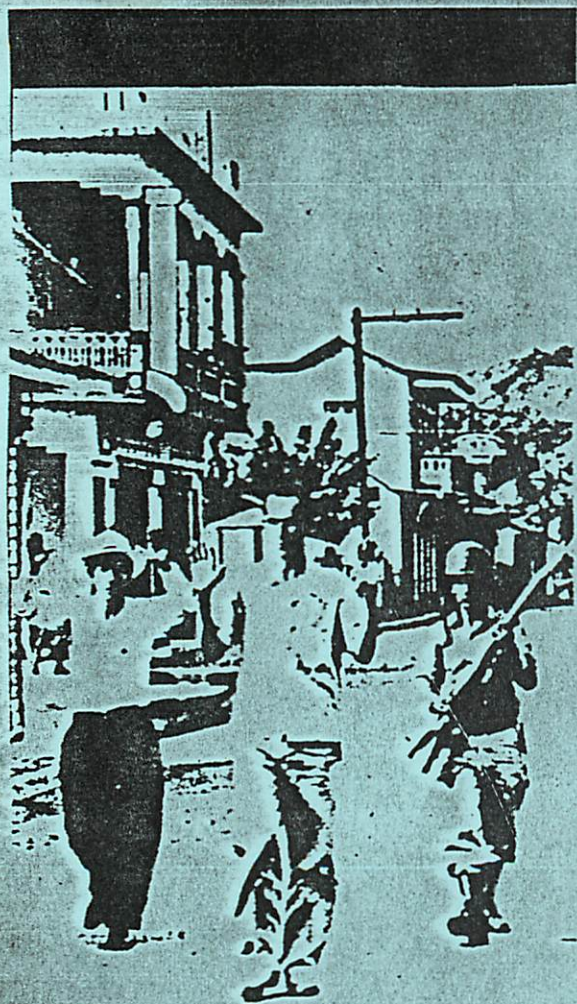
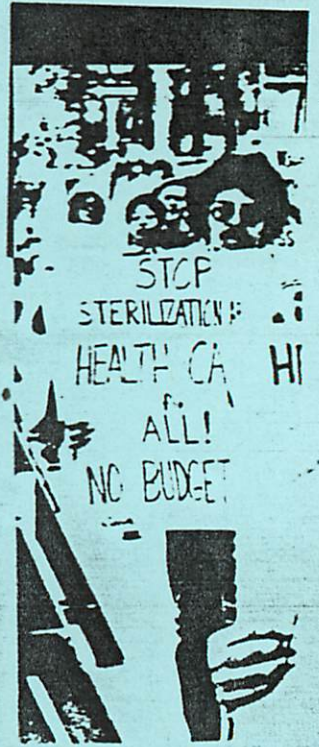
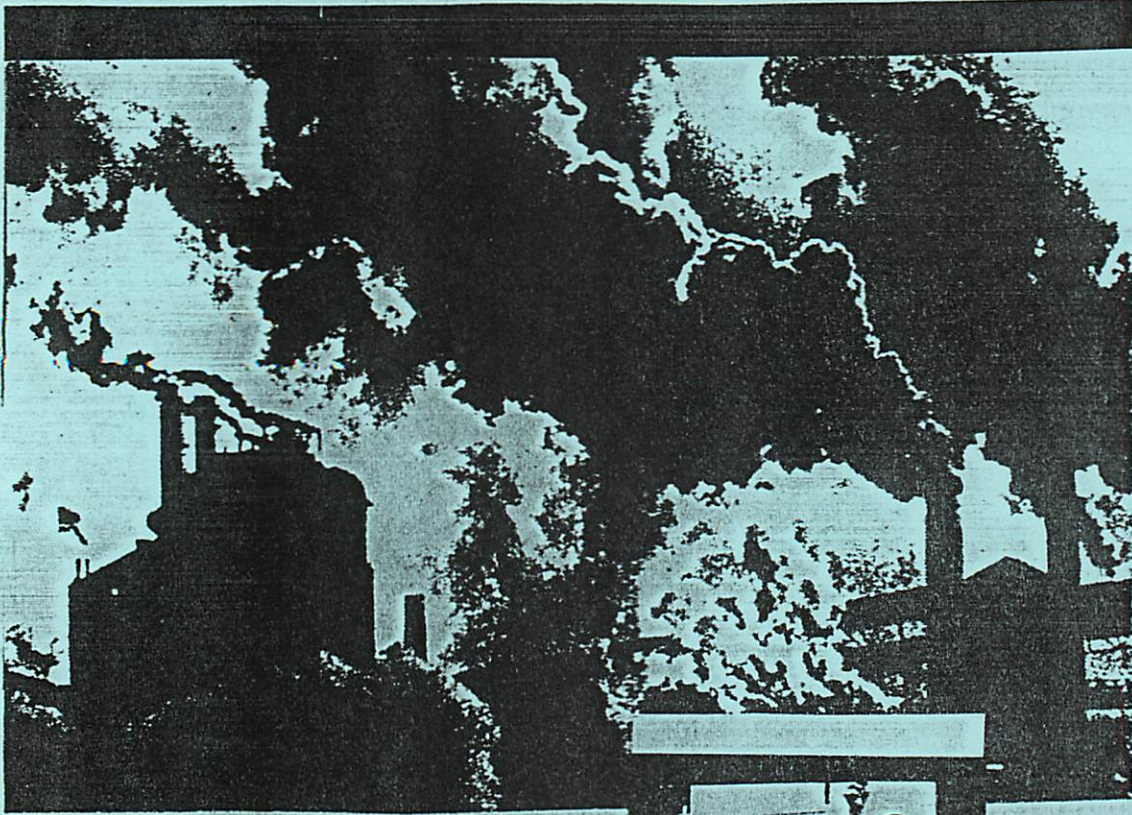


COLONIALISM in PUERTO RICO



PUERTO RICO IS A U.S. COLONY

Puerto Rico is an intervened nation, a Latin American country with its own culture, language and history. From as far back as the 1500s, indigenous peoples resisted Spanish colonialism and plunder. By 1868, Puerto Rico was consolidated as a nation. It has fought fiercely to be free of Spanish and later Northamerican domination. Throughout, neither Spain nor the US has been able to destroy the will of the Puerto Rican people to attain their national destiny.

But this is not what we have learned in US schools. . We have been taught that Puerto Rico is a tiny island, no bigger than Rhode Island, that it is completely dependent on the US -- indeed, that it is a drain on US resources. But if this is true, WHY has the US done everything in its power to keep control of Puerto Rico?

Perhaps this quote will shed light on US self-interest, evident from the moment of the invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898. This appeared in The New York Times six days after the invasion: "... Puertorico [sic] ... occupies a commanding position [in the Caribbean] and possesses [great] resources ... The strategic importance of Puertorico is so great and the drawbacks to its annexation so small that its cession was certain to be demanded."

The secret societies which had fought Spanish colonialism until Spain was forced to grant Puerto Rico autonomy in 1897, continued to fight against US occupation. An escalated military presence was the US response. Although Puerto Ricans consistently voted for independence from 1904 to 1916, Congress ignored those elections, imposed US laws on the island, and made Puerto Ricans US citizens so they could be drafted to fight in World War I.

Since the 1930s, when it became increasingly clear that there could be no free elections in a militarily occupied country, a strong sector of the independence movement has refused to participate in the US-controlled elections. As one independentista said, "'Free elections' is like saying that prisoners, surrounded by armed guards and a high wall, are free to escape."

The US has complete economic and political control over Puerto Rico despite attempts to characterize its current "commonwealth" status as the "will of the Puerto Rican people." In the 1950s the US government attempted to make the official language English -- even in the schools. This was successfully resisted, but to this day all federal court proceedings in Puerto Rico are conducted in English. In 1898, Puerto Rico had a self-sufficient agricultural economy, but to fulfill US corporate needs, its economy was changed first to a single cash-crop (sugar cane) and then to light and heavy industry. Puerto Rico must now import nearly all of its food -- mostly from the US, of course. This economic and political dependency has often created a sense among Puerto Rican people that "Puerto Rico can't make it without the US." But, as Puerto Rican patriot and prisoner of war Lucy Rodriguez has said, "...the imperialists do not stop at destroying us with these strategies of dependency ... The safety and well-being of the Puerto Rican people is of no interest to them. We wage our struggle in the present so that our future will be one of peace..."

U.S. REPRESSION IN PUERTO RICO

All attempts at independence - from voting to petitioning to peaceful protest - have been met with severe repression. For instance, the 1934 sugar cane workers' strike and many

unarmed demonstrations demanding freedom for imprisoned Nationalist Party leaders brought the Ponce Massacre of 1937, in which 21 independentistas were killed and 150 wounded. Four decades later, in 1979, Angel Rodriguez Cristobal, a leader of the Puerto Rican Socialist League, was assassinated in a federal prison where he had been sentenced for trespassing on "US Property." He and 20 others had been part of an ongoing campaign to prevent the Navy from "practice" bombing off the shores of Vieques, Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican history is filled with many similar examples. Knowing this history, a small, but growing, armed clandestine movement has arisen that can operate outside the eyes and ears of the US government.

WHY IS PUERTO RICO SO IMPORTANT TO THE U.S.?

Puerto Rico's future has been the subject of many high-level US governmental strategy meetings in which a series of inter-related plans have been developed. The "Micronesia Plan" proposes to give territories like Puerto Rico and the Mariana Islands (in the Western Pacific) the illusion of more power, and thereby head off drives for full independence, while in fact increasing US control, particularly militarily. The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) is a comprehensive plan to bring the entire Caribbean region under complete US economic and military control.

Perhaps the most insidious and highly developed plan is the 2020 Plan, named for the year of its intended completion. It is aimed at maximizing Puerto Rico's resources for its own use. Its six main parts, if implemented, will spell the complete destruction of the Puerto Rican nation:

1) Natural Resources - The central mountains are rich in strategic minerals needed for war materials -- nickel, chrome, cobalt, etc. These minerals can only be obtained through a series of open-pit mines, 1 1/2 mile across and 1/2 mile deep. 37,000 acres in the mountains were originally "frozen" for mining use. However, in August 1986, a large lease of land to Kennecott Copper was revoked due to massive grass-roots opposition. Other mining companies still have permits for excavation elsewhere.

2) Industry - Eleven "industrial parks" around the perimeter of the island are in the planning stage, concentrated in metal refining, pharmaceuticals, electronics and electrical generators. These parks are to be the final production area of the CBI.

3) Physical infrastructure - Construction is already underway on the necessary roads, dams, power plants and water filtration plants that will make these developments possible. A super-highway from the mountains to the ocean will soon be finished. Two dams being built, the first of many, have already displaced 430 families. Dumps for contaminated waste are being built all over the island.

4) Militarization - In order to protect the mines and industry and all US interests in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico is being increasingly militarized. In 1983, Puerto Rico was used as the staging ground for the US invasion of Grenada. According to the Puerto Rican Bar Association, Puerto Rico is a central link in the US's global nuclear strategy. Roosevelt Roads (the largest US Naval base outside US borders) houses the 7th Fleet and serves as command and control center for nuclear arms (including sophisticated transmitters). In 1984, funds for military purposes in Puerto Rico increased to a

record \$404 million, more than double the aid to the entire region, including El Salvador. In the 1986 maneuvers (Ocean Venture '86) Puerto Rico became "Nicaragua" and a US "invasion" was practiced.

5) Agriculture - Small Puerto Rican--owned farms have been displaced from the center of the island to coastal regions where they have been bought out by big business, especially by Israeli agribusiness.

6) "Urban Development" & Depopulation
- Forecasts indicate that with the 2020 Plan, the island would be able to support only 1-1/2 million of the present 4 million people. Already nearly 4 million Puerto Ricans live in the U.S. The plan therefore calls for escalating the "depopulation" of Puerto Rico. 40% of Puerto Rican women of childbearing age and 25% of the men are already sterilized (the highest rates in the world). A case in point is that, in recent years, there has been a net decline in population of 12% in the central mountain region.

PUERTO RICO IS FIGHTING FOR INDEPENDENCE

It is clear that the self-interest of the US is so great that it will never peacefully or voluntarily allow the Puerto Rican nation to pursue its own destiny. In order to survive and build a better life - just as the people of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Vietnam are doing - Puerto Ricans are building a combination of mass struggle and armed struggle that will eventually mobilize the entire people to win independence. What is happening now is only the tip of the iceberg.

Perhaps the most recent indication of this is the response of Puerto Ricans to the arrest of 13 independentistas on Aug. 30, 1985, and 3 more (including a North American in Massachusetts) several months later.

The "Puerto Rico Independence 16" are charged with the \$7 million expropriation from Wells Fargo in Hartford, Connecticut, an action claimed by the Macheteros, an armed clandestine organization. The Macheteros have received growing support for their actions - from the 1981 destruction of 9 U.S. fighter planes bound for El Salvador, to the distribution of gifts and food on Three Kings Day, 1985, to children in Hartford and Puerto Rico (using money from the Wells Fargo expropriation). On the day of the arrests, 250 FBI agents raided 38 homes and organizations. The 16 arrested activists have voiced support for all parts of the independence movement and declare their innocence of all charges. Massive demonstrations have condemned the entire operation as a brutal and wanton attack on the independence movement. Even sectors outside the independence movement have come forward to support the 16.

The guerrilla movement has continued its actions since these arrests. Just to cite two examples: In October 1985, another clandestine organization, the Organization of Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution (OVRP) wounded a US Army recruitment official and warned that US "mercenaries" in Puerto Rico would not be safe as long as the US government terrorized independentistas. In November, 1986, the Macheteros, the OVRP and the Armed Forces of Popular Resistance placed bombs in ten US military installations and recruitment centers. Their communiques explained that they acted to denounce US plans to train Nicaraguan contras in Puerto Rico, and to allow commercial lumbering in the island's beautiful, popularly-treasured El Yunque rain forest.

These actions have contributed to a growing anti-military and anti-war consciousness. From the 50,000-person march against militarism (and for independence) in April 1984, to the thousands of counter-demonstrators who far outnumbered the US-sponsored July 4th "celebration" in 1985, Puerto Ricans are increasingly showing their refusal to allow their island to become a launchpad for war in Central America.

In many of the demonstrations, there is increasing support for all those arrested in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. Following the example of the 5 Nationalists who were jailed for 25-29 years, 15 Prisoners of War (POWs), captured combatants, rejected US jurisdiction over Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. These POWs refused to participate in their trials and demanded the right (under international law) to be tried in an international tribunal. They were convicted of seditious conspiracy, which they maintain is an impossible crime for Puerto Ricans whose sole aim is the liberation of their country, not the overthrow of the US government. They are now serving sentences of 35 to 99 years under conditions of isolation of calculated mistreatment.

These 15 patriots come out of Puerto Rican communities in the US; they maintain the necessity and internationally recognized right to fight the colonizer in its own territory. Their example is more than symbolic leadership to the 4 million Puerto Ricans who live in the US. Vietnamese patriots told Puerto Ricans visiting during the war that if there were that many Vietnamese living in the US, Vietnam would have won more quickly.

Three other non-Puerto Ricans are being held as political prisoners in the US because of their uncompromising support for Puerto Rican independence. A Dominican man is serving a long sentence on a frame-up bank robbery charge. Two Northamericans are the last

of 9 activists (the others are Puerto Rican and Mexican) still serving 3-year sentences for refusing to talk to a federal grand jury investigating the independence movement in general and the FALN (a clandestine organization in the US) in particular.

Like any colonized people, Puerto Ricans have the internationally recognized right (mandated by the UN Charter and resolutions of the UN Decolonization Committee) to use any means necessary to attain self-determination. True independence for Puerto Rico does not mean having a few rich Puerto Ricans take control of the island; it means redistributing the wealth to all the people. This is why Puerto Rico needs to be not only independent but also socialist.

Again and again, the US government's response to demands for Puerto Rican freedom has been violence and increased repression. In the final analysis, the US government has always used guns and death to protect its profits and will do so again. But as Nicaragua is proving, even small nations, when dedicated to justice for all people, can triumph over the largest military power in the world.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

As Northamerican white people who live in the US, we can play an important role in supporting Puerto Rican independence. We have always been told that we live in a "free" country, but there can be no real freedom until all people are free. How can we, while others are struggling for a better world, stand by and allow ourselves to be drafted to fight for a system that is only becoming more violent and decadent? No colonizing power can carry out its plans without the consent of its population. So we can directly contribute to the demands of the Puerto Rican nation for freedom.

The US understands that the struggle of the Caribbean region is not a single-country issue; as long as the US has Puerto Rico as a direct colony, Central America will be subject to military attack. The independence of Puerto Rico will eliminate one more "resource" from the US arsenal; the US will be less able to wage war. And we will be one step closer to living in a peaceful world.

Recent actions opposing the massive war maneuvers in the Caribbean, and especially in Puerto Rico, show the strength and importance of the Puerto Rican independence movement and its Northamerican support. While 50,000 people marched in Puerto Rico in 1984, a group of white Northamericans, some from the New Movement, barricaded themselves in the Intrepid War Museum in New York Harbor and got major TV coverage for their exposure of the US role in the Caribbean and Puerto Rico. On several occasions, the New Movement has organized hundreds of North Americans to march in front of Navy ships to protest US militarism in Puerto Rico. These demonstrations -- which included direct actions where people attempted to or did board the ships -- occurred on Armed Forces Day in 1984 (San Francisco) and 1986 (New York) and July 4th, 1985 (Chicago). And a Northamerican armed clandestine organization, the Red Guerrilla Resistance, bombed the Naval Officers Club in Washington, DC in 1984 to protest war maneuvers then being held in Puerto Rico.

As we saw during the anti-Vietnam war movement, our actions do make a difference. Educational programs, demonstrations, supporting the prisoners of war and political prisoners are concrete ways we can say to the US government: "NO! We won't allow you to destroy Puerto Rico in our name!"

EFFECTS OF COLONIZATION ON THE PEOPLE OF
"PUERTO RICO USA"

(all statistics are for the island -
Population: 4,000,000)

- * 40% unemployment
- * 75% of the people on food stamps
- * per capita income of \$3900 per year
(1/3 that of Mississippi)
- * cost of living in San Juan is 8%
higher than Washington, DC
- * drug traffic amounting to millions of
dollars annually
- * 83,000 heroin addicts
- * 52% of high school-age youth have used
drugs
- * 800,000 alcoholics
- * 500,000 individuals suffering from
some form of mental illness
- * 20,000 homeless on the streets
- * 60% drop-out rate from public schools
(20% drop out each year)
- * average of 42 couples divorce daily
- * 75,000 abandoned children
- * public and private debt of \$13 billion
or \$3000 for every man, woman and
child
- * 17% of the capitalist world's
pharmaceuticals come from Puerto Rico:
not one of the 92 pharmaceutical
plants on the island is unionized



Free Puerto Rico!

New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence & Socialism

The New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence and Socialism is a national organization that works to develop understanding and support for the struggle of the Puerto Rican people—invaded and seized by the US military in 1898—to liberate their nation and to establish an independent society. As North Americans, we in the New Movement work under the leadership of the Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional Puertorriqueño, a US-based organization of Puerto Rican patriots. The New Movement chapters are involved in many activities against US colonialism and US military intervention. We have written materials, slide and film programs on such topics as the 2020 Plan, the history of Puerto Rico and the independence movement. A new video on Puerto Rican women Prisoners of War is now available. Please write or call the chapter nearest you to set up a program and discussion.

Chicago – Box 295, 2520 N. Lincoln, Chicago, IL 60614 Tel (312)278-6706

San Francisco – 3543 18th St., # 17, San Francisco, CA 94110 Tel (415)561-9055

New York – POB 2512, Cadman Plaza, Brooklyn, NY 11202 Tel (212)243-0202

WE NEED YOU!

Informing the North American public of the colonial situation of Puerto Rico is an important but expensive struggle. We hope you can participate in this work. Please clip and return this coupon so we can be in touch with you.

- I would like to donate \$50 \$20 \$10 other.
- I would like a subscription to Free Puerto Rico!
- I would like a subscription to Libertad, the monthly journal by the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War. I enclose \$25 for the subscription.
- I would like more information.

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