

THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY IN PUERTO RICO

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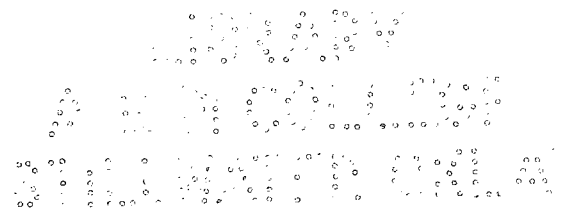
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### Preface

This study is devoted to a consideration of the efforts upon the part of Puerto Ricans to secure grants of autonomy and more liberal self-government from Spain and the United States.

Many support the belief that there has never been a real movement for independence in Puerto Rico. Perhaps what those holding this opinion mean is that no movement for independence or statehood has ever come near success. It is true there has been no revolution comparable to the American Revolution or the wars for independence in South America, but Puerto Rico would have been peculiar if it had not had its insurrections, its demands for a voice in insular affairs, its claims for a "star in the American flag," its political leaders urging complete independence.

In most instances, this study approaches the problem from the Puerto Rican angle with occasional references to the attitudes and reactions upon the part of the officials of the United States Government.

G. A. C. Jr.

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# THE STRUGGLE FOR AUTONOMY IN PUERTO RICO<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter I

### Acquisition of Puerto Rico

With the breaking of diplomatic relations between the United States and Spain on April 20 and 21, 1898,<sup>2</sup> and the approval by President McKinley of a joint resolution of Congress demanding the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Cuba,<sup>3</sup> a state of war existed between the two nations.

The break between the two nations arose chiefly over the general welfare of Cuba, "the pearl of the Antilles," and little thought was given at that time to the ultimate consequences as they concerned other insular possessions of Spain. While Cuba was in a state of rebellion against the government at Madrid, this was not the case in Puerto Rico, and no mention was made in diplomatic correspondence between the two governments of the status of the island of Puerto Rico.

For these and other reasons the invasion of Puerto Rico in the war with Spain was not given great consideration until after the war was in progress and the capitulation of Spanish forces in Cuba was practically assured. After the surrender of General Toral to General Shafter

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly spelled Porto Rico. The spelling Porto Rico was changed to Puerto Rico under provision of a Senate joint resolution in 1932. Statutes at Large, XLVII, pt. 1, 158-159.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. For. Rel. 1898, 764-767.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 763.

July 16, 1898,<sup>4</sup> and the American occupation of Santiago,<sup>5</sup> attention of the War Department was then turned to the invasion of other territory. General Nelson Miles had been ordered to organize an expedition to Puerto Rico and plans were made immediately to give him utmost cooperation in directing transports and furnishing re-enforcements.<sup>6</sup>

There is very little definite information as to the exact reasons for sending our armed forces against the Spanish on the island of Puerto Rico. However, as President McKinley expressed it in his second annual message to Congress, December 5, 1898, "With the fall of Santiago the occupation of Porto Rico became the next strategic necessity."<sup>7</sup> The fact that such an expedition was strategic is pointed out by General Nelson Miles in his dispatch to R. A. Alger, Secretary of War, dated July 17, 1898. General Miles called attention to a strong fleet of naval vessels in the port at San Juan preparing to go to Spain and suggested a strong combined movement on Puerto Rico to make sure of the capture of the island and the reduction of Spanish forts there.<sup>8</sup>

After a conference of the President and the Secretaries of War and Navy on the morning of July 18, General Miles was directed to land the troops then on the Yale and other

<sup>4</sup> H. Doc. No. 2, 55 Cong., 3 sess., 124.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>7</sup> James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1904, I, 93.

<sup>8</sup> H. Doc. No. 2, 55 Cong., 3 sess., 130.

transports at any place in Puerto Rico he might determine.<sup>9</sup> A similar message was sent to Admiral Sampson, commanding the North Atlantic Squadron. Miles in turn sent a letter to Admiral Sampson requesting additional naval forces be ordered to cover the landing of some ten thousand men on the island of Puerto Rico and at the same time to hold the Spanish ships then known to be in the harbor at San Juan, Puerto Rico.<sup>10</sup>

Upon reaching the island of Puerto Rico, Miles found it advisable to take the harbor of Guanica first. This was promptly done and the American flag was raised in Guanica at 11 o'clock on July 26. No casualties were reported on the American side.<sup>11</sup> Plans were immediately made for a complete conquest of the island. July 26, in an engagement at Yauco, the Spanish were defeated. The navy entered the harbor at Ponce, the largest city on the island, on July 27, and the army took possession of the city the next day. Skirmishes continued until, on August 13, 1898, the Americans had occupied a large portion of the island as a result of six engagements. At this time word was received of the signing of the protocol on the twelfth of August<sup>12</sup> and hostilities ceased, leaving the Spanish in command of San Juan.<sup>13</sup>

In correspondence with the United States Peace Com-

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 131.  
<sup>10</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 132.  
<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 139.  
<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 140.



missioners at Paris in a message dated September 16, 1898, President McKinley pointed out that our government required of Spain the unqualified concession of the following demands which concern our subject:

II. The cession to the United States of Porto Rico and other islands under Spanish Sovereignty in the West Indies.

IV. The immediate evacuation by Spain of Cuba, Porto Rico, and other Spanish islands in the West Indies.<sup>14</sup>

These demands were conceded by Spain, and their concession was recorded in the protocol of the twelfth of August, 1898.

The Treaty of Peace was concluded at Paris, December 10, 1898;<sup>15</sup> ratifications were subsequently exchanged, and the treaty was finally proclaimed on April 11, 1899.<sup>16</sup>

Excerpts from the treaty which concern this subject are given below:

Article II - Spain cedes to the United States the Island of Porto Rico and other islands now under Spanish Sovereignty in the West Indies and the Island of Guam in the Marianas or Ladrones.

Article IX . . . . In case they<sup>17</sup> remain in the territory they may preserve their allegiance to the Crown of Spain by making, before a court of record, within a year from the date of the exchange or ratifications of this treaty, a declaration of their decision to preserve such allegiance; in default of which declaration they shall be held to have renounced it and to have adopted the nationality of the territory in which they may reside.

The civil rights and political status of the

<sup>14</sup> U. S. For. Rel. 1898; H. Doc. No. 1, 55 Cong., 3 sess., 904.

<sup>15</sup> Sen. Doc., 61 Cong., 2 sess., XLVIII, 1690.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Spanish subjects, natives of the peninsula.

native inhabitants of the territories hereby ceded to the United States shall be determined by the Congress.<sup>18</sup>

With the conclusion of this treaty, Spain had signed away her last vestige of authority in the Western Hemisphere. Cuba secured her independence from Spain. If Puerto Rico, like Cuba, had been waging a war of revolution for independence with a de facto insular government, it is wholly probable that the United States would have established the Puerto Ricans as a separate sovereignty under her protection.

But such was not the case and Puerto Rican patriots settled down in a prolonged series of passive efforts toward autonomous government for the island. These efforts grew in magnitude and are flourishing as this is written.

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<sup>18</sup> Sen. Doc., 61 Cong., 2 sess., XLVIII, 1690.

## Chapter II

### Early Efforts toward Autonomy under Spain and the United States

It is evident that greater independence and liberal self-government has been a constant desire of Puerto Ricans since the early years of the nineteenth century up to the present time.

The government of Puerto Rico under Spanish rule until the latter part of the nineteenth century was founded upon the shortsighted colonial policy of Spain. It was nothing more than a military regime bent on the exploitation of the island and the maintenance of Spanish domination over that portion of the New World.<sup>1</sup> A brief historical sketch of the government of Puerto Rico should be of interest to the American student in forming a background for the study of the tireless efforts on the part of Puerto Rican patriots to secure autonomy for the island. A noted Puerto Rican historian, Pedro Capo-Rodriguez, described the government under Spain, previous to the granting of the Autonomia in 1897,<sup>2</sup> as follows:

. . . . it may be said that for over three centuries Porto Rico was governed, . . . as a military post, and that the governor, as the royal representative, was the source of all power and authority in the Island. Up to 1840 the towns were practically managed by army officers, whose duty it was to report directly to the captain general of the Island. From that time until 1870 the policy

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<sup>1</sup> Pedro Capo-Rodriguez, Hispanic-American Historical Review, II (November, 1919), 543.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

was gradually adopted of giving to the larger municipalities a local government administered by the civilians appointed by the governor and chosen, as a rule, from among the natives of Spain residing in the Island.<sup>3</sup>

The spirit of nationalism and the idea of independence among Puerto Ricans was considerably strengthened by the independence of Venezuela in 1811,<sup>4</sup> and that of Santo Domingo in 1821.<sup>5</sup> The first actual efforts came in 1835 with the planning of a military uprising against the provincial Spanish government in which more than fifteen hundred civilian Puerto Ricans also intended to take part. The plan resulted, however, only in the severe punishment of a group of patriots. Perez Moris and Cueto, Spanish historians, considered this conspiracy as "the first serious step to secessionism." A second attempt at a military uprising in San Juan, the principal Puerto Rican city and seat of the government of the island, in 1838, also failed.

For nearly thirty years there was very little activity on the surface among the Nationalist patriots. In 1864, Captain Luis Padial y Vizcarrondo was believed by the government to have been appointed chief of the revolution being planned. He was sent to Spain as a result. Three years later, in 1867, many patriots were exiled or subjected to other punishments as alleged instigators of another attempted rebellion. Because of this movement, Benito

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<sup>3</sup> Capo-Rodriguez, op. cit., 545.

<sup>4</sup> Bailey W. Diffie, Porto Rico: A Broken Pledge, 187.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Montero, a corporal of the artillery battalion, was put to death.

The Lares rebellion, the largest armed protest up to that time, arose in 1868. This revolt was chiefly the result of the revolutionary activities of Dr. Betances, a leader who brought the cause of Puerto Rican autonomy rapidly into a prominent place in the years just prior to the acquisition of the island by the United States.<sup>6</sup>

After the Lares rebellion had subsided with no appreciable results, revolutionary propaganda continued to be directed from St. Thomas by Dr. Betances. In 1874, Betances was successful in bringing arms to the island through the port of Guanica, and a year later another revolutionary movement was disclosed by the government. It resulted in the imprisonment of some of the more prominent leaders, but Betances escaped.<sup>7</sup>

The activities of the "Secret Societies" began in 1887, and as a result the Civil Guard under the government of General Palacios employed the "compoete" - inquisitorial tortures - in persecuting men of the Autonomous Party, although many of those persecuted claimed that they had nothing to do with the secret revolutionary movements.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Manuel Guzman Rodriguez, El Libro de Puerto Rico, 91.

<sup>7</sup> Diffie, op. cit., 188.

<sup>8</sup> "Among the prisoners held in 'El Morro' in that year were Pedro Marie Descartes, who told the author that he was the President of the secret society 'La Torre del Viejo', and Jose Vicente Gonzalez, who was punished by 'compoete' because it was believed that he was a member of said societies." Comment by Manuel Guzman Rodriguez in his article "El Nacionalismo en Puerto Rico," or "Nationalism in Puerto Rico," published in El Libro de Puerto Rico, 93.

In the same year a number of rebels and conspirators were exiled or otherwise punished as a result of a riot taking place in Yauco. The promoter of the uprising, Antonio Mattei Lluveras, was in New York at the time trying to organize an expedition to aid the movement.<sup>9</sup>

To fully appreciate the numerous conditions and circumstances influencing the early efforts of Puerto Ricans to gain independence from Spain or some form of liberal self-government, it is advisable to consider the attitude of the central Spanish government toward her colonial possessions and toward Puerto Rico in particular. Spain went too far in extending her medieval colonial policies in the West Indies without keeping abreast of the times. Spanish statesmen and legislators of the past century seemed always unaware of the blunders of the policy of the Spanish government in the attempted management of her colonies of this hemisphere. It was because Spain could not maintain its superiority over Puerto Rico and Cuba that Spanish rule became cruel and utterly unbearable.

Coupled with the uprisings in Puerto Rico, the Cuban revolution of 1868, ending in the agreement of El Sanjon of 1868<sup>10</sup> (later dishonored by Spain) and the Spanish revolution of September, 1868, led finally to the making of Puerto Rico a Spanish province in 1870 with an adequate representation in the Spanish parliament and other provi-

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<sup>9</sup> Diffie, op. cit., 188.

<sup>10</sup> Capo-Rodriguez, op. cit., 545.

sions that made the government of the island more liberal and civil in character. However, the jurisdiction and power of the insular government was still practically subordinated to the will of the governor general, and in special cases the whole matter could be taken to the central government in Spain.<sup>11</sup>

From that time until the cession of the island by Spain to the United States, the status of Puerto Rico was that of a Spanish province, and under the Spanish Constitution the inhabitants were always considered as Spaniards, as subjects or citizens of Spain.

It was during the period immediately preceding the acquisition of the island by the United States that Puerto Ricans in their energetic appeals in the Spanish parliament were able to command the respect of the central government of Spain. As a result, a more liberal policy toward the island was assumed.

However, the activities of the Voluntarios, or the Spanish Militia,<sup>12</sup> soon rendered practically useless this new policy of the central government. This was followed by a period of persecution and mismanagement which reached its height with the "comparte" in 1887 under General Balacios. Ten years later the central government resolved that self-government should be given to Puerto Rico. In writing of this action by Spain, Senor Capo-Rodriguez

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> In reality merely an armed political party composed of native Spaniards residing in the island.

stated as follows:

. . . . due to a combination of events, including the Cuban War of Independence of 1895-98, the strong and continued pressure of the United States upon the government of Spain, which culminated in the Spanish-American War, the representations of a handful of illustrious Porto Ricans representing the Autonomists Party headed by Munoz Rivera, and the fear perhaps of a Porto Rican uprising unless greater justice were granted to the Island, the cabinet of Senor Sagasta resolved that self-government should be given to Porto Rico.<sup>13</sup>

The royal decree known as the Autonomia was signed November 25, 1897, by Maria Cristina, as queen regent of the kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

Although this now almost forgotten Spanish decree of 1897 practically centralized all power and authority under the governor,<sup>15</sup> it did provide for a colonial parliament and other liberal concessions.<sup>16</sup> But this long anticipated autonomia or self-government went for naught, since it barely reached the stage of successful operation when the Spanish-American War put an end to Spanish colonial power in the island.

The first and only colonial legislature to convene under the authority of the Royal Decree of 1897 met on July 17, 1898. On July 25 came the news that the American fleet was off Guanica preparing to land.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Capo-Rodriguez, op. cit., 542.

<sup>14</sup> U. S. For. Rel. 1898, 636-644.

<sup>15</sup> Duffie, op. cit., 32.

<sup>16</sup> From a Spanish point of view the decree was really a long step toward a wiser policy of colonial administration.

<sup>17</sup> Duffie, op. cit., 32.



The Legislature adjourned, never to meet again under the Spanish flag, and the work of 400 years was blown away in the breeze that raised our flag over the island.<sup>18</sup>

When General Miles, at the head of the American Army, landed upon the island of Puerto Rico, in July, 1898, he issued a proclamation which has been the source of much controversy and the inspiration for much native Puerto Rican speech-making and writing. Because of the interest manifested by the inhabitants of the island at the time and their expectations in regard to the benefits of American rule the proclamation is quoted as follows:

TO THE INHABITANTS OF PORTO RICO:

In the prosecution of the war against the Kingdom of Spain by the people of the United States in the cause of liberty, justice and humanity its military forces have come to occupy the island of Porto Rico.

They come bearing the banner of freedom, inspired by a noble purpose to seek the enemies of our country and yours, and to destroy or capture all who are in armed resistance. They bring you the fostering arm of a nation of free people, whose greatest power is in its justice and humanity to all those living within its fold. Hence the first effect of this occupation will be the immediate release from your former political relation, and it is hoped a cheerful acceptance of the government of the United States.

The chief object of the American military forces will be to overthrow the armed authority of Spain and to give to the people of your beautiful island the measure of liberty consistent with this military occupation.

We have not come to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but, on the contrary, to bring you protection, not only to yourselves but to your property, to promote your

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.; Regis H. Post, "What's Wrong in Porto Rico," World's Work, XLIII, 261-267.

prosperity, and bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our Government.

It is not our purpose to interfere with any existing laws and customs that are wholesome and beneficial to your people so long as they conform to the rules of military administration of order and justice. This is not a war of devastation, but one to give to all within the control of its military and naval forces the advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization.<sup>19</sup>

Nelson A. Miles.  
Major-General, Commanding United States Army.

The landing of American troops in 1898 was welcomed by the independence party, confident that Americans came to bring independence to the island. Feliz Matos Bernier offered his services, with a number of men, to General Miles, and Pedro Maria Descartes, with a group of followers, aided the forces of Colonel Mullings.<sup>20</sup> Simultaneously, the Liga de Patriotas Puertorriquenos, founded by Eugenio Maria de Hostos in the interest of the independence movement, raised the white flag, and requested a plebiscite, manifesting a desire for the independence of the island.<sup>21</sup> However, through the lack of strong political leaders and the opposition of the United States, the ideal was set aside, remanifesting itself later on the island in the Unionist and Nationalist parties.

When the transfer of the island to American control was completed, the Department of Puerto Rico was created.

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<sup>19</sup> H. Doc. No. 2, 55 Cong., 3 sess., 142.

<sup>20</sup> Diffie, op. cit., 189; Rodriguez, op. cit., 93.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.; Diffie, op. cit., 189.

Major General John R. Brooke was placed in command and made military governor.<sup>22</sup> He was succeeded on the sixth of December, 1898, by Major General Guy V. Henry, and he in turn, on May 9, 1899, by Brigadier General George W. Davis, who held the position of military governor until the inauguration of a civil government on May 1, 1900 under the act of Congress known as the Foraker Act.<sup>23</sup>

In his annual message to Congress on December 5, 1899, President McKinley said:

Though Porto Rico and the Philippines hold a different relation to the United States, yet, for convenience of administration, the same principle of autonomous government has been extended to them. . . . The time is ripe for the adoption of a temporary form of government for this island.

President McKinley continued further as follows:

. . . For present purposes I recommend that Congress pass a law for the organization of a temporary government, which shall provide for the appointment by the President, subject to confirmation by the Senate, of a governor and such other officers as the general administration of the island may require, and that for legislative purposes upon subjects of a local nature not partaking of a Federal character a legislative council, composed partly of citizens of the United States, shall be nominated and appointed by the President, subject to confirmation by the Senate, their acts to be subject to the approval of the Congress or the President prior to going into effect. In the municipalities and other local subdivisions I recommend that the principle of local self-government be applied at once, so as to enable the intelligent citizens of the island to participate in their own government and to learn by practical experience the duties and requirements of a self-contained and self-governing people. I have not thought it wise to commit the entire government of the island to officers selected by the people, be-

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<sup>22</sup> Sen. Doc. No. 79, 57 Cong., 1 sess., 11.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

cause I doubt whether in habits, training, and experience they are such as to fit them to exercise at once so large a degree of self-government; but it is my judgment and expectation that they will soon arrive at an attainment of experience and wisdom and self-control that will justify conferring upon them a much larger participation in the choice of their insular affairs.<sup>24</sup>

On April 12, 1900, the so-called Foraker Act,<sup>25</sup> providing a form of civil government, was passed. Under this act a government on the American model which aimed at balancing the power between American and Puerto Rican officials was set up. When the bill was presented to the Senate it contained a provision extending to Puerto Ricans the privilege of American citizenship, but this was left out by the committee in charge of the bill.<sup>26</sup> The omission of the privilege of citizenship in the final draft of the bill was a distinct blow to the pride of the Puerto Rican people. The act as a whole has been criticized harshly by its opponents and favorably by those who consider it worked well. Ex-Governor Regis H. Post stated that he considers it the best form of government which could have been devised for Puerto Rico at that time. He continues, however, that

. . . coming so shortly after the realization of their hopes for autonomy granted by Spain, and excluding the Porto Rican from our citizenship, it bore seeds of disappointment and wounded self-respect, which were to grow a crop of dissatisfac-

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<sup>24</sup> James D. Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, X, 162.

<sup>25</sup> U. S. Stat. at Large, XXXI, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Sen. Rep. No. 249, 56 Cong., 1 sess.

tion and complaint.<sup>27</sup>

The period immediately preceding and following the inauguration of the government under the Foraker Act was one of political uncertainty. The party which had been the Autonomy Party under the Spanish regime was divided on the issue of what course to follow. The parties being formed out of the old Autonomy Party were the Republican, which became known as the Pro-American Party, and the Federal, which was known as the Anti-American Party. Neither of these parties advocated independence at this time, the Republicans favoring statehood and the Federalists, organization as a territory.<sup>28</sup>

The first legislature met on December 3, 1900, and remained in session until January 31, 1901,<sup>29</sup> by which time they had approved thirty-six laws providing civil government and a system of taxation.

Governor Allen served until September 14, 1901, when he was succeeded by Governor William H. Hunt, who had been acting as secretary.

In his annual report dated July 10, 1902, after the third year of civil government under the Foraker law was well under way, Governor Hunt pointed out that the progress of the civil government up to that time had been very encouraging. He stated further that he could see no reason

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<sup>27</sup> Post, op. cit., 261.

<sup>28</sup> Duffie, op. cit., 37.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

to fear any serious interruption in the future.<sup>30</sup>

Bitter political differences among the Puerto Ricans seemed to be based principally upon personal antagonisms arising out of former times, although a few were dissatisfied with the government.

According to Governor Hunt, the Foraker law furnished an admirable form of government for the island.

Whatever doubt may have once existed as to its practical applicability must give way before the actual facts recorded under the crucial test of operation. Through its provisions the United States has brought liberty, self-government, and prosperity to a million people.<sup>31</sup>

Under this law, Congress provided for the appointment by the President of a governor, a secretary, an attorney-general, a treasurer, an auditor, a commissioner of the interior, and a commissioner of education, each to serve four years. The five departmental heads, together with five native Puerto Ricans, likewise appointed by the President, constituted the executive council, which, besides acting as an advisory body to the governor, formed the higher branch of the legislative assembly, while the house of delegates, composed of thirty-five members elected biennially, formed the lower branch.<sup>32</sup>

On July 25, 1905, a Convention of Municipal Delegates was held at San Juan in which they acted unanimously in

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<sup>30</sup> Sen. Doc. No. 32, 57 Cong., 2 sess, II, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., I, 13.

<sup>32</sup> John Ball Osborne, "The Americanization of Porto Rico," World's Work, VIII (May, 1904), 4759-4766.

asking for a certain reform of the fundamental law that would largely transfer the control of the local government to their own people.<sup>33</sup>

Hobart S. Bird in an article published in the Outlook pointed out that the question should not be whether Puerto Rico would be governed by her people more satisfactorily to us, but whether it would be governed more satisfactorily to them. The principal fears entertained by the United States as expressed concerning a government controlled by the islanders seemed to be that peace and order would not be maintained and personal property rights respected; that unwise class legislation would be indulged in; that religious liberty would not remain inviolate, and non-sectarian public instruction would be abandoned or seriously impaired; that injustice and partiality in the judiciary would become the rule instead of the exception; that the principles governing the imposition of taxes and the assessment of property would be based upon favoritism instead of equality, and that the fiscal system in general would become demoralized.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of the fact that the United States Congress completely ignored all the requests and demands for more liberal self-government, a concerted campaign of grumbling continued. Bills were introduced in the elective lower

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<sup>33</sup> Hobart S. Bird, "Should Porto Rico Be Self-governing?" Outlook, LXXXI, 621.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 622.

house of the insular legislature proposing that the island be an independent territory under the protectorate of the United States, whereby the voice of the United States in the government would end with the naming of the governor. Even more insistent were the demands that the executive council should be elected.

Yet an illustration of the attitude of the politicians and the working of political rings in the autonomous parts of the Puerto Rican government is timely and may be found in the following extract from the minutes of a secret meeting by the local "Republican Committee of Ciales":

Whereas the month of May is now approaching, at which time will fall due the payment of \$200.00 due the committee, said payment being guaranteed by the coreligionaries [Fellow partisans] Genores Barnas, Nieves, Munoz, and Montes, it is hereby ordered that on all payments of salaries for services rendered during the month of January by municipal employees, five per centum from the total amount paid each employee be deducted until the sum of \$200.00 is thus accumulated . . . . This order shall be communicated to the municipal treasurer and comptroller. If any employee refuses to permit such discount, the municipal treasurer shall inform this committee thereof.<sup>35</sup>

With the adjournment of the insular legislature in 1906 two incidents appeared on the horizon to indicate a favorable turn in public sentiment toward the American people. The first was an article published in the Puerto Rican newspaper, "La Democracia," March 16, 1906, on the adjournment of the legislature:

Where liberty had previously been destroyed, it

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<sup>35</sup> Eugene P. Lyle Jr., "Our Experience in Porto Rico," World's Work XI, (January, 1906), 7086.



was restored.

Where a system of plunder had been introduced, restitution took its place.

In short, pernicious laws - laws tending to bring ruin and misfortune among the people - were substituted by good laws, thus realizing amidst the applause of public opinion acts of true justice.

The legislative work of 1905 and 1906 is a patriotic labor.

It opens wide the road of progress and happiness to the Porto Rican people; it leads them to the fulfillment of their legitimate aspirations, checking unwholesome passions, fratricidal hatred, and restoring to the country the moral peace so dear to it.

A beautiful work.<sup>36</sup>

Still more significant was a presentment to the Federal Court of a Federal Grand Jury in November, 1906. The object of this presentment was to furnish a formal disavowal of the anti-American prejudice which had been, in certain quarters, very much displayed and exaggerated. A single paragraph from this document reads as follows:

The people of Porto Rico are not disloyal to the United States, nor is there any such feeling of hostility towards the Government of the United States or towards American institutions as might readily be understood from many expressions used by prejudiced or partial newspaper and magazine correspondents and writers. On the contrary, our experience, investigation, and knowledge of the existing situation in Porto Rico warrants us in the assertion that there is no more loyal, liberty-loving, and law-abiding people living beneath the folds of the American flag than the citizens of Porto Rico, and there is no doubt but that the greatest hope and ambition of the Porto Rican people today is to be more closely allied with and to be given a greater measure of participation in administration of the

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<sup>36</sup> L. S. (Anon.), "Impressions of a Careless Traveler - 'What Our Youngest Child Wants,'" Outlook, LXXIII (August, 1906), 856.

governmental affairs in their island, through those forms, methods, and policies which are the foundation and controlling feature of the Government of the great American commonwealth.<sup>37</sup>

In a message to Congress transmitting a report made by the Secretary of War upon the conditions existing in Puerto Rico, President Taft called attention to the desires expressed by the various Puerto Rican political factions for amendments to the Foraker law, especially the desire to be made American citizens.<sup>38</sup> The Secretary of War, J. M. Dickinson, suggested not an act making all Puerto Rican citizens American citizens with or without their consent, but an act to provide machinery by which Puerto Rican citizens who should make the proper application for citizenship to a proper court shall become American citizens upon taking the oath of allegiance to the United States. He suggested further that after a certain date the right to vote and to hold office should be confined to American citizens.

In making recommendations concerning the demand of the islanders for an elective senate, Secretary Dickinson stated:

I do not think it wise to grant at present this demand in full but recommend that a senate be created consisting of 13 members, all citizens of Porto Rico, or of the United States who have resided for not less than one year in Porto Rico, eight of whom shall be appointed by the President of the United States, and the remainder elected by the qualified voters of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> H. Doc. No. 615, 61 Cong., 2 sess., CXIII, 1.

Puerto Rico.<sup>39</sup>

It appears that the Puerto Ricans had a real grievance against the United States in the refusal of Congress to take any action upon their request for citizenship. Their fight for citizenship did not bear fruit until the passage of the Jones-Shafroth Act in 1917.

Theodore Roosevelt, in writing on the matter of Puerto Rico's grievances against the United States points out that a Puerto Rican was not a Puerto Rican because Puerto Rico was not a country; he was not an American citizen because Puerto Rico was not a part of the United States, and he could not be naturalized because there was no foreign prince or power allegiance to which he could forswear.<sup>40</sup>

The desire for a new form of government was realized on March 2, 1917, with the enactment of the Jones Bill<sup>41</sup> which greatly extended the powers of the Puerto Ricans. Collective citizenship was granted in opposition to the wishes of the majority party, the Unionists, who had taken the stand that it was not consistent with their demand for independence.<sup>42</sup> The executive council was supplemented by an elective senate. Appointments to cabinet positions were, with two exceptions, no longer made by the President of the United States, but by the governor of Puerto Rico,

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>40</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "Puerto Rico's Grievance," Outlook, XCIX, 643, 644.

<sup>41</sup> U. S. Stat. at Large, XXXIX, 951-968.

<sup>42</sup> Biffie, op. cit., 40.

subject to confirmation by the Puerto Rican senate. The governor still retained the right to veto.

Political parties on the island had been very active in the matter of campaigning for autonomy and more liberal self-government from the time of the inauguration of the government under the Foraker Act. Increased activity came as a result of the passage of the Jones Bill in 1917.

At the close of the fiscal year 1918-1919, Governor Arthur Yager embodied in his annual report a statement on the twenty years of progress in Puerto Rico under American administration. He declared that the government of the island was both entirely democratic and, in the main, locally controlled and responsible to the people. He stated not only that such was the case with political institutions such as the legislature and municipal offices but also that practically the entire personnel who did the work of the government were native sons and daughters of the island. Out of 5,953 positions in government service only 203 were held by those who were not natives.

Governor Yager pointed out that only a few safeguards which seemed necessary to protect the island itself from the inexperience and lack of preparation of a large part of its own voters have been retained in the national government, and that those also would be given the people of the island as soon as the work of education and training could be made more universal and complete.

### Chapter III

#### Political Parties in Puerto Rico

#### Seeking Statehood or Independence

It is deemed advisable in this study to devote a chapter to the discussion of various political parties or factions that arose in Puerto Rico and their efforts toward self-government. A better understanding of the efforts of Puerto Ricans toward autonomous government should be effected.

#### The Union Party

The party "Union de Puerto Rico" sprang from the Federal Party, which was dissolved so as to constitute a stronger group under the new name.<sup>1</sup> The organization took place in February, 1904,<sup>2</sup> more on the order of a league of patriots rather than as a political party. Its aim was to ask the Congress of the United States for a system of government for Puerto Rico of any one of the following types: (a) autonomy or self-government; (b) statehood; (c) an independent republic under a United States protectorate.

The early leaders of the party strenuously pressed for independence and included their desire in the party platform. However, after the death of Luis Munoz Rivera

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<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, "Nationalism in Porto Rico," in El Libro de Puerto Rico, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Antonio R. Barcelo, "The Union Party of Porto Rico," in ibid., 195.

who led the campaign for independence, the party made several changes in its platform in regard to the future political status of the island. Antonio R. Barcelo, lawyer, at one time president of the insular Senate, became president of the Unionist Party.<sup>3</sup>

From the very year of its organization the Union Party was successful at the polls.<sup>4</sup> The Unionists continually fought for autonomy for a decade or more and included in their platform a declaration for independence. Declaring for independence did not mean that they contemplated revolution, for as Ex-Governor Post points out,

. . . the Porto Rican was a fighter by constitutional methods. He had been trained for centuries as a politician, he was astute, courageous, and quick to see and grasp any opportunity that the law or the political situation might offer. He knew exactly what he wanted and how to influence the public opinion of his people . . . .<sup>5</sup>

In the Assembly held in Mayaguez in 1912, the following declaration was issued by the Party:

The Unionist Party will not support anarchistic doctrines nor systems disturbing the common life and harmony of the different social elements, but it does declare that the proletariat more than any other class needs the help and solidarity of the country. Porto Rican laborers should receive higher wages, own their own homes, have sufficient food and clothing and decent footwear, and their labor should be limited to eight hours a day, with the enjoyment, in their sad condition, of all the moral and physical pleasure that life affords. We also demand laws which, without whimsical limitations, will establish compensation for labor accidents, cooperative societies, shop hygiene, premiums for perseverance and intelligence in manual

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<sup>3</sup> Rodriguez, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Diffie, Porto Rico, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

labor, and loans enabling laborers to acquire homes at low prices payable on long terms. We desire, without vain formulas, but by tangible acts, to strengthen each day the social brotherhood that obliges the leaders of the people to feel the sorrows of the people and to remedy them insofar as power to do so is given them, thus rendering fervent homage to the new world era through the sentiment of human fraternity.<sup>6</sup>

In 1920 the General Assembly of the Unionist Party ratified the foregoing declaration and added the following:

According to the finality pursued by the Unionist Party it is the party's policy more efficiently to prepare the people morally, politically and economically for the exercise of the rights and duties of free citizens capable of handling their own affairs, and it will not hesitate in solving the problems affecting human life which are condensed in democracy's august trinity: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. And in this effort it will not yield the position which it holds in the conception and execution of ideas compatible with conditions of human nature.

The Unionist Party, therefore, upholds the principle of liberty which consecrates man's inalienable right to the free expression of thought and to the organization of all classes for the purpose of establishing their just claims for social and financial improvement. It also upholds that principle of equality which is based on the acknowledgement of the innate privilege of each individual, as increased by the fruit of his labor, study, volition and abnegation, and the principle of fraternity which does away with prejudice of race, religion and social standing in the interest of greater harmony in the community.

The social problem, it might be said, is the sole and fundamental problem. All others are inherent therein because they converge towards the organization of the individual for his relations with other beings in the formation of communities that make up a people and a nation. Thus the political problem is inherent in the social so far as it tends to establish the constitutional formula or system of government serving as a rule for human initiative and activities. And

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<sup>6</sup> Barcelo, op. cit., 195.

so also is the financial problem which establishes the means necessary for the development of the community along all lines.

Laws protecting rights and regulating duty, justice, public education, health, charity, finance, agriculture, commerce, industries, banks, means of transportation, public works and services and, in short, everything representing life and progress, should be looked after with the purpose of raising to the highest possible degree the moral and material level of the people.

Since the year 1905, when the Unionist Party, through its majority began to act in the Legislature, it has directed its effort and all its diligence to the satisfactory solution of these problems of public character in conformity with the powers granted by the Organic Act and the resources at its command.<sup>7</sup>

As the months and years passed after the inauguration of a more liberal form of government for the island under the Jones Bill, it is interesting to note that the leaders of the Unionist Party became less insistent in their campaign for statehood. On November 22, 1922, the party met in General Assembly and left out of its platform the statehood plank, public opinion in the United States and in Puerto Rico having expressed itself openly against the incorporation of the island as a state in the Union. The idea of organizing a special form of government seemed to prevail.

Later, in a General Assembly which met on February 11, 1923, the party stood for the following platform:

That it always having been the supreme ideal of the Unionist Party - just as it has been and is that of all worthy people throughout history - the institution of a free country, master of its own destiny,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 197.



for the present and future:

And it being highly desirable that for the better assurance of said liberty there must exist an Association of a permanent and indestructible character, between the Island and the United States of America, the advantages and conveniences of which can be conceived of from what has been derived for both the United States and Porto Rico out of a mere association during the last twenty-three years, and the results of such association being felt beyond the territorial limits of Porto Rico and the United States, because far beyond those limits said Association would revive many hopes and cause the disappearance of many fears; it is resolved by the party "Union de Puerto Rico" gathered in Supreme Assembly: that the founding in Porto Rico of a state, country or a community which may be free and may be associated with the United States of America, is the aim and inspiration of Porto Ricans, thus solving honestly, satisfactorily and finally the problem pending solution as to what are to be the relations between both countries.

In virtue of the above the Assembly declares that the creation of the Free Associated State of Porto Rico is from this day on, the Program of the party "Union de Puerto Rico," and to the realization of that Program the glorious party will devote all its earnest efforts, that party which was founded in a solemn hour by immortal men of our country, and which is yet bound to create, just as they do, an immortal work.<sup>8</sup>

In 1931, leaders of the Unionist Party declared for absolute independence and, in so doing, caused a split that caused its death.<sup>9</sup> It was succeeded in 1932 by the Liberal Party with A. R. Barcelo remaining in leadership.<sup>10</sup> The Liberal program was a compromise between the "independentistas" and the advocates of autonomy. It held independence as the one and only political goal, but until that could be attained the program proposed to work with the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>9</sup> New York Times, June 28, 1931.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., March 20, 1932.

"de facto" government. A personal factor was seen in the actual organization of the new party. Barcelo needed to modify his stand for independence in order to be politically successful in the next election. It was feared that the Socialists working in agreement with the Republicans and Unionist-Republicans would control the island under the leadership of Santiago Iglesias.

### The Republican Party

Shortly after the acquisition of the island by the United States the old Autonomy Party divided into two factions, namely: Federalists, known as anti-American, and Republicans, known as pro-American.<sup>11</sup> Neither of these factions advocated independence at this time, the "Partido Republicano Puertorriqueno"<sup>12</sup> favoring statehood and the Federalist Party, organization as a territory.

A great number of Puerto Ricans upon considering the actual facts facing the people of the island as a result of the American occupation and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Paris, December 10, 1898, met for the purpose of organizing the Republican Party. Mr. Manuel F. Bossy was elected as president of the party, and their constitution was adopted in the first general assembly of the party on July 4, 1899.<sup>13</sup> This constitution, in part, stated explicitly the following:

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<sup>11</sup> Diffie, op. cit., 37.

<sup>12</sup> Republican Party of Puerto Rico.

<sup>13</sup> Jose Tous Soto, El Libro de Puerto Rico, 201.

Our substantial principles comprise two categorical declarations: (a) Definite and sincere annexation of Porto Rico to the United States of America. (b) Recognition of Porto Rico as an organized territory, as a preliminary step to its admission as a state in the Federal Union.

We swear loyalty to the flag of the United States and to the American ideals, looking toward the prestige of Porto Rico as a member of the Federal Union, as this will reflect the greatness of the nation of which we desire to be a part.<sup>14</sup>

The Republican Party was the only party electing delegates to the first legislative assembly, House of Delegates, under the Foraker Act. The Federals declined to present candidates in this election due to a rift that arose over the division of the island into legislative districts.

A former Chairman of the Republican Party of Puerto Rico, Senor Jose Tous Soto,<sup>15</sup> in writing on the ideals and work of the party calls attention to the fact that the party works earnestly toward its principal ideal, i.e., that Puerto Rico should become in the near future a state of the American Union. He states further

. . . that this depends on the effort of the Island more than on the consent of Congress, and that when the people of Porto Rico reach in their social and political career, the proper stage, the Island will be admitted as a State of the Union, without Congress placing obstacles in the way to such a patriotic purpose.

. . . the Republican Party has time and again urged the extension of the territorial government that we now enjoy, until we finally reach full self-government; the Party has stated in its platforms

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 202.

many petitions intended to reach this end, and every time it has had an opportunity to approach the national government it formulated similar petitions. It is well known that all territories are not alike because of the difference in population, habits and specific conditions which exist among them, and that is why each territory has been granted a form of government in accordance with its condition. Porto Rico, therefore, might become a self-governing territory.<sup>16</sup>

Conventions of the Republican Party meeting in 1910, 1912, and 1914 incorporated in their respective platforms requests for a complete separation of functions between the legislative and executive powers, that the insular senate be totally elective and that the budget of expenses be originated in the lower chamber.

In later years after the Organic Law (Jones Act) of March, 1917, went into effect, the Republican Party assembled at San Juan and adopted a platform which has stood these many years, declaring that

. . . . the Organic Law puts into actual exercise the greater part of our political program granting us citizenship and territorial organization, now lacking only the declaration to let the American Constitution extend to Porto Rico and that this will come, because from the very moment that the Porto Ricans become citizens of the United States it is impossible to conceive this privilege without the granting of the law that defines the immunities, privileges and rights of such citizens, and without the protection of the flag, for whose glorification was shed the blood of the heroes and martyrs of the country during the time of Washington, Lincoln, and McKinley, spreading the spirit of liberty, democracy and harmony throughout all the world, so that mankind may be happier.<sup>17</sup>

A reaffirmation was made to the effect that the island

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 205.

be considered as a definite and integral part of the United States, organizing it as a territory preparatory to admittance as a state.

### The Nationalist Party

The Nationalist Party was formed in 1922 by men from the Unionist Party who advocated complete independence and did not agree with the Unionist plank requesting a free-state form of government, associated with the United States.<sup>18</sup> Associations known as Nationalist Associations joined with the Juventud Nacionalista, composed of students in larger centers, to form this new party. Apparently the reason for the organization of another party advocating complete independence in addition to the Unionist Party was the desire to combat absentee ownership of property on the island that they might secure economic independence as well as political independence.

Increased activity on the part of the Nationalists came in 1930. This was partly due to the recruiting of new members from the Unionist Party and the election of a new leader in the person of Albizu Campos. There was a change in the old policy of the party which allowed events to shape their course. Campos' slogan, "Be what you want to be," was injected into the party convention with the result that party followers believed independence was attainable if desired intensely enough. Early steps taken

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<sup>18</sup> Diffie, op. cit., 191.

by the newly inspired party included refusal of government offices, the issuing of propaganda to the women of Puerto Rico, and a general attack on the United States "regime."<sup>19</sup>

In April, 1931, the Nationalist Party inaugurated a program to "reconstruct the Republic of Porto Rico" proclaimed at the time of the unsuccessful Lares revolution in 1868. Party leaders issued the first two hundred thousand dollars of a planned issuance of five million dollars in gold bonds, called the "independence loan." These bonds were issued in five-dollar denominations and stated on their face that they were to become payable from the republic's treasury five years after the republic's recognition with 4 per cent interest from the date of recognition. The bonds were signed by officials of the party and bore the party seal. They were dated November 16, 1930, "in the 63rd year of the proclamation of the Republic." Neither the State Department nor the War Department took any great interest in the announcement that the bonds were being distributed.<sup>20</sup>

Charges against Campos, of inciting to riot as a result of aggressive activities of party followers, were dismissed in municipal court on June 23, 1932. Campos acted as his own lawyer and sought dismissal on the ground that no court established by the United States had jurisdiction. He was overruled but presented an extensive defense and

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<sup>19</sup> New York Times, May 25, 1930.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., April 10, 1931; ibid., June 29, 1932.

was cheered by a large crowd when he left the courtroom.<sup>21</sup>

The Nationalist Party has always been a minority party and very radical. Its activities have been inspired and directed by Albizu Campos since 1930. The party believed in him so strongly that he was at times elected to party leadership while in jail or under bail when his activities and the activities of his followers would run afoul of the law.

Some knowledge of the personality of Pedro Albizu Campos adds interest to activities of the Nationalist Party.

Campos is now past his mid-forties. Back in 1913, as Pedro Campos, he received a Puerto Rican government scholarship of five hundred dollars a year to go to college in the United States. He ranked high in his college preparatory work and was among the brightest to finish at the Ponce High School. Pedro Campos (he then used only his mother's name) had overcome many handicaps. His mother, of mixed blood, had been a servant in his father's home. His father, white, was from an old Spanish loyalist family which had migrated to Puerto Rico from Venezuela.

Campos first went to the University of Vermont, later transferring to Harvard. A devout Catholic, he was active in establishing a college chapter of the Knights of Columbus and became its head. He frequently lectured in nearby New England towns. Lecturing and tutoring were a source of income for him.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., June 24, 1932.

In the meantime Don Alejandro Albizu, proud of the record his son was making, had given him his name legally, and it was as Pedro Albizu Campos that he came back to Puerto Rico, after the entrance of the United States into the World War, to seek an army commission. Being denied a commission, he was drafted later, entered a training camp, won a commission and was assigned to a negro regiment. Released from the army almost a year after the armistice, he returned to Harvard to complete his law course. While at Harvard he married a Peruvian girl and returned to Puerto Rico to establish himself in the practice of law.

In 1928 he was a candidate for the nomination for senator from the Liberal Party, but the party leaders turned him down. In 1930, Campos succeeded in being elected to the presidency of the Nationalist Party and has held it ever since. His leadership and domineering tactics have caused many of the old stand-bys to drop out. Most of his followers are young people of white blood.<sup>22</sup>

The party's most recent convention, held in February, 1939, at which time P. A. Campos was again elected president of the party, though serving out a sedition sentence in the Federal penitentiary at Atlanta, Georgia, took the following action: (a) a committee was appointed to study the matter of calling a constitutional convention to declare the island independent; (b) the convention declared all war inhuman that does not involve liberty and independence for

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., May 2, 1937.



the people; (c) it resolved not to cooperate with the existing "regime"; and, (d) it protested against the establishment of military bases in Puerto Rico by the United States as sure to provide targets in the event of war.<sup>23</sup>

One should not confuse island nationalism with the Nationalist Party. Nationalism on the island hopes to attain island independence. The Nationalist Party, however, makes out a legal case for independence dating complete island sovereignty to November, 1897, with the granting of the Spanish Autonomia decree and dating the founding of the "Republica de Puerto Rico" to the Lares Revolution of 1868.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., February 23, 1939.

Chapter II  
Recent Efforts toward a More  
Liberal Self-Government

Efforts toward a more liberal self-government for Puerto Ricans were given added impetus early in 1924 when Governor Towner and leading men of the island appeared in Washington to argue in favor of the privilege of electing their own governor. It was pointed out that they wanted to continue as part of the territory of the United States and that their desire for extension of self-government was not for the purpose of becoming an independent republic. Governor Towner said, "Personally I think that the island will in time become a State in the Union."<sup>1</sup>

In 1926 a Puerto Rican delegation, headed by A. R. Barcelo, president of the insular Senate, and Jose Tous Soto, speaker of the House of Representatives, went to Washington to ask of President Coolidge and Congress the right to elect their own governor. Miguel Guerra Mondragon, vice-president of the House, expressed his views in this language:

There were sixty thousand Porto Ricans in New York City who could not see the justice of voting for Al Smith or Jimmie Walker while inhabitants of the island took their Governor at the dictate of Washington authorities.<sup>2</sup>

This was the same delegation of Puerto Ricans that visited

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times, March 30, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., April 20, 1926.

Washington in 1924, and each time the request for a more complete autonomy or self-government was put on the table by the House of Representatives. The delegation was also received by Secretary of War Davis, to whom they again made their desires known and asked for the privilege to be granted six years in the future, in 1932. Governor Towner's term was to expire in 1928, but they did not feel the time would be ripe for such an election then.

On October 10, 1926, a memorial signed by Puerto Rican legislators was prepared in San Juan and presented to Governor Towner to be presented to President Coolidge, urging him to have Congress give the island an elective governor in 1932.<sup>3</sup> The memorial told of previous memorials taken to Congress in 1924, and of a bill prepared by the resident commissioner, Cardova Davila, approved by the Secretary of War, House and Senate committees, passed by the Senate, but failing to pass by the House because of a last hour rule requiring unanimous consent to consider any bill.

When the new insular legislature convened on February 15, 1927, a joint resolution was passed in the opening session asking for complete direction of the internal affairs of the island. Barcelo and Soto sent the following message to Coolidge:

The Senate and House of Representatives of Porto Rico have resolved, upon inaugurating their session,

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., October 16, 1926.

to pay their respects to the President of the United States and to ask him to recommend Congress to approve a law placing complete direction of their internal affairs in the hands of citizens of Porto Rico, treating this island with justice and recognizing such principles of government as are the will of the governed in accordance with the highest conception of the principles of liberty.<sup>4</sup>

Several months later a similar message was sent to the President and at the same time they cabled the Pan-American Conference in Havana asking that the Hispanic republics there represented endorse the message sent to Coolidge. The message to the conference reads in part:

. . . Ours is the only Spanish-American country whose voice is not heard in Havana during the Pan American Conference, because it is not represented there. We ask to be allowed to be constituted a free state.<sup>5</sup>

The Puerto Rican Brotherhood of America, an organization of Puerto Ricans in New York City, sent telegrams of endorsement to President Coolidge and the chairman of the Pan-American Congress at Havana concerning the message of Barcelo and Soto. It is estimated that there were one hundred fifty thousand Puerto Ricans in New York at the time.<sup>6</sup> In an editorial on January 21, 1928, the New York Times pointed out that Barcelo and Soto could hardly expect Coolidge to recommend to Congress that Puerto Rico be made a free state or that the Pan-American Conference in Havana would go on record as approving the message they sent to

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., February 16, 1927.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., January 20, 1928; Cong. Rec., 70 Cong., 1 sess., LXIX, 6583.

<sup>6</sup> New York Times, January 22, 1928.

the President. Their action may be regarded as a political gesture, designed to attract attention to the demands of the islanders.

Governor Towner was considered by Barcelo as "an admirable Governor and the kind of chief executive we would choose ourselves."<sup>7</sup> However, the Times points out further that there are so many illiterates among the voters that a governor elected in 1928 would be the choice of the most powerful politicians.

Charles Lindbergh landed in San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 5, 1928, on his Caribbean tour and a special session of the legislature was called to honor him.<sup>8</sup> The legislators seized upon the opportunity to make known their plea for freedom in handling their own affairs and, without opposition, passed a concurrent resolution to be handed to Lindbergh.<sup>9</sup> After a medal was pinned on the flier's coat by Senate President Barcelo, the speaker of the House, Soto, read the resolution as a welcoming tribute to Lindbergh, concluding with a "message from the people of Porto Rico to the people of the United States" which they entrusted to him. The closing paragraphs of the message are as follows:

The good wishes of Porto Rico will go with you to the land of the brave and the free, and to your country and to your people. You will convey a message of Porto Rico not far different from the cry of Patrick Henry - 'Liberty or Death!' It is the same in substance with but a difference imposed by

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<sup>7</sup> Editorial in ibid., January 21, 1928.

<sup>8</sup> New York Times, February 4, 1928.

<sup>9</sup> A. C. Dana, Porto Rico's Case, 7.

the change of times and conditions.

The message of Porto Rico to your people is: grant us the freedom that you enjoy, for which you struggled, which you worship, which we deserve and you have promised us. We ask the right to a place in the sun of this land of yours, brightened by the stars of your glorious flag.<sup>10</sup>

This somewhat ambiguous petition to the American people asking freedom was subsequently explained to mean full control of internal affairs and not complete severance from the United States.

Within a few days the lower house of the Puerto Rico legislature followed up by sending messages to President Coolidge, the speaker of the United States House of Representatives and the president of the Senate, demanding that Lincoln's famous words, "Government of the people, by the people and for the people," be applied to the government of the island. These messages were in the form of a demand upon Congress and a recommendation to the President.<sup>11</sup>

With the attention of the Puerto Rican people focused on the new demands for greater autonomy, Soto issued a public letter visioning Puerto Rico as one of the United States. He suggested a constitutional amendment permitting oversea states to a representation in Congress, voting only on laws affecting their particular states and, further, urged continental political parties to incorporate planks

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; New York Times, February 6, 1928; Cong. Rec., 70 Cong., 1 sess., LXIX, 6348.

<sup>11</sup> New York Times, February 14, 1928; A. R. Barcelo, "Porto Rico's Demand for Status of Free State," Current History, XLVIII (May, 1928), 264.

in their platforms favoring complete self-government for Puerto Rico.<sup>12</sup>

Realizing that many unfavorable interpretations had been placed on the so-called "Lindbergh Message" and because of an appeal made by Dr. J. W. Harris, of the Polytechnic Institute at San German, Puerto Rico, to the governor to secure a detailed explanation due to the resignation tendered by a trustee of the institute who was displeased by the seeming antagonism of the message, Barcelo and Soto issued an official explanation of the message in a letter addressed to Doctor Harris on February 6, 1928.<sup>13</sup> They pointed out that the message was not meant as it was interpreted but that it meant, in substance, complete self-rule without separation from the United States.<sup>14</sup>

President Coolidge rejected the plea of Puerto Rico in a letter to Governor Towner dated February 28, 1928, and published on March 16. It was in direct reply to the message brought by Charles Lindbergh and the telegram to the Havana Conference.<sup>15</sup> This letter over the signature of President Coolidge referred to the relation of Puerto Rico to the United States, the entire absence of any excuse on the part of the Puerto Ricans for expecting complete freedom,

<sup>12</sup> New York Times, March 15, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., March 19, 1928; Dana, op. cit., 55.

<sup>14</sup> This explanatory letter represents so admirably the Puerto Rican views that it is given in full as Appendix I.

<sup>15</sup> New York Times, March 16, 1928; Cong. Rec., 70 Cong., 1 sess., LXIX, 4872-4874; Dana, op. cit., 8.

and the failure of their political leaders to appreciate either (a) the extraordinary amount of freedom already conferred by the Jones Bill, 1917, or (b) the signal benefits which American occupation had brought to the island.<sup>16</sup>

Puerto Rican reaction to President Coolidge's letter was that of resentment. Parts of the letter were regarded as a criticism, both of elected political leaders and of Presidential appointees in the island. Senator Barcelo claimed that this letter would strengthen the Unionist Party in the November election.

Although a formal reply to Coolidge's letter was delayed, sharp criticism of American policies toward Puerto Rico was made in statements to the press by Luis Munoz-Marin, Nationalist leader.<sup>17</sup> He denied that the mass of Puerto Rican people were any better off than they were thirty years before when the American Government took charge. La Democracia, Puerto Rican newspaper headed by Senator Barcelo, referred to the Coolidge letter as "an outcry of pain." Former officials of the insular government, and the son of Dr. Coll y Toste, historian quoted by President Coolidge, were quoted freely in their criticism of the letter. La Democracia, which was the majority party paper, in an editorial on the Coolidge letter assailed the President as a "thundering Jupiter," but advised caution and discretion

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<sup>16</sup> Apparently this letter ignored the letter of explanation by Barcelo and Soto. In order that the reader may draw his own conclusions pertinent excerpts from the letter are given in Appendix II.

<sup>17</sup> New York Times, March 17, 1928.



in discussing the subject, so as not to prejudice an official statement to be made by Barcelo and Soto, jointly. El Tiemp, another Puerto Rican paper, placed the responsibility for political and economic confusion in the island at the feet of the governors sent by Washington.<sup>18</sup> Alfonso Lastra Charriez, member of the House of Representatives in Puerto Rico, took the President to task concerning his letter in answer to their plea for free statehood. He referred several times to "the regime to which we are subjected by the United States."<sup>19</sup> He stated further that a careful analysis of the letter might serve as an argument in favor of the criticism which the Puerto Ricans make against the United States "regime."

Harwood Hull, editor of the Puerto Rico Progress, the only newspaper on the island printed in English, pointed out that the Coolidge letter hurt the pride of the Puerto Ricans. Mr. Hull sheds considerable light on the reaction to the letter in the following words:

. . . Its blunt frankness was not appreciated. The particular phrase, "based largely on a complete misunderstanding of concrete facts," proved to be the most severe blow to Porto Rican pride. To Porto Ricans "concrete facts" are far less important than personalities and assertions. Part of the surprise of the Islanders was due to a sharp difference between the tone of the letter and the manner of speech they had been accustomed to hearing from Governor Towner. The Governor on all occasions so chose his words as to win flattering approval from the leaders. Governor Towner was outspoken in favor of an elective Governor for the Island.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., March 18, 1928.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., March 24, 1928.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., April 1, 1928.

In a letter called "In Defense of Porto Rico," addressed by Barcelo and Soto to the resident commissioner for Puerto Rico in Washington, Felix Cardova Davila, a formal reply to the President's letter was made. The letter contained a brief form of all grievances of Puerto Rico against the United States for thirty years, and suggested a scheme of government which it contended would satisfy all Puerto Rican interests. The proposed form of government would include, first, an elective governor; second, greater control of traffic regulations; third, a curtailment of the jurisdiction of the Federal courts. The greater part of the letter brought out denials in general to the President's letter, and through it ran the one thread that Puerto Rico was not better off than it was under Spanish rule and that it has not as much to thank America for as President Coolidge asserted. According to the letter, Puerto Ricans had more self-government under Spain and a more satisfactory form of government.<sup>21</sup>

Davila, in a speech in the House in answer to President Coolidge's letter to Puerto Rico, declared that his people were humiliated as a result of the letter. He renewed his plea for home rule in the island and urged the enactment of his bill to provide for an elective governor. He expressed resentment to the inference of the letter that "we have done nothing but receive favors from the American

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., April 18, 1926; Barcelo, "In Defense of Porto Rico"; Cong. Rec., 70 Cong., 1 sess., LXIX, 6337-6345.

people and are highly ungrateful when we express our complaints."<sup>22</sup>

With the national party nomination conventions of 1928 in the offing Puerto Ricans began a drive to secure statehood planks in both party platforms. The Democrats included a statehood plank in 1920 at San Francisco, but in 1924 at Madison Square Garden, it was believed more advisable not to press it.<sup>23</sup> However, the Republican platform drawn up at Kansas City made no mention of the Philippine or Puerto Rican question. Puerto Ricans had asked the party to favor legislation permitting the selection of their own governor by popular vote as well as statehood for the island.<sup>24</sup>

The Democrats in their convention at Houston incorporated the following in their platform:

We favor granting to Porto Rico such territorial form of government as would meet the present economic conditions of the Island and provide for the aspirations of her people, with the view to ultimate statehood accorded to all Territories of the United States since the beginning of our government, and we believe any officials, appointed to administer the government of such territories, should be qualified by previous bona fide residence therein.<sup>25</sup>

During the interim between national party conventions of 1928 and 1932 the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, having been formed in 1922, became very active in an open campaign for independence. Albizu Campos became the new

<sup>22</sup> New York Times, April 13, 1928; Cong. Rec., 70 Cong., 1 sess., LXIX, 6325-6335; Barcelo, "Porto Rico's Demand," Current History, XXVIII (May, 1928), 273.

<sup>23</sup> New York Times, March 27, 1928.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., June 14, 1928.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., June 29, 1928.

president of the party and in a series of speeches advised the Puerto Ricans to refuse office under the United States rule in a move for independence.<sup>26</sup> He argued that since the island had been recognized as an organized territory of the United States, the inevitable step was statehood. Switching to independence, he asserted that Puerto Ricans were not then or ever citizens of the United States despite the Act of 1917.

Loyal to his pledge to the Nationalist Party not to cooperate with the government by accepting an appointment to public office, Louis Garcia Casanovas declined the post of public works director at Caguas.

In the same series of speeches with Campos, Soto, former speaker of the House of Delegates, presented his arguments in favor of a free state. He pointed out that a constitutional amendment would be necessary, but that it offered a more logical solution than either statehood or independence. It was his idea that Puerto Rico should draft its own constitution, subject to the approval of Congress; that the island's Senators and Representatives at Washington would participate only in legislation affecting the island; and, that Puerto Rico might negotiate commercial treaties through the Department of State.<sup>27</sup>

In 1962, both major parties went on record as favoring closer relations between the island and the mainland. The

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., April 20, 1960.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Republican plank was less definite, but it was interpreted in Puerto Rico as implying statehood. It was the third time that the Democrats had gone on record as favoring statehood.<sup>28</sup> However, in the November elections on the island, the old question of statehood against independence was raised. The Liberal Party, advocating independence ultimately, polled 170,000 of the 588,000 votes cast. More than 5,000 votes were cast for the Nationalist Party, whose aim at that time was independence quick and complete. The Socialist Party also figured strongly in the election and was rated as pro-American. Its platform did not commit to statehood.<sup>29</sup>

Soon after Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated in March, 1933, the Puerto Rican Senate sent a message to him signed by its president, R. M. Nadal, asking for an elective governor of the island until the question of independence was decided. The message congratulated Mr. Roosevelt on becoming "President of our nation," but the island newspaper, *La Democracia*, as well as Liberal senators on the island, made the objection that "the United States is a great nation but not our nation."<sup>30</sup> Later, though, five editors of Puerto Rico's largest daily papers, both partisan and independent, cabled Roosevelt urging the appointment of a Puerto Rican as governor without mentioning a candidate. A number of natives were seeking the appointment, including Martin

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., December 6, 1932.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., March 15, 1933.

Traviesso, acting governor during the Wilson administration.<sup>31</sup>

The vice-president of the insular Senate and Socialist leader, Bolivar Pagan, referred to the agitation for the appointment of a native Puerto Rican as governor as "moon-light sentimentalism." "The important thing," he declared, "is not the appointment of a native by the President but the election of a governor by the people."<sup>32</sup>

Senator Tydings of Maryland, chairman of the United States Senate Insular Possessions Committee, while on his visit to the island in December, 1933, announced that pleas for Puerto Rican independence would be taken seriously by him in the future. He neither advocated nor opposed the island's independence but said,

When we read in the newspapers that this political party or that wants Porto Rico to be independent from the United States we are inclined to believe what we read. If that is your desire we want to know it. If it is not, we want to know that.<sup>33</sup>

The Liberals were in the minority at that time but were on record as favoring independence. Barcelo, their leader, had privately assured Washington officials repeatedly that he did not favor an unfriendly separation. He declined to discuss his attitude on the statehood plank with Senator Tydings.

In its next session the Puerto Rican legislature passed a resolution for statehood on March 23, 1934. It was divided into two parts, (a) pointing out disappointment in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., March 25, 1933.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., March 26, 1933.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., December 6, 1933.

the regime under which it had been working, and (b) demanding an elective governor while waiting for statehood to be granted by Congress. It was proposed that a constitution be drafted locally and submitted to Congress after a plebiscite had approved it.<sup>34</sup>

In a protest against the resolution, Professor Clemente Pereda of the University of Puerto Rico started a one-week hunger strike. He seated himself in the principal plaza of San Juan and said his protest was against political hypocrisy, with the hope that his suffering would "purify the people."<sup>35</sup> He displayed the one-star flag of Puerto Rican independence. Being identified strongly with the Nationalist Party for complete independence of the island he had taken an active interest in a student movement opposing the appointment of the Socialist (pro-American) Rafael A. Torres to the board of trustees of the university. However, he had ceased his party activity at the request of the school administration.<sup>36</sup>

Among the visitors to Professor Pereda were Barcelo and Campos. Barcelo assured the professor that the Puerto Rican people who loved their country above all else sympathized with him. He pointed out further that he feared such

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., March 25, 1934; ibid., March 26, 1934. He graduated from Peabody College and took his M.A. at Columbia.

<sup>36</sup> Professor Pereda, sitting in a rocking chair in the heart of the San Juan shopping district, attracted a larger crowd than an orchestra drew three squares away. According to the New York Times correspondent, the crowd seemed sympathetic and three young Nationalists voluntarily kept watch as he slept.

a sacrifice was useless and ill-advised, but since it was made in a noble cause he hoped it would hold out to the end.

Upon ending his week's fast March 31, Professor Pereda estimated that five thousand signatures had been received opposing the resolution. The cadets de la republica attended him and received contributions for the movement. As a spectacle of fanatic fervor, many declared his hunger strike had not been approached in the island in many years. Some said that he drew larger crowds than Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt on her visit to the island.<sup>37</sup>

A crowd of two thousand remained with him during the last night of his fast and accompanied him to the hospital at 6 a.m. Later, the student body of the University of Puerto Rico honored him in a resolution declaring him their spiritual father.

Pereda's patriotic exhibition proved to be in vain. On April 18, 1934, by a strict party vote, the Puerto Rican Senate adopted a resolution petitioning the United States Congress for statehood. The debate on the question lasted from midnight to dawn with the coalition polling 11 votes to 3 for the Liberals. Just a few days later, Francisco Rodriguez, law student at the university, was suspended pending a "satisfactory explanation" after assaulting and being beaten by the professor. Meantime Pereda was read out of the Nationalist Party, which disapproved hunger strikes in the campaign to free the island from "the Yankee

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<sup>37</sup> New York Times, April 1, 1934.



invader."<sup>38</sup>

Senate President R. M. Nadal, head of the coalitionists, asserted that statehood would insure peace and plenty, while independence would meet starvation, bloodshed, and dictatorship. Senator Barcelo asserted that independence offered the only economic solution to the island's problems, through free access to world markets.<sup>39</sup>

The statehood versus independence fight among the islanders subsided until January of the next year when the Liberals raised the question again in a plea for economic independence through a Federal reconstruction program as a step leading to political independence. Harwood Hull, in writing for the New York Times, expressed the opinion that business men of Puerto Rico feared the talk of independence or statehood was doing the island no good in view of the existing economic uncertainties. Even Senator Barcelo changed his plea to that of political independence only after the island had been rehabilitated. Mr. Hull stated further that few Liberals had considered the possibility of having to decide between independence and the surrender of American citizenship.<sup>40</sup> In the November election of 1934 an opportunity was offered those desiring unadulterated independence to vote for the Nationalist ticket. The Nationalists received only about five thousand votes to one hundred seventy thousand for the Liberals. The Union-Republicans

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., April 26, 1934.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., January 6, 1935.

claimed that the election was a plebiscite in which voters expressed a desire for statehood rather than independence.<sup>41</sup>

In May, 1934, President Roosevelt transferred jurisdiction over the island from the War Department to the Interior Department. This came as a surprise to Puerto Ricans but had been frequently requested by them on the ground that to be under the War Department cast discredit upon the island.

The American Legion convention in San Juan, P. R., on September 4, 1934, adopted a resolution asking Congress to grant statehood to the island. Addressing the convention, Judge R. Arjona Siaca said that Puerto Rico was thoroughly competent to exercise state sovereignty, and the United States must fulfill the pledge made when the island was taken from Spain.<sup>42</sup>

In a straw vote conducted by the Correspondencia, Puerto Rico's oldest daily, for a popular expression as to the island's future political status, independence won by almost 3 to 1. The vote as reported in the New York Times was as follows: independence, 11,608; statehood, 4,329; autonomy, 792. While the total vote was only a small percentage of the three hundred seventy thousand votes cast in the last previous election, it indicated a higher percentage favoring independence.

Barcelo, president of the Liberal Party, started the reorganization of the party preparing for the 1936 campaign.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., September 5, 1934.

He urged all Puerto Ricans to present a united front against the American nation. His newspaper, La Democracia, concerning his conversation with Roosevelt quoted him as saying, "Since you are not capable of making of us a people enjoying complete freedom and dignity, set us free so that we may lead our own life."<sup>43</sup>

Upon hearing about the rumor started in Puerto Rico by a San Juan newspaper that an effort was being made to secure the annexation of the island to Florida, Martinez Nadal, president of the insular Senate, said that he held the island to be properly entitled to Florida since it had been discovered by Ponce de Leon, first governor of Puerto Rico.

Resident Commissioner Santiago Iglesias stressed the importance of seeking a solution for economic matters rather than political. Although, not wanting to lose sight of the statehood aim, he felt the islanders should be stressing "economic needs" rather than "political eventualities."

Finally, Santiago Iglesias introduced a bill in Congress which placed the legislative resolution of more than a year previous before the House of Representatives and was the first formal request to Congress for a final definition of the island's political status.

Secretary of the Interior Ickes outlined the points to be considered before the island and the United States decided on the statehood step. (1) Statehood for Puerto Rico

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., January 31, 1935.

would establish a new precedent by including in the Union as a sovereign state a territory not actually contiguous with other states or territories. (2) Despite the precedent of New Mexico and Arizona, the admission of Puerto Rico to statehood would be including for the first time as a sovereign state a population of wholly different cultures, tradition, and language not likely to be altered by infiltration.<sup>44</sup> (3) Since there is opposition to the move in the island, care should be taken not to admit it as a state against the wishes of the majority. Such would be without precedent and undesirable. (4) The rights of the people already in the Union as well as those in the territory are involved. (5) Statehood, once gained, according to American precedent would be permanent.<sup>45</sup>

None of the points, however, caused the advocates of statehood to hesitate. Not expecting immediate success, they advanced ideas about liberalizing the island government then, as suggested in the resolution, arguing that it would serve as a preparation for statehood as the ten year period for the Philippines.

Senator Tydings, in keeping with his pledge to the Puerto Ricans to consider seriously their desires for independence, introduced a bill in the United States Senate on April 23, 1933, to provide complete independence. The introduction of the bill came as a surprise to those follow-

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<sup>44</sup> Not raised as an objection but for discussion.

<sup>45</sup> New York Times, June 2, 1935.

ing Puerto Rican affairs. According to the bill the islanders were to have the opportunity by special election to voice their opinion on the matter of independence. Puerto Rican leaders were in a quandary as to how it would affect their demands for statehood. However, in endorsing the bill, Secretary Ickes said that if they should decide against complete independence the question of statehood could be discussed later. He denied that the measure was inconsistent with the statehood pledge of the Democratic platform of 1932.<sup>46</sup>

The Tydings Bill seemed to complicate the trial that was pending on the charge against Campos and other Nationalist leaders, implicating them in an alleged conspiracy to overthrow the United States control of the island. Campos used for the basis of his defense the contention that the United States had no legal or moral right to the island, that every act of the United States in and on behalf of the island for forty years had been illegal, and that the Treaty of Paris was only a scrap of paper so far as Puerto Ricans were concerned, since the "sovereign island" was not consulted regarding the treaty. Campos dates "island sovereignty" back to the Leres Revolution in 1868 and therefore claims there was no crime involved in the case of Nationalist activities.

Students of the University of Puerto Rico again be-

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., April 29, 1936.

came active and urged an immediate declaration of a Republic. They voted almost unanimously to call on leaders of all parties at once to convene a constitutional convention.<sup>47</sup>

Leaders in the Socialist and Liberal parties were quick to complain that the terms of the Tydings bill would allow Puerto Rico to achieve political independence only at the price of economic ruin. The Nationalists professed to welcome the introduction of the Tydings bill and turned the matter of economic distress into an argument for independence. In a mass meeting held on May 10, 1936, at Caguas, an estimated ten thousand Puerto Ricans heard P. A. Campos urge the calling of a constitutional convention for the purpose of drafting a constitution.<sup>48</sup>

The sentencing of Campos and seven of his followers on July 31 to terms of from two to six years following conviction on the charge of conspiring to overthrow the United States Government did not put an end to enthusiastic efforts on the part of the natives for autonomy and a more liberal self-government.<sup>49</sup> The newly formed Puerto Rico Statehood Association soon announced a vigorous campaign "to have the island's star placed in United States flag." Santiago Iglesias, leader of the Socialist Party and advocate of continued American control, was the victim of an attempt on his life during his campaign for the office of resident commissioner at Washington. He returned to the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., April 30, 1936.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., May 12, 1936.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., August 1, 1936.

platform one week later and urged the people to make it unnecessary for Congress to hold a plebiscite by voting for him and expressing their desire for a continuation of the territorial government.

This election held in November, 1936, was the first to be held under the new law providing for universal suffrage allowing men and women, literates and illiterates to vote. Iglesias, the Socialist-Coalition candidate, won by a large vote showing a gain over the Liberals, advocates of independence.<sup>50</sup>

The Nationalists continued their program of propaganda and demonstrations. On April 23, 1937, after obtaining a permit to parade in Ponce, they participated in a riot which resulted in the killing of ten people, including one member of the insular police force.<sup>51</sup> According to Harwood Hull, native journalist, the riot was partly a result of a former conflict and ill feeling between the Nationalists and the police. University of Puerto Rico students claimed to have been insulted by a radio speech made by Campos two years previous. A student meeting protesting the speech was interrupted by Nationalist threats, and before the evening was over four Nationalists had been killed by the police. At the graves of the Nationalist victims Campos administered an oath of revenge to some eight thousand friends and members of the party. Subsequently, in February, 1936, two

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., November 2, 1936; ibid., November 5, 1936.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., April 23, 1937.

young Nationalists shot and killed Colonel E. F. Riggs, insular police chief. The assassins said they had avenged the killing of the four Nationalists by the police and Campos said the oath taken in October of 1935 had been fulfilled. Nationalists had also been accused of making the attempt on the life of Resident Commissioner Iglesias.<sup>52</sup>

Julio Pinto Guadia, acting president of the Nationalist Party, and ten others were charged with the killing of the policeman in Ponce but were acquitted that September when the case came to trial.<sup>53</sup>

Regardless of these riots and unconcern for human life, officials at Washington deemed it unnecessary to take action and referred to it as a matter for the local police.

Senator Barcelo, leader of the Liberal Party, minimized the danger of the situation by calling attention to the fact that there were "only 5000 Nationalists" and that their demands were "impractical." Though Barcelo was an advocate of independence he was not in favor of a plebiscite being granted at that time by Congress on the statehood or independence issue because he feared that the cause of independence would be defeated.

Martinez Nadal, member of the insular Senate, raised the plebiscite issue again in a speech on July 4, 1937, in which he said that independence was the only way to end "what many islanders complain of as long-continued colo-

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., April 29, 1937.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., September 13, 1937.



nialism." A rift among the Liberals appeared as a result of Barcelo's statement when former Senator Luis Munoz Marin headed a Liberal faction, claimed to have ousted Barcelo, and urged a quick determination of the issue by an island election. They requested Nadal to join with them, but Nadal, though not objecting to a plebiscite, claimed that the last two island elections had favored statehood.<sup>54</sup>

Further insight into the attitude of the United States Congress is noted from the statements made by United States Senator Austin on returning from the island. He pointed out that the island furnished an important link between the United States and South America in "confronting the two extremes of fascism and communism now menacing the world." He said, however, that Puerto Ricans had made great progress under the American flag and were on their way to statehood. It was his opinion that the existing social and economic conditions would delay the granting of statehood. He stated further that the "island is a real asset to the country as a whole."

The most recent outbreak of violence in protest to American rule in Puerto Rico took place at the celebration commemorating the anniversary of the landing of the Americans during the Spanish-American War. Two people were slain and thirty injured in an attempt to assassinate Gov-

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., July 19, 1937.

ernor Blanton Winship in Ponce, the hotbed of the Nationalist Party. Governor Winship escaped without injury. Martinez Nadal, president of the insular Senate, declared that this incident convinced him more than ever of the great need for the American flag in Puerto Rico.<sup>55</sup>

The desire to settle the issue of the future political status of the island is continually being manifested, however, by various organizations throughout the island. In March, 1939, the island chamber of commerce together with delegates from seventy-two other organizations met in a so-called "economic convention" and passed a memorial to the insular legislature asking the legislature to call on Congress to allow the islanders to hold the much sought-after plebiscite to determine the island's future political status. Copies of the resolution were sent to President Roosevelt, Secretary Iokes, and Congress. No mention was made of either statehood or independence.<sup>56</sup>

Resident Commissioner Iglesias introduced a bill in this session of Congress to make Puerto Rico an incorporated territory of the United States. No action has been taken on the bill at this writing.<sup>57</sup>

On March 22, 1939, the International Congress of American Democracies, meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay, adopted a resolution urging President Roosevelt to free Puerto

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., July 26, 1938.  
<sup>56</sup> Ibid., March 14, 1939.  
<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Rico.<sup>58</sup>

Governor Blanton Winship, having resigned as governor of the island, is to be succeeded September 1, 1939, by Admiral William D. Leahy. Governor Winship ended his active term on June 25, when he left for the United States. Shortly before his departure, in a radio speech bidding the islanders adieu, he repeated his hope that Puerto Rico would become the forty-ninth state in the Union.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., March 23, 1939.

<sup>59</sup> Daily Oklahoman, June 26, 1939.

### Conclusion

The matter of Puerto Rico's future political status is indeed an important one. Puerto Rico, true enough, is not a very large place on the map of the world, comprising only about one-half the area of New Jersey, but it is inhabited by an intensely patriotic people fired with a deep concern for the future of the island.

In keeping with the basic principles and doctrines of our government, it is well to consider the Puerto Rican question as one of importance - first, for the Puerto Ricans, themselves; second, the people of the United States should realize that Puerto Rico is a valuable and worthy portion of the greater United States. Further study and the element of time may also disclose even larger aspects of Puerto Rico's future pertaining to the entire Western Hemisphere and to the world at large.

Politically, the United States has been guilty of neglect since no indication has ever been given whether Puerto Rico is to become a state in the Union, become independent, or remain in status quo for an indefinite period.

Distressed economic conditions on the island have influenced the Puerto Rican attitude, as does the matter of absentee ownership.

Important points to be considered may be stated briefly as follows: (1) The uncertain status of Puerto Rico is causing a gradually widening breach between the island and

the United States. (2) Before taking definite steps to determine the future status of Puerto Rico Congress should make a careful survey of the various possibilities, including statehood, complete independence, and further self-government under the present system. (3) Our success or failure in dealing with Puerto Rico may affect the manner in which Latin-American republics accept our present "good neighbor policy."

Appendix I

Official Letter of February 6, 1923, to Dr. J. W. Harris<sup>1</sup>

My dear Doctor Harris:

We are answering your letter of this date. The message of the People of Porto Rico to the People of the United States entrusted to Colonel Lindbergh by the Legislature of Porto Rico at the joint session held in his honor does not need any explanation. It is self explanatory. Its meaning is plain. Porto Rico wants her internal sovereignty; that is to say, the same that the Continental States enjoy, but with the power to retain, as at present, all public revenues derived from sources on the Island to meet her public needs which are greater than those of any State because we are performing now the task of centuries.

We are not asking for international or absolute independence. We do not want to sever the ties of a common flag and a common citizenship. We acknowledge and accept the sovereignty of the Union as defined in the Constitution, that is to say, the powers vested in the Federation by delegation of the states themselves. We want the national tariff, but with power vested in our local Legislature to reduce, with the approval of the President, said tariff on foreign raw food staples in order to lessen the cost of living for our laboring classes, and to increase, also with the approval of the President of the United States, the schedules on agricultural products of our soil not protected by the tariff and not produced in the Continental States, in order to prevent the importation of inferior goods into Porto Rico and their exportation as Porto Rico products. We want the guarantee of life, liberty, equality, justice and property of the Federal Constitution, that we fully enjoy now, in spite of the fact that the Great Document has not been extended to Porto Rico, because of the Bill of Rights contained in our Organic Act. We want to preserve the American institutions and systems that we ourselves have adopted in our laws; we aspire to a perfect friendship and close brotherhood with our fellow citizens of the States. Even we do not resent not being an integral part of the Union, in spite of our American citizenship, according to the decisions of the United States Supreme Court. But we aspire also, and above all, to the government of our people, by our people and for our people; that is to say, to a republic form of government. That is certainly American freedom. That is the freedom that we ask in the message of the People of Porto Rico en-

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<sup>1</sup> A. G. Dana, op. cit., 11.

trusted to the messenger of good will sent to us from The People of the United States. In the terms of the message: "the freedom that you enjoy, for which you struggled, which you worship, which we deserve, and which you have promised us." For this reason we state: "Our message is not far different from the cry of Patrick Henry. It is the same in substance, but with the difference imposed by the changes of times and conditions." We reproduce the cry that he dared to raise, not against his English ancestry, but against "taxation without representation" and against the "guiding hand of governors appointed by the Crown"; we refer to it as an echo of your history, appealing to your national pride, not in a hostile attitude, not in an angry mood, but as a friendly notice to your people, to the American People, that we are neglected from the standpoint of our political aspirations and of our economic needs; that our voice is not heard, that you have forgotten that our progress in all the paths of human endeavor is far ahead of that of many of our sister Latin Republics of whose independence you feel so proud and are prone to maintain.

It is inconceivable that we would take advantage of the courtesy of the Governor in according to our request for a special session of the legislature to render homage to Colonel Lindbergh and hand him a message containing petitions which may imply a severance of ties of Porto Rico from the United States, or which may be construed as inimical to American ideals. Such thing would mean a discourtesy to Porto Rico's guest and a lack of consideration to our Governor.

As regards our present political aspirations, we shall state in very few words that these are the following: Complete self-government including the right to elect our own Governor; as to the future the majority party has reached a conclusion as a compromise, between the conflicting of solutions of statehood and independence, that this matter must be left to be solved by the coming generations according to the best interests of both the people of the United States and the people of Porto Rico.

As regards statehood permit us to say that if Congress is ready to grant us statehood, no doubt the people of Porto Rico will feel deeply the honor of becoming one of the stars of your glorious constellation. There are some of them that have sprung from the same origin, the same stock that we are. This is a matter that should be placed before our people for its decision. But what are the chances of statehood for Porto Rico in the light of the utterances of your statesmen and the silence of your political platforms? When collective citizenship was urged upon Congress by President Taft, the request was accompanied by the statement that citizenship did not imply any future promise of statehood. For these reasons, and many others, we are not now

urging statehood. If you think it is better for your national interests not to admit us into the Union, we will abide by your decision; but it is up to you to be true to your history and institutions and to devise a scheme of government for Porto Rico that will harmonize your dignity, liberty and happiness and ours. We will cooperate with you to find the way to the solution of the problem. But do not misunderstand us, do not be misled by the enemies of our noble aspirations as a People. Do not pronounce the word "disloyalty" to describe the deepest sentiment in the hearts of men: Love for the freedom of the country in which his cradle was rocked by the hands of a loving mother.

Your letter has been a surprise to us. We can not understand how the message of the Legislature can be construed as a plea for international or absolute independence. It is the same as our message to President Coolidge, transmitted also to the Pan-American Conference, not because we look for redress or remedy for our inferior political condition, but because the President himself offered to the Conference the relief for that condition, that is to say, plain home rule; and for that reason we feel entitled to obtain the endorsement of the Nations of our own origin to the words of the chief magistrate of the nation in order that he may apply them to the sick man at home. In the said message the words "internal sovereignty" were changed by news agencies into "international sovereignty," entirely changing, of course, the meaning of the statement. We shall not be surprised to find that the present message also has been mutilated or misquoted. That will explain the alarm voiced in the cable received by you. We trust that you will acknowledge that there is no reason for alarm or uneasiness. We voice a truly American sentiment which is imbued in the minds and hearts of all our school children by the study of your history, and which is also a natural sentiment deeply rooted in the hearts of human kind.

In conclusion let us answer with dignity that part of your letter wherein allusion is made to the question of money by saying; that had we had in mind the asking of independence for Porto Rico, the loss of one million dollars or of untold millions of dollars to all the institutions of Porto Rico, will not deter us in the least.

Signed

Yours very truly,

Antonio R. Barcelo,  
President of the Senate,

and

Jose Tous Soto,  
Speaker, House of Representatives,

at San Juan, P. R.,  
February 6, 1928.



Appendix II  
The Coolidge Letter

Dear Governor:

I desire to acknowledge the concurrent resolution of the Legislature of Porto Rico committed to Colonel Lindbergh on his visit to San Juan, and also a cablegram, dated January 19, signed by Messrs. Barcelo and Tous Soto, the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives of Porto Rico, respectively.

The cablegram and resolution seem to be based largely on a complete misunderstanding of concrete facts. It would not be difficult to show that the present status of Porto Rico is far more liberal than any status of its entire history; that its people have greater control of their own affairs with less interference from without; that its people enjoy liberty and the protection of law, and that its people and its Government are receiving material assistance through its association with the continental United States. The Treaty of Paris, of course, contains no promise to the people of Porto Rico. No phase of that treaty contemplated the extension to Porto Rico of a more liberal regime than existed. The United States has made no promise to the people of Porto Rico that has not been fulfilled, nor has any representative or spokesman for the United States made such a promise.

The Porto Rican Government at present exercises a greater degree of sovereignty over its own internal affairs than does the Government of any State or Territory of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Without admitting the existence of "a grave economical situation" in the finances of the Government of Porto Rico, the present difficulty, which it is hoped is but temporary, is exclusively the result of the exercise by the elected representatives of the people of Porto Rico of an authority granted by the present very liberal organic law. The responsibility of the United

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<sup>1</sup> In contradiction of this assertion, A. G. Dana points out that the Porto Ricans have no right (a) to vote for President; nor (b) to take any active part in enacting or averting legislation at Washington (which nevertheless may send their sons to war); nor (c) to elect their own Governor, Auditor, Attorney General, Commissioner of Education, the Justices of the Supreme Court; nor (d) to make their own local laws free from veto or overruling by a Federally appointed Governor, the President or Congress; nor (e) to share with the States and other territories in the customary allotment of Federal funds, for roads, education.

States, as distinguished from that of Porto Rico, is, at most, that officers appointed by the President in Porto Rico may not have exercised power legally placed in their hands to veto or make ineffective acts of the Porto Rican Legislature.

The cablegram complains that -

Ours is the only Spanish-American country whose voice has not been heard at Havana during the Pan-American Conference, for it was not represented there.

This is a most serious error and is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the relation of Porto Rico to the United States. No State or Territory of the Union was represented as such at Havana, but the representation of the United States in Havana represents Porto Rico as truly as it represents any part of the territory of the United States.

The request is made that Porto Rico be constituted as a "free State" and not "a mere subjected colony." Certainly giving Porto Rico greater liberty than it has ever enjoyed and powers of government for the exercise of which its people are barely prepared cannot, with propriety, be said to be establishing therein "a mere subjected colony." The people of Porto Rico are citizens of the United States, with all the rights and privileges of other citizens of the United States, and these privileges are those which we invoked "when declaring for independence at the memorable convention at Philadelphia."

In answering the cablegram it might be well to consider briefly the conditions and tendencies we found in Porto Rico and what the situation in Porto Rico is to-day, as well as the steps we are responsible for in Porto Rico to better conditions as we found them and as they exist to-day.

.....

Prior to the American occupation the Porto Rican people had received practically no training in self-government or the free exercise of the franchise. While there existed a body of educated, intelligent men, the great mass of the people were without experience or training in self-government, and only a small percentage could qualify as voters under very broad electoral qualifications.

The military Government in its brief existence of eighteen months accomplished the following:

- 1 - Order was re-established and an insular police force organized.

2 - The more obvious burdens of taxation as they fell on the very poor people were abolished, and a careful study made by an expert, preparatory to the adoption of a proper revenue system for the island.

3 - Such changes in the judicial system were made as were necessary to bring that system more in accordance with American procedure and with the American view of individual rights and liberty.

4 - A Department of Education was established; Boards of Health were organized; the public works were reorganized and progress in road building was greater than in all the previous history of Porto Rico.

And finally the Government was reorganized in accordance with the act passed by Congress to establish a civil government in order that there might be a minimum of friction in changing from the military to the civil government.

Experience has shown that this organic act, though intended to be temporary, was quite up to the standard of such acts, and that it gave to the people of Porto Rico a liberal form of government under which they could acquire experience in democratic government honestly administered and could enjoy all of the rights and privileges to which we are accustomed. Under it the possibility of development was great and this possibility was realized.

Congress, recognizing the progress in Porto Rico, enacted in 1917 the present organic law. Under this law the Porto Rican people were made citizens of the United States. All of the guarantees of the Constitution are extended to Porto Rico, or the Legislature of Porto Rico is granted authority to make effective those guarantees not specifically extended.

The great satisfaction in Porto Rico at the passage of this act is the best evidence of its liberality.

The principal difference between the Government of Porto Rico and that of the organized and incorporated Territories of the United States is the greater power of the Legislature and the fiscal provisions governing Porto Rico, which are far more liberal than those of any of our States or Territories.

.....

It is not desired to leave the impression that all progress in Porto Rico was due to continental Americans. Without the cooperation and assistance of Porto Ricans progress would indeed have been negligible, but the cooperation is largely due to the encouragement of American

assistance, American methods and an increase in the reward of efforts made.

There has been a natural hesitation to recall and dwell upon the unfortunate condition of Porto Rico in the past. There is a feeling, however, that the United States is entitled to a good name in its dealing with Porto Rico and to protect itself from any reflection on its good name. Perhaps no Territory in the world has received such considerate treatment in the past thirty years as has Porto Rico, and perhaps nowhere else has progress been so marked and so apparent as in Porto Rico. We are certainly entitled to a large part of the credit for this situation.

.....

There is no disposition in America, and certainly not on my part, to discourage any reasonable aspiration of the people of Porto Rico. The island has so improved and its people have so progressed in the last generation as to justify high hopes for the future, but it certainly is not unreasonable to ask that those who speak for Porto Rico limit their petition to those things which may be granted without a denial of such hope. Nor is it unreasonable to suggest that the people of Porto Rico, who are a part of the people of the United States, will progress with the people of the United States rather than be isolated from the source from which they have received practically their only hope of progress.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin Coolidge.

February 26, 1928.

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<sup>2</sup> Cong. Rec., 70 Cong., 1 sess., LXII, 4872-4874.

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