankee imperialists to annex Puerto Rico will only hasten this process.

We soon will print the last article of our series on the Right of Self-Determination for Puerto Rico. In it, we will put forward our concrete tasks in that struggle as well as a tactical plan which will help us carry them out.

FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PUERTO RICAN REALITY:

1. Analysis of the Political Declaration of P.S.P. (Published by L.P.R.)
2. Analysis of the Havana Conference (Resistance, Vol 6, # 13)
3. Self-Determination for the Puerto Rican Nation (Resistance, Vol 7, # 9-part 1; Vol 7, # 10-part II)
4. Betances and the Struggle Today (Resistance Vol 6, # 14)
5. 25 Years After Jayuya (Resistance, Vol 6, # 12)
6. On the Puerto Rican National Minority (Resistance, Vol 5, # 20)
7. On the October 27 Rally at Madison Square Garden (Published by L.P.R. -M-L)