

Pedro Albizu Campos

Personal Reminiscences

Instead of the usual warm, smiling, open-arms welcome of Don Pedro, I was greeted by stern silence. A slip of paper was placed in my hands:

November, 1944

The Call to Non-Violent Direct Action

Speaker: Miss Jean Wiley

Time: a) for meditation 10 minutes
b) for delivery 15 minutes

At the bedside of the great Puerto Rican patriot Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, I was to deliver the first of my practice speeches. To the revolutionary leader of the independence movement I was to present a convincing case for nonviolence. Don Pedro knew of the Gandhian movement, but chose to follow the example of the Irish patriots in their struggle for freedom.

Released after six years in the Atlanta Penitentiary, Don Pedro was committed to Columbus Hospital, New York City, in broken health and with a serious heart condition. The years of ill treatment in a southern prison for a man with Negro blood all but destroyed him. When the famous Chilean poetess Gabriela Mistral sought to visit him at Atlanta, she reported, "I looked, with what sorrow, at that large mass of prison where the greatest Puerto Rican and possibly our greatest Latin American was imprisoned."

Our Harlem Ashram members, pacifists living cooperatively, and activists in interracial problems, had been invited to meet Don Pedro. Since our leader, Jay Holmes Smith, had been a follower of Gandhi, we were involved in the "Free India" movement. "Why not 'Free Puerto Rico'?" Don Pedro challenged us. As a result, Ruth Reynolds and I committed ourselves to spend a day each week with him, while Jay became involved in writing and speaking on the Puerto Rican issue. Thursday was my day for lessons in Spanish (Castilian) and the colonial situation in Puerto Rico. Lunch was a time for relaxation. Professing a distaste for the hospital fare, he had me buy sandwiches for him while I ate his lunch. Afternoons were open for visits from his friends. They would swarm in, hat in hand, immaculately dressed, eyes focused on Don Pedro with intense devotion. Envelopes were left by his bedside containing gifts of money. But whatever gifts he received, he inevitably shared with others, claiming that he had few personal needs.

The pajama-clad, soft-spoken Don Pedro I came to know was quite different from the public figure and fiery orator distinguished by formal attire and a black bow-tie. I saw him not so much as the great patriot spoken of with reverence throughout Puerto Rico, but in the role of a personal friend. Eyes fixed on whomever he was speaking with, he radiated warmth and affection. His

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gentleness and humility put everyone at ease and on an equal plane. It was not until later, when I read about him and his magnificent leadership in the independence movement that I became fully aware of his greatness of stature.

When he once joked about leaving the hospital bed and attending an affair and being the handsomest man there, it was with an impish sense of humor. This, he could well have been. Olive-completed, with regular features and a well-groomed mustache, his brown eyes reflected pain as he recounted injustices done to his people, but could flash with anger over a disagreement.

There were days of special note. One was when Congressman Marc Antonio learned of a bugging device in Don Pedro's room, shouted words of wrath into it, and tore it out of the wall. Then there was the day when Ruth and I were both asked to spend the day there as witnesses to whatever might transpire. He had been threatened with re-arrest because of his refusal to sign papers promising to cease all talk of independence. We suffered fear for his life knowing that his precarious health would not endure further imprisonment. We were aware of figures lurking in nearby doorways, no doubt prepared to defend their beloved leader. But no arrest came.

Though Don Pedro knew us to be pacifists and loved us nonetheless, he maintained his convictions that his followers should be prepared to defend themselves—and even us, should the need arise! Despite our disagreements in this area, we revered him for his great talents and passionate love for his native *Borinquen* (historical name for Puerto Rico). We shared his passion for a free Puerto Rico.

With a degree from Harvard Law School, he was brilliant in his oratory, which had swayed his followers to rebellion against United States repression and exploitation. He exemplified the fervor of our own American patriot, Patrick Henry, who proclaimed, "Give me liberty or give me death!" In time, death came to Don Pedro for the cause he espoused.

I knew Don Pedro as a warm, sensitive human being, a deeply devout Catholic with a great love for his people and compassion for all humanity. As a lawyer, he was astute and brilliant in his analysis of the Puerto Rican situation. A man of culture, he loved the poetry and music of his country and gifted me with records and sheet music of the dances of his uncle Juan Morel Campos. One of my speech assignments was "The Contribution of the Negro to American music." Many a time he had me stand at the foot of his bed to recite to visitors the entire poem, "*Borinquen, nombre al pensamiento grato como el recuerdo de un amor profundo.*" ["*Borinquen*, name to the thought as pleasing as the memory of a profound love."]

When my involvement in preparing to bring the great Canadian poet Wilson MacDonald to New York necessitated my giving up a few of my regular days with Don Pedro, he sent me a note. "Maude is coming Saturday morning. I'm compelled by rival MacDonald to wait to see you at his convenience."

"When he comes I will shoot him," he teased me. But when I brought Wilson MacDonald to his bedside, Don Pedro thrilled to his readings and later gave me an envelope with some money

to give him, knowing him to be in need.

Of Don Pedro, MacDonald wrote, "I will remember the day when you took me to Columbus Hospital to meet with Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos and my delightful conversation with this apostle of sensitiveness."

Don Pedro showed his own poetic creativity in an Easter greeting he composed centered on creation and resurrection. "From the quarry of shadows, the creative ray of light cuts out each being, with his shadow unto himself."

Upon my engagement to Abe, Don Pedro called us both to his bedside for his blessing. Taking a sip from his own glass of wine, he passed it on, that we might all become united by drinking from the same glass. Placing Abe on one side of his bed and me on the other, he embraced us both. Stroking Abe's hair gently, he gave us a beautiful discourse on love, marriage, and family. His thoughts were both practical and idealistic. He saw no conflict between one's duties to family and to society. "Your home is a holy sanctuary." And to Abe, "Shake off all that is brutal and lowly before you enter your home, as you would remove your shoes before entering a temple. Be your finest self in your home."

He urged us to get married before Abe went off to prison as a conscientious objector; it would give him greater courage. As we sought to leave, Don Pedro held us firmly. "We must celebrate." Pinto Gandía had left with a sly, "I shall return." He did, with a basket of delicious Puerto Rican food-fricassee of chicken, rice, mushrooms, and more. After a 2½-hour visit, Don Pedro embraced us again and asked us to return soon. Every moment of the visit had been skillfully converted into a pearl of beauty and joy. All was harmony and perfection, with never a wasted word.

Then there was a celebration for my departure from New York to join Abe in California. "A party for my family of the Ashram has been arranged in your honor," Don Pedro wrote. "I will try to be present. Do not fail to take Jay, Maude, and Ruth. I do hope it will be a perfect evening in joy and inspiration." His offer to be present was only a sly teasing on his part, as he knew he would be unable to leave the hospital. The party was a Metropolitan Opera production of "Pelleas and Melisande." He knew of my love for music and for French.

Then came the day for my departure. It was a sad farewell. Once in California, Abe and I received letters congratulating us on our marriage, and later on the birth of David. "In marriage," he wrote, "the most privileged relation, there is the expectation of identification. This realization means bliss." In reference to our work with spastic children he wrote, "Seldom have I read anything more touching than your account of the activities in which you keep your children, that they may be happy, recover assurance and maintain in their hearts of innocence the hope of faith and joyful inspiration."

In another letter he expressed regret that he could not be of financial assistance to us. "It is clear to me from self-evident facts that our beloved friends are having difficulties in making both

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ends meet.... Forgive me for saying this, since you do not make any request, but I feel a great solidarity with you and I sense the economic reality facing you. I will always keep you in mind, seeking the opportunity to accompany you in your endeavors spiritually, and in material things.”

Upon news of our expecting our first child he wrote, “Keep with you only thoughts of beauty and inspiration. I do believe that is a birthright of the child before seeing the light of the universe.”

When David was seven months old, we took him to New York. Don Pedro had been released from the hospital and was staying in the home of a friend. David played merrily on his bed and received a beautiful Spanish blessing. Though our visit was unannounced, he insisted on our partaking of a bountiful lunch which we suspected could have been prepared for him.

We never saw him again, but received clippings of his triumphant return to Puerto Rico and the oratory that was again attracting thousands. Then we read tearfully of his rearrest, saw pictures of how his legs had been affected horribly by radiation. And finally he succumbed. “The funeral procession,” Ruth wrote, “from the Catholic Church to the cemetery, was too long for the intervening distance and had to double up.” On our first visit to Puerto Rico in 1971 we made a pilgrimage to his tomb, a simple marble slab beneath the flags of Puerto Rico and Lares.

This I would say to you, beloved Don Pedro: I regret my years of silence in the cause of independence, but my life is now dedicated to doing my utmost for your dreams of freedom. I feel your spirit pushing me on to greater efforts.

Previous to his final imprisonment, Don Pedro sat in his apartment, water cut off, bullets whizzing around the room, as he composed a prayer for his imprisoned secretary. It was passed on to her secretly, folded neatly in the palm of a guard’s hand as he distributed meals to the prisoners. It read in part:

My God, have pity on me: Grant me Thy light. Grant me Thy eternal life. Grant me the humility and lowliness of our Lord Jesus Christ, His love, His pardon, and His generosity toward those who crucified Him. May these be our sentiments toward those who have done us evil. Free us from hatred, from thirst for vengeance, and from bitterness against them.... We implore Thy eternal Grace upon us, that we may find ourselves at Thy call, in Thy divine Presence, where our adored ones are.

Laura Albizu Meneses

My fondest picture of Laura Albizu Meneses is one of her reading letters her father Pedro Albizu Campos had written to us. It was an emotional moment for her, a tender reunion with her

beloved father. Despite her return to Peru, her mother's native land and the place of her birth, Laurita maintained her concern for the independence of Puerto Rico. Our first meeting with her and her brother Pedro Albizu was at the International Conference in Support of Independence for Puerto Rico held in Mexico City in 1979.

We saw her next in Puerto Rico, as she and the late J. Benjamín Torres collaborated on plans for an Instituto Albizu Campos. She told us of her activities with the Peruvian Peace Movement and her affiliation with the World Peace Council. As a member of the presidium and a Peruvian delegate, she has occasion to travel abroad. She is concerned about social problems, solidarity with Latin American and Caribbean countries, and the United States attacks on Nicaragua. She fears that Puerto Rico may become a springboard for attacks on Latin American countries.

Married to a Peruvian engineer, she has six children and eight grandchildren. She works as a private nurse, teaches Spanish, and does translating. Her daughter, Rosa, teaches ballet in Cuba.

Laurita's mother, Doña Laura Meneses de Albizu, lost her citizenship in 1948 and went to Cuba, where she was granted Cuban citizenship. She was then appointed to the Cuban Mission to the United Nations. Ruth Reynolds and I had the privilege of meeting this great lady and her handsome lawyer, Juarbe Y Juarbe at the heavily guarded Cuban Embassy, and taking them to lunch.

Laurita carries the joyful spirit of her father, reflecting a lesser known side of Don Pedro. She recalls him as a loving father, full of laughter and fun, enjoying the precious hours with his children, and dancing with her.

She recalled her daily visits with her father in prison in 1956, and how, unable to speak, he would twist her wedding ring as a request for news of her family. And he would cut short her visits with him lest she be subjected to the radiation torturing his body.

Her plea is that we not be confused by the terminology "Associated Free State," but recognize Puerto Rico's continued status as a colony. "We must be aware who the enemy is," she asserts. "Since the United States has committed violence against our country, we have the right to use any method necessary for our freedom."

J. Benjamín Torres

News of the death of J. Benjamín Torres came as a deep shock. He succumbed after a convalescence on April 8, 1986, the anniversary of the birth of the "Father of the Country," Ramón Emerterio Betances. He was thirty-nine years old. He was buried in the cemetery of Old San Juan

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next to the tomb of Albizu Campos. This honor was accorded him for his rescue of a great quantity of historical documents on Albizu, which gave him an honorary title of "Biographer of Albizu."

The Nationalist bulletin, in its obituary, expressed gratitude for his narration of the Nationalist Party, and for his beautiful and generous testimony before the federal judge on behalf of Carlos Noya and Frederico Cintrón, Grand Jury resisters. "He was a professor, but also a 'Maestro.' We will always be grateful."

Entering the apartment of Benjamín Torres was like a visit to the archives. Shelves of books, pamphlets, photographs, clippings constituted the massive research he had done to produce his volumes on the works and life of Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos. Four of these volumes comprise a collection of articles, speeches, proclamations, correspondence of the great Nationalist leader from 1923 to 1936. Another volume covering the period 1937 to 1954 was in preparation. There is also a volume of dissertations written about Albizu, and another reproducing photographs, paintings, sketches, and sculptures of Albizu. Torres was always generous in the sharing of his wealth of materials.

Prof. Torres' interest in Albizu was sparked by the reading of the biography of Albizu written by his wife, Doña Laura Meneses de Albizu. His curiosity led him to the researching of old newspapers and questioning of those fortunate enough to have had direct contact with the master. For his M.A. thesis at New York State University, he chose the topic, "History of the Nationalist Party from 1922 to 1937."

Torres called himself the "black sheep" of the family as he became more and more involved in the independence movement. His mother was a member of the Popular Party, which supported Commonwealth status. His father was a "*Penepe*," of the "New Progressive Party" (PNP), which favored statehood.

His job as professor of Puerto Rican history at the University of Turabo, Caguas, gave him the motivation and freedom for further research.

Prof. Torres had embarked on plans for the "Instituto Albizu Campos" to be established in San Juan. It is to serve as a library and archives offering information and documentation to students, researchers, and anyone interested. It will give opportunity for in-depth study of Albizu's thoughts and works, as well as the reality of Puerto Rican history. Learning of Puerto Rican cultural values will help develop a national consciousness necessary in the struggle for emancipation from colonial domination.

Films and documentaries on Albizu will be prepared for radio and television, and curricula prepared for public schools. Along with the development of the Institute will be preparations to commemorate the centennial of Albizu's actual birth date, June 29, 1893. This coincides with the year of the 500th anniversary of the "discovery," or more accurately, the colonization of Puerto Rico by Spain, November 19, 1493.

Meanwhile, the Institute will cooperate with a plan to erect a statue and a monument to Don Pedro in Ponce, the city of his birth. The work will go on, despite the loss of the guidance of Prof. Torres.

As a member of the “Intellectuals,” Prof. Torres was privileged to attend their second meeting in Cuba. He considered this three weeks a most beautiful experience.

As a leading authority on the life and thoughts of Albizu, Torres saw as his outstanding qualities not only his great intellect and power of oratory but a special charisma, a love of all people, a commitment to dedicate himself completely to the cause of independence. His brilliance and compassionate nature won him the respect and admiration of friends and foes alike.

Torres was widely lauded after his death for his contributions to the cause of independence. *Claridad* quoted Torres’ definition of patriotism as “that which offers one’s life and the sacrifice of liberty and personal security in service to society.” Certainly Torres fulfilled this in his own life. “The injustice accumulated during 500 years,” Torres once wrote, “obligates us to reclaim the right to speak with our own voice, to write our own history and put our passion in defense of full liberation.”

Luis Nieves Falcón, president of the PEN Club of Puerto Rico (an international organization of poets, essayists and novelists) wrote of him, “His spiritual harmony, his deliberate speech, were the expression of internal valor of a human being who dedicated his short but fertile life to the restoration of the figure of Don Pedro and of Puerto Rican nationalism. He did it with critical balance, but with an affectionate feeling of caring. With Benjamín disappears one of our fighters; one of our free men.”

Awilda Palue told of the most noted intellectuals, young and old, nationalists, communists, bourgeoisie and proletarians arriving from all corners of Puerto Rico to attend his funeral. She described him as “a gentle man, caring, happy, friendly, a tireless worker, an internationalist.”

Marisa Rosado, secretary of the Committee of Intellectuals for the Sovereignty of Countries, recounted how tenderly he had kissed a Puerto Rican flag as he lay on his death bed in the hospital. “Although he did not realize all he wanted to,” she asserted, “he achieved much in a short time, thanks to his disciplined life.”

Pedro Aponte Vázquez

A letter written in 1931 by an American doctor, Cornelius P. Rhoads, aroused in Professor Pedro Aponte suspicion that Rhoads could somehow have been associated with the torture and death of the great Puerto Rican liberator Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos. Of Puerto Ricans, Dr. Rhoads

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had written in a letter, “They are beyond doubt the dirtiest, laziest, most degenerate and thievish race of men ever inhabiting this sphere.” In this letter he had boasted that “all the physicians take delight in the torture and abuse of the unfortunate subjects.” Knowing of Dr. Rhoads’ anger toward Albizu for having published and circulated this, he began researching the death of Albizu and possible connections with Dr. Rhoads.

Born in Guarabo, Aponte had felt deeply the influence of a pro-independence grandfather. His earliest recollection is feeling at the age of six a sense of repulsion over seeing a neighbor running down the street with an American flag. As an elementary school pupil, it bothered him to salute the American flag and he began to feel an aversion toward North Americans, innately sensing their role as oppressors of his country. Through the influence of his mother he developed a strong sense of justice and love of his country. She used to talk to him about Gandhi and the movement in India for liberation.

His father was a policeman, a profession highly respected at that time. Only in later years did people become aware of the oppressive role of the police as they came into violent confrontation with liberation movements. In those days the policeman walking his route had only to beat the pavement with his club to maintain order. Selected for size, strength, and toughness regardless of educational attainment, his role was to protect life and property.

Aponte’s growing involvement in the cause of independence disturbed his parents, who tried to discourage him. But the seed had been planted early in his life. In his youth he listened avidly to stories of the student strike of 1948 at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). When his father participated in police action against the 1950 revolution, his sympathies were with the Nationalists. Yet he was concerned also for the safety of his father.

High school offered no challenge to his alert and intelligent mind. He became bored, and eager to enter college. Not being permitted to take the GED for a high school diploma, he joined the air force. There he was permitted to take tests to circumvent further high school classes. This career didn’t last long due to his rebellion against racial discrimination. After two years he was court-marshaled and given an “undesirable discharge.”

By then he had acquired his high school diploma and was free to enter college. He chose to major in social sciences at UPR. For advanced studies he entered Fordham University, working toward his M.S. in urban education. Through Aspira, a foundation concerned with school dropouts, he was granted a Rockefeller scholarship.

With his M.S. in hand, he went through a long series of jobs in which he faced intolerance toward his support of independence. An administrative job at the Central Office of Personnel Management was cut short when he electioneered for the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP). He was fired from a job as insurance salesman when he protested the harassment of a fellow worker. Then from college counselor, to English teacher, to journalist for *El Diario*, to public relations for the National Puerto Rican Forum, and finally a five-year period of unemployment.

This gave him the opportunity of opening a new career—that of research. It was then that he searched out all the information he could about Dr. Rhoads. During World War II, he learned, Dr. Rhoads was an expert in chemical warfare, from there turning to nuclear research as consultant to the U.S. Atomic Commission. He was then assigned by the Rockefeller Foundation to research anemia at the Puerto Rican Presbyterian Hospital, applying to people what had been proven on dogs. Considering the racism prevalent in the United States, and attempts to prove the intellectual superiority of the White race, Puerto Ricans were deemed fit to be used as guinea pigs for medical experimentation. From this came accusations of planned genocide as U.S. corporations and the military sought further economic and territorial control. An oft-quoted quip was that the “yankees” were interested in the cage but not the bird. On the side, Dr. Rhoads researched cancer, boasting that he had killed eight Puerto Ricans and transplanted cancer in others.

Rhoads was angered by Albizu’s accusations of genocide. With Albizu in prison, the problem was how to eliminate him without arousing suspicion. He was considered a “dangerous enemy whose conscience was not for sale.” Hanging, poisoning, beating to death were all too obvious. Radiation seemed a logical solution. Already a group of scientists had initiated experiments in prisons and hospitals to observe the effects of radiation on human beings. Dr. Rhoads was well versed in atomic radiation.

It was shortly after a visit to Puerto Rico by Dr. Marshall Brucer, who had experimented with the use of fertilizer with radioactive phosphorous, that Albizu’s health declined sharply. He was taken to the very hospital where Dr. Rhoads had conducted his experimentation. Albizu had reported seeing strands of beautiful colors in his cell at La Princesa Prison, corresponding to descriptions of laser beams (from ‘Light Amplification by Simulated Emissions of Radiation’). Other Nationalist prisoners reported also seeing blue laser beams. At La Princesa, effects of radiation had become evident—swollen legs, raw feet, body covered with radiation burns. Albizu had kept his body wrapped in towels soaked in ice water to alleviate the pain, and he suffered heat flashes and burning sensations.

In the 1984 hearings before the U.N. Decolonization Committee, Prof. Aponte reported on his investigations of the past six years. He offered photographs and abundant testimony as to his theories on the death of Albizu. He pointed out that Albizu, as a graduate in physics and chemistry, was well qualified to determine what was happening to him despite efforts to declare him paranoid.

I attended a press conference held at the tomb of Don Pedro at which Prof. Aponte asked the president of UPR, Fernando Agrait, to invite a team of pathologists from the United States who, along with Puerto Rican pathologists, would determine scientifically the cause of death. This request has not been granted, but two publications are spreading the word: *Yo Acuso* and *Necator Americanus*. Another book is in progress.

Aponte's zeal in researching the death of Don Pedro led to an attempt to silence him. He was not rehired in his position at the University, and his book, *Yo Acuso*, was banned from the University library. He fell victim, apparently, to our government's attempt to suppress the truth. However precarious his means of earning a livelihood, Aponte strives on and refuses to be intimidated.

A recent communique from Aponte tells of the "cowardly assassination" of one of his sons. He laments that to date there had been no thorough investigation. He asks that the "probability of political conspiracy as a motive of this tragedy be examined." Such are the hazards of truth-seeking.

Gutiérrez del Arroyo Sisters

"I must take you to meet friends of Don Pedro," Isolina Rondón, formerly secretary to Pedro Albizu Campos, announced one day. "He would have wanted you to know them." Winding in and out of narrow streets, we came to the home of the four maiden sisters, each with a special talent. Mirta Gutiérrez del Arroyo still teaches piano. Dolores is a retired high school teacher, and Isabel is an historian and former university professor. Carmen, very alert in cultural and political issues, takes on the job of keeping the home in order and meeting the needs of her sisters. She was the first to greet us.

Though fluent in English, Carmen admitted that she expressed her thoughts much better in her native tongue. In reference to attempts to anglicize Puerto Ricans, she called it a crime to deprive people of their language.

"Isabel is very busy and has limited energy," Carmen warned us. But Isabel appeared briefly, bubbling over with stories of her beloved Don Pedro. Her nationalistic principles, which she openly proclaimed after the revolution of 1950, cost her her job teaching at the University of Puerto Rico, despite her high qualifications, including a doctorate in history from the University of Mexico.

Isabel was forewarned of the October revolution of 1950 when Don Pedro called her to meet him at the home of a Dominican priest, an admirer of Don Pedro. In their four-hour talk there was no mention of plans for a revolution. But the meeting signified to Isabel that something of importance was brewing. In the following month came the uprising, something that had to happen, Don Pedro proclaimed, "even if we have to fight with hands and pins." Catching wind that something was about to occur, police surrounded the home of Don Pedro, trapped and arrested him.

Isabel spoke of the great creative power of Don Pedro, his mystical nature, his joyfulness. During his last imprisonment, she recalled, he lay paralyzed by a stroke, unattended for several days and without medical care. When he was finally granted amnesty in November of 1964 and Isabel and Carmen went to see him, he was unable to speak. His face filled with sadness and anxiety as he fingered the black dress Isabel was wearing. Surely somebody in the family had died, he assumed. "No," Isabel assured him, "everybody is alive and well." And she went down the list of family members. His expression changed to one of peacefulness and resignation, unable as he was to express his feelings in words.

Such recollections racked her body with their intensity. She excused herself to return to her work of researching and writing a book on Puerto Rican history. "She must save her energy," Carmen explained. "She gets too wrought up reminiscing about Don Pedro."

As an historian, Isabel believes that "Albizu Campos' opportune historical emergence was providential, for God in His munificence grants nations in crisis the light of a resplendent star that illumines and saves them from not understanding their destiny." For her, Albizu was an apostle, a prophet, a teacher, as well as a revolutionary leader.

A recent honor paid to Isabel was the dedication of the Puerto Rican collection room of the Technical University of Bayamón in her name. She was praised as one of Puerto Rico's principal intellectuals and one of the first scientific investigators of the country. She was cited for her "conservation of our nationality, Spanish language and eventual integration of this Latin American country into the conglomerate of our sovereign nations, fulfilling the dream of Bolívar." Her file of hundreds of thousands of cards collected throughout thirty years of research is a bibliography of all historical areas bearing any relation to the national history of Puerto Rico, a unique guide to the basics of Puerto Rican cultural, political, economic, spiritual and ideological history.

The four sisters remain devout Catholics, as was Don Pedro, despite lack of support for independence among the five Catholic bishops of Puerto Rico. Writing, speaking, and participation in marches proclaim their undiminished zeal for independence.

As Carmen brought in cornmeal and coconut cake and acerola ice, she quoted Don Pedro, "*En Lares, machete en mano, el jíbaro escribió con sangre, '¡Somos Puertorriqueños!'*" ("In Lares, machete in hand, the jíbaro wrote in blood, 'We are Puerto Ricans!'")

Jacinto Rivera Pérez

Our first trip to Puerto Rico was on the spur of the moment. We were visiting Abe's sister in Miami, so very close to Puerto Rico! We arrived with only a slip of paper giving the address of the Nationalist Party. Because of our friendship with Pedro Albizu Campos, we were most likely to be well received by members of his party. And so we were. The president of the party, Jacinto Rivera Pérez, came to the office and took us to the tomb of Don Pedro for moments of reflection. From

there we drove to the fabulous rain forest, El Yunque, and had lunch in the forest. Knowing him to be an agronomist, we plied him with questions. We were mildly chided for not giving him more advance notice so that he could arrange more for us in our brief four-day stay there.

Don Jacinto's political awareness began as early as the third grade, when he refused to say the pledge of allegiance. He had learned from his father that the United States flag was not his flag. His loyalty was to be only to Puerto Rico.

In the eighth grade he led his class in scholarship. The speech he prepared on independence was banned. He gave it, nonetheless, and the Puerto Rican flag was hung in front of the American flag, hiding it from view during the graduation. The police were called in, but there was nothing they could do.

In high school he joined the C.M.T.C., a United States National Guard in Puerto Rico. While studying at the Agricultural and Mechanics College of the University of Puerto Rico, he joined the R.O.T.C. For about ten years he offered military training to the cadets of the Nationalist Party.

He graduated from the College of Agriculture in 1939, and began the difficult task of job hunting. He was finally offered a job, despite a letter from U.S. government shown to him by the boss of the U.S. Soil Conservation Services giving instructions not to employ him. He was then able to marry his sweetheart, Elida Negrón Cintrón, with whom he has since raised two daughters.

He worked for the Soil Conservation Services for a couple of years, and then for the U.S.D.A. Agricultural Experiment Station, where he experimented in growing vanilla and essential oil plants. At the same time he developed a farm for milk production. In 1944 he decided to go to the Agriculture and Mechanics College of Texas, from which he received his Master's Degree in plant breeding.

Aware of ecological problems in Puerto Rico, he was appalled by the deliberate destruction of areas in El Yunque, where Agent Orange was tested. He knew also of the bacterial testing lab near the Capitol at San Juan during World War II. In Texas he had observed hormones being used in animals to increase their weight. This practice was being brought to Puerto Rico. He deplored the chemicals being used in Puerto Rico, the practice of digging plastic into the soil, and failure to improve and maintain proper conditions of the soil. Chief violator was an Israeli corporation farming a vast area of land in southern Puerto Rico.

Don Jacinto's entree into the Nationalist Party came following the 1937 Ponce Massacre. He had been suspicious of the possible involvement of Governor Winship in the massacre in his determination to rid the country of Albizu Campos and the Nationalists. (An unarmed Palm Sunday procession of Nationalists was fired upon by the police. Twenty-one people were killed and over a hundred were wounded.)

Don Jacinto found in Albizu a man respected by everybody, a devout Catholic, a revolutionary. He was not, as are many *independentistas*, a Marxist-Leninist. Once independence is achieved, he maintained, the people could then make a political decision.

When Albizu Campos returned from jail on December 15, 1947, Don Jacinto was named vice-president of the Nationalist Party. In 1950 he was commissioned to go to Venezuela to seek help for a revolution. He remained there until 1963.

In 1980 he appeared before the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations. He reminded the committee that the Nationalist Julio Pinto Gandía had presented a paper at the inaugural of the United Nations in San Francisco. The Nationalist Party held official observer status until the 1950 repression of the Party. He denounced the U.S. Navy occupation of Vieques, compulsory military service, U.S. refusal to explain the “assassination” of Albizu, the mysterious disappearance of Pinto Gandía, the fortifying of an atomic base in Puerto Rico, the assassination of two young *independentistas* at Cerro Maravilla, and the holding of political “prisoners of war” because of their fight for independence. He declared that the Treaty of Paris ending the Spanish-American War ceding Puerto Rico to the United States was illegal.

Don Jacinto now serves as president of the Nationalist Party. Well-informed in political and economic events, he serves as a valuable source of information at the Nationalist meetings, and helps to keep alive the goals and the fervor of Albizu Campos.

Carlos Vélez Rieckehoff

The smiling, dignified appearance of Carlos Vélez Rieckehoff was a welcome sight, as we arrived in 1979 at the San Juan airport for our second visit to Puerto Rico. As acting president of the Nationalist Party while Jacinto Rivera was in Spain, he had attended the 1979 International Conference in Support of Independence for Puerto Rico held in Mexico City. We had told him then of our intentions of spending two weeks in Puerto Rico, and he had offered to meet us there. Fair-complexioned, with set jaw and blue eyes, he appeared Germanic as his name would indicate. After a warm welcome, he drove us to his daughter’s home and then to the tomb of our beloved Don Pedro.

We were later to visit with Carlos and his wife Luisa Guadalupe de Vélez in their spacious home at Vieques. Luisa had been born in Vieques, the “baby island” of Puerto Rico. One of ten children, she had grown up on a four-acre homestead. Sweet potatoes, yucca, corn, goats, a cow and chickens provided for most of the family’s needs. If still hungry after a frugal meal, the children’s father would take them to a coconut grove to fill up on the sweet milk and meat of the coconut. The fertile land was rich with groves of pineapple, sugar cane, herds of cattle, an abundance of fish. Jobs were readily available. Luisa’s father earned his livelihood as a carpenter, and her mother, as a dressmaker.

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Soon after the marriage of Carlos and Luisa, however, in 1941 the United States Navy took possession of three-fourths of the twenty-mile-long island. Families were paid a pittance for their homes and given twenty-four hours to evacuate. Carlos was forced to leave his job working on a 600-acre sugar cane ranch, and seek employment in New York City. He drove a truck, worked as a night watchman, whatever work he could pick up. Luisa found work in a factory. Those remaining in Vieques suffered the indignity of no longer being able to provide for their needs and at present about sixty percent of the families are on food stamps.

Prior to his marriage, Carlos had become involved in the Nationalist Party. A pamphlet given him by a fifteen-year-old boy had fired his interest in the independence movement. In the 1930s he served as president of the New York chapter of the Nationalist Party.

Upon returning to Puerto Rico, he had the opportunity to get to know Albizu Campos, taking long walks with him in the outskirts of Caguas. At that time, Don Pedro was living with his wife and three children in a simple house of wood and zinc, furnished only with the barest of essentials. Carlos relates visiting with him one day on his front porch. When a beggar passed by, Don Pedro searched his pockets for a coin. "Carlos, see what you have," he pleaded. Carlos came up with his last dime to the relief of Don Pedro, who could not bear to see anyone in need denied help.

Carlos also tells of a scrape he got himself into in a patriotic attempt to seize a Puerto Rican flag from an organization he felt was not in genuine sympathy with what the flag stood for. As police closed in, he barely escaped with his life.

From Don Pedro he had learned pride in his heritage and willingness to sacrifice his life and safety, if necessary, for the cause of independence. He had a chance to prove himself later when, in the 1950s, Nationalist meetings were outlawed. Refusing to deny his affiliation with the Nationalist Party, Carlos was arrested, along with Don Pedro and other Nationalists, to serve three years in prison.

In 1980 he presented a fervent plea to a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives investigating the situation in Vieques. He told them of how his ancestors, wife and children were all natives of Vieques, how he had passed most of his life there, and how the people of Vieques have lost much of their land through the occupation by the Navy.

He pleaded not only for the return of Vieques to the people, but for recognition that the very seizure of Puerto Rico through the Treaty of Paris was null, since Puerto Rico had already been granted autonomy from Spain. He compared the invasion of Puerto Rico to the attempt of Russia to take over Finland in the 19th century. An international conference examining the issue had determined that "the rights of a country to national liberty is free from war conquests and diplomatic treaties."

"In addition to the material damage that the Navy has caused the geography of Vieques," Vélez declared, "it is depressing that an island endowed with singular beauty by the Creator

is used as a training school to teach men to kill their fellow creatures. This act alone is contrary to the rules of Nature and Christian Humanism.”

Gently asserting that he could never willingly take a human life, he recognizes the possibility that liberation might have to come about through force of arms.

José Antonio “Ñin” Negrón

In 1945, Ñin Negrón left the 65th Infantry Regiment on an honorable discharge. For his fighting against Naziism in Central Europe, Africa and the Pacific, he was lauded as a hero. In 1950 he found himself in prison sentenced to sixty-five years for fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico. His house was raided and his father, Ché, thrown in prison in retribution for Ñin’s involvement in the Nationalist uprising of October, 1950. Ché was a member of the Independence Party (PIP), which in no way fosters violence. When police tore down his Puerto Rican flag, he painted a large one across the front of his house, in defiance of continued FBI harassment.

When camping on Ché’s fifty-acre ranch, we found that everybody knew Ché and respected him, from the local banker to the *público* driver, to school children who pointed him out to us on our first visit. A sturdy man in his eighties, he welcomed us by climbing a grapefruit tree for a luscious sun-ripened fruit. Since he knew no English, our exchange of greeting each day was a “*¡Fuerte!*” as he flexed his muscles. In 1983 we attended the sixty-fifth wedding anniversary of Ché and Rosa. Though not coffee drinkers, we could never resist Rosa’s coffee, homegrown, roasted in the *cocina* and flavored with milk fresh from their two cows.

Ñin’s record in the army had been good until the day he took off, without permission, to visit Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos at Columbus Hospital, New York. Don Pedro greeted him coolly, seeing him dressed in the uniform of the United States Army. But later, as both faced prison sentences, Albizu gave him a warm hug. “You know me, now?” grinned Ñin. The visit to the hospital constituted a serious misdemeanor and he was thrown briefly into the brig.

Ñin never questioned his role in the war. But being in an all Puerto Rican regiment, he became aware of Puerto Rico’s colonial status. As he looks back on his war experiences, he recalls how soldiers were jailed for giving bread to German children and that in later years our government was shipping bombs to Germany so that they could re-arm against Russia.

The war was his university of life. Reading and discussions increased his awareness of world problems. He saw indications of Puerto Rican rebellion against U.S. colonialism. When President Truman went to Heidelberg, Germany, there were demonstrations and threats to kill him. Bolívar Pagán, Puerto Rican Resident Commissioner, was so unpopular because of his demand for more Puerto Rican soldiers that he was afraid to appear before Puerto Rican troops.

By 1947 the increasing popularity of Albizu Campos alarmed our government, and plans were laid to imprison him as well as other leaders of the independence movement. At that point Albizu, who himself had once served as an officer in World War I, instigated the training of cadets for self-defense against the United States. The cadets could at least demonstrate to the world their determination to fight for freedom. In 1950, as arrests increased, Nationalists and other *independentistas* went into action in Naranjito, Ponce, Jayuya, Mayagüez, Utuado and Arecibo. The “revolution” was quickly put down and Ñin, who had led the troops in Naranjito, faced prison along with Albizu Campos and some thousand others.

Ñin still marches in his cadet uniform of white pants and black shirt in patriotic observances. He sees hope for independence by arousing world opinion against U.S. colonialism. He sees the importance of getting the truth out to the world. Already Venezuela and Mexico are adding their voices in favor of independence, as world opinion, through the United Nations, swings towards decolonization of countries not yet liberated. In time the United States will have to yield, Ñin believes.

Loyal to the Nationalist Party of Albizu Campos, Ñin serves as treasurer. Though now small in numbers, the Nationalist Party carries on an educational program and organizes patriotic demonstrations.

A plaque presented to Ñin by Concepción de Gracia, founder of PIP, reads: “For your unfailing struggle, for your presence in most difficult moments to promote the ideal of a free and just country, we consider you our inspiration.”

Isolina Rondón

From her front door on Calle Brumbaugh, near the University of Puerto Rico, Isolina Rondón watched in horror as police shot into a car carrying four Nationalists. “Don’t leave them alive!” she heard the police shout.

It was the year 1935, in which Nationalists were being rounded up in an attempt to destroy the pro-independence fervor stirred up by the oratory of Pedro Albizu Campos. His support of the sugar strike had raised fears of an alliance between the working class and the revolutionary Nationalist Party.

Killed in the fray, now referred to as the “Río Piedra Massacre,” were Ramón Pagán, secretary of the Nationalist Party, Eduardo Rodríguez, and Pedro Quiñones. Dionislo Pearson was wounded, and later died.

Isolina testified in court, but no action was taken against the police. That same year, Albizu was arrested and sent to Atlanta Penitentiary.

It was a little short of a miracle that Isolina escaped arrest, though her home was searched three times. In her childhood, she had been influenced by a pro-independence cousin who was a member of the Unionist Party, a predecessor of the Nationalist Party. Her father had died when Isolina was a child. With her mother receiving scant pay as a housekeeper, it was necessary for Isolina to help out. So upon graduating from the eighth grade she entered a secretarial school.

It was then that she fell under the magnetic influence of Don Pedro. Along with other devotees, she began paying daily visits to his home in Río Piedras, absorbing all she could from his vast store of wisdom and knowledge.

Then came the day when Don Pedro asked her to take notes at a Nationalist meeting. In time she became his personal secretary. I met her on one of her visits to Don Pedro at Columbus Hospital. For a time she wrote to me, keeping me posted on events. She remained faithful to the Nationalist Party throughout the turbulent years of harassment, imprisonments and assassinations, and now serves as secretary of the Party.

Isolina sees no other way than revolution for the release of Puerto Rico from the domination and exploitation of the United States. But she recognizes the difficulty of getting enough general support of the population because of the fear of hunger, of communism, of the military strength of the United States and repressive measures taken against supporters of independence. The revolution of October, 1950 had failed because of hasty, insufficient preparation due to external events, and no such revolt has been attempted since.

Isolina believes that seven-eighths of the Puerto Ricans are for independence, but are afraid to express themselves openly. She has no such fear. Her tiny apartment, cluttered with newspapers she has been monitoring, is adorned with two large portraits and a bust of Don Pedro. Now reunited in friendship, Isolina and I both find our lives directed by the spirit of the great master.

Isabel Rosado Morales

Her dark eyes flashed as her voice rose in intensity and rapidity, intermingling Spanish and English. Isabel Rosado, long-time Nationalist, now in her eighties, was describing how police had manhandled her and trampled on her as she participated in the 1979 ecumenical prayer service on Vieques naval territory. Bruised, her face grimy with sand, she lay gasping for breath. A policeman eyed her with ridicule. "Just an old drunk. Haul her in!" So Isabel, retired teacher and social worker, a woman of culture and learning, was handcuffed and taken to the police station. Upon recognition by a lawyer, she was released. She escaped sharing the fate of the twenty-one

who were sentenced to prison for their protest against Navy occupation of the small island of Vieques.

Doña Isabel, as she is affectionately called, was a young elementary school teacher when she heard of the Ponce Massacre. The emotional impact on her was tremendous, swinging her into the orbit of the Nationalist Party. From then on she became an ardent follower of the great patriot of liberation Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos.

Though not a participant in the October 1950 revolution, Doña Isabel's fate became entwined with that of the Nationalists, as our government attempted to destroy the Party. She was taken from her job as school social worker to serve a year's imprisonment. After her release, she fell victim again to the harassment of Nationalists and had to serve another three months.

Barred now from public school employment, she obtained a position in a private school. This was not to last for long. Blame for the attack on Congress by four Nationalists fell on Albizu Campos. Doña Isabel, among others, was in the Nationalist office during a pre-dawn raid by the police. When met by a spray of bullets, the police withdrew. At dawn they returned and tossed tear gas bombs through the bullet-riddled windows. Albizu Campos was carried out unconscious, along with those with him. Doña Isabel was again thrown into prison, this time to serve for eleven years simply for her support of Don Pedro.

Upon her release in 1965, the impossibility of finding employment led her to eke out a living through sewing and crocheting. Living frugally, she maintains her witness for independence.

Doña Isabel became one of our closest and most beloved friends. Walking through town with her was always an adventure. Young people would stop to embrace her with affection. She was constantly putting in a word for independence. On the way to see a lawyer, she engaged a cleaning lady in conversation and then received a warm hug from a young man. Everybody seemed to know her. At the lawyer's office, arrangements were made for a radio broadcast. This was immediately executed as she taped an extemporaneous speech, and I read from a hastily drawn-up script in Spanish proclaiming my support of independence.

She is not often to be found at home. She could be attending a funeral for a patriot at Mayagüez, laying a floral wreath on the grave of a fallen patriot, off on a tour of Cuba, participating in a patriotic observance in the Dominican Republic, visiting Puerto Rican political prisoners throughout the United States.

As I joined in the newly composed liturgy of the Iglesia Episcopal del Pueblo, of Yauco, we prayed to "God, Father of the people, who, for love of His people stirs up among us prophets for our hope." Among the names of Ramón Emeterio Betances, Eugenio María de Hostos, Pedro Albizu Campos, and others, was that of Isabel Rosado, all prophets, seeking to help Puerto Ricans become independent from "North American imperialism and all other imperialism, so that we can construct a new society and a new humanity where oppression of human beings against their brothers does not exist and all are one."

Blanca Canales

Doña Blanca Canales chuckled when I approached her with some incredulity to ask if she had really been one of the leaders of the October 30, 1950 Revolution. A grandmotherly, retired social worker, now in her eighties, she hardly seemed the type.

Born in the mountain town of Jayuya, she grew up in a Unionist family. She was drawn, however, to the Nationalist Party, which took a more militant stand on independence. She recalled wistfully the three months Pedro Albizu Campos and his daughter Laura spent in her home.

By 1950, following World War II and the Korean War, the United States was taking on a new role—that of a superpower. As it tightened its hold on Puerto Rico, Puerto Rican patriots were becoming more militant. In turn, they were being subjected to the Smith Act—the “*Ley de la Mordaza*,” a law to silence anyone advocating the overthrow of the government by force of violence.

Blanca joined the Nationalist Cadets of the Republic. Though trained as nurses, women were taught, also, to march and to shoot. Social worker by day, militant by night, she played an active role in the preparation of the 1950 uprising. Munitions were stored in her home. By then, having been a Nationalist for twenty years, she was fired with patriotic zeal for liberation from “tyrannical forces.” She realized, however, that up against the most powerful nation in the world, the Cadets could hope for nothing more than a heroic gesture.

The Nationalists had just celebrated the birthday of General Valero de Bernabe, who had fought with Bolívar for South American liberation. Word had come of a plan to assassinate Albizu. Events were happening too fast to delay plans for the uprising, so the Nationalists proceeded hastily with the revolution on October 30, before outside help had been able to arrive.

Assembled in the yard of her home in Coabey de Jayuya, those prepared to participate in the revolution were administered an oath by Blanca. Surrounding the Puerto Rican flag, they took the Albizu Campos oath to defend their country and flag with their lives if necessary.

As the Jayuya contingent struck out for City Hall, Blanca was the only woman among twenty young men. “I had been reading stories of heroines and imagined myself off to a crusade,” she admitted with a smile.

Though proficient in shooting, Blanca was kept out of the fray by being assigned a post at the telephone. City Hall was attacked and fires set to the post office and Selective Service building. Blanca, in turn, climbed to a second floor hotel balcony and shouted, “*¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!*” thus proclaiming the Republic.

The rebellion was soon quelled, both in Jayuya and in other communities throughout Puerto Rico. In Ponce, three police had been killed and seven civil workers wounded. In Arecibo, the police department had been fired on.

The town of Jayuya was in the power of the revolutionaries for three days in spite of bombardment by planes and artillery of the United States National Guard. Finally, on November 1, when the National Guard entered Blanca's barrio, the revolutionaries surrendered to avoid its devastation.

Though Blanca had not fired a shot, witnesses claimed that she had killed a policeman. This drew her a life sentence. For the burning of the post office, a Federal offense, Blanca was given an eleven-year sentence at Alderson Federal Penitentiary. There, she met briefly with Lolita Lebrón, who had been involved in the 1954 shoot-up in the United States Congress. After 5½ years, she was sent to a prison in Puerto Rico for the life sentence. However, this was eventually commuted by Governor Sánchez Villela.

From the 1950 rebellion a stronger patriotic movement emerged. *Independentista* candidates received the highest number of votes ever.

Undaunted by her seventeen years of imprisonment, Blanca held firm to the cause of independence. "We have to keep working even if it takes a hundred years," she vowed, the softness of her voice belying the strength of her convictions. Though living a quiet life in a government housing project, she is still under surveillance, her phone tapped, her every move checked by a woman undercover agent. But strong in her Catholic faith and patriotism, she remains unafraid.

Antonio Morales Ramírez

The high school boy stood, arms folded, as classmates saluted for the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. "Why should I pledge allegiance to any flag other than that of Puerto Rico, my native land?" questioned Antonio Morales Ramírez.

"Soon you will have to face the realities of life," the principal had admonished him. But he never wavered in his loyalty to the Puerto Rican flag. He took pride in his heritage. Ancestors on his mother's side, the Ramírez family, had participated in the *Grito de Lares* of 1868, for liberation from Spain.

From those early beginnings, Morales held fast to his nationalism. He was one of the founders of the Nationalist Party in 1923, which later, in 1930, came under the inspired leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos.

He had left high school seeking work in a sewing machine factory. Being too young for the job, he was shunted into a restaurant job at La Cafetería in Old San Juan. There he added up bills for the princely sum of \$30 a month.

The restaurant experience led him, eventually, to the Mallorquin, the oldest restaurant in San Juan, established under the Spanish regime in 1848. There, amid tables draped with white linen, waiters in white jackets, and murals of Spanish scenes, Morales, manager since 1959, presided, his quiet dignity and courtliness of manner reminiscent of an age of gallantry long past. Generous hospitality awaited his friends as he sat with them. We were hosted several times to a meal of superbly prepared Spanish and Puerto Rican-style cooking, along with a glass of wine.

And now we mourn the recent passing of our generous friend. He had remained for sixty-two years a loyal member of the Nationalist Party. He envisioned a free Puerto Rico liberated from United States domination, free from political antagonisms, one family under the Puerto Rican flag. Then he would no longer be an American, but a Puerto Rican citizen. Alas, that he did not live to realize this dream.

Rosa and Lydia Collazo

Lydia Collazo Cortez, step-daughter of Oscar Collazo, and her two teenage sisters were alone in their Bronx apartment, their mother, Rosa, incarcerated in a prison cell. Every day they visited with her, taking her food and fresh clothes and feeling angry at the injustice of her confinement. Thanks to the generosity of a local Jewish grocer, they managed to survive.

Rosa Collazo, Lydia's mother, served eight months in a federal prison in New York merely for being the wife of Oscar Collazo at the time of his 1950 attack on Blair House. She describes her arrest: "I remember as if today, when they knocked on my door. I opened it. More than twenty FBI agents entered.... They showed me a photo of Oscar on the ground and told me they had just killed him.... I said that if he died, he died for the cause." Actually, Oscar survived and was himself imprisoned. Once released, Rosa continued her work with the Nationalist Party, helping gather 100,000 signatures to save Oscar from the electric chair. She worked also (unsuccessfully) for the release of Ethel Rosenberg, who had been her cell-mate.

At the time of the Nationalist's attack on Congress, Rosa was again accused of complicity in a conspiracy and was committed for seven years at Alderson Prison, West Virginia. There she met with Lolita Lebrón and Blanca Canales. "No one will ever pull me out of the struggle!" she avows. "For this I want to live until we are free."

In Lydia's youth, her family was in contact with other liberation movements all over the world, including Ireland, India and Israel. It was during the McCarthy period, when North Americans were struggling to shake off government persecution in their own homeland.

Lydia frequented the Catholic Worker, and had many friends there, mostly pacifists. "Their support in our struggle can never be paid in full," Lydia tells us. "We will be eternally grateful."

Though born in New York, the Collazo family were always patriotic Puerto Ricans. Lydia, through the influence of her family, developed an awareness of the Puerto Rican struggle for

independence. She came to know Pedro Albizu Campos who, when released from the hospital, occupied an apartment below theirs, so that he could regain strength to return to Puerto Rico. Always an enthusiastic teacher, he taught her about the political and economic situation in Puerto Rico.

Lydia went to Puerto Rico as a promising young artist, finding her subjects in scenes of contemporary life, and of the political struggle. This had to provide her with a livelihood until her search for a job was successful. This was not easy. *Independentistas* then, as now, were looked upon with suspicion. Thousands of Nationalists were serving prison sentences. But her talent, vivacity and determination won her a post as a public school art teacher.

Lydia and her mother now live in a comfortable apartment, surrounded with beauty and culture: records of Sephardic Jewish and Puerto Rican music, Lydia's art work, and an extensive library. They hold on to their convictions with a minimum of harassment.

As for her mother, Rosa, a commemoration for her fifty years of patriotic work was held in 1984 in the Bar Association Building. Recognition was given for her efforts towards the commutation of her husband's death sentence.

Recently, now in her eighties, Rosa marched with us the full length of a pro-independence, anti-militarism demonstration. She proudly called out, as we walked, that we were Yankees in support of independence.

Oscar Collazo

Shots rang out at the Blair House, where President Harry Truman was temporarily residing. It was the year 1950. Truman had, by then, given the order to drop the H-Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a massacre he never regretted. It was a year of patriotic fervor and turmoil in Puerto Rico. Blanca Canales and her little troop had proclaimed the Republic in Jayuya as part of an island-wide uprising. Nationalists had attacked the governor's residence in San Juan. Angered and frustrated by the United States domination over Puerto Rico, Oscar Collazo and his young friend, Grisello Torresola, determined to commit an act that would draw world-wide attention. Buying one-way tickets to Washington, D.C., they decided on the strategy of attacking the Blair House. Torresola and one guard were killed in the fray. Collazo lay wounded and unconscious.

For this act of protest, Collazo served twenty-nine years imprisonment, part of it in the agonizing uncertainty of being taken off at any time for execution. Finally, under the pressure of national and international appeals, Truman commuted his death sentence.

Born in Florida, Puerto Rico, a *barrio* of Barceloneta, Collazo suffered the loss of his father at the age of six. The care of sixteen children was too much for his mother, so he was brought up by an older brother, a member of the Unionist Party. Folding in 1934, the Party was never a decisive advocate of independence as was its offshoot, the Nationalist Party. It was with the Nationalist Party that Collazo chose to affiliate.

Collazo was but fourteen when he took part in his first unlawful activity. He joined a student strike in commemoration of the birthday of the great Puerto Rican politician and poet, José de Diego. Among the speakers participating was Juan Antonio Corretjer, who read from his poetry and delivered a patriotic speech. He first heard Albizu Campos speak at the 1932 celebration of de Diego's birthday. At that moment the Puerto Rican legislature was debating the conversion of the Puerto Rican flag into a symbol of colonialism to be flown alongside the American flag. "What should we do to these traitors?" demanded Don Pedro.

"Hang them!" shouted the crowd. Armed with sticks, they rushed to the Capitol with Don Pedro in the lead, driving out the terrified legislators. The building was still under construction and the handrails of the steps, pressured by the onslaught, gave way. Several people fell. Manuel Rafael Suárez later died of injuries received from the fall, and became honored by the Nationalists as their first martyr. Collazo saw in Albizu not only a great leader, but a man of action.

It was later, when Collazo spent some years in New York City, that he had the opportunity to know Albizu better. He visited with him at Columbus Hospital and, under Albizu's influence, became actively involved with the Nationalist Party. He served first as secretary, and later as president of the New York chapter. For a livelihood he became a metal worker in a factory.

It was after some years of political awareness that Collazo determined to carry out the action at the Blair House that led to his imprisonment. It was no easy decision, to choose between devotion to his family and love of country. He left behind his wife, Rosa, and three adolescent daughters as he entered Leavenworth Penitentiary. There he spent his time reading, studying French and Portuguese and learning to play the guitar. He was active in supporting fair treatment of fellow prisoners. In his love of reading, he met with disappointment when the library of 30,000 books was replaced with TV. Weeks went by without access to newspapers, and he was permitted communication only with close family members and lawyers.

Los Indómitos, a story of the three Nationalists, Collazo, Irvin Flores and Rafael Cancel, describes his release from prison. He was asked if he believed that the twenty-nine years in prison had softened him. "In the first place," he replied, "they didn't take me to prison to soften me but to rot me. In the second place, when you struggle for the independence of your people, there is no way you can be softened."

On his return to Puerto Rico, he feared that he had been forgotten. But he and Rafael Cancel and Irvin Flores and Lolita Lebrón were greeted by a multitude waving flags and posters. The emotion of this reception, he confessed, brought on a flood of tears.

He noted many changes in Puerto Rico—broad avenues, tall buildings, modern houses, and banks, but "none of it belongs to us!"

We met Collazo on many occasions. One of them was an annual observance of the Ponce Massacre. He was interviewed there for a radio broadcast in which he dealt with his opposition to voting. He sees no value in elections controlled by a foreign power under the shadow of military bases and nuclear weapons in order to bring about political changes. Up to now, Puerto Rico remains a colonial system disguised as a “free associated state,” but whose powers depend on the Congress of the United States. He agrees with Congressman Dellums’ resolution to return all political powers to the people of Puerto Rico in that no valid political decision can be made within the framework of repressive colonialism. Nationalists follow Albizu’s mandate to boycott the colonial electoral process.

Collazo sees clearly the results of United States imperialism with its control over 85% of the Puerto Rican economy. Unable to regulate tariffs and foreign competition, Puerto Rican industries have little chance for survival.

Collazo sees the possibility of independence within his lifetime, although admitting that it will take years. As for statehood, he has never considered it a serious alternative, since people don’t support it as an ideology, but for the handouts they would get from the United States.

He sees some hope in the United Nations resolutions calling for independence, and deploring United States harassment of *independentistas*. He sees socialism as the hope of the future for mankind insofar as it succeeds in bringing about equality and true democracy.

Proclaimed as a national hero, Collazo remains steadfast in his convictions, a voice to be commuting his death sentence, he replied, “When the last Yankee soldier leaves the Puerto Rican territory, I’ll be glad to write a letter of appreciation to the president of the United States.”

Rafael Cancel Miranda

Thunderous applause greeted Rafael Cancel as he strode to the platform at the International Conference in Support of Independence for Puerto Rico, held in 1979 in Mexico City. Joining him there were three other Nationalists recently released from prison—Irvin Flores, Lolita Lebrón and Oscar Collazo. They had spent the longest term in prison of any other political prisoners. There, before representatives of some fifty-one countries, they were seen as the embodiment of the directive of their teacher Albizu Campos to exercise valor and sacrifice. We found Rafael friendly and easily approachable. By the time we met him again in Puerto Rico at patriotic observances, we were embraced as old friends.

Rafael Cancel knew at the age of seven that he was an *independentista*. His father, Rafael Cancel Rodríguez, was president of the Mayagüez Nationalist Party and took him to meetings. His

father had been the victim of political repression, had been imprisoned and had lost everything. With the help of his brothers, he established a furniture business which Rafael now controls.

In 1937, his father and stepmother went to Ponce for the celebration of the abolition of slavery and to march for the freedom of political prisoners. One hour before the parade, permission was cancelled by the Ponce mayor at the demand of Governor Blanton Winship. Nevertheless, with the singing of *La Borinqueña*, the procession started out on its way to the Cathedral. Armed police attacked, giving the marchers no opportunity to defend themselves. Twenty-one died, and over a hundred were wounded in what came to be known as the "Ponce Massacre." The white nurse's uniform of Rafael's stepmother became soaked with blood as she crawled over bodies in search of her husband. Miraculously, they both managed to return home unharmed.

Shocked by the incident, young Rafael committed his first political act in refusing to salute the American flag in school.

Participation in a school strike shortly before his graduation protested the requirement of giving school instruction in English. He was expelled, and went to San Juan to finish his schooling.

Los Indómitos, by Antonio Gil de Lamadrid Navarro, relates how Rafael once helped a beggar with his heavy load collected from a dump. Upon following him home, he became aware of the slum area. A man of deep compassion and sensitivity, he started a school there teaching reading, writing, arithmetic and social orientation.

When he reached draft age, he refused, along with seven others, to accept the authority of the U.S. government and register for the draft. There was the danger, also, of being conscripted for the Korean War. This drew him a two-year sentence at Tallahassee Prison.

Eventually, he migrated to New York City, finding work in a shoe factory. In 1953 he appeared before the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations. He testified that, despite the United States' assertion that since the formation of the Puerto Rican Commonwealth, Puerto Rico was no longer a colony, its political status was essentially the same. That assertion prevailed for some twenty years before the Decolonization Committee was convinced of the colonial status and began passing resolutions for the independence of Puerto Rico.

The following year, Rafael joined with Irvin Flores, Lolita Lebrón and Andrés Figueroa Cordero in the demonstration in Congress, the four of them firing at the legislators in a desperate plea for the recognition of their right for freedom. This drew him an eighty-four-year sentence for "an attempt to overthrow the government by force and violence."

"When I went to prison," he is quoted in *Los Indómitos* as saying, "I was already formed. I had character and was sure of why I was there and for what I was struggling." Even so, the first three years were particularly difficult. Being an independent person, he found it hard to adjust. "Either I break the prison, or the prison breaks me, and I'm not going to let it break me."

He spent time in Leavenworth, Alcatraz and in Marion, where he was held for eighteen months in the “hole.” He read every book he could find on sociology, and learned to play the guitar. He witnessed and protested prison brutality and racism.

One particularly pathetic incident related in *Los Indómitos* was the visit of his wife, who had been his high school sweetheart. She had worked to save up enough for the long trip to Kansas only to find Rafael in the “hole.” After three days of agonized waiting she was allowed only one hour with him.

Rafael’s refusal to accept parole delayed his release. But the day finally came. He was welcomed back in Puerto Rico as a hero, and with shouts of “¡Unidad!”

“Now I’m going to do something that I’ve waited twenty-five years to do. Go among my people and greet them.” He was fearful that he might have lost his human sensitivity amid the hostility and violence of prison life. But his emotional reunion with his loved ones proved otherwise. Throngs surrounded him and lifted him up on their shoulders. Was it merely a coincidence that the Nationalists were welcomed home on the very day that Puerto Rico was celebrating the birthday of Pedro Albizu Campos?

As with many Latin American patriots, Rafael is a poet. A musical production of his poetry, “*Por Las Calles de Mi Patria*,” has been enthusiastically received in Puerto Rico and in the United States. The poems are those he had sent to his father while in prison. He had thought them lost, and was surprised to find them published by his father. The musical production is dedicated to those active in the struggle for freedom.

He continues to carry the cause of freedom to other countries, and returns occasionally to the United States on speaking tours in behalf of Puerto Rican political prisoners.

In a collection of the ideology of Rafael Cancel, we find the following:

The revolutionary is a man thrown from his home into combat for his highest concepts of loyalty to his people.

The strong man doesn’t lack weaknesses: he simply overcomes them.

We don’t beg heaven for what we can obtain struggling.

Irvin Flores Rodríguez

Irvin Flores’ return to his beloved Puerto Rico was greeted by a wildly cheering crowd. Flores, Rafael Cancel, and Lolita Lebrón had served 25 years in prison for their attack on Congress in 1954.

At the airport, the welcoming crowds waved Puerto Rican flags, joined in the national anthem, "*Borinquen, the land where I was born,*" and raised clenched fists.

Crowds followed the Nationalists from the airport to the cemetery where Pedro Albizu Campos was buried. As a thousand people entered the cemetery, the gates were closed. Hundreds more stood on the walls.

I met Irvin Flores only a few months after his release in 1979 at the International Conference in Support of the Independence of Puerto Rico, held in Mexico City. I came to know him better in Puerto Rico as we met at patriotic observances and in the "land rescue" community of Villa Sin Miedo. By then he was married and living in Bayamón, where I was able to pin him down to an interview over a lunch of rice and beans.

Born into a poor family in Cabo Rojo, Flores was orphaned at the age of eight by the death of his mother. He and five brothers and sisters were raised by an aunt.

After high school he attended a vocational school, where he studied electricity and tailoring. While there, he chanced upon a group of students discussing independence. Among them was Rafael Cancel, who invited him to join "Puerto Rican Youth for Independence."

Later he joined the Nationalist Party and became a member of its cadet corps. His first meeting with Albizu Campos he described as a very emotional experience. Sensing his zeal for independence, Albizu encouraged him to take up public speaking.

In the 1950 uprising, he joined the Mayagüez contingent in their attack on the police station. Though 3,000 Nationalists were arrested, Flores escaped to the mountains.

Holding to the Nationalist policy of refusing to cooperate with the United States government, Flores declined to register for the draft. To avoid conscription, he went into hiding, moving from one farm to another one step ahead of the FBI. Eventually they caught up with him. He was imprisoned, and found himself again in company with Rafael Cancel. Upon his release, the Army refused to accept him, considering him a subversive.

Flores left Puerto Rico for New York City in order to escort his nephew. He remained there, working in a TV cabinet factory. Again he met with Cancel, and also with Lolita Lebrón and Andrés Figueroa Cordero, with whom he prepared for the attack on Congress. It was planned as a cry of outrage over the Congressional Law 600 which declared that since Puerto Rico now had its own constitution, it was no longer a colony. To the Nationalists it was clear and evident that the political status of Puerto Rico had not in reality changed. The group reached Washington, D.C. on one-way tickets.

Entering the House of Representatives as tourists, they seated themselves in the gallery. At a signal by Lolita, they began firing. The congressmen scrambled to cover. Some were wounded. In the confusion that followed, Flores walked away, stopping to look at statues of American patriots who had fought for the independence of their country, left the building, and taxied downtown. At the bus station, however, he and some Mexicans were picked up by the police, who had just learned that four Nationalists were involved but only three were apprehended. A loose bullet in his pocket was a giveaway.

Los Indómitos describes his prison experience. He spent his time studying English, and reading biographies and books on history and philosophy. He learned to play the guitar and tried his hand at painting. For the first thirteen years he had no visitors and very little correspondence.

He was fifty-three years old when finally, through national and international pressure, President Carter commuted the sentences of the Nationalists, including that of Oscar Collazo. Public opinion indicated an awareness of the farce of feigning support of human rights while detaining political prisoners. Andrés Figueroa had already been released because of terminal cancer, and later died.

The Nationalists were reunited in Chicago at the home of Rev. José Torres, whose wife, son and daughter-in-law are now serving sentences in prison for the cause of independence. There, in the emotion of a boisterous reception, Flores delivered his first public speech. He in no way repented his actions. "Independence will come when the people resolve to fight for it and not just wish for it."

In New York City they were scheduled to appear at the Church of the Apostle San Pablo. A hundred or so were expected. Instead, seven thousand crowded into the church and overflowed onto the sidewalk.

Then, on to Puerto Rico. His work there was now to seek to unify the independence movement. He set about interviewing its leaders in an attempt to find issues on which they could all agree, despite the wide range of ideology from revolutionary and socialist to bourgeois. Response at first was negative, but gradually, meeting together united them on such issues as national liberation, use of natural resources, military conscription, the militarization of Puerto Rico. Celebrations commemorating patriotic holidays also brought them together. In time, the Comité Unitario Independentista swelled to twenty-one chapters throughout Puerto Rico.

Wherever Irvin Flores goes, he is greeted with handshakes, hugs, requests for autographs and the greeting, "Thank you for your sacrifice."

Doña Consuelo de Corretjer

We saw poet/revolutionary Juan Antonio Corretjer on a number of occasions, always conspicuous for his black beret, and regal bearing. He was ever present at rallies and meetings of CUCRE (Committee Against Repression). It was not difficult to get his consent for an interview. But something always came up. He was off to Mexico on behalf of imprisoned William Morales. He was in the middle of an important article. And, finally, he was too ill to see us. Knowing him to be an outspoken revolutionary, the gentle tenderness of his last reply struck me. "I'm so sorry. My wife

and I did want to meet you.” And then came news of his death, January, 1985, throwing all of Puerto Rico into deep mourning. His life had been one of constant struggle for the freedom of his country, for which he had suffered years of imprisonment. “Commandante Juan Antonio Corretjer, *¡Presente!*” was the universal cry.

Rafael Cancel wrote a beautiful tribute to Juan Antonio. “And do you know something else that I admired in you? To see you seated on the benches of the public plazas with your Doña Consuelo at your side, and to see you rise with all the pain of your shoulder and walk towards the friends who were coming to greet you, not waiting for them to walk to you—these were little gestures of sublime greatness.”

A description of one of his books of poetry speaks of its beautiful balance between the classical and the modern. “He transports us into the world of his love for Doña Consuelo, opening his collection of poems with some verses of Homer, in which he speaks of the nobility and strength of husbands and wives when in heart and mind they are one.” Such was the relationship between Juan Antonio and Doña Consuelo.

Doña Consuelo, in turn, spoke in an interview published in *Claridad* of the indestructible love between her and Juan Antonio that carried them through hunger, sickness, persecution, and every crisis. There were moments of danger, too, when, returning from a meeting of the Socialist League, a bullet barely missed the forehead of Juan Antonio.

In a *Claridad* tribute to Doña Consuelo, she is acclaimed as a heroine. “This extraordinary woman, by her intelligence and sensibility and valor holds a place of honor in the line of combatants for National Independence.” It speaks of her great sense of humor that helped her survive in the struggle for freedom.

I finally did get to meet Doña Consuelo de Corretjer. I saw her first at a welcoming dinner for Pablo Marcano, political prisoner who had just been released. With her was a young psychologist, Iris Rodríguez, who promised to take me to her home in Guayanabo. (I later learned that Iris’ house had been searched during the August 30 arrests.)

A narrow, woody road led to the simple cottage of Doña Consuelo. There, with suitcase packed, was José Luis Rodríguez. The neatly groomed young man of twenty-four gave his quiet farewells. He was off to Chicago to face trial for sedition. It was a moment of apprehension and sadness.

As we partook of cafe con leche, Doña Consuelo spoke, in a low, quiet voice, of her first contacts with Nationalists, with Pedro Albizu Campos and with Juan Antonio, who had served in prison with Don Pedro and later became Secretary General of the Nationalist Party.

She was born in Santurce, the seventh in a family of ten. Her conservative Episcopalian parents failed to understand that it was their own teachings of the principles of justice that led her to embrace the Nationalist cause of independence, and eventually to enter the Communist Party. Her parents had taught her to think, regardless of their own convictions.

Two events in the 1930s influenced her thinking: the Spanish Civil War and the imprisonment of Puerto Rican Nationalists. It was then that she began her work of liberation.

One of her activities had been to open the Betances School in order to further an understanding of Puerto Rican national heritage. Students would bring their children to learn what was never presented in the public schools. In keeping with the effort to destroy the independence movement, the school was finally closed in 1950.

She, as well as Juan Antonio, served time in prison. She was charged, in 1969, with conspiracy against the United States government. Of the eight charges, she was sentenced for only one: illegal possession of arms. She was held in maximum security, apart from her fellow socialists.

At one time she studied art, painting and music and thought of becoming a concert pianist. But she was directed into political action.

Juan Antonio, in time, left the Nationalist Party to found the “Liga Socialista Puertorriqueña.” One of his primary concerns was the support of Puerto Rican political prisoners—primarily the so-called POWs (prisoners of war), and those who resisted questioning by the Federal Grand Jury.

As a result of their activities, their phone, along with thousands of others in Puerto Rico, was tapped. Proof of this came once when someone calling the Corretjer family found himself connect with the police department. And their daughter was once talking with her daughter by phone. Upon closing the conversation, she lifted the receiver again only to hear the entire conversation played back. While going into homes to give piano lessons, Doña Consuelo would find herself followed by undercover agents.

Along with refusal to recognize U.S.-controlled elections, Juan Antonio and Doña Consuelo refused any government aid, such as welfare or social security. They eked out a living with Doña Consuelo’s teaching, and the sale of Juan Antonio’s books. Doña Consuelo continues to subsist with dignity on a very meager income, accepting gifts of clothing, and the free use of a house. Her life is dedicated to service rather than to self-gratification. She is content to live on faith rather than to be beholden to U.S. charity.

Doña Consuelo accepts the possibility of armed revolution to confront the violence of the U.S. military takeover and occupation. She believes that in time hunger, unemployment, the militarization of Puerto Rico, the presence of nuclear weapons, and the threat of Puerto Ricans being sent to kill blood brothers in Central America will create enough anger for armed revolt.

As I commented on the number of poets involved in revolutionary thought, she remarked that Latin Americans are poets by nature. One sees this in the number of poets in the Sandinista leadership in Nicaragua, and with such Puerto Rican patriots as Juan Antonio Corretjer, Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel, Francisco Matos Paoli and many others.

Meanwhile, Doña Consuelo, despite a recent stroke, carries on the political idealism of Juan Antonio, the publishing of his works, and creating of her home a shrine where visitors come for inspiration and support in the cause of freedom.

José Luis Rodríguez

Twenty-four-year-old José Luis Rodríguez made good use of his freedom between conviction and sentencing, to join in a *Grito de Lares* celebration in San Francisco. He had been out on \$25,000 bail since his arrest in Chicago two years ago, and had finally received a conviction of “seditious conspiracy.” He knew it could bring him a sentence of up to twenty years.

Handsome, well-groomed, quiet and modest in manner, he lent little credence to attempts to brand him as a terrorist and a threat to the United States government. His speech at the celebration dealt mostly with the importance of the 1868 Lares rebellion against Spanish colonialism. He could have been a Thomas Jefferson or a Patrick Henry speaking out for freedom in those almost forgotten days of our own struggle for independence.

I had met José Luis at the home of Doña Consuelo. It was inspiring to know that not all Puerto Rican patriots lived in Puerto Rico. New York City and Chicago are the two main centers of nationalism, because of the consolidation of Puerto Rican communities. There is some activity in San Francisco, but Puerto Rican families there are more widely separated.

José was born in the activist-oriented Puerto Rican section of Chicago. With a B.A. from the University of Illinois in political science, and a minor in Latin American history, he chose to do volunteer community service. He tutored students with reading problems and helped the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in its efforts to preserve the Puerto Rican national heritage.

On trial with José Luis had been three others, including Alejandrina Torres, 47-year-old wife of a United Church of Christ minister. For two years she was confined in the women’s mind control unit of Lexington Prison, Kentucky. Twenty-three-hours-a-day confinement and sensory deprivation took their toll on her health. She experienced dizziness, depression and weight loss. The purpose was to reduce her and two other political prisoners to a state of submission essential for their ideological conversion and hopefully to the point of becoming desperate enough to destroy themselves.

The others arrested had taken the position of prisoners of war, maintaining that the United States had illegally and militarily invaded Puerto Rico and that they were in their full rights to resist. José Luis himself had taken the position of political prisoner. There were, at that time, fifteen POWs and ten political prisoners. Though not a member of the clandestine armed struggle, José Luis declared himself to be in full support of it, maintaining that any method of liberation was justifiable. In view of his taking a different stand than the others, he was given a suspended sentence with five years probation. The other three, Edwín Cortés, Alejandrina Torres and Alberta Rodríguez were given thirty-five years each.

His plans are now to continue his involvement with the independence movement, particularly in support of the incarcerated POWs and other political prisoners.

Alberto Rodríguez Santana

In my correspondence with Puerto Rican political prisoners, one of the most vocal was Alberto Rodríguez. I decided to ask about his background. He replied in some detail from his prison cell in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

“I worked as a teacher-counselor at Northeastern Illinois University,” he wrote. “I worked with students who needed special help to stay in school, because of academic deficiencies. Sometimes the problems were financial, family, or personal. I loved the job.

“In the community I worked with a group that created a culture center. I also helped organize several community news-sheets. Even from here I write for them. I also worked with the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican POWs (prisoners of war). I worked around issues of repression, particularly police brutality. At the time of my arrest, I had been active in community work in Chicago for about five years.

“Before that I was active at the University of Illinois while I was studying there. I worked against the Vietnam war, pro-Cuba, pro-Allende, Pro-Angola. Also around Puerto Rico, Culebra, Vieques, etc. It was in high school, however, that I became active for Puerto Rican independence. It was around the time of the Young Lords.

“I came from a family of fourteen. My father came from Puerto Rico but my family moved to Chicago before my first birthday. I come from a very strong Catholic background. Religion was a very big part of my life in my early years.

“My commitment to the use of revolutionary actions to further political objectives comes from my firm belief that, faced with oppression, colonial subjugation, and inhumanity, one must resist or else perish as a people. I look at the experience of Native Indians in this country and fear the same happening to my people.”

Alberto told a story he had heard from an elderly Mexican living on his block. “There was once a man who struggled for independence. He was a man of such principles and ideas that the oppressors could not handle him. Knowing the love this patriot had for his father, they arrested the father. The oppressors threatened to kill his father if the patriot did not surrender. The patriot’s answer was that while he loved his father with all his heart, his country came first.” Alberto said this story had never left him. Later this love of country compelled him to act for justice and freedom.

Alberto was arrested in Chicago for “seditious conspiracy” against the government of the United States, along with Alejandrina Torres, Edwín Cortés and José Luis Rodríguez. In June of 1953, the arrest came in what he termed a “Gestapo raid” on the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in an attempt to cripple the entire independence movement in Chicago. Seditious conspiracy is the agreement among two or more people to oppose the authority of the government by force. In 1901, the United States passed a sedition act against the Filipino people who were waging guerilla

war on United States occupation. Since 1937, this charge has been used excessively against the Puerto Rican independence movement. Puerto Ricans maintain that such a charge is impossible, since Puerto Rico belongs to the United States, but is not a part of it. Many Puerto Ricans in the independence movement deny any legitimate authority of the United States over them, and believe that they have a right to oppose United States authority by any means necessary.

In writing for *Libertad*, Alberto describes imprisonment as creating conditions aimed at the psychological destruction of the POWs. He finds total repression there and the dominance of the lowest human and moral values. Racism is encouraged, working a hardship on Puerto Ricans. Alberto sees the need of POWs to maintain the spirit and fortitude necessary for liberation. "Everything we do, think, study and plan is for the day we return to the struggle," he writes.

He finds prison officials attempting to create conditions and situations in order to justify their own violence. This the POWs must avoid, adopting a policy of stoic resistance.

He recalls the words of the Irish patriot who died on the 74th day of his fast in prison. "It is not those who can inflict the most, but those who can suffer the most who will conquer."

He sees much of the struggle for liberation as nonviolent: workers' strikes, students' demands for better education and the democratization of universities, protests around environmental issues, governmental corruption, militarism and state repression. But increasing repressive violent response by the colonial regime will convert those peaceful struggles into violent ones, he warns.

He sees the necessity of all independence forces uniting. "United States imperialism is unleashing a wave of ruthless repression," he warns, "which will not abate until the movement is destroyed or we destroy them."

A recent communication from Alberto relates with delight that his wife and two children are moving from Puerto Rico to Chicago, where they can visit more often. "Even after three years," he writes, "I have not completely accustomed myself to the reality that my children are growing up without me. I try to continue to be a part of their lives, but it is very difficult. As for my wife, she is very supportive of me and in agreement with my position."

He speaks of the immorality of United States' acts, such as dropping the bomb on Hiroshima and funding the Nicaraguan contras. "But in face of their immorality, we must seek a higher morality. For us to become immoral ourselves, even if justified by their acts, we truly become no better than they."

Norberto Cintrón Fiallo

We first heard of Norberto Cintrón while he was at the Metropolitan Prison, New York City. Norberto had committed no crime. He had been sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment for

refusing to collaborate with the Federal Grand Jury. As a staunch *independentista*, he refused to recognize its jurisdiction over him.

Norberto's zeal for independence stemmed from family involvement in revolutionary liberation causes in the Dominican Republic, where his mother was a citizen. He was born there, and his brother, Frederico, in Puerto Rico. His Puerto Rican father was a member of the Nationalist Party of Pedro Albizu Campos. Family conversation often centered around such heroes as Betances, Bolívar, and San Martín. He was taught to love his adopted country, Puerto Rico, and resist its domination by the United States.

Starting out as a factory worker, Norberto entered union activities. For twelve years he served as president of *Gremio Puertorriqueño de Trabajadores*, working not only for fair wages but for safe working conditions.

Being a union organizer subjected Norberto to all sorts of harassment. American corporations were doing their utmost to destroy unions, since part of the enticement to open branches in Puerto Rico was the abundance of cheap labor. A bomb was once placed in front of his office. His life was threatened. He was arrested on a false charge of having robbed a bank. He served six months on this charge before being exonerated. Police then sought to involve him in the Sabana Seco shooting of United States' Navy men, though he was attending a union meeting at the time. Then came the call to answer questions of the Grand Jury. Upon refusal to cooperate, he was sentenced to eleven months.

Originally formed for the protection of citizens' rights, the Grand Jury now collaborates with the FBI in the harassment of anyone opposing the colonial status of Puerto Rico—mainly *independentistas* and union organizers. Refusal to answer to the Grand Jury originally brought a sentence for civil contempt. But Norberto's brother, Frederico, was later sentenced for criminal contempt, which brought a much stiffer sentence.

In Norberto's statement to the Grand Jury, he told of his dedication to the establishment of a Republic, where there would be neither inequality, nor injustice, nor exploitation of man by man; no abuse of power, a country free from colonial dependency.

Upon Norberto's release, the job he secured was suddenly withdrawn. The company found out that he had been a union organizer. Wherever he turned, he met with the usual reluctance to hire an *independentista*. Fortunately, his wife, charming, talented, and stunningly beautiful, was able to hold her teaching position, despite her *independentista* sympathies. But Norberto's chances of employment were still slim.

Norberto published a collection of his thoughts and poems while in prison. They reveal a sensitive and compassionate soul. In an introduction, his mother, also a teacher, writes, "Do you want to know who Norberto is? Read, and you will know. You will know what he struggles for, for you, for me, for himself, for all. Read, and you will know a man with integrity—brave and straightforward, forty years of an exemplary life. A great son, loving husband, and sweet father,

defender of country and of the humble.... Norberto, my son, my life, my enchantment, my all. Country calls you.”

To his parents he writes, “I am happy to know that I am the son of such marvelous beings, so noble, so honest, so good and understanding. You are the beginning of what my children will be tomorrow.”

To his young children, Leila and Amaury, he writes, “You are for me like water for the fish. To think about you is to think about country, struggle—struggle to raise people to security and liberation. I love you. It would be easier to be with you every day, to buy you toys, to watch TV. My children, life teaches, and errors are committed. But there are errors which cannot be pardoned. To abandon the struggle, to be a traitor is unpardonable. I prefer death to a life in disgrace.”

To his wife he writes, “Sad? I won’t deny it. Nostalgia? Why not? Melancholy? Of course. Desiring you? You know it. Why deny that it is hard to be away from you. My sad heart clamors for you. I never thought that our separation would cause such an effect, even knowing that we continue to be Eternal Love.”

To his daughter, after her visit with him in prison:

And with your sad look you will ask, “Why, Papa? Tell me, Papa.”

And I will only embrace you

And with a tear will tell you, “Some day you will know.”

Sylvia Maldonado

Two bright young students from the University of Puerto Rico came to see us, eager to share their concerns. One, Sylvia Maldonado, was majoring in sociology. The other, Orlando Fernández, was a student of philosophy. Refusing to be shut in by the narrow world of academics, and courageously speaking out despite the threat of surveillance and harassment, they were providing leadership in building an awareness on campus of the colonial situation.

Their opposition to the militarization of Puerto Rico was not necessarily from a pacifist position, but rather from a realization of how Puerto Ricans are being victimized by our military. Their concern was for the increased activity in the seven United States military bases, which they felt threatened their safety. They foresaw that Puerto Rico could become a target in the event of a nuclear war because of the storage of nuclear weapons there, or a possible victim in the event of a nuclear accident. They saw campus recruitment as a means of preparing Puerto Rico for military intervention in Central America. Unfortunately, the Solomon Act was forcing young people to register for the draft.

Sylvia was one of the organizers of *Estudiantes Alertas de Peligro Nuclear en Puerto Rico*, founded in August of 1984. Leading up to this was the nuclear research carried out by a special commission of the Puerto Rican Bar Association. Published by the Association, it led to a resolution opposing nuclear weapons in Puerto Rico, and a basis of information for the campus organization. Its massive research of some fifty-six pages was picked up by religious organizations and a branch of Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Campus organizations are particularly concerned over the threat of United States military invasion of Nicaragua. They see the aftereffects of the Vietnam War, with a third of the Puerto Rican population affected in some way: a thousand dead, the veterans hospital filled with the wounded, loss of relatives, mental problems. They see evidence that Puerto Ricans are already playing active roles in the United States military in Honduras.

The Student General Council, the largest student organization, responded to the threat by placing tables on campus carrying information on Nicaragua. "Voices for Peace" leaflets were distributed for signatures to be sent to the United Nations, an activity sparked by Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and George Wald.

On August 30, 1985, 300 FBI agents descended on Puerto Rico, arresting thirteen *independentistas* there, one in Mexico and one in the United States.

I didn't recognize any of the names of those arrested, but among the forty or so homes that were searched was that of Sylvia. I wrote asking her for a description of the search. My translation of her reply is as follows:

"At 6:05 Friday, August 30, a disturbance of cries and noise in the hallway of our apartment awoke me. My mother came out of the bathroom and saw armed men, camouflaged, with bullet-proof vests, pointing large weapons at her. They told her to put her hands on her head and if she moved, they would shoot. They asked her if there was anyone else in the house. She replied that her two daughters, my sister and myself, were there. She told the men that they were in their bedrooms. They opened the doors violently and made us go out. Nor did they let us get dressed. They lined us all up in the hall with our hands on our heads and took us into the living room, where they registered us. Then they commanded us to sit down.

"Some began to ask questions of my mother while others searched the house. I asked for the identification of the agent who was directing. He showed it to me from a distance, but didn't let me see his name. I asked for permission to get dressed, which he said I could, but under supervision.

"Then they told us that we had to leave because they had an order to search the apartment. We decided that we wanted to stay. We asked if we could call our lawyer. The agent in charge asked us who our lawyer was. We told him that our father was, who lived next door. He said very disrespectfully, 'Ah, that lawyer! But the same thing is happening to him.' We asked if we could

call him. He told us we could. We then asked my father, Roberto Maldonado, if we had to leave the house. He told us that legally we didn't have to, that we could stay in order to prevent their later claiming that they found something that wasn't there." (Sylvia's father was later arrested on March 21, 1986.)

"We asked the agent for the search warrant and he replied that it had not yet arrived. We told the agent that we were told we could stay in the house. He replied that it didn't matter what our lawyer told us, we had to leave. He cut off our telephone connection. We insisted on staying, but they threatened us with large weapons. They told us that if we did not leave they would arrest us and take us to court. I thought that my life was in danger. We left. They wouldn't let my mother take her purse or her keys.

"I had to go down with the agents so that they could register our car. I then went to the neighbors' house and explained to them what was happening. I returned to my apartment to tell the agents that what they were doing was illegal and that I had the right to remain there. A Puerto Rican agent said to me, 'It is illegal, so what! Now go away.' I asked him his name, but he didn't want to tell me. I made note of their physical descriptions and left.

"I went to the house of my father and his wife Coquí Santaliz, a well known author. They were going through the same situation, but in a more violent form. Coquí came out of the bedroom after hearing all the noise. One of the FBI agents, who carried a large weapon, was trembling while forcing her to lie on the floor. My father tried to calm him because he could have killed her.

"They were in our house until 6:00 p.m. When we returned, they had taken materials of Students Alert to Nuclear Danger in Puerto Rico; a big cloth map of points in which were located places in Puerto Rico related to nuclear weapons; a cloth map on which were visualized the difference between the power of the nuclear explosives [dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki], and the equivalent in the nuclear weapons of today; names and addresses of students with whom the anti-nuclear group had contact; a directory of anti-nuclear and pro-peace organizations with whom the 'Alert' had contact; the money of the group, and other things.

"Of my personal things, they took all the savings books, credit cards, \$360 in travelers checks, all the cash, an address book of friends in different parts of the world. They also took, among other things: books, two typewriters, writings, the manuscript of an unpublished novel, pictures from all over the island Coquí had taken for her newspaper articles and which were an historical file, everything in the darkroom, including unexposed film.

"As coordinator of the 'Alert' group I want to denounce the illegal search of my home and of my family without search warrants or arrest warrants.

"I wonder if the anti-nuclear struggle in Puerto Rico is illegal. If not, why did they take materials from our groups? The only thing that occurs to me is that the United States government is afraid of the anti-nuclear struggle because they are promoting every day the creation of more nuclear weapons.

"My father, Roberto José Maldonado, is president of the Puerto Rican Human Rights Institute. After the August 30 arrests, the Institute became involved in defending and helping the

arrested and their families. For years my father had defended people whose human rights were violated. He defended successfully over 3,000 youngsters who refused to serve for the U.S. in Vietnam during the sixties and seventies. At the moment of his arrest, the Institute was organizing conferences, forums and activities for human rights.

“Today [early 1987],” Sylvia added, “the materials taken by the FBI had still not been returned, neither mine nor Coqui’s.”

Now graduated from UPR, Sylvia works full time at the Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace. Part of her work, she writes, is to give speeches. She is also in charge of the Documentation Center.

Though Sylvia’s parents are pro-independence, she is the only activist of the family. Too young to have had personal contact with Albizu Campos, she feels strongly the inspiration of his spirit and his teachings.

Jorge A. Farinacci García

I did not know personally any of the people arrested in the August 30 1985 raids by the FBI. But I met the wife of Jorge Farinacci, Tatí Fernos, who was touring the country in defense of those arrested. Not having met Farinacci himself, I am taking advantage of two previously published interviews with him—one in the April, 1986 issue of *Libertad*, the other in *Free Puerto Rico*, a publication of the New Movement in Solidarity With Puerto Rican Independence and Socialism.

In *Libertad*, published by the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, he was asked how he first became involved in the independence movement. His reply was, “I became active in the late sixties, while attending the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras. I was a member of various student organizations, among them the Federation of University Students (FUPI). During my college days, I participated, along with many other *compañeros*, in the successful campaign against the draft and the ROTC’s presence on campus. Because of my political involvement, I was suspended from college and faced other disciplinary measures that affected my studies somewhat.

“After graduating from law school in 1973, I dedicated my efforts to aiding the Puerto Rican labor movement. I was an attorney for the Teamsters Union of Puerto Rico, where, since early 1979, we had fought a long battle to oust the union’s corrupt leadership. We were finally successful two years later.

“In addition, along with other *compañeros*, I founded the journal *Pensamiento Crítico*, to which we have dedicated the majority of our political efforts to date. Throughout the year we have been subject to persecution by the FBI and federal government due to our pro-independence militancy. For example, in 1981 we were subpoenaed by the Grand Jury, and the following year accused of an alleged bank robbery.”

He then spoke of the August 30 arrests. “The immediate cause was our alleged participation in an action in which unknown persons appropriated \$7.2 million from a Wells Fargo armored truck in Hartford, Connecticut. This action was later claimed by the Macheteros.

“However, the real reason, which is obvious to our people, is that this aggression responds to the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Puerto Rican revolutionary movement, at a time when the world capitalist crisis manifests direct efforts in the political, economic and social phenomena throughout the Central American and Caribbean regions, particularly in Puerto Rico.”

In a press interview upon his return to Puerto Rico on bail, Farinacci explained the arrests as a means of inflaming the public against the independence movement. As for the claim that he was a member of the Macheteros, who had taken the blame for the Wells Fargo robbery, he described them as a patriotic organization struggling for the independence of their country, but that he was not a member.

He described the conditions to which he was subjected following his arrest. “To exercise our right to work for our own defense, we demanded the establishment of the necessary facilities. The conditions of confinement in the Otisville Federal Correctional Institution violated this right. Since our imprisonment we were held in segregation and allowed only one or two hours of recreation. We had no contact with each other and were totally isolated from the rest of the prison population. Other factors, such as the long distance between the prison and the location of our families and defense attorneys, extremely harsh security restrictions ranging from handcuffs to shackles and chains made life at Otisville unbearable.”

They eventually were transferred to the New York Metropolitan Correctional Center. Held on “preventive detention,” all but one of the “Hartford 16” were eventually granted bail. Farinacci is out on a \$1 million bail, while one, as of April, 1988, still remains in prison on the assumption of “high risk of escape.” Preventive detention was achieved after years of efforts on the part of the Reagan administration. A new law, “Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984,” was finally passed and signed by the President. It authorizes holding accused persons not yet convicted of a crime without right to bail. This has been challenged in the courts, with the result that bail cannot be denied on the basis of “dangerousness.” To date they have still not come to trial.

In the interview by *Free Puerto Rico*, he was asked how he would assess the configuration of political forces in Puerto Rico at present. Farinacci replied, “It would be very nice to say that the independence movement of Puerto Rico represents the majority of the people, but that is not correct. We would say that we do represent the most active and the most conscious activists in Puerto Rico regarding the rights of our people. In the working class movement, in the organized labor movement, the presence of the independence movement is very strong and dominant, and

that is the case in some professional groups. In most public workers' organizations, the leadership of the unions are *independentistas*, as in the Federation of Teachers, the health industry employees, the electrical workers, the Sewer and Water Authority, lawyer groups and public workers.

"In the electoral and student sector of our community, the presence of the independence movement is very strong. I would say at this moment the independence movement has a stronghold on at least 10% of the population, and influence on more than 50%. Obviously that does not reflect directly in elections because of many reasons. For example, even if you take the colonial elections, which do not represent and do not measure at all the strength of the independence movement, the part of the elections that represents the independence movement got around 5% for governor and 15% of the legislature. If you understand that Puerto Rico is a colony, that the United States has tried with all its resources to destroy our nationhood, to destroy the independence movement, then this strength is one of the things we can be proud of. And at this moment the independence movement is growing."

As to the case of the "Hartford 16," Farinacci declares, "We have to state to the court and to the people of Puerto Rico and the people of the U.S. that we are not guilty of what we have been accused. We understand that Puerto Rican militants, activists and fighters for the independence of their country cannot be guilty of anything when they are fighting for the liberty of their country.... We want to denounce the colonial character of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S., and how we have been subjected to oppression and exploitation by the U.S. as a colonial power for almost 100 years.... This is going to help show the world the real face of colonialism, which is the face of totalitarianism and definitely not the face of democracy."

[Quotes from *Libertad and Free Puerto Rico* used by permission.]

Tinti Deyá and Alexis Massol

"The '2020 Plan' will mean the virtual destruction of the Puerto Rican Nation. It envisions the construction of eleven military/industrial parks, strip-mining the center of the island, and elimination of most of the island's population. This is genocide." So read a circular distributed in San Francisco by the New Movement in Solidarity With Puerto Rican Independence.

This sounded so far out, so sensational, that I decided to go directly to the source of the organized action against "2020." The Taller de Arte Y Cultura in Adjuntas is located in the

mountains of central Puerto Rico, whose beautiful scenery could well be in jeopardy if their claims were true.

A gathering assembled in the Palenque Bookstore of Adjuntas to greet us, and to share their concern for the exploitation of their area's countryside. Alexis Massol, civil engineer, unfurled a large map copied from one discovered in the governor's office. Eleven circles pinpointed the industrial parks planned to process minerals mined in the interior. Tinti Deyá de Massol explained to us the significance of the program, scheduled for completion in the year 2020. Her husband speaks little English, but Tinti, an eighth-grade English teacher, could communicate with us fluently.

Tinti and Alexis Massol, as directors of the Taller de Arte Y Cultura, spearhead the protest against open-pit mining and the whole "2020" concept. Speaking at colleges, high schools and churches throughout Puerto Rico, they attempt to arouse Puerto Ricans to the threat of a military/industrial take-over of their country. They see the plan already in progress, with twenty-four dams planned, in addition to the huge one already in construction in a suburb of Ponce. Pipelines have already been constructed to provide water for the mining and processing of minerals.

We were taken by jeep up into the mountains on a scary roller coaster ride over steep, one-way dirt roads into areas where we could see exploratory shafts. We met with an elderly rancher, whose thirty acres richly planted in fruit trees and coffee could well be taken up by Amax or Kennecott, as was the neighboring ranch. "Where would you go?" we asked him, and he shook his head sadly. 37,000 acres have already been purchased, waiting for the appropriate time to begin mining, we were told. In the 1960 explorations, seventeen deposits of copper, gold and silver had been discovered in the Adjuntas area. In other areas, cobalt, nickel and chrome have been discovered, strategic minerals for atomic weapons.

It is interesting to note that there is a greater decline in population in the mountains than in other areas; also, that land in the mountains can no longer be subdivided and sold. It would appear as if the land was being deliberately cleared, so that the mining industries could move in.

The Taller de Arte Y Cultura has been a natural center of concern. Founded for the defense of cultural, natural, environmental and human resources, it serves as an educational center. Tinti and Alexis own the Palenque Bookstore, which is stocked with Puerto Rican literature. But their educational work extends beyond Puerto Rico. Both have been on lecture tours in the United States, and have addressed the United Nations Decolonization Committee on the "2020" issue. Their book, *De la Deformación Y la Destrucción*, is a "scientific-patriotic analysis of the proposed project of exploitation of minerals in Puerto Rico."

The petite Tinti is a fighter, in her quiet way, not only for the preservation of the Puerto Rican mountains, but for the independence of her country. Influenced by her father, and by readings and meetings, she was won over to the cause. As a teacher, she deplores an educational system that encourages cultural and economic dependency upon the United States. Books used in the schools, she tells us, are censored by the United States Department of Education and carry little

information on Puerto Rican history and culture. She resents, also, the admission of military recruiters into the schools to entice students into military service for United States wars.

Even in the event of independence, Tinti would choose to protect the beautiful mountain scenery from the scars of mining and encourage alternate, replaceable resources such as flowers for perfume, wood for houses and crafts, land areas for the production of food. "Natural resources belong to all Puerto Ricans," she tells us. "We must protect the soil, the air, the water, so that future generations can share this beautiful land. Imagine," she muses, looking out over a spectacular view, "a mine there, 2,000 feet deep and a mile wide!"

A recent activity sponsored by the Taller de Arte Y Cultura was the planting of a *Maga* tree, the national tree of Puerto Rico. This act symbolized the creating of alternatives which, instead of despoiling the natural environment, will enrich it.

Neftalí García

When questions of environment and natural resources come up, Dr. Neftalí García is most likely to be called upon. With a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Ohio State University and a minor in philosophy at UPR, he is well equipped as director of Misión Industrial. He has held this post since the mid-1970s.

The Industrial Mission was founded in 1969 to give ecumenical support to workers, and to provide a shock absorber between workers and industrialists. Funded by the World Council of Churches and seven or eight religious denominations, it provides support for the health and safety of workers. Such abuses as permitting sanitation workers to ride on the side of the truck and subjecting workers to dangerous pollution demanded immediate attention. The Mission acts also in the vanguard of all environmental problems, regardless of their magnitude.

The disaster of the Vietnam War, the Black movement against racism, the assassination of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. aroused Dr. García's thinking in terms of social reform. Such books as Fanon's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* gave him a perspective on the importance of decolonizing Puerto Rico.

Though the board of the Industrial Mission is church-oriented, García broke away from traditional Protestant beliefs. Nonetheless, he considers himself basically religious in his concern for ethical values.

Dr. García's job is to teach communities to broaden their understanding so as to solve their own problems. This is an important step towards achieving political as well as economic independence. He gathers information necessary for the solution of a problem, gives talks, holds

press conferences on current problems, serves as a consultant in cases relative to pollution and natural resources. He invites participation, encouraging self-confidence and power, in an effort to offset the psychological effects of colonization. He has testified before the United Nations Decolonization Committee as to the relationship between colonial status and environmental problems.

Dr. García sees the danger of Puerto Rico losing the beauty of its green mountains and valleys through the contamination perpetuated by United States-controlled industries. He sees the threat of United States exploitation of copper, cobalt, nickel, and other minerals, though he does not see the immediate threat of the "2020" plan.

He is concerned about the anti-environmental practices of the Israeli farms in Santa Isabel, southern Puerto Rico. Their excessive use of insecticides affects the health of the whole area. Though financed with a \$36 million loan from the Puerto Rican government, it seems less interested in providing for the agricultural needs of Puerto Rico than in selling its brand of irrigation system, and defending U.S. political interests in Puerto Rico. We entered a warehouse near the farms where onions were being loaded onto trucks for export, and obviously not for Puerto Rican use. Meanwhile, Puerto Rico imports 90% of its food.

The sixty or more pharmaceutical plants in northern Puerto Rico, and the petrochemical plants in the southern area are not closely controlled in their dumping of pollutants. This is one of the incentives for U.S. industries to locate in Puerto Rico. In 1983, for instance, eighteen wells were found contaminated, affecting 10,000 people. Tetrachloride of carbon, mercury, and other dangerous chemicals were found. The Puerto Rican Bar Association reported that the air in Puerto Rico contained seven times more sulphur dioxide than that of the United States. "Puerto Rico, like all oceanic islands, is a fragile ecosystem that cannot carry the burden of industrial models built on a continental scale," it warns.

In a December, 1986 article in *Pensamiento Crítico*, García drew a clear cut connection between the colonial status of Puerto Rico and its natural resources and environment. With United States investments in industry, banking, and speculation calculated around \$30 billion, environmental issues must accommodate to these interests. The Environmental Protection Agency, Administration of Health and Occupational Safety, and Geological Survey are federal bureaucracies protecting corporate interests rather than the economic and health welfare of Puerto Ricans.

He pointed out that the experimentation with Agent Orange and other herbicides in the rain forest of Puerto Rico affected not only the flora and fauna but the very health of the people living in the area. The Navy has destroyed lagoons, agricultural activity and social life of the people of Vieques. Plants designed to treat wastes from chemical and pharmaceutical industries at Barceloneta were never constructed as promised. Transnational companies have contaminated subterranean waters and soils. The city of Cristiana was constructed with no regard for the presence there of lead, zinc and other toxic substances in the sediments and water. Mercury has been found in the blood, urine and skin of residents there.

Colonial ideology, García maintains, is taught in the schools and through the media that Puerto Rico has few natural resources and little inventive scientific-technological ability, and that Puerto Ricans are genetically inferior to the white inhabitants. With this in view, it is easy to take advantage of the native population.

In testifying before the Decolonization Committee García reported unemployment at 25% along with multiplying social problems as a result of the colonial situation. As Puerto Ricans organize in support of independence, the United States responds with further subjugation: economic repression and designation of those struggling for independence as “terrorists”. Among repressive actions was the vandalizing of the offices of *Pensamiento Crítico*, of which García is a staff member. Members of the editorial board were arrested, another attempt to eliminate a free voice in political, economic, and social matters. “The FBI had no idea what was going on in the independence movement, so they took everything they could get their hands on to gather that information,” he declared. “But their error is that the reaction will serve to enhance something they want to crush. The arrests and the invasion of homes prove to people that, no matter what they say, colonialism has no legal basis and respects no laws.”

Francisco Matos Paoli

*Fatherland, what a happy sun between the trees.
Drunk of burning kingbirds,
From hill to hill is the wake
Of those who gave themselves to the kindled honor of spring.*

(from *Antologia Minuto*)

I went to interview Francisco Matos Paoli at the suggestion of Lolita Lebrón, since he was writing the forward to her latest book of poems. I knew only that he was a poet so widely recognized as to be selected as one of fifty to attend the World Congress of Poets in Athens, Greece. But was he an *independentista*? I should never have questioned that. Matos Paoli assured me that all the poets of Puerto Rico favored independence. Inversely, I was finding out that many of the outstanding independentistas were also poets.

Francisco Matos Paoli and his wife received me warmly and with a humility unexpected from one who has received extensive honors, has been named a candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature, and had, by invitation, attended previously the World Congress of Poets held in Madrid.

Matos Paoli was born in Lares, a town known for its annually celebrated "*Grito de Lares*," Puerto Rico's rebellion against Spanish colonialism. He was one of nine children. The death of his mother, when he was only fifteen, compelled him to write his first collection of poems. He has written of his mother that she inspired him and taught him the "mystery of Providence."

Part of his youth was spent on a farm, where he could commune with nature, an essential part of much of his poetry. In high school he became deeply absorbed in the classics. It was then that he met Pedro Albizu Campos and became inspired to join the struggle for independence. He looked upon Don Pedro as the "foundation of his country," and as a Puerto Rican Christ.

He then joined the Nationalist Party, which he described as "based on reconquest of sovereignty by means of heroic testimony" and the "mystic of liberty." In time he became secretary general of the Nationalist Party, and still considers himself a Nationalist, though embracing spiritualism and a nonviolent approach to independence rather than revolution. His schooling, after graduating from high school as a top student, included commercial studies at Polytechnical School, UPR, with a major in Spanish. He then spent a year at the Sorbonne, Paris, for the study of comparative literature.

His marriage with Isabel Freire Meléndez was the culmination of a college friendship, as they worked together in the patriotic struggle. In 1943 he began a professorship at UPR teaching literature in the Humanities Department.

Intermingling political activity with an astonishing productivity in poetry, he participated with the students of UPR in actions for independence and gave patriotic speeches.

In an interview with Manuel de la Pueblo he stated, "I believe fundamentally that the function of poetry should be removed to the realm of a perfect justice between human beings. I believe in an aesthetic ethic. I am not a purist. I do not betray myself in an aesthetic vacuum without being linked to the reality of my country."

In 1950 he was arrested in the wake of the Nationalist uprising. He was then serving as secretary of the Nationalist Party. His home was searched in the expectation of finding guns or explosives. They found only a Puerto Rican flag. His imprisonment was on the basis of his having made four patriotic speeches previous to the uprising at Cabo Rojo, Santurce, Guánico and Lares. He was sentenced to twenty years, later reduced to ten. Other members of the Nationalist Party were put in prison with him, due to determined efforts to destroy the Party. In time, he shared the cell with Albizu Campos. He tended him nights during his suffering from ulcerations on his legs and body caused by radiation.

The time spent in prison was productive. He edited a newspaper with news of political prisoners, poems, patriotic songs and drawings. His book written there, *The Light of Heroes*, revealed his awareness of the reality of the Puerto Rican struggle for freedom.

Due to the pressures of confinement, he suffered a severe mental collapse and ended his imprisonment in a mental hospital. The period of "madness" was one of introspection and deeper awareness. It threw him into a world of spiritual mysticism and profound Christian faith. He had already been involved in spiritualism, having founded a spiritualist center, Luz Y Progreso. He experienced a sharpening of his intellect and creativity.

He left the hospital able to continue a vast production of poetry and to serve as lecturer and resident poet of UPR. When the UPR Department of Hispanic Studies at Mayagüez named him as candidate for the Nobel Prize, the response was unanimous that he best represented not only the Puerto Rican identity but that of the Spanish Antilles and Latin America.

He continued in his political activity in support of independence and gave support to Puerto Rican political prisoners. He considers six of his books of poetry to be primarily patriotic, and critics credit him with the formation of a national patriotic conscience.

As I left, Doña Isabela Freire de Matos opened a cupboard to proudly show me the forty-nine books of poetry he had published and seventy-five volumes as yet unpublished. She is, herself, a poet, and author of teaching materials for children.

I was presented with three books. In one of them, Matos Paoli inscribed: "In the holy fire of Independence of Puerto Rico." And in another: "To Jean Zwikel with all my regards. I appreciate her to be a pacifist."

Andrés Jiménez

There was no mistaking Andrés Jiménez as he entered the room of a friend of his in Oakland. Wearing a straw hat, he looked much like the picture on the album he gave us, *Barlovento, Canto a América Latina*. He was on tour in California, sharing his songs, rich in the Puerto Rican tradition.

His casual, low-key manner as he spoke to us, betokened a man of modesty. Famed as a *Jíbaro* singer, Jiménez comes from the small mountain town of Orocovis. He grew up there on his family's ranch, one of fifteen children.

Jíbaros, poor mountain people, have an innate sense of freedom. Jiménez expresses in song his love of life and freedom, which he calls the highest objective of human beings. His songs deal with different phases of love—love between men and women, love between human beings, love of country. They express moments of anguish, sadness and depression, as well, and the solitude of humanity. Though he carries in his heart the cause of independence, his songs are not protest songs. He wants them to serve, rather, to awaken people to strong feelings for their traditions, and the betterment of their country, to be alive to reality in their confrontation with life.

His own awakening came when, at the age of seventeen, he moved to New York City, and was drafted into the army. Action in Vietnam led him to the realization of the oppression of people against people, and of the reality of colonial control that involved him a war in no way related to his own country.

His passion for love and freedom has expressed itself through his writing and singing, which led to his present success and stature as a well-known recording artist, both in Puerto Rico and among a growing number of aficionados in this country.

He sees a solution to crime in Puerto Rico in the granting of equal education for all as to the Puerto Rican political and economic reality, and the sweeping out of all exploitation of the poor and the hungry. Developing in Puerto Ricans a spirit of national pride can make them stronger. He is confident that Puerto Ricans are quite capable of solving their own problems without dependency on the United States. The tendency is for them to look up to the power and wealth of their colonizer, and to deny their own potential. Such is the psychological effect of five hundred years of colonization. The problem is how to break through economic dependency, to develop their own industries and a strong economy.

Jiménez feels confidence in the new generation of Puerto Ricans who have grown up in the 1960s. He sees a strengthening of fiber on all levels of society. When he was seventeen, he favored the status quo. "If I can change, so can others!" he chuckled.

He sees hope, also, in the Latin American struggle for freedom, and that the United States is gradually losing power in that area. Puerto Rico is not alone in its fight for freedom, he points out. The conscience of all oppressors is involved.

He doesn't feel the threat of harassment. Though aware of the power of United States intelligence forces, and their subtle ways of working against *independentistas*, he chooses to ignore any threat to himself.

He sees the power of love to overcome oppression. Independence will come, he believes, if not in his lifetime, at least for his children or his grandchildren. All this is expressed in his songs. "One cannot be a poet and not love freedom," he tells me—much as I had learned from Francisco Matos Paoli.

An artist friend listening in said she had detected some Arabic influence in his music. The Spanish influence is in his blood, he explained, and Spain has been influenced by the Moors. She expressed also a feeling of global vision in his songs. "They affect me like a bottle-opener," she said. "They open up in me an incentive to create, to pursue my painting."

Claridad reviewed his record, *El Jíbaro*, as encompassing three universal themes: "Human conception of destiny, moments of anguish, sadness and depression, and solitude of humanity."

To another singer, *Chuito*, Jiménez expressed a thought that could well apply to himself:

*Many songs surge
Produced with your clay
Born from your seed,
Master of Troubadours....*

Arturo Meléndez

Whatever the demonstration for independence, whether against militarism, or honoring the birthday of a Puerto Rican patriot, the staunch figure of Arturo Meléndez is likely to appear.

Our friendship began when he introduced himself to us at the Old San Juan Cemetery, where we were commemorating the birth of José de Diego. He had written a paper on Vieques that he wanted to share with us, and directed us to his office on the UPR campus.

Ardent socialist and member of the Central Committee of PSP (Puerto Rican Socialist Party), Professor Meléndez has a long record of opposing the colonial status. While he was in high school, he told us, he fell under the magnetic spell of Pedro Albizu Campos. He left the fold of the Popular Democratic Party, of which his father was a founder and organizer, and followed Albizu Campos throughout Puerto Rico.

His college studies began at the University of Puerto Rico, continuing at Yale University, and then at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where he majored in philosophy. His professorship began at UPR, where he now teaches a survey of western culture in the Humanities Department.

Is he harassed as an *independentista*? Yes, he was fired for a period in 1981-82 for participation in the student strike protesting a 300% increase in tuition. Upon appeal to the Puerto Rican Supreme Court, he was reinstated.

Will he ever be called before the Federal Grand Jury? Quite possibly professors could be the next to be called. If questioned, he would follow the tactics of other *independentistas* and not cooperate. He knows that he is under surveillance, as are all prominent activists in the independence movement—his phone tapped, mail intercepted, his car followed.

Now president of the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors, his organization encompasses UPR of Río Piedras, the universities at Arecibo and Mayagüez, as well as the campus of Medical Studies. He estimates that about 25% of the professors are pro-independence.

As for the student body, there is a strong independence organization, FUPI, and an anti-nuclear movement.

Professor Meléndez is optimistic that independence could come within his lifetime, that Nationalism is on the increase, sparking strides towards toward freedom and justice. Independence must be approached from different angles, he points out— political, legal, economic, even to the violent actions of the Macheteros.

He is not optimistic about United Nations pressure, though he testified in 1981 before the Decolonization Committee. His testimony there began with the statement that the Association of University Professors came before the Committee for the first time “because the situation involving military hegemony in Puerto Rican life is truly a tragic one from the physical to the

spiritual, psychological and moral aspects.” He sees Puerto Ricans being pulled into United States militarism in Central America, in view of increased recruiting of young people.

Professor Meléndez sees the need for negotiation between the Puerto Rican legislature and the United States Congress so as to come to an understanding of a solution to the problem of political status. If not solved peacefully, armed revolution could erupt. People are becoming impatient with the increasing deterioration of the economy under United States domination.

Could Puerto Rico survive economically on its own? He believes that with the rich natural resources available, such as minerals, fertile soil, and fishing, all of the basic needs could be supplied. As for the increase in government corruption, he maintains that in Nicaragua and Cuba, where tyrannical governments have been overthrown, there is little or no corruption.

He envisions a unification of independence forces such as the 1985 Fourth of July “Counter-march.” Whereas small assemblies of commonwealth and statehood advocates gathered for the observance of “Yankee” independence, some 25,000 marched for Puerto Rican independence. Organized by PIP (Puerto Rican Independence Party), thousands of others joined in. Colorful floats dramatized concern about the United States’ placing of nuclear weapons in Puerto Rico in violation of the Tlatelolco Treaty for a nuclear-free Latin America. Of course, Professor Meléndez was there! He sees hope in such demonstrations of solidarity.

It was an honor and a privilege for Prof. Meléndez to address the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs during their hearings on the international role of the United States insular areas. The question under discussion in this special session was on how insular international activities should be cleared with the federal government since there seemed to be no consistent federal policy. The implications were that the foreign relations activities of the insular territories should not be in conflict with the policies and interests of the United States.

As representative of the Association of University Professors, Meléndez took this opportunity to point out that under the present colonial situation, Puerto Rico has no freedom in its relationship with foreign countries.

He makes a distinction between the recent agreements with the Marshall Islands and Micronesia giving them free-associated status, and the colonial status of Puerto Rico. “They [the islands] shall have the right to conduct their own foreign affairs except for defense and security related matters.”

Puerto Rico has no such powers, he maintained. He considers its relationship with the United States as a “slave-master relationship in which free rights are denied.... Their role is limited as to what the master or metropoli permits them to do. And, of course, the granted or permitted role shall always be what the interests of the metropoli or master demands and not those of the subdued individual or collective body.

“What is required,” he specified, “is a formal recognition by the metropoli of full, unlimited sovereignty and transfer of all powers. The rules of international law and the United Nations must be complied with. Persecutions against intellectuals and workers in the scientific and cultural domain and of Puerto Ricans in general, under pretext of supposed subversion of ideological radicalism, must definitely cease.

“If the people is a sovereign entity ... they will play the role inherent in their supreme power on an equal basis with other sovereign peoples; but if they are a colony ... their role will be limited to what the master permits them to do.” It is up to the Committee which of these roles Puerto Rico is expected to play.

He addressed also the 1986 hearings of the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations, ruing the failure of the United States government to take any positive action as to the status of Puerto Rico.

In a letter to us, he thanked us for “all the invaluable help you bring to the Puerto Rican People, and your courageous defense of our dignity and your hunger and thirst for Justice and Love and Beauty. Thanks to you and the American people!” Puerto Ricans are indeed grateful for American support.

Iván O. Hernández

Bishop Antulio Parrilla devoted one of his columns in *Claridad* to a speech given by Iván O. Hernández, M.S., Clinical Psychologist of the Instituto Psicológico Y Familiar de Puerto Rico. It was one of a series presented by the California Hispanic Psychological Association at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1983.

“We are not allowed to govern ourselves, we are not allowed to decide for ourselves, we are not allowed to protect our own interests, because we are subservient to the interests of the country that dominates us,” he stated in his speech. He spoke of the psychological damage to behavior patterns, attitudes and values; the creation of a negative image, as Puerto Ricans saw themselves incapable of directing their own destiny.

When I returned to Puerto Rico in June of 1985, Iván Hernández was one of the first people I wanted to meet. I was surprised to learn that he was not a full-time psychologist. His field of studies at UPR was in civil engineering. It was later that he acquired an M.A. in clinical psychology from the Caribbean Center of Advanced Studies, San Juan. He had worked first as an engineer in private industry and public service, and now works for a government-owned corporation, the Puerto Rico Public Building Authority, as Deputy Executive Director. He has a part-time practice in psychology. The two areas combine forces in night school courses he takes towards his Ph.D. in Industrial Organizational Psychology.

I learned later, from an article he sent me on the death of his brother, what a distinguished family he comes from. His brother, Jorge, had served as executive director of Puerto Rican Tenants in Action in Boston. He was eulogized by Mayor Flynn as a “dedicated fighter for the rights of poor

people.” The article told also of his parents. His mother had been a teacher, his father, Undersecretary of Education and later District Superintendent of Schools.

A professor I had interviewed was teaching a course in oral history. It occurred to me that, in a sense, my interviews could be oral history, and that I should have them on tape. On this, my first try, not everything came through clearly. But I have transcribed as much as I could decipher!

As a retired teacher, I was most interested in the role education played in the colonization process. My first question was about his early schooling.

“My first grade teacher,” he told me, “was a very wonderful woman, very lovely and a good person. I remember her lesson in geography: ‘This is a map of the world,’ she told us. ‘This is Puerto Rico, this very tiny piece of land we can almost not see.’ This is part of the way of education: We are colonized by a very great power. We are able to survive only because we’re part of the United States. We have few economic and geographic resources. We are an island only a hundred miles long and thirty-five miles wide. As simple as that. So we are taught.”

“Did that continue on throughout the grades?” I asked. “When did you become aware of the colonial situation?”

“I became aware in high school. You become aware when you grow up and identify with attitudes and values that you realize are a part of you. For American children it is important to know George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, so as to build character. I studied about George Washington. I admired him. But I never studied about de Diego, Betances, the great men of Puerto Rico. This is part of being colonized.”

“But your teachers were Puerto Rican.”

“Yes, but they were part of the system and merely passed on to students what they had learned.”

“How is it that the United States is able to dominate education?”

“You are not forced. They do not stick a gun at your neck and force you. When you’re a little child you are taught that, and you believe it. Teachers are victims of the psychological propaganda.”

“Suppose there was a teacher who had a feeling for independence. Would she last as a teacher?”

“If a teacher becomes conscious of this and tries to press in the direction of independence, immediately she is accused of becoming politically involved and strange to our traditional democratic way of life.”

“Are Puerto Ricans psychologically prepared for independence?”

“No. It would be up to the United States government to decide to teach our people to become politically independent. Puerto Ricans tend to be paranoid. It would take many years to reverse the procedure, to teach our people not to be afraid of independence, to appreciate the values of independence.”

“What is the psychological effect on the United States of having a colony?”

"The United States is involved in so many things. You have no real idea of the situation in Puerto Rico. You have not realized what is happening. You have not been conscious of the problem."

"But our government is aware."

"Yes, probably, but not your people."

"But is it not bad for us psychologically to dominate another country?"

"No big damage, not so bad as being colonized. We are taught that independence would be bad for us. It's like telling a child not to grow. He can't play in the street because he would have an accident. Keep him in the house playing with toys. Don't let him go to the beach, to the sidewalk. Don't let him grow."

"You spoke of studying African liberation movements in the seventh or eighth grade—the process of colonization and exploitation by European powers. Didn't you get the relationship with Puerto Rican colonialism?"

"No, we were seen as receiving economic benefits in material advancement and that the democratic process here makes it unnecessary for Puerto Rico to fight for our freedom."

"And you didn't relate to our American struggle for independence?"

"No, we didn't realize that. Think of that!"

"Why do some Puerto Ricans want statehood?"

"Because they are afraid of independence. They think they will starve, will sink in the middle of the ocean. But if you want something it should be because you really love it, appreciate it. The desire for statehood is not a matter of American patriotism."

"What would happen if you were given statehood?"

"I don't know. I'm afraid we would receive a flow of Americans buying up all the land in the country, in the mountains because nobody would throw them out. Puerto Ricans would have to move into the cities and live as they do in New York City. We would be dumped out of the middle of the land."

"I believe it was Pedro Albizu Campos who used to say that the United States wants the cage, not the bird."

"Yes, that's it! They want the cage, not the bird!"

Alfonso Damman

Alfonso Damman is a Roman Catholic priest without a church. He and others were deposed because of their outspoken support of independence and their political involvement in the cause.

As a founding member of PRISA (Program of Renewal and Social Investigation for Action) he saw the need of awakening the Church to fulfilling its Christian responsibility in daily life. Among his endeavors was passing out religious tracts to workers. This was done quietly, without the singing and shouting often witnessed in Puerto Rico. One of the tracts starts out with, "My friend Quiqui has a problem. He is a very religious man and a lay leader in his church. But he is also a conscientious worker and delegate to a union that represents the factory workers where he works." His Christian brothers want him to give up his union activities. His minister tells him he should not participate in strikes or picketing, that a Christian worships God and prays for his salvation. But believing that the Kingdom of God is here on earth, Quiqui sees an obligation to work towards its realization. He sees the Kingdom of God as one of peace and justice. Such is the spirit of PRISA.

Since the founding of PRISA in 1968, Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ and Pentecostals have joined together to promote political action based on spiritual values. Not all are of the same political party, but all espouse the cause of a liberated Puerto Rico.

Alfonso is still a citizen of his native land, Holland. Subject to the usual harassment accorded *independentistas*, he faces the threat of deportation. When he first came to Puerto Rico twenty-three years ago, he saw advantages in the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. But he became gradually aware that Puerto Rico was a nation separate from the United States, embracing a culture, language, and traditions of its own. Merging with the United States would wipe out the unique nationalism of Puerto Rico. He became convinced that only through independence could Puerto Rico survive.

He sees the independence movement as originally one of nationalism, a romantic vision of "liberty or death." Such was the dynamic leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos. Independence was the sole issue, whatever direction it might take politically, achieving it by whatever means necessary to bring it about.

But now Alfonso sees the necessity of moving away from what he calls bourgeoisie thinking to a new concept of independence. One must now ask in what ways independence will serve to better the life of the worker. So within past years, he has devoted his time to speaking directly to workers, joining them in union activities, and finding himself and his religious values gradually accepted. Whereas workers have been mainly in support of statehood, where they saw economic advantages, they are now turning more to independence. They see the value of making their own decisions in their work, in production, and in marketing. They see themselves more in relationship with Central America and South America than with the United States. The Hospital Workers Union, of which Coretta King is honorary president, for one, has taken a stand in favor of independence.

PRISA's work is three-pronged: the place of religion in the workers' struggle, the unification of forces within the trade unions, and education in trade union matters to achieve more democratic participation. True Christianity, it maintains, proclaims "collective salvation of the

people from slavery, envisions people as pilgrims on the road to the promised land, a new and just society of free people.”

PRISA’s work, through other members of the staff, encompasses a wide range of publications. In addition to the brochure *Religion and the Workers*, are *Notes for a Decolonizing Pastoral*, *Homage to José Herrera Oropeza* (illustrious Venezuelan who championed independence for Puerto Rico in the United Nations), *Base Christian Communities*, and *Vieques and Christians*, among others.

Alfonso admits that he is not a pacifist, that for a Latin American to be a pacifist is a luxury. Though his work is largely educational, he sees the possibility of a time when only by violence can people overcome the forces of enslavement. He is no longer with PRISA, but continues to concentrate on his work with unions.

Lydia Milagros González

A new and unique history of Puerto Rico recently off the press, *La Otra Cara de la Historia* (The Other Face of Puerto Rico’s History) presents the story of working people not covered in the usual text book. The book was written by sociologist Angel G. Quintero Rivera and Lydia Milagros González, Dissemination Project Director of CEREP (Center of Studies of Puerto Rican Reality). Profusely illustrated, the book points out that agriculture and industrial workers are just as much a part of Puerto Rican history as people of outstanding achievements.

Born in New York City, Lydia was raised in Puerto Rico and is fluent in both English and Spanish. Her studies at the University of Puerto Rico were mainly in literature, philosophy and theater. It was there that she began her investigation into Puerto Rican history. She continued her studies at the Center of Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. This school, under the direction of Ricardo Alegría, gives courses in subjects little touched on in the usual university curriculum.

In 1979 Lydia joined the staff of CEREP as a researcher and worked with other members of the Center on different aspects of Puerto Rico’s history. In time, CEREP began to develop an ambitious popular educational project.

I first met Lydia on a tour of Nicaragua. She shares a concern not only for the colonial status of Puerto Rico, but for United States aggression against other countries.

Lydia, along with some twenty members, delves into the fields of history, sociology, economics, political sciences, and Puerto Rican literature. CEREP is a non-profit institution, independent of political affiliations, but its depth of research reminds Puerto Ricans that they have a rich and significant heritage of their own quite comparable to that of their colonizer. They do not

have to submit to United States values, but can view with pride and dignity their own achievements. CEREP fills a gap in Puerto Rican education, which ignores, for the most part, Puerto Rican history, culture, and social changes.

CEREP develops creative approaches to Puerto Rico's failing economy apart from its dependency on United States economy. It sees the future of Puerto Rico in political partnership with other Caribbean countries, and reaches out to an interchange of ideas. Its research reveals the impact of the military apparatus of the United States on Puerto Rico, and the effects of federal subsidies on Puerto Rican economy. Meanwhile, Lydia continues work on a second volume of *The Other Face*, a valuable contribution to an understanding of the realities of Puerto Rico.

Bishop Antulio Parrilla-Bonilla, SJ **Titular Bishop of Ucles**

In preparation for the 1979 International Conference in Solidarity with the Independence of Puerto Rico, Bishop Parrilla was on tour of the United States. His fiery oratory denouncing the colonial status of Puerto Rico endeared him to us. It was a special joy to meet him again in Mexico City, where we joined with citizens of some fifty-one countries. I was there as a delegate of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

Bishop Parrilla had recently been arrested for participating in the ecumenical prayer service on Navy territory on the island of Vieques. Christians of various denominations had gathered in protest against the U.S. Navy takeover of three-fourths of the island. Deeply sensitive to any violation of human rights, Bishop Parrilla pled for justice. "Man is worth more than the strategies of war, more than supersonic airplanes, more than all the treasures of the earth," he declared. "Christ died for all humanity regardless of race or social status. Therefore, we must respect human rights and work for the liberation of the people of Vieques." He saw the struggle of the people of Vieques as one of regaining the beautiful land that God had created and to live in peace and tranquility.

Arrested with him, among others, were Padre Andre Trevathan, an Episcopal priest, and Wilfredo Vélez, a Methodist minister. Bishop Parrilla was willing to accept imprisonment rather than pay the \$500 fine for occupying what he claimed was his native land. Having counseled prisoners, he welcomed the challenge of a first-hand experience in prison. This was denied him, however. He was placed on a year's probation and ordered to stay away from Vieques. Subsequently, Bishop Parrilla, along with others who appealed to the Boston Appeals Circuit, was declared innocent of the charges relating to Vieques.

He was then free to attend the conference in Mexico, and to participate in the resolutions condemning the existence of U.S. military bases in Latin America and the Caribbean, urging the eradication of colonialism in all forms in the Caribbean, asking the United States to refrain from

further repression of the Puerto Rican independence movement, and demanding withdrawal of the U.S. Navy from Vieques.

Each year that we returned to Puerto Rico, we paid our respects to Bishop Parrilla. We found him secluded in his little office of the Juan XXIII Social Center, surrounded with books, and continuing his research and writing. We would always call for an appointment, for he was cautious as to whom he admitted. Knowing his phone to be tapped, along with thousands of others in Puerto Rico, any discussion by phone was avoided.

He had not as yet completed his M.A. in economics when he found himself drafted into the U.S. Army. He served in Panama as radar chief. It was then that he became converted to Catholicism, and took courses in philosophy and theology at St. Mary's Seminary in Emmittsburg, Maryland. In 1962, he was ordained to the priesthood. He served various posts in Puerto Rico, Cuba and New York, and was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Caguas. Following his arrest, however, he was dismissed from the Río Piedras parish, where he had been conducting Mass and tending the poor.

In his concern for the poor, he challenges them to become aware of their potential power. To this end, he has been active in organizing cooperatives. He served as program director at the Cooperative Institute, UPR. He does not hesitate, however, to criticize the cooperative movement in its failure to meet the needs of the poor.

Any issue involving injustice gains his support, whether a street vendor threatened with eviction from his corner, maltreatment of sugar workers in Santo Domingo, the eviction of a "squatter" family from their home which led to the killing of Adolfo Villanueva, to closure on businesses on Sunday, abortion, and the evils of tobacco and drugs.

He equates the high rate of suicide with an unjust system and social disintegration, in which the traditional Puerto Rican values have been overridden by foreign values. Under colonial domination, Puerto Ricans lack confidence in themselves, and fear freedom.

Last we saw him, his weekly articles were still being run in *Claridad*, but had been cancelled in other newspapers. He had sent us a packet of his books: *Puerto Rico, Church and Society*; *Puerto Rico, Survival and Liberation*; *Cooperatives, Theory and Practice*; *Neomalthusianism in Puerto Rico*.

"I'm not an absolute pacifist!" he declared on our last visit with him. He would not resign his right to self-defense. Clarifying this in a letter to us, he explained that the position of the Catholic Church is to accept war in self-defense. At the same time it condemns nuclear war and military recruitment against one's conscience. He prefers nonviolent action, but sees a need for a gamut of diverse methods for the independence of one's country. He quoted Albizu Campos, "Where despotism is the law, revolution is in order." He agrees with Pope John Paul that force is an acceptable means to secure justice when "prolonged tyranny takes away fundamental rights of the person, and at the same time, seriously damages the common good of the nation." He believes that the right of Puerto Rico to use armed force to liberate itself from the colonial yoke is part of

the moral principle of self-defense established by Christianity centuries ago. This does not cancel out, however, other methods of struggle such as political and international pressure.

Nonetheless, Bishop Parrilla is outspoken in his opposition to military conscription because of its possibly forcing Puerto Ricans to fight in “Yankee” wars against their Latin American or Caribbean sisters and brothers, or to defend the interests of multinational corporations. He reminds us that Puerto Rico has never been at war with another country. He sees the American administration like a cowboy with hand on pistol, ready to shoot at the smallest provocation.

Bishop Parrilla once listed in *Claridad* his acts of opposition to conscription, and asserts that if men who refuse to register are to be arrested, then he, too, would be subject to arrest for advocating non-compliance. He has urged picketing of post offices on the grounds that, since U.S. troops have invaded Puerto Rican national territory, Puerto Ricans should not serve in U.S. troops. He advises that there are legal and moral ways to oppose conscription and that “a conscience well-formed, and not superficial or capricious, places one above any civil law that violates this conscience.”

He points out the possibility of a nuclear holocaust and the necessity of refusing to promote it. He sees Puerto Rican participation in the Vietnam War as a “sad and traumatic experience.” For example, 3,000 patients in the local Veterans Administration Hospital have been treated for symptoms believed to be linked to Agent Orange. “How impressive is the heroism of dozens of young Puerto Ricans, their moral strength and the rightness of their conscience, in defying military, inhuman and arrogant machinery!” he said in addressing students at the University of Puerto Rico.

He fears the stockpiling of nuclear weapons in Puerto Rico and the use of naval bases for the suppression of independence movements in the Caribbean.

He expresses to us his concern for Nicaragua and his fear that the United States was preparing for a direct invasion. He has Jesuit friends there, and declares that Nicaragua is not Marxist, but merely wants to develop its own way of life. He feels that the United States is attempting to keep Latin America in subjugation for its own benefit.

He challenges the FBI for its activities in seeking to neutralize certain political groups by means of infiltration, interception of mail and investigations based on mere allegations.

However outspoken politically, he considers himself a devout Catholic and in communion with the Pope. Though no longer an active member of the organization, he remains a Jesuit.

“I choose not to be a spectator in history, but an actor in it,” sums up his philosophy. “The time has come to go beyond mere words and speeches, but to engage in forceful action.”

In view of possible forms of action, Bishop Parrilla has written for *Claridad* essays on conscientious objection and civil disobedience. “Civil disobedience,” he tells us in the September 26-October 2, 1986 issue, “when born of a well-formed and informed conscience, has to be seen as a patriotic force, operating for peaceful social change without civil or political disorder.” It mobilizes political power through acts confronting an unjust situation. He points out that civil disobedience gives society a valuable service, drawing attention to conditions viewed as legal but actually harmful to the community. Civil disobedience has been observed throughout the centuries, he affirms, as with Socrates, Thoreau and many others.

He believes that in the present political and social environment of the United States and Puerto Rico, there are possibilities for increased and unprecedented civil disobedience. Already it has been demonstrated in anti-nuclear and anti-military protests, the struggle to oust the U.S. Navy from Culebra and Vieques, resistance against military conscription, “land rescue” to provide housing, protests against contamination of the environment and ecological destruction.

As for the development of one’s conscience, he describes it as a gradual unfolding from childhood through the influence of priests, ministers, teachers, parents, and friends. Conscience is then able to determine which civil acts are in violation of natural laws.

It is not an easy road. Conscientious objectors must be willing to suffer the consequences of their acts. He challenges Puerto Ricans to be alert to the possibilities of civil disobedience through the dictates of their conscience.

Padre Pedro Del Valle Tirado

We sat in the patio of the Episcopal Church of Yauco as the slender young priest, Padre Pedro del Valle Tirado, delivered his sermon. His Afro-style hair topped fine features that were clean-shaven, except for a bushy moustache. Spanish words shot forth with earnest intensity to the little circle of devoted parishioners. Padre Pedro had been locked out of the church after his dismissal by the Episcopal Court. He was no longer authorized to perform the sacrament, but the *Dame la Mano* (Give me your hand) greeting of peace, the spirited singing, the jovial interchange of pleasantries between Padre Pedro and his “flock” bespoke the warmth of a loving extended family. Having no children of her own, his wife, Dolly, mothered the children in the congregation, and cradled a restless baby in her arms. Since our host in Yauco, Guillermo, was Episcopalian, we attended services with him. Though we could not understand the sermons, we liked the lively young priest and the warmth of the ritual.

Soon after, Padre Pedro and Dolly found themselves locked out of the parish house, as well. As their belongings were moved out, they set up housekeeping on the sidewalk in front of the church. There they camped for fifty-seven days at what came to be known as “Villa Colchón” (Mattress City), a part of the militant resistance against the dismissal shared by an angry congregation.

Tension had been mounting for some years between the young priest and his bishop, with accusations slung back and forth. Finally, the Padre was tried by the Ecclesiastic Court, charged with being undisciplined, disobedient, and having broken canonical laws. Church members surrounded the Court with protest posters: “The Church belongs to the people and thus should

be based on love so that the spirit of Justice may prevail.” Signs were hung in the church and inscribed on its walls.

As a result of Padre Pedro’s militancy, he was dismissed from teaching his course on the New Testament at the Interamerican University of San Germán. Dolly, however, retained her position as counselor.

A native of Mayagüez, Padre Pedro had graduated from the Interamerican University. After four years of religious training at a seminar in Carolina, he was prepared to fulfill his commitment to not only preach the Gospel, but to witness to it in action.

He had grown up in poverty. Deserted by his father, his mother had worked in a factory to support the three children. To further his education, he had to work at the docks from the age of sixteen. He then felt it his mission to administer to the poor.

Foremost in his philosophy was the urgency of liberation, both personal and national: personal liberation to allow for the fulfillment of one’s potential, to be free from hunger, from inadequate housing, from oppression; national liberation of Puerto Rico from its colonial status. On this latter issue, though most of the Episcopal priests of Puerto Rico might have agreed, Padre Pedro was the most outspoken.

By July of 1984, Padre Pedro and Dolly were to celebrate the first anniversary of their eviction. They had found an empty, dilapidated building in the downtown area, suitable for a church home. Through the generosity and hard work of those remaining with Padre Pedro, and fund-raising through the sale of *pasteles*, the church emerged: Iglesia Episcopal del Pueblo. The finishing touch was a crucifix, formed from two branches of the *guenepa* tree in the backyard.

Supporters poured in from all over Puerto Rico for the celebration. Nationalists Irvin Flores and Oscar Collazo were there in support. Rafael Cancel read the scripture from the Old Testament. The celebration was a joyful one.

The Church, by now, had been incorporated as part of the Iglesia Episcopal del Pueblo of Latin America. Activities had begun: a motion picture on Nicaragua, a pantomime for the children, music for adolescents, workshops in sewing and journalism, weekly Bible discussions. Padre Pedro’s followers included people he had helped get out of jail, people he had pulled out of the drug habit or from prostitution, or found money for to cure some illness. They found in the church a fountain of services, and respect for people as human beings. Almost all were poor or unemployed.

The congregation, meeting first in homes, had begun the task of revising the liturgy.

We believe in God, Father Liberator of the people Who has made a good and rich world for everybody and Who hates the usurper who appropriates for himself, condemns to a misery not merited innumerable human beings.

We believe in Jesus, Who declared Himself sent by the Father Who was born of a woman of the people, assuming the condition of worker among workers, Who incarnated Himself among the subjugated of the earth

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declaring them blessed and equal to Him; Who condemned with harsh words the exploiters, Who was denounced as subversive in the established order....

We believe that there will be a historical justice in which all and each one of us will be judged in accordance with our works of oppression or liberation....

We believe in the Community of believers who united in the Spirit of Love will be strengthened to prepare a better humanity in which there will be no aggressors nor victims of aggression and in which oppression and war will no longer exist.

The liturgy included prayers for patriots struggling for the independence of their country, such as Isabel Rosado.

The publication, *Voces* was created to deal with Puerto Rican traditions, history and culture, the theology of liberation, concern for political prisoners. The purpose, as Padre Pedro stated, was to stimulate dialogue on the humanization of society, to rescue such values as valor, sacrifice, responsibility, exaltation of life.

Padre Pedro envisions a congregation sharing the joys and sorrows of their brothers and sisters. "Nothing bothers and sickens us more than the existence of human beings exploited and victimized by an unjust order, or by a church embodied only in the existing economy, served by a clergy myopic and deaf before the plaint of the poor," Padre Pedro once wrote. "We must translate words into action ... through fighting, but most especially through loving.

"Peace supposes a love so big for another human being, that one is willing to give up his life for him. While the rich continue oppressing the poor, there will be no peace; while there is repression, persecution, invasion in Puerto Rican homes, there will be no peace; while our country continues to be invaded by U.S. imperialism, there will be no peace," he concludes.

"With regard to violence," Padre Pedro asserts, "We are trying to recapture what God, Father of the people, has given for all Puerto Ricans. Therefore, our acts are not violent; violent are those who use federal funds to buy the conscience and the votes of those who suffer; violent are those who exploit and humiliate the poor and arrest them, as happened August 30, 1985."

Dolly writes to us that their church is involved in educating their people and alerting them to the dangers of militarism in Puerto Rico. "We are opposed to the use of Puerto Rico as a go-between for the invasions of the United States against Latin American and Caribbean countries, and the use of Puerto Rico as an arsenal of nuclear weapons. We, as Christians, oppose this."

When Padre Pedro is accused of being political, he replies, "We are in the politics of love, of fraternity and peace. If this is being political, then for this, King of Gods, political I am."

Bishop Francisco Reus Froylán

Episcopal Bishop of Puerto Rico

We approached the Rt. Rev. Reus Froylán at the Episcopal Church of Vieques with some embarrassment. We had just come from attending the Yauco Church of Padre Pedro del Valle Tirado. Padre Pedro had been ousted by the Ecclesiastical Court, and the bishop's act had been met with angry militancy. Bishop Reus had seen us at the Yauco church, and knew of our friendship with Padre Pedro; but he greeted us with a warm embrace.

We saw him next at his home in Saint Just, a suburb of San Juan. We had been given permission to camp in our van at the temporary location of Villa Sin Miedo. Following the brutal eviction of the "squatter" community and destruction of their homes and gardens, Bishop Reus had given them refuge on five acres of Episcopal land. The bishop's home was on adjoining property, near the church headquarters. We found him warm and approachable. As we sat chatting in the kitchen, his wife, Doreen, served us cold drinks. We found the home simple and unpretentious, enriched only by art, music and literature.

There was a more formal interview in his office next to the Saint Just Episcopal Church. "I never wanted to be a priest," he confided with a twinkle in his eye. "My father was a priest and wore nothing but black. I just didn't want to go around dressed in black. Furthermore, I'd be required to wear a hat." But he finally discarded the possibility of any other career, and began studying for the priesthood.

Following his B.A. from the University of Puerto Rico, he entered the Dubase Memorial School in Tennessee. Honorary doctorate degrees were conferred on him by the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, and by the General Seminary in New York City.

His first church was at Magueyes, Puerto Rico. He loved the rural life and his work with poor people. He found them clean and hard-working, and he enjoyed the Jíbaro folklore. It evoked memories of his childhood in Moravia. As a priest's son, he had grown up in comfortable circumstances. Finding himself the only one in school wearing shoes, he would hastily discard his as soon as he had left home. He recalled the fragile huts there, and how, when they were destroyed by a hurricane, the people would take refuge in caves.

In pursuing his career, he filled various posts throughout Puerto Rico as teacher, chaplain, and, finally, priest. His wide range of interests and concerns led him to accept the directorship of the Puerto Rican Annual Youth Conference, to become a member of the Puerto Rican Boy Scout Council and member of the Board of Directors of St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital. He has supported programs for the mentally retarded, as well as serving on numerous church committees.

Bishop Reus was the first native Puerto Rican to serve as Bishop of the Puerto Rican Episcopal Church. This appointment, in 1964, was one of the first steps toward making the church autonomous. By 1979 the Puerto Rican churches were functioning on their own, having separated

from the United States organization. The thirty-eight churches are now more than fifty percent self-supporting, and have developed their own constitution, liturgy and hymnology.

Bishop Reus' concern for the underprivileged has not waned since his days of serving a poor country church. "The economic policies of President Reagan have maimed the hopes of the poor and the minorities in the North American nation," he declared in a speech to the priests and congregations of the Puerto Rican churches. "The government should increase its efforts to guarantee that nobody in our country goes hungry, lacks clothing, lives in sub-human conditions, is limited from obtaining a good education, be without medical care or be unemployed if he can work. These basic necessities are not privileges that the church can give to the poor, but absolute rights of everybody. When one invests millions of dollars in the armaments system, or wastes money in the caprices of senators, representatives or mayors, one can hear the groans of a people who suffer." He sees the church as the conscience of the community, the nation, and the world. He warns, however, against politicizing the Gospel.

In action, he has defended Episcopalian worker, María Cueto, victim of Federal Grand Jury harassment and two imprisonments for refusing to answer to the jury. He has spoken up to mining industries against the environmental impact of open pit copper mining in central Puerto Rico. He opposes further production of nuclear weapons, and supports the Episcopalian resolution protesting U.S. Navy occupation of Vieques. Recently, having long been in agreement with admitting women to the ministry, he ordained the first woman priest in Puerto Rico. His giving shelter to Villa Sin Miedo was a controversial and courageous act, incurring the wrath of Governor Romero, who had hoped to see the community destroyed. Episcopalian land sheltered not only Villa Sin Miedo until such time as it purchased its own land, but also Hogar Créa, a home center for drug addicts.

In a publication by *PRISA*, *Apuntes Para Una Pastoral Descolonizadora*, he describes the history of churches in Puerto Rico. Their original role was to maintain the status quo. The Catholic Church came in with the Spanish *conquistadores* in full support of their colonizing. The Protestant Churches came with the United States military occupation to serve not the needs of the Puerto Rican people, but those of the corporations and the colonizing power. Only recently has the church come into an awareness of the role of liberation. Bishop Reus sees the duty of the church, first of all, to recognize the fact that, as the United Nations declares, Puerto Rico is still a colony, and as such has full right for self-determination.

"The colonizer has to resolve the situation," he tells us. "If not, the colonized has every right to rebel and struggle for its liberty. The church which maintains a colonial relationship cannot speak with moral integrity."

He sees the role of the church also as preserving the culture of Puerto Rico—the liturgical music, architecture, sculpture and painting—in the face of the onslaught of North American culture. The church must as well try to break through the mentality of dependency, and prove to

the people that they are capable of governing themselves and providing their own food. Though he sees Puerto Rico as more advanced in racial equality than the United States, there is still a subtle discrimination that the church needs to discourage. Just as the Episcopal church is gradually losing its financial dependency on the North American church, so the country needs to break out of the paternalistic dependency created by its colonizer.

Bishop Reus rues the persecution and harassment faced by those striving for independence. The church can help in the protection of human rights. He deplores the possibility of Puerto Ricans being drawn into military intervention in Central America. Only in the elimination of injustice and oppression can the church be truly the Body of Christ, he maintains.

“I am not advocating violence or armed revolt,” he wrote us when I asked if he truly considered himself an *independentista*, “but I speak out boldly. Take the steps to continue the protest which has already started. If Muñoz [Marín, former governor of Puerto Rico] could bring about such tremendous changes without bloodshed, so can the people of Puerto Rico do the same thing now.”

When Villa Sin Miedo moved from the Episcopalian land, and onto the property they were able to purchase, Bishop Reus felt we were no longer safe in the deserted area. He then invited us to move into his backyard, and we enjoyed a closer friendship.

His wife, Doreen, had been most hospitable to us, giving us use of their bathroom facilities and refrigerator. Her recent death was a tragic loss not only to the bishop, but to the Saint Just Church and the Episcopal parochial school where she had played an important role.

Beneath the dignity of ceremonial robes and miter is a man of humility, always open for a good joke. When guests once inquired about our camper parked in his backyard, he explained that that was where he kept his in-laws. Surely he wouldn't have them in his home! He allowed for a moment of horror. “Do they eat there, sleep there?” Then he confessed that we were camping there. And so we were, enjoying the quiet seclusion among palm trees, a banana grove and mango trees.

Padre Andre Trevathan

Two men in clerical garb stood on the naval beach of Vieques watching with growing concern as U.S. sailors roughed up two protesters. Episcopal priest Andre Trevathan and Catholic Bishop Antulio Parrilla-Bonilla had flown to the island of Vieques, off the east coast of Puerto Rico, to conduct a quiet ecumenical service in the fishing town of Esperanza. Instead, they found themselves swept into an act of civil disobedience protesting the U.S. naval occupation of Vieques. They were persuaded to join a flotilla of fishing boats which landed on the naval territory of Blue Beach. Some two hundred demonstrators were setting up tents in preparation for occupation of

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the beach. There was barely time for a brief religious service by Padre Andre and Bishop Parrilla before two truckloads of armed Seabees descended upon them.

Two of the demonstrators, Angel Rodríguez Cristóbel (later assassinated in his cell at Tallahassee Prison) and Ismael Guadalupe (a high school teacher) were taken onto a Navy ship. Concerned for their safety and that of others, Padre Andre and Bishop Parrilla decided to accompany them. They soon found themselves under arrest at Roosevelt Roads Naval Base, running the gamut of fingerprinting and mug-shots. They were then locked up in cells at the Federal Court Building. By 4:30 in the morning, they were released under their own recognizance, subject to one year's probation. Others got off less easily. Twenty-one were arrested at random and incarcerated in United States prisons.

This experience was a first for the tall, graying Padre Andre, then in his twentieth year in Puerto Rico. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, he later moved with his parents to Kentucky. Following the faith of his parents, he attended University of the South, an Episcopalian university in Sewanee, Tennessee. Later, studies at a seminary in New York prepared him for the priesthood. A vacation trip to Puerto Rico persuaded him to remain, serving in various churches throughout the country, and developing his fluency in Spanish.

As we were camping in the Villa Sin Miedo community, then located on Episcopalian land, we had plenty of opportunity to visit with him in the diocesan office in Saint Just. He was serving, then, as Vicar for Pastoral Affairs, and conducting services at Guaynabo. We questioned him as to whether the separation of the Puerto Rican Episcopal Church from that of the United States was not one step in the direction of independence. "Don't speak of independence," he warned with a smile. "Call it, rather, autonomy." Though he himself supports independence, some of the Episcopalian clergy favor commonwealth or statehood.

The movement towards separation began at the initiative of the Puerto Rican church. Having already succeeded in 1964 in being assigned a Puerto Rican bishop, Bishop Reus Froylán, further nationalization was in order. Bishop Reus, though not amenable at first to the concept of separation, found on attending a conference of the House of Bishops that they were concerned only for United States problems. He then saw the need for Puerto Rico to develop its own stewardship, encouraging lay members to take leadership in coping with local problems. By 1979, legal separation was realized, but still with 50% dependency on financial help from the United States.

Asked about the possibility for independence, Padre Andre is not optimistic that it can come about within the next ten years. Armed violence, he feels, is out of the question for Puerto Rico. Though there could possibly be no alternative but revolution in Central American countries, where wholesale cruelty runs rampant with complete disregard for human life, there would not be such popular support for revolution in Puerto Rico.

As for guerilla warfare in Puerto Rico, it was not able to succeed in the October Revolution of 1950, he points out. The United States, well aware of the situation, took immediate and decisive action to quell the attempt at liberation.

The problem, he feels, lies in what he calls “bond servants” mentality. Through five hundred years of colonization, Puerto Ricans tend to turn to the “Big House” or the boss, to form an opinion, lacking self-confidence in their own power to make decisions. A mentality of dependency holds on to fears that, as a small island, Puerto Rico would be unable to sustain itself without outside help. Constant repression and harassment of *independentistas* create fear of taking a stand. Though secretly desirous of independence, many people doubt its viability, and fear to give expression to their desires. Independence groups are diverse, with little of the interaction necessary to bear great influence.

Diverting from his native tongue, he greeted the arrival of his son in fluent Spanish and then was off to Villa Sin Miedo. He played a supportive and protective role there, always ready to come to their rescue in case of harassment or problems.

Padre Andre has since returned to the United States. He will be sorely missed in Puerto Rico, where he had established a beautiful feeling of rapport with the Puerto Rican people and concern for their rights.

Jorge Luis Landing

It surprised me to find members of the Masonic Lodge witnessing for independence at the United Nations Decolonization Committee hearings. But then I met Jorge Luis Landing, himself a Mason, who explained it all to me. Did I not know that Masons supported the cause of independence as far back as the French Revolution? “*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*” was their motto. They were in support of the American Revolution, as well. Many of the early patriots for freedom were Masons: Dr. Betances, Benítez Juárez, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson. Masons, Landing told me, could be of any religious faith, but must believe in independence. Racial discrimination is not permitted in the Puerto Rican chapters, one reason for their separation from the North American chapters. I learned later that the designer of the Statue of Liberty, Auguste Bartholdi, was a Mason. The torch, the book in her left hand, the seven pointed diadem around her head are all Masonic symbols.

A veteran of the independence movement, Landing belonged to PIP (*Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño*) from its very beginnings under Concepción de Gracia, and served as vice-president in 1965. By 1967, PIP fell under the leadership of three men: Concepción de Gracia, Rubén Berríos and Landing.

At the death of de Gracia, Landing pulled out to form his own party, Authentic Sovereignty Party. Berríos carried on with PIP with a philosophy of legal and nonviolent solutions. However,

though a lawyer, Landing was unwilling to support any law he felt to be immoral. He saw, also, the need of bringing in the poor people, and of giving them more access to local government. Berríos took an anti-communist stand and sought the approval of the American government.

Landing's greatest inspiration came from Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos. He saw him as a man of great spiritual stature, with deep compassion for the poor and little concern for material gain. Muñoz Marín had begun his career with a promise to foster independence, but failed to follow through. Albizu never wavered, despite the temptation to gain political power.

When Albizu returned to Puerto Rico after years of imprisonment and illness, Landing was a student at UPR and serving as president of the student council. In celebration of the event, Landing raised the Puerto Rican flag. For this act in support of Albizu, he was sentenced to sixty days in prison.

By 1949 Landing had finished his legal studies at George Washington University, Washington, D.C. There he was a classmate of Juan Mari Brás. Both he and Mari Brás were later questioned by the FBI about Collazo's attack on Blair House in 1950, and the attack by four Nationalists on Congress in 1954. Though not in any way associated with those acts, they viewed them as morally justifiable in a desperate attempt to get the attention of the American people.

When Albizu was imprisoned in 1954, Landing tried to get him released through habeas corpus. All attempts failed. Albizu was to remain in prison until his death.

As a result of his activities, Landing was temporarily disbarred at one point, but reinstated. Now continuing his private law practice, he no longer takes leadership in the independence movement, but does hold firm to his national pride and passion for freedom.

Landing had the privilege of adding his signature to a statement by the National Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico [Masons], presented in hearings before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the United States government, July of 1986.

In this presentation, the Masonic organization draws a distinction between a country that is free and one in slavery. "There does not exist a middle state between freedom and slavery. This is so, because in the life of every nationally identified society, as in that of any individual, there is, or there is not, a master," it stated. "As regards nationalities, when deprived of their freedom, the master is either a Metropolis from outside, or a dictator from inside.... The *Gran Logia Nacional de Puerto Rico* is certainly conscious that the great majority of the Puerto Rican people have been feeling deeply the damaging aspects and indignant situation to which our country has been subjected during the eighty-eight years of United States dominion over the essential aspects of Puerto Rican life. With the exception of very ignorant, insensible, or morally deprived individuals, the Puerto Ricans in general condemn and reject every type of colonialism or subjugation, be it political, economic, cultural or otherwise."

The statement goes on to express the necessity of Congress acknowledging Puerto Rico's sovereignty and transferring all powers to the people of Puerto Rico. The United States must

negotiate with Puerto Rico in fairness for a true “free-association” based on mutual respect and fair dealing. “If you do it, we beg the Great Architect of the Universe to duly reward you; if not, He Himself shall demand it from you.”

Ada Rivera Ruiz and Miguel González Rodríguez

We vigiled with Ada and Miguel in their tiny shack as threats came over the radio of an invasion of Villa Sin Miedo. Each time a warning sounded, the children would line up armed with sticks and stones in defense of their community. Villa Sin Miedo (Town Without Fear) was one of a number of “squatter” or “land rescue” communities in Puerto Rico. Having tried unsuccessfully to gain use of government land actually set aside for housing, but used only for the pasturing of a few cows, families in desperate need of housing had moved in under cover of night. Carrying boards on their backs, they had stealthily built crude houses. Roads were hacked out by hand. In time the community expanded to three hundred families.

Among the organizers and leaders of the community were Miguel González and Ada Rivera. Miguel’s father had followed the current trend of leaving the farm to seek a better livelihood in the city. The only work he could find was driving a truck. He served also as a Pentecostal minister. Miguel added his bit to family support by selling newspapers and by shining shoes for the wealthy of the Condado. They were living in the land rescue community of Shanghai.

From correspondence courses in business administration, Miguel turned to social problems. He became acquainted with Concepción de Gracia, president of an independence party. He was inspired by the patriotism of Lolita Lebrón, Oscar Collazo and others, and became aware of his own national identity. He came to understand that Puerto Rico had been colonized by force and not by choice, that American citizenship had been imposed on the Puerto Ricans, and that there was a wide gap between the democracy professed by the United States and the colonial situation.

Miguel took on a variety of construction jobs, and finally worked as a union organizer, attempting to make unions more democratic.

Ada had grown up in the small mountain town of Camerio in relative poverty. Her family of nine subsisted on a federal check accorded her father, who had been wounded in Korea.

Her earliest political awareness came from literature passed out in her school, and from the shock of seeing two Catholic priests expelled from the church because of their social concern. With a scholarship to the University of Puerto Rico she majored in social work. This was during the university uprisings of the 1970s. Students demanding the ousting of the ROTC clashed with the police. One student, Antonio Martínez, was killed. The ROTC program was finally removed from the campus, but was placed in an adjoining area.

United in marriage, Miguel and Ada found themselves unemployed, and, as *independentistas*, practically unemployable. Their need for shelter led them to the realization that though the United

States Constitution recognized shelter as a human right, this provision had been removed from the Puerto Rican Constitution. It was then that they saw the necessity of providing housing through their own efforts. They were among the first to settle in Villa Sin Miedo.

When the police became aware of the expanding community, harassment began. Miguel told of four thugs entering the community and threatening one of its members with a gun. As another member of the community emerged with a gun, the gunman dropped his. Miguel seized it and fired shots at the fleeing gangster. They learned later that the gang had had a two-hour planning session the night before with an undercover agent. Miguel was accused of wounding one of the thugs and sentenced to two years in prison. Our first meeting with Miguel was at the court trial. With shy reluctance, Ada found herself in the role of the leadership Miguel had held. Despite a strong macho tradition, the community accepted her.

We camped for a month in the community, feeling perfectly safe and secure with our camper doors wide open. The "security guard" rode by periodically on his white horse, and night guards were placed at the entrance to avert further harassment. We were struck by the intensity of the work, as community members put up their shacks of wood and tin, laid water pipes, put up spigots, planted flowers and vegetables, built a schoolhouse for adult classes, and a chapel. And now there was the threat of complete destruction of the community.

Villa Sin Miedo, in its striving for economic independence, had begun to pose a threat to a colonial system requiring complete control over a docile people. Despite vigorous popular support for the community, Governor Romero vetoed a bill to give it title to the land. The members refused to give up the land they felt was rightfully theirs, since they had developed it. The last picture we took was of a man on his knees planting seeds.

We then had to leave because of a reservation to transport our camper to the island of Vieques for the summer. Two days later, came the invasion. Three weeks of training at Culebra Island by U.S. military officers in Vietnam-style tactics had prepared police for the attack. The troops stormed in, five hundred strong, heavily armed, driving out the terrified men, women and children with tear gas, setting fire to their homes and all their possessions, destroying the flourishing gardens. An hour-and-a-half later, nothing remained.

The homeless band straggled into San Juan. A friendly legislator arranged shelter for them on the floor of the Capitol. They were finally rescued by the Episcopal Church, which gave them use of five acres of their land. Tents were provided. Food, clothing and bedding were brought in to an erstwhile self-sufficient people. We visited "tent city" in its early beginnings. It was pathetic to see the few remaining families marking off their tiny allotment of land with bamboo poles, and setting out pots of geraniums for a bit of beauty.

As the tents wore out, they were replaced with wooden 12'x12' cabins, each with a hanging light bulb. When next we camped with them, families were already involved in making clothing, craft products, and fruit ices for sale. Gardens had sprung up. Classes in history and health had

begun. Miguel and Ada were working together again in leadership roles. Ada's work was praised in a community news-sheet. "Her work and commitment for and with us have been a struggle shoulder to shoulder. She is an example of the valor of our Puerto Rican women." It compared her with their national heroines—Lolita Lebrón, Blanca Canales, and Adolfinia Villanueva, among others.

In time, religious organizations granted the community sufficient funds to buy fifty acres in the foothills of El Yunque, the rain forest. *[What my mother, Jean, is too modest to tell is that an article of hers read by a German religious group was partially responsible for a majority of that funding. —Daniel]* Shacks were knocked down and moved, potted plants transported. A community of about fifty families was miraculously restored.

Illness forced Ada to go to the United States for treatment, and her three children needed psychological treatment for emotional scars from the brutal eviction. Miguel followed her shortly. But the community continues on in confidence that it can overcome its economic problems through its own efforts and hard work.

Roberto Resto Piñero

As Roberto's troops raided a small village in Vietnam, destroying homes, attacking and driving out terrified Vietnamese, how could he know that this would be happening in his native country of Puerto Rico. Barely ten years had elapsed since the Vietnam experience when an invasion similar in almost every aspect drove over three hundred families from their homes in the land rescue community of Villa Sin Miedo. Within an hour-and-a-half, five hundred police had looted and burned their homes and possessions.

Roberto, in a leadership role, had been involved in the laborious task of distribution of land to needy families, hewing out roads, coordinating jobs, installing an electrical system, laying pipe, and building houses from whatever scrap lumber and materials they could forage.

Roberto had fostered an adult education program in the little school building, bringing in teachers from the student body and faculty of UPR. Having studied sociology at Passaic Junior College, New Jersey, and at the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, he felt it important that the community develop basic skills, study their national roots and learn to establish human relationships.

We camped again at the new location, impressed with the progress already made in clearing the land, reconstructing and sometimes enlarging their houses, planting their vegetables and developing home industries. A portion of the land had been set aside for parks, schools, communal areas, medical services, and an area for raising animals. Villa Sin Miedo had come into its promised land.

Roberto had been wounded in Vietnam when he stepped into a booby trap. Physical handicaps beset him, but his influence is strong in the creation of a unified community. His vision of independence is more than political. He sees the importance of breaking down a sense of dependency and developing self-reliance, initiative and creative thinking.

While we were there, loud-speakers announced an evening meeting. "I wouldn't go," Roberto declared, "if they didn't encourage wide participation. Poor people and colonized people need to free themselves from chains of subordination and develop an awareness of their own powers. The people here are beginning to speak up, make their own rules and regulations, govern themselves." Roberto sees this as a process of transformation, a freeing process. "They need to become more humane, more aware of the needs of their brothers and sisters of the community. Talking about independence isn't enough. One has to create his own independence in everyday living." Building a community, he believes, can become a blueprint for the eventual building of a free Puerto Rico.

Sixteen commissions govern the community: finance, political, water, transportation, roads, purchases, construction, library, and education, among others. Each family has two votes in council decisions. There are no class distinctions, no one is at the top. All are equal. Everyone's opinion is important.

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator who inspires the educational program of Villa Sin Miedo, once said of the community, "In spite of my having visited more than eighty percent of the countries of the world during my exile, I have never seen before a community which maintained hope before such adversity." And so Villa Sin Miedo lives on, thanks to the idealism of Roberto and others, proof that social relationships cannot be destroyed.

Roberto had taken us to visit other land rescue communities and continues his interest in coordinating their activities with those of Villa Sin Miedo. His hope is to instigate the same democratic development in other communities and encourage an interchange of ideas so as to develop an effective role in Puerto Rican economy.

At our final visit to Villa Sin Miedo we witnessed the stirring moment of the raising of the Puerto Rican flag over the community, and joined in the singing of the *Borinqueña*.

In a recent update on the community, Roberto tells of workshops being developed, such as sewing for the women and carpentry for the men. They are beginning to integrate into the neighboring community of Cubuy. They are now playing volleyball and baseball. Girls participated in a tournament with four other teams and won the championship—twelve games out of fourteen.

Wrote Roberto, "The community is growing physically and spiritually. Democratic process is maturing. People are working on the construction of a community center. Headstart is now ready to accept children from other communities. It is hard work, but very satisfying to help people free themselves from oppression and colonialism."

Ramón “Chino” Santiago

A humbler, but no less important member of Villa Sin Miedo, is Ramón Santiago, known as “Chino.” His house was one of the last to be knocked down for transporting to the new location of the community. While awaiting a truck for the final clearing of the five acres granted by the Episcopal Church, Chino busied himself cleaning up the trash. It was pride in his community, pride in being Puerto Rican that motivated him to try to leave the area cleaner than he had found it two years ago. The houses had been constructed so that they could be easily disassembled, and plants had been carried off in their containers.

As poet and philosopher of the community, Chino envisions a life of economic independence, proving that one can live and survive without the help of the government. He sees colonialism as supporting leeches dependent on welfare and food stamps. But by working together in mutual support, a community can free itself and provide for its own needs. If a road needs to be repaired, you don’t wait for the government to repair it, is Chino’s philosophy. You do the job yourself. This is a step towards independence that the colonial government feared and sought to destroy, lest the concept of self-reliance spread throughout the country and undermine colonial control. “People are brain-blocked,” he declared, “fearful that they can’t survive without the support of the colonizer.”

As the son of a Nationalist, Chino witnessed days when it was dangerous to wear the black shirt of the Nationalist cadets. His father barely missed being killed by the police, and fled to the United States.

Chino himself entered the PIP Party, a party dedicated to a nonviolent approach to independence. He yearns to see independence before he dies. He sees no problem in Puerto Rico’s supporting itself with the natural resources available. He recalls from history that when Spain granted autonomy to Puerto Rico, there was enough gold to make coins they called pitirres, named after a native Puerto Rican bird.

Chino sees a trend within the past five years of returning to the land. His community sets a noble example. To this vision he has dedicated a series of poems he anticipates publishing. One of these is as follows:

*Let us raise our flag of freedom
Let us be united and strong
Let us share our faith and wisdom
All united, all in one.*

Rafael Hernández Ramos

The stocky and robust farmer, Rafael Hernández, sat under a tree near his home in Yauco surrounded by visitors. Friends had come, as they frequently did, to consult with the socialist leader and poet.

Hernández was seventeen years old when he first attended one of Pedro Albizu Campos' orations. It was a July 25 celebration at Guánica in observance of the landing of the United States Army there in its military takeover of Puerto Rico. Won over to the cause of independence, he joined the Nationalist Party under the Yauco leadership of Rafael Brigante.

The Cuban revolution of 1959 further influenced Rafael with increased fervor for independence, and also towards socialism. He has made two trips to Cuba which convinced him that this was the system needed throughout the world. Since the Nationalist Party does not advocate any particular party line, he turned to the Socialist Party, PSP, and now serves on their central committee.

He does not view independence as likely within the near future. Yet, he muses, history sometimes leaps ahead faster than expected. Liberation depends on world conditions, and on Puerto Rico's relationship with other Latin American countries. It depends also on overcoming a current attitude that Puerto Rico is like a patient in a hospital dependent on oxygen, and that once the oxygen is cut off, the patient dies. Unfortunately, there is a lack of access to communications media to teach people otherwise.

We were privileged to get a copy of his first published book of poems, *Estampas Y Semblanzas Yaucanas*. In it he pays tribute to each of the barrios of Yauco. We had been with him and our host Guillermo de Jesús on a photographing trip throughout all of the barrios. The poems express the love he feels, as a farmer, for the landscape of his country. This, combined with a historical perspective, lends a poignancy to his writings.

On the golden banks of my Yauco originated the aboriginal capital where Gueybana was born.

Of this man is venerated his sublime heroism with combat before Ponce de Leon.

He distinguished this nation for posterity.

Rubén Berríos Martínez

Rubén Berríos, president of the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP), looked down proudly over the speaker's podium into a sea of green and white PIP flags. While a small number

of statehooders and commonwealth supporters celebrated elsewhere the independence of America, 25,000 *independentistas* of all political and tactical views marched for the independence of Puerto Rico.

Organized by PIP, it was the most colorful procession I had ever participated in. The main theme was the threat of the United States placing nuclear weapons in Puerto Rico in violation of the Tlatelolco Treaty for a nuclear-free Latin America. This was viewed as a direct threat to peace in the Caribbean, and to the safety and survival of Puerto Rico in the event of a nuclear war. Marchers carried mock atom bombs, and coffins draped with Puerto Rican flags. Weeping mourners in black followed a float carrying the representation of a cemetery. A masked "Reagan" embraced a skeleton carrying a huge bomb.

"July 4," Berríos proclaimed during the speeches that followed the march, "is a glorious date for the independence of the entire world, but a shameful one for those who oppose independence."

I next saw Berríos in the formal setting of his senatorial office as he sat behind an impressive executive desk. After several years of trying to secure an interview with the elusive Berríos, I was finally granted a half hour during his lunch hour.

As a social democrat, Berríos holds himself aloof from Marxist-Leninist organizations. Though his aim is to establish in Puerto Rico a free, socialist, democratic republic, he adheres strictly to a nonviolent approach. He shies away from efforts towards unification of the independence movement. He chooses to hold his political activities separate unless, as in the case of the march for independence, other factions wish to participate.

As a lawyer and professor of law at the University of Puerto Rico, Berríos has faith in the legislative process. In PIP's thirty-eight years of existence, it has worked towards legislative representation. Berríos was recently elected senator. Another PIP leader, David Noriega, is serving as representative in the Puerto Rican legislature.

One proposal he plans to make is a request to change the U.S. maritime laws that force Puerto Rico to import and export goods on U.S. ships which increases the price of products entering or leaving the island. He believes, also, that U.S. Selective Service laws should not be applied to Puerto Rico without the consent of the Puerto Rican legislature.

Rather than depend on the United Nations for international support, Berríos deals directly with other countries in an attempt to bring international pressure to bear on the United States. He has traveled extensively in Europe and Latin America. He was recently elected vice-president of COPPAL (*Conferencia Permanente de Partidos Políticos de América Latina*), an organization representing democratic and anti-imperialist parties of Latin America, and is also one of five vice-presidents of *Comité de la Internacional Socialista para América Latina*.

Berríos has confidence that a balance of circumstances can be created to the point where the United States would be willing to relinquish its hold on Puerto Rico.

"No nation can hope to remain as virtually the sole colonial power where over seventy-five countries have gained their independence since World War II," he asserted in a Foreign Affairs

address. “More and more [people]” he believes, “are accepting independence as the only responsible, natural, sensible way out of the colonial quagmire.”

In answer as to how to work towards independence, Berríos replied, “The more we can convince our people to struggle for independence, the more we can convince people in other countries to be friends of Puerto Rican independence.” He admitted that it was not easy to accomplish this, because of economic dependency and lack of self-confidence.

As for preparing people psychologically for independence, he replied, “Of course this is possible. Just make them into *independentistas*. De-colonize them individually.”

I wondered if there might be small steps that could be taken immediately towards economic or political independence. He felt this was impossible and would only fool and confuse people into thinking that they were gaining freedom.

Berríos opposes statehood as being an easy way out, with continued dependency on food coupons. He believes in the dignity of the work ethic. “Statehood,” he asserts, “would only create a permanent ghetto, with the loss of international prestige.”

PIP opposes military conscription, recognizing the fact that Puerto Ricans are being recruited to fight “Yankee” wars. He sees the danger of Puerto Ricans being called for military intervention in Latin America or in the Caribbean.

Berríos sees no definite date ahead for independence, since the process of liberation is slow. “We will continue our struggle for whatever time it takes. We can only hope that independence can be achieved before social disintegration forces the country into chaos.”

“It must be a civil struggle without deviation,” Berríos asserted at a *Grito de Lares* observance, “but difficult because the adversary is the strongest power in the world.” Eschewing violence, he believes that the greatest valor of man is to restrain himself and bridle his passion.

To the question of his phone being tapped, he shrugged his shoulders. “Yes, in all probability.” And as for death threats, “Oh, yes, that too.” But he forges ahead regardless of personal danger.

Juan Mari Brás

The brilliant oratory of Juan Mari Brás resounded throughout the assembly hall of the El Prado Hotel, Mexico City. It was the Second International Conference in Solidarity with the Independence of Puerto Rico. He spoke against a backdrop of portraits of three Latin American heroes of liberation—Albizu Campos of Puerto Rico, José Morelos of Mexico, and Simón Bolívar

of Venezuela. Four hundred delegates and hundreds of observers testified to their support of the transference of all governing powers to the people of Puerto Rico.

It was a momentous occasion in the year 1979. The four Nationalists who had suffered imprisonment for twenty-five years had just been released. Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel, Irvin Flores, and Oscar Collazo were welcomed to the platform as national heroes. A Sandinista in military uniform received thunderous applause as he told of the recent victory of the Nicaraguan people over Somoza.

Several years later my husband and I were to meet with Mari Brás in his office in San Juan. By then he had resigned as Secretary-general of the Socialist Party (PSP), had resumed his private law practice, and was involved in efforts to unify the independence movement.

A giant of a man, physically and intellectually, he received us with quiet modesty. I apologized for not having read his book, just off the press: *El Independentismo en Puerto Rico: Su Pasado, Su Presente, Su Porvenir*. It was not as yet in stock in the university bookstores. Asking me if I read Spanish, he reached in a drawer of his desk and pulled out a copy. He inscribed it to us as “*buenos amigos de nuestra lucha de independencia, con la gratitud y afecto de J. Mari Brás.*” (good friends of our struggle for independence, with the gratitude and affection of J. Mari Brás.)

He told us of how his father had been an *independentista* within the Liberal Party. At the age of fifteen, while in high school, he began to develop his own political awareness. The 1943 Tydings Bill for independence was introduced in the United States Congress at that time. A friend of the slain Col. Riggs, Tydings framed the bill in such a way that it would have brought financial ruin to Puerto Rico. This stirred up a great deal of controversy in Puerto Rico, particularly among the students. Mari Brás joined the National Association of Youth for Independence, soon becoming its president.

By 1947, he was at the University of Puerto Rico to welcome the return of Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos to Puerto Rico, following his imprisonment in Atlanta, Georgia. The Puerto Rican flag was raised by exuberant students. But the chancellor of the university denied Albizu the right to speak to the students. A student strike ensued. Mari Brás was expelled. He finished his B.A. requirements at Lakeland, Florida.

In his history of the independence movement, Mari Brás praises Albizu Campos as the most significant leader in Puerto Rican history. “Albizu,” he writes, “was a living legend who inspired the initiation of many of us in the patriotic struggle and induced us to persevere and deepen our commitment.” Despite his becoming a socialist, he never changed his views on Albizu.

Because of his expulsion from UPR, he was refused admission by ten or fifteen colleges. George Washington University, in Washington D.C., finally accepted him for law studies. He was in Washington during the attack on Blair House by Oscar Collazo. He was arrested and questioned by the FBI. He did not know Collazo at the time, but was held by the FBI for several hours simply for being an *independentista*. Other Puerto Ricans were held for months with no charge other than having been present at a discourse in favor of independence. As a result, he was dismissed from the university. He completed his studies at American University, also in Washington, D.C.

He passed the Puerto Rican Bar in 1954, specializing in constitutional and labor law, and salary claims. He founded the Socialist Party of Puerto Rico, which evolved out of the MPI (Pro-Independence Movement), and became its secretary-general.

In 1976, his son was assassinated. Responsible for the homicide was an insane man he believed to have been programmed by the FBI. Despite the man's insanity, he was convicted of second-degree murder, so as to avoid further investigation.

In seeking out the FBI records on him, Mari Brás was given only thirty-eight of the seventy-nine volumes. Being tailed by the FBI in no way curtails his activities as he travels to Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Chile, Uruguay, Nicaragua, and the United States to further the cause of independence. I asked him if he was still subject to harassment. "They took my son," he replied sorrowfully. "What more can they do to me?"

In his survey of the independence movement, Mari Brás summarizes his expectations for independence. He sees hope in the United Nations, with its resolution 1514 (XVI), called the "Magna Carta" of decolonization, and subsequent resolutions since 1972. He has made his appeal in hearings before the Decolonization Committee. He sees hope in support by the international community, especially the non-aligned countries. He sees hope also in the strengthening of the labor movement, and in such organizations as CEREP (Center of Studies of Puerto Rican Reality), CUCRE (Committee Against Repression), the Industrial Mission, the Center of Advanced Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, the Project for Justice and Peace in the Caribbean (American Friends Service Committee), and the periodical *Claridad* for its work in educating the public.

He sees the importance of keeping alive both the movement for armed struggle, in its opposition to U.S. military control, and the electoral movement, which has had some success through PIP. He warns Puerto Ricans that "the Yankees would like to see us docile."

Following the arrest of the thirteen *independentistas* on August 30, 1985, Mari Brás visited with them in New York. He marveled at their firmness of spirit, their sense of humor despite all odds. He feels with their imprisonment "a new dawning of the indestructible patriotic and revolutionary struggle of the Puerto Rican people," and that they help make possible "the widest union of Puerto Ricans in their struggle for liberty."

In his testimony in the Decolonization Committee hearings of 1986, Mari Brás represented the Committee of Puerto Rico in the United States. This was the first year that a representative of Cuba presided at the hearings. Cuba has always been supportive of the cause of independence, finding in Puerto Rico a "common history of struggle and hope." The terms of this year's resolution were drafted by the patient cooperation of Cuba and Venezuela and diverse political sectors of Puerto Rico, he explained. They included a process for instigating a constitutional convention to negotiate with the United States government for the decolonization of Puerto Rico.

"Only through a great unified movement looking beyond political and ideological differences," he concluded in talking with us, "can the prevalent fears of hunger and persecution

be overcome for the eventual liberation of Puerto Rico, breaking through domination by the greatest imperialist power of our age.”

Carlos Gallisá

As a group of Quakers, Peacemakers, and Puerto Rican *independentistas* converged on the little island of Culebra, Carlos Gallisá joined in their attempt to oust the United States Navy. Each day they built a small chapel on Navy territory for meditation. Each day the Navy destroyed it, only to find it rebuilt the following day. In time, Rubén Berríos, president of the Independence Party (PIP), was arrested for civil disobedience. Gallisá remained at liberty to carry on the leadership of PIP. Eventually, the Navy was removed from Culebra, only to have its activities escalated on the island of Vieques.

Gallisá, a graduate of UPR, was practicing as a labor lawyer at the time. He had been influenced toward independence by friends, and by a college professor, Antonio González. He first joined PIP, which was, by then, more militant and youth oriented than it had been under Concepción de Gracia. By 1972, PIP was represented in the Puerto Rican Congress with Rubén Berríos in the Senate, and by Gallisá in the House of Representatives. But by 1973, Berríos and Gallisá parted company, Gallisá entering the Marxist-Leninist-oriented Socialist Party, or PSP. Juan Mari Brás was secretary-general at the time; upon his retirement in 1983, Gallisá took over the leadership.

A tour of the United States brought him to San Francisco, where I had the opportunity to meet with him. I had heard him speak at PSP rallies in Puerto Rico. His powerful oratory and clear diction enabled me to catch bits of his message, despite my difficulty in understanding spoken Puerto Rican Spanish. But it was a relief to hear him in his quite fluent English.

He spoke of the long struggle of Puerto Rico for its independence, and how Americans have been deceived into believing that now that Puerto Rico has its own constitution, it enjoys self-determination. Such is not the case. The three million people in Puerto Rico are still in colonial bondage despite the fact that less than one percent of the countries originally colonized are still controlled by a mother country.

In 1981 a U.S. federal task force was appointed to deal with Puerto Rican status. George Bush, in his frequent visits to Puerto Rico, no longer mentions statehood as a possibility. But the Pentagon, Gallisá believes, might push for statehood in order to bring Puerto Rico more fully into the industrial-military complex.

Gallisá has appeared in hearings before the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations. In 1982 he denounced United States’ refusal to honor U.N. resolutions for independence, or Resolution 2621 of the General Assembly, which states that “Member states shall carry out a sustained and vigorous campaign against all military activities by colonial powers in territories

under their administration, as such activities constitute an obstacle to the full implementation of Resolution 1514 [for independence]." In defiance of this resolution, militarism moves at an increasingly rapid rate towards the creation of a vast military bastion.

In 1984, he spoke further on the militarization of Puerto Rico and also on the repression of the people. At that time there were twenty-six Puerto Ricans in U.S. prisons for the "crime" of fighting for Puerto Rican independence. The federal courts, grand juries, CIA, FBI, he pointed out, practice covertly and overtly against the independence movement.

In the 1985 Decolonization Committee hearings, Gallisá spoke of the great amount of energy—diplomatic, economic, political—being spent by the United States to avoid being condemned as a colonial power. Letters, phone calls, threats of reprisals, and offers of economic aid all work towards influencing countries to vote against Puerto Rican independence.

Gallisá has, himself, undergone harassment, his home fired on twice, his law office blown up in 1977. He was once hospitalized after a clubbing by the police.

In testifying before the Decolonization Committee 1986 hearings, Gallisá commented on the fact that though the United Nations has recognized the colonial status of Puerto Rico since 1972, the United States is still telling the international community that it is self-governing.

For fourteen years, he pointed out, dozens of the most important religious, labor, professional and cultural organizations representing almost all the political spectrum have testified. He asks for full support of the resolution for independence. Countries opposing are helping to perpetuate the colonial domination of the United States over Puerto Rico.

Gallisá had the opportunity of attending the 1986 hearings in Congress on the political status of Puerto Rico. He reported on the debate within the Insular Affairs Committee, in which consideration was given to extending the newly adopted policy towards Micronesia to Puerto Rico. Micronesia now has all governing rights except for defense. Gallisá does not find this acceptable for Puerto Rico.

PSP (Socialist Party) has long seen the importance of unifying the independence movement. Dialogues have been opened up through seminars in an attempt to adopt a common strategy despite ideological differences. Gallisá sees an alliance, not only with other socialist parties, but with autonomists working towards a more gradual transfer of political powers to Puerto Rico. He sees them joining forces to oppose attempts toward statehood.

Now that Congress has opened up the issue of political status, liberal forces in this country can do much. One thing would be to give support to Congressman Dellums' resolution for the transfer of powers to the people of Puerto Rico.

If the United States government wants a peaceful transition to solving the political status, the administration will have to take the initiative and necessary steps to this end, Gallisá warns.

However, if the government insists on maintaining its colonial hold on Puerto Rico, "our struggle for independence will continue," Gallisá declares. "We will use all the means we have to

obtain our right to independence, the same right the thirteen colonies exercised to free themselves from the colonial domination of England.”

Jorge Rodríguez Beruff

Professor Jorge Rodríguez Beruff is recognized as a foremost researcher on United States militarism in Puerto Rico. The United States took Puerto Rico over in 1898 for its strategic importance in the Caribbean. Since then, recent years have seen a rapid increase in its militarization, with seven military bases covering an area of 62,000 acres. Professor Rodríguez, through seminars and pamphlets published by the American Friends Service Committee's *Proyecto Caribeño para Justicia y Paz*, is alerting Puerto Ricans to the danger of becoming a source of manpower for an invasion of Central America, or a target in the event of a nuclear war.

Raised in a conservative family, Prof. Rodríguez came into political awareness at the University of Puerto Rico. He was there during a critical period. 1964 to 1968 was a time of student agitation, riots, clashes with pro-statehood students, beatings by the police. Students were demanding a more democratic administration and opposing militarism on the campus. Students demonstrated against the Vietnam War, burned the ROTC building, opposed military conscription because of the threat of being sent to Vietnam. Protest against conscription was on different levels, from refusal to register and card burning, to refusal to take the physical exam, or non-cooperation once inducted. Fortunately, Rodríguez drew a high number and escaped induction. But he would never have participated in the war he considered criminal and instigated by an imperial power. As it was, over a thousand Puerto Ricans were killed in the war, having been placed on the front lines.

A test case involving Sixto Alvelo, a worker who refused to be inducted, resulted in a prison sentence. But after the burning of the ROTC building, the federal judge reconsidered the case in view of the tense situation on campus. Alvelo was required to serve only one hour in prison!

At the university, Rodríguez came into contact with progressive professors who were critical of the university structure and the colonial system. His contributions to *Brecha*, a student newspaper, clarified his own position.

Rodríguez continued his studies in England at the University of York, majoring in political science. Returning to Puerto Rico, he took a post as professor of social sciences. He was there during the 1971 riots between anti-military students and the ROTC right-wingers. He chose to resign as a result of the atmosphere of persecution and intolerance against progressive intellectuals.

During this period, he completed his Ph.D. thesis on the Peruvian Military, which was subsequently published in Peru. Considered by then an authority on militarism, he was called to the Russell Tribunal, in Rome, to testify on militarism in Puerto Rico. The Tribunal had been

investigating violations of human rights in Latin America. This led him to realize how much he had to learn about his own country.

In 1980 he began to point out the violation of the Tlatelolco Treaty by the United States, an issue which was denounced before the United Nations Decolonization Committee. Proposed by Mexico in 1963, it was formulated in 1967 and signed and ratified by all the states involved. It prohibits all use and fabrication of nuclear weapons in Latin America and requires its complete de-nuclearization. Article 4 requires the United States to issue reports in which it declares that no prohibited action has taken place in its territories. But Prof. Rodríguez claimed that numerous nuclear war activities were indeed being carried out in Puerto Rico. This was later substantiated in a document published by the Puerto Rican Bar Association, product of a painstaking study carried out by that institution.

His writing career began with the publication of two articles in West Germany, one on United States policy in Latin America and one on the United States Military in Puerto Rico. This led him to collaborate with the Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace, first with its youth exchange program, later with its support of the movement to get the United States Navy out of Vieques.

Through the Caribbean Project, he published his comprehensive tract, *Puerto Rico and the Militarization of the Caribbean 1979 to 1984*. In other writings, he describes the military importance of Puerto Rico dating from the days of Spanish control for the purpose of protecting the transport of gold and silver. For the United States, Puerto Rico is part of the system of defense of the Panama Canal and its trade lanes. It serves as a base of operations for invasions in the Caribbean region. Rodríguez quotes from the United States Senate Congressional Record a list of thirty-six United States military invasions in the Caribbean and Latin American area between the years 1890 to 1983, some of which originated in Puerto Rico.

The increase in militarization comes out of the Cold War mentality and determination to contain national liberation movements and retain the colonial status in the Caribbean. Training in counterinsurgency tactics is provided in Puerto Rico, as well as control tactics used against students and patriotic forces.

Prof. Rodríguez has now returned to the University after an absence of eight years. He continues to warn that “the military use of Puerto Rico constitutes a constant danger for all the people of the Caribbean and Latin America and for world peace, while the militarization of its society represents an obstacle for true decolonization.”

Ismael Guadalupe

“My sin was to step on the land where I was born.” So declared Ismael Guadalupe, who, for thirteen years, had been a high school teacher. He had been arrested for participation in the May 19, 1979 ecumenical prayer service on naval territory, Vieques. For many years he had struggled for the right of the people of Vieques to live in peace on their island. He had been serving as president of the Crusade to Rescue Vieques. Joined together to free Vieques from the occupation of the United States Navy were members of diverse political ideologies, religious philosophies and social position.

“I do not come as one accused, but as accuser,” Ismael stated in his court defense. He accused the Navy and the federal court of putting thousands of human beings on the street who had lived on the land now occupied by the Navy. His own parents had been victims of the expropriation. He claims to have known personally more than a dozen people killed at the hands of drunken sailors, or by bombs left lying on the land. He recalled the death of Chuito Legrand, a ten-year-old boy, victim of a bomb he had come across. Then there was the body of Alejandro Rosado found buried head down; the assassination of Francis Christian; the death of a father and his son Anastasia; of Domingo Acosta, and others.

In addition, there was the collective crime against 8,000 Viequens: the loss of 26,000 of the 33,000 *cuerdas* of land that had been theirs for their economic development and sustenance. Ismael saw Viequens as a people imprisoned between two bases, one for the storage of weapons, the other for target practice.

For this act in defense of his native land, Ismael was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine of \$500. We had been warmly received by his wife, also a teacher, during his imprisonment, as she coped with the care of their two boys.

We met with Ismael on the ferry taking us from the *Isla Nena* (“baby island”) of Vieques to Fajardo, on the mainland. It was a long, rough trip, twice the distance of a route to Ceiba that the Navy refused to grant. He told us of his imprisonment, first at Atlanta, then at Lewisburg, as one of the twenty-one sentenced to prison. He was on his way to take on a new job as organizer for the Federation of Teachers in the Fajardo area.

Ismael was influenced early in life by the Nationalist García Vélez, also a native of Vieques. He saw the problem as bigger than the mere occupation of Vieques. The issue was also the colonial status of Puerto Rico, largely responsible for unemployment, drugs, and social problems. In Vieques, he had experienced the high cost of living due to the almost total dependency on imports, the absence of jobs, the lack of medical services.

His spirit reflected that of the patriotic Viequens who seek to regain the fruits of their once prosperous island.

[In my desire to cover as many points of view as possible, I asked Professor Richard Levins to write of his own activities in the cause of Puerto Rican independence. Dr. Levins teaches at the

*Harvard School of Public Health and the Organismic and Evolutionary Biology Department.
—J.W.Z].*

A Permanent and Personal Commitment by Dr. Richard Levins

In the summer of 1949 I met Rosario Morales. Our courtship was also my introduction to the South Bronx and to Puerto Rico. I frequented the mavi stand near the 163rd street elevated station and learned to fry tostones. I started to learn Spanish from a few pamphlets about El Grito de Lares [the rebellion of 1868 against Spain] and the sugar strike of the 1940s.

We were both communists. She was a recent recruit, attracted by the scientific philosophy as much as by the struggle against injustice. From her father she had acquired a pro-union stance and some knowledge of U.S. imperialism in Latin America. One uncle, a Popular Democrat, assured me that Muñoz Marín was really a communist deep down inside but the Americans wouldn't let him do anything. I was third generation Red. My grandmother had become a socialist in the Ukraine before immigrating to the United States and had been active in organizing the unemployed women's councils and the garment district strike in New York in the 1930s. My father had been a founding member of the Young Communist League in 1919. I grew up in a home where political ideas were part of everyday conversation and somebody was always involved in anti-fascist, anti-racist and pro-labor activities, and it was taken for granted that understanding the world was interesting because we were out to change it. May Day was my big holiday; I always took off from school to march with the Women's Councils or the John Reed Club. And as a child I grew up with the knowledge that I would be a scientist and a revolutionary. So I was ready on general principles to support the Puerto Rican struggle for independence before I met Puerto Rico.

We arrived in Puerto Rico in 1951. For me it was a chance to see Rosario's country, for her a chance to get reacquainted with her parents' homeland that she had only visited twice. For both of us, it was to be an interlude while we decided what to do next while waiting for the growing repression and the Korean war to disrupt our lives one way or another. It was also my first encounter with the tropics. I fell in love with the landscapes of lush forest and seaside deserts, the odd karst hills, the peculiar leathery plants on the serpentine soils of Maricao and the cattle egrets nesting in the mangroves. The encroachments of U.S. commercialism and the poverty of the people seemed all the more outrageous against these backgrounds.

It was only some eight months after the Nationalist Revolt of October 30, 1950. Repression was heavy in Puerto Rico. Many were still in jail for participating, or being thought to have wanted to participate, or as in one case, because of an expression of pride that Puerto Ricans were fighting back, or because they flew the Puerto Rican flag. While some of Rosario's relatives welcomed us, others were afraid of associating with "subversives." They did not divide along political lines. One

near-falangist cousin kept us informed of police interest in us. I was looking for work at agricultural experiment stations or university branches. But a casual acquaintance, who identified herself as part of a Nationalist Party cell among government employees, told me that the FBI had gotten to my prospective employers before I did, so that jobs were unlikely.

Meanwhile I sought out the Communist Party of Puerto Rico. It wasn't easy—the Party was small, fear was widespread, and an unknown American asking people if they knew how to reach the CP or where to get the communist paper was often regarded with suspicion. I had obtained a few names and addresses from the U.S. Communist Party, but the people were either not available, or the addresses or the politics were obsolete. Finally I met Leonard Schlaefer who whispered in response to my inquiry about the newspaper *Pueblo*, “Hush, we'll talk later.” He took us to the house on Lutz Street where the Puerto Rican flag hung from a large tree.

Here we met Mary (Maga) and her daughter, Jane Speed, and César Andreu Iglesias. The Speeds were Alabama gentry. Maga had become radicalized by the state government's repression of the Tenant Farmers' Union and by the Scottsboro frame-up in which a group of young black men had been accused of raping two white women.

While attending a communist training school she met César and moved to Puerto Rico. It is part of the pride of communists that as internationalists we can move anywhere in the world, orient ourselves politically, and join in what we see as part of one world-wide struggle for a new society.

With her flaming red hair and Alabama accent in her fluent Spanish she was soon a familiar sight in Puerto Rico. Within the Party she was always outspoken, opposing almost alone the wartime dissolution of the Party while César was away in the army. She expressed the first warnings that Muñoz Marín would strike back from the threshold of greatness in the tradition of the Latin American liberators to become merely the colony's most successful politician.

Her mother never learned Spanish nor joined in active political work in Puerto Rico. But it was she who sewed by hand the Puerto Rican flag that flew over Calle Lutz before such flags were safe, respectable and commercially manufactured. We still have that flag. Later, during the arrests of 1954, Maga and her three-year-old grandson blocked the police from searching the house and finding the now fugitive César.

The Speeds and César became close friends of ours. It was Jane's warning that we probably would not be able to find work and that the Party could certainly not hire us. That led us to buy a piece of an abandoned coffee plantation in the mountains of Barrio Indiera Baja, Maricao, and start vegetable farming.

César was a born dramatist, and I would spend hours listening to his accounts of Puerto Rican history, filled with voices and gestures that turned him into whatever orator or politician he was quoting. Even years later I sometimes forget, as I recite Albizu's speeches to my children and friends, that I was never there. I had heard it all from César as we sipped rum on some Santurce evening when the incessant rains in Maricao kept us from farming. Rather than go bats in our shuttered house we would leap into the truck and rush to the capital in time for tea or a drink.

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César more than anyone helped me turn my abstract anti-imperialism into a rooted identification with the Puerto Rican revolution.

The Puerto Rican Communist Party had always been a small organization. At its greatest it had a few hundred members, at least on paper, and at the time of our participation we numbered about fifty.

But it was the CP which urged through all the complexities of Puerto Rican politics that the struggles for national independence and social emancipation must develop together. Communists and Nationalists interacted in complex ways. We were on the same side in the struggle against imperialism. But whereas Nationalists saw that cause as above class divisions, we saw it as part of an international class struggle. Whereas for Nationalists the exploitation of Puerto Rican labor by U.S. corporations was one in a long list of colonialist abuses, we saw it as central, not because it was the only or most painful abuse but because it was the reason for the colonization and continued domination. Nationalists saw economic struggles as somehow less dignified than national ones. Where nationalism looked for support to other hispanic peoples, we looked to the international working class.

We were uneasy about Nationalist heroes such as José de Diego who wrote moving patriotic poetry but was a conservative who voted in the Senate against university scholarships and was the lawyer for the South Puerto Rico Sugar Company. Communists were turned off by the conservative Catholicism of many Nationalists, by their idealization of Spanish times, and by their emphasis on heroic acts. We thought these might evoke admiration but not active mass emulation, and might provoke a lot of repression.

We supported the Second World War as an anti-fascist struggle while Nationalists went to prison for refusing induction. But we were harassed by the same enemy, exposed the same imperialism, denounced the same opportunists, met uneasily on national holidays in the same cemeteries while the FBI photographed us both. We went to the same prisons during the same “arrest the usual suspects” roundups. We admired each others’ steadfastness in a colony where we were both surrounded by opportunism and corruption. And we tacitly joined in an implicit compact never to denounce, for the gratification of our enemies, any of the ways in which any of us carried on the struggle.

During the Maricao years I was the Party’s coffee region organizer. I naturally sought out the local Nationalist leader. But when we met he told me, “Here we can do nothing. This is a poor region, and people think only of their bellies.” My own activity focused on organizing a coffee workers’ pre-union movement to raise the wages above the prevailing \$1.44 per day if it didn’t rain (and in coffee country it rained!) We briefly published a local newspaper, *Tribuna Campesina*, on a gelatin hectograph that became moldy in the rainy season and was replaced by a cranky mimeograph that the police confiscated in frustration when their raid turned up no arms. Together with the local agricultural vocational teacher, Gregorio Plá, I organized a cooperative to process

and market bananas, citrus and coffee. Rosario worked with the women's club of the Agricultural Extension Service. We agreed that the most important thing for the women of the barrio at that point was that they get out of their homes, meet together and get organizational experience. And of course we propagandized in the barrio for independence and socialism.

In 1953 a long bout of illness stopped me from farming. While hospitalized at Castañer I met the pacifists who worked there and soon afterward joined the hospital as a lab technician. Rosario and I worked with the pacifists in the Fellowship of Reconciliation. They were mostly North Americans, some of them conscientious objectors doing alternative service in Puerto Rico. Although they shared our anti-militarism, they were timid about criticizing the United States military presence in Puerto Rico for fear of being seen as pro-independence. Yet the association was a good one for us. We learned to appreciate pacifist commitment, abandoned the facile stereotypes of pacifism in popular thought which confuse pacifism with passivity, learned from their concept of witness the potential power of taking a stand even without a mass following. This notion of witness also provided one of the points of contact between North American pacifists and Puerto Rican nationalists, who often saw their dramatic actions as militarily futile but politically necessary acts of witness to keep the flame alive. We were impressed by the fact that outwardly our pacifist friends were both firm and gentle, and militant without hating their enemies. We trusted them enough to arrange to leave our children in care of a pacifist family if we were both imprisoned at the same time.

We went back to school in New York in 1956 and returned to Puerto Rico four years later. Much had changed. Jane had died. César had returned to San Juan after living on our farm for several years and winning recognition as a writer. The oppression had eased up enough so that I had even been offered a job at the School of Tropical Medicine by an interviewer who said that the FBI had warned them about me, and while they would really prefer a 100% White Christian American a good geneticist would do.

The lethargy of the late fifties gave way to a new excitement. New organizations arose to find new ways of struggle, new ways of posing the problems of how to relate social and national struggles; new ways of combining legal and extra-legal forms of action. César joined with Lorenzo Piñero, of Nationalist background, Juan Mari Brás and other veteran fighters along with the student movement to form the MPI (*Movimiento Pro-Independencia*, later to become the *Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño*). Juan Antonio Corretjer, who had passed through both the CP and the Nationalist parties worked with *Acción Patriótica Unitaria*, from which he later organized the *Liga Socialista*. Cuba had taught us that a Latin American country could win against the U.S., and there was a sudden interest in Marxism. Whereas previously we were ignored, now young people tracked down any rumor of a Marxist around to demand seminars.

I joined the University of Puerto Rico faculty as an ecologist with a new concern about the destruction of the environment in the colony. The contamination was hard to miss: on days when the winds shifted to the southeast the fumes of the petrochemical complex at Guayanilla rose to the crest of the *cordillera* where we still lived on the farm. The enterprises have since shut down. Having extracted their profits while they could, they left behind a polluted landscape and a

dislocated economy. My new awareness added energy to my political commitment and helped me bring my political and scientific lives closer together. I concentrated my political work on Marxist education mostly with FUPI (*Federación Universitaria Pro Independencia*) both in Río Piedras and Mayagüez and in the MPI where César had recruited me as Assistant Secretary of Political Education.

By 1965 the opposition to the Vietnam war was growing, and along with a committee of professors against the war I helped organize the teach-in at the University of Puerto Rico. The press was strident in its opposition to the teach-in. Since it had been forbidden by the University administration, we set up our loudspeakers at the campus fence and spoke from a ladder leaning against the wall while the audience, press, and police listened both on and off campus. That week Rosario went into labor with our youngest son, so I stayed in the mountains and came into Río Piedras for a few hours only, for the teach-in itself. My sudden appearance and disappearance added an exotic flavor of mystery and conspiracy to the event.

The ladder we spoke from provided the name for the journal, *La Escalera*, edited by Georg Fromm, Gervasio García, and Samuel Aponte. *La Escalera* became the major vehicle for the introduction of a flexible Marxism to the independence movement. In my essay *From Rebel to Revolutionary* I argued for a coherent view of society as a whole, for looking at the roots of our colonial problems rather than settling for the traditional collection of *atropellos*, a catalog of outrages and abuses. I urged that while *la patria* may be *valor y sacrificio*, it also required good aim. Other articles dealt with the Vietnam war, draft resistance, forms of political action, labor movement issues, the need for an ecological outlook, and literary criticism. The cover was often done by Lorenzo Homar and other leading artists. We were linked to but not formally part of the MPI and FUPI, allowing us both the rich contact with the political movement in which most of us were directly involved and also the freedom to innovate without having to represent the consensus of an organization.

During all the years of participation in the struggle for independence I had very few personal encounters with anti-(North) Americanism. *Independentistas* had become quite sophisticated in seeing their enemy not as “Americans” but as U.S. imperialism. Paradoxically, personal anti-Americanism was more likely to be expressed by supporters of the regime whose national feelings were suppressed in their political lives by personal or class interest and therefore came out in more individual ways.

The University administration and the political police disapproved of my activities. When I came up for tenure in 1966, a press campaign led by an FBI-connected journalist urged my dismissal. I was refused reappointment on the grounds of my supposed incompetence. This forced me to emigrate again to find work, first at the University of Chicago and then at Harvard. Therefore in 1967 I left Puerto Rico, but not the struggle for independence and socialism. What had begun

as a political obligation stemming from a general world view had turned into a permanent and deeply felt personal commitment.

During the political upsurges of the late sixties I was able to continue active participation in the MPI (later PSP). I also taught Puerto Rican history for the Young Lords in Chicago. Later I joined the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee which was active in the campaign to free the Nationalist prisoners, and now publishes *Puerto Rico Libre* and presents a North American anti-colonial view at the United Nations Commission on Decolonization.

It is already four generations since the U.S. conquest, and who knows how many more before the Dorado Beach Hotel becomes a home for disabled workers, the delicate roots of fruit trees and pasture plants reach out to bind the wounds of the traumatized soils of Vieques, and the Socialist Republic of Puerto Rico realizes the dream of Betances and Martí and forms part of a Caribbean Federation.

Margarita Pérez

Knowing of the good work for peace of the American Friends Service Committee, I was gratified to find an office in Puerto Rico founded by the AFSC office. It is known as the *Proyecto Caribeño Para Justicia Y Paz*. Although it became independent of AFSC in 1986, and manages its own program, AFSC continues to provide some administrative and financial support and cooperates with its programs.

It was to the "Proyecto" that we called for help when we shipped our camper to Puerto Rico. From their office, Rick Hall put in a full day's work exercising his fluency in Spanish to extricate us from an incredible amount of red tape.

Directing the Proyecto since 1982 was the young and enthusiastic Margarita Pérez. From childhood, she had been active in Catholic community work. By the age of thirteen, she was teaching in the church. Having been living in the United States, she went to Puerto Rico in the sixties, where she continued her interest in social work, and participated in a popular education program in La Perla, a notorious slum area. She met friends there involved in political action who instilled in her a concern for the independence of Puerto Rico.

She learned that many nuns and priests were pro-independence, but working quietly for the cause. The official stand of the Catholic Church is still pro-colonial.

The office had opened in 1971 in support of the struggle to get the United States Navy off the little island of Culebra. Through non-violent action by Quakers and other pacifists and religious organizations, Culebra was finally returned to the people from whom it had been taken.

Its activity then turned to an interchange of Puerto Rican youth with young people from the United States. Based on the premise that oppression produces adverse effects in the lives of both the oppressor and the oppressed, the young people engaged in an interchange of experiences. At

this point the Proyecto was called *Intercambio de Juventud* or Reciprocal Youth Interchange Project. The youth from the United States going over to Puerto Rico were given work assignments for periods of four to six months. One of these assignments was at Vieques. They saw a situation there quite similar to that of Culebra, and prepared a slide show on the militarization and exploitation of the island. Another group went into central Puerto Rico to investigate the threat of exploitation of the valuable resources there by United States mining industries. They found proof that Puerto Rico has the resources necessary for economic survival. Other research was on pharmaceuticals, the ROTC, the repression of unions, and environmental pollution by multi-national industries.

From the Intercambio, the organization became the Proyecto. It was now seeking reciprocal understanding of other countries of the Caribbean despite historical, cultural, and racial differences.

The Proyecto is a collective force of laborers, religious workers, professionals and students working for justice and peace. It is part of a network including PRISA, the Puerto Rican Bar Association, *La Conferencia de Religiosas*, the Evangelical Council, the anti-nuclear movement, the Puerto Rican Institute of Civil Rights, and others. It envisions the Caribbean as a zone of cooperation and peace, and free of nuclear weapons.

Through seminars, lectures, forums, publications, and materials for schools and universities, the Proyecto keeps Puerto Ricans informed of the militarization of their country. It reminds them that more than thirteen hundred Puerto Ricans died in Vietnam, twice as many as from any other state or territory of the United States. Thousands have been physically and mentally affected. This should be a warning against enlistment in the United States military. To this end, it supports COMEPAZ (*Comité de Maestros, Estudiantes y Padres por la Paz*) a peace organization in the town of San Lorenzo campaigning against military recruitment in the public schools. It denounces the nuclear threat and had participated in the formation of the Puerto Rican anti-nuclear movement.

The Proyecto protested the detention of Haitian refugees at Fort Allen by the United States government, equating it with a concentration camp. Christmastime brought on a campaign against war toys, including a festivity in a park with a display of alternatives to violence. "Don't play war, play peace" was the theme.

One of many seminars organized by the Proyecto drew together, in 1984, peace organizations not only from Puerto Rico, but from twenty English and Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean, Central America, and North America. Together, they examined the factors bringing about militarism, and its impact on society. In conclusion, the conference affirmed the right of a people to build a just and democratic society. "The concept of peace involves social justice and the effective right of a country to self-determination and national sovereignty."

Of educative value are publications such as a treatise by Prof. Rodríguez Beruff on the militarization of Puerto Rico. *Intercambio*, written in Spanish, English and French, informs of the

military maneuvers of the Puerto Rican National Guard abroad, the threat of nuclear weapons in Puerto Rico, the Grand Jury persecution of *independentistas*, compulsory military service, the United States military presence in the Caribbean, and violations of human rights.

The Proyecto publication *Paz, Paz, Pan* (Peace, Peace, Bread) represents the collaboration of diverse organizations working for peace and human rights. A research project on Grenada was published before the invasion. With EPICA (a United States-based ecumenical organization), the Proyecto published *Puerto Rico: a People Challenging Colonialism*. Also published is a treatise on the Dominican Republic.

A documentation center provides services to a varied group of users: unions, churches, students, researchers and journalists. It includes clippings from the five major newspapers of Puerto Rico and information on the militarization of Puerto Rico, United States foreign policy, and the Caribbean Basin Initiative. In the reading room are books, pamphlets, and newspapers in Spanish and English, as well as audio-visual resources.

In 1987, Margarita attended the first Central American Workshop On Human Rights. All Central American countries participated, as well as Belize, Mexico, Colombia and Puerto Rico.

The anti-colonial work of Margarita Pérez and her staff of paid workers and volunteers, in their search for justice and peace, is supported by the declaration of the American Friends Service Committee: "We call on the United States to renounce any right to power over Puerto Rico and to work with the Puerto Rican people to establish a process by which transfer of power to them, and genuine self-determination, can be assured."

Carlos Zenón

Carlos Zenón, president of the Fishermen's Association, bore up as long as he could under the earthshaking bombing that had started at seven o'clock that morning. By ten o'clock he had come to the end of his patience. "This bombing will never stop!" he mused. Jumping into his little fishing boat, he confronted the USS Dewey. By then, the bombing was so loud he had to cut two pieces of cloth from his T-shirt to cover his ears. He thought his head would explode. As he maneuvered his boat in front of the cannon, the firing stopped. The U.S. Navy claimed it lost \$25,000 that day because "someone halted its testing." But Zenón reflected on the amount of ammunition it had saved.

This was but one of many acts of nonviolent resistance since the United States Navy took over three-fourths of the island of Vieques in 1941 for the storing of munitions and for bombing practice. The main resistance has been from the Fishermen's Association and the Crusade for the Rescue of Vieques. It is the fishermen who have been the hardest hit, since the bombing practice destroys the supply of fish and thousands of dollars worth of traps have been demolished. The last

time we were on the island, the fish supply was so low that we observed men going out equipped for deep sea diving. This has its dangers in that there is no facility nearby to deal with the bends.

The bombing practice threatens the safety of the people of Vieques. Zenón told us of an incident in which a young boy pushed against an unexploded bomb and was killed. Three others were crippled for life. Recently, he told us, a little girl found a live ordinance. An old man chased her to try to retrieve the bomb, but the bomb exploded. The man lost some of his fingers. The little girl is practically blind. The Navy offered the father \$2,000 and a job in compensation. Divers have come across unexploded bombs which could go off if hit by an anchor.

Zenón relates with amusement the time a group of Viequens caught the Navy literally with their pants down. A group of 150—fishermen, their wives, and others—stealthily entered the Navy base while the Navy men were still asleep in their shorts. Pitching tents, they settled in with the singing of the *Borinqueña*. “What the hell is going on here!” was the cry of consternation when the invaders were discovered. Federal marshals, Puerto Rican police, and Navy officers were called. Summons were dropped from helicopters, but Zenón shouted not to touch them. The invaders stayed two days, and then marched boldly out the front gate.

In another incident, in which Zenón was involved, fishermen went out in their tiny boats to attack the Navy ships with slingshots. The Navy retaliated with water hoses as they chased the elusive eighteen-foot boats about.

Zenón and others once confronted a truck loaded with munitions headed for Camp García by sitting in the middle of the road. At least ten trucks attempting to leave or to enter the munitions depository were held off. Rev. Caleb Morales gave his blessing on the action with the following observation: “Christ identifies with the poor and the oppressed.”

At the Vieques hearings, sponsored by Congressman Ron Dellums and held in Vieques and Washington, Zenón vowed, “We are going to go to the water when we want to and not when they want.” This he demonstrated one morning when he started out early for a day of fishing. A call came from the Navy ordering him to return to shore. There was going to be a naval operation in that area, they announced. “I also have an operation,” he retorted, and he quietly continued fishing until early afternoon, holding off the bombing practice.

Each year there is some form of resistance to the NATO operations, in which other countries pay a fee for the privilege of bombing Vieques. One such operation was Ocean Venture 81, which proved to be a trial run for the invasion of Grenada. The participants were instructed that they were to take the power from an “unfriendly” government and station troops on the island until an election could be called, and a government installed that would be friendly to the United States. The terrain of Vieques is similar to that of Grenada. The 75th Ranger Battalion, trained especially for rugged territory, was flown from Norton Air Base to Vieques for the maneuvers.

Ocean Venture 82, an operation costing \$12 million, represented a mock invasion of a mythical country known as “Brown,” which had interfered with sea lanes and had shipped arms to El Salvador. Cuba seemed to be indicated.

Zenón appeared in several hearings before the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations. In the 1979 hearings, he gave a long discourse in which he claimed that when the Navy left Culebra, it merely transferred its operations to Vieques, contrary to agreement. “We will continue the struggle until we obtain justice, until we have obtained the complete cessation of all military activity on the island, and we obtain the return of our land and our waters for our own use and enjoyment,” he proclaimed. He called the military operations on Vieques abusive and illegal, showing how they have adversely affected the life and the economic development of those who live there. The Navy is in violation of the Declaration of Human Rights of 1947, he maintained.

In the 1981 hearings, he told of how Vieques had served as a springboard for the attack on Guatemala in 1954, for the Cuban invasion of 1961, and for the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, and that boats had been sent from Vieques to the coast of Nicaragua during the Sandinista liberation.

Though Zenón does not go into the issue of independence, one big step towards liberation would be to break the oppressive hold of the Navy on Puerto Rican territory.

Vieques is the story of unfulfilled promises. The promises of 1982 signed by former governor Carlos Romero are still ignored: to give back some land to the people of Vieques, to limit the amount of noise, to reforest and preserve the ecology, to bring in industries to ease the unemployment.

The first industry to come in was Dandle, which manufactured military uniforms. Founded in 1984, it collapsed in January of 1987.

Attempts to enlist the “top ten” industries have not as yet borne fruit. These corporations, however, have the major contracts for production of nuclear arms in the United States and would endanger Vieques, making it a prime target in the event of a nuclear war.

Meanwhile, unemployment estimated officially at 23% in 1986 is actually, according to *El Mundo*, closer to 40%.

Continued occupation of Vieques, its inhabitants feel, can only bring about eventual extermination of the flora and fauna, and destroy the culture and the pride of Vieques.

In our meeting with Zenón we commented on his bravery. “I have two sons,” he told us. “I will continue the struggle regardless of personal danger. I want my sons to grow up to be proud of me.”

Piri Thomas

Piri Thomas turned down an invitation to dinner at our home, but invited us, instead, to a gourmet dinner he would prepare. As we entered his apartment in San Francisco, I could understand why he chose to be interviewed in his own milieu. Surrounded by works of art, including paintings of his own, with soft classical music in the background, Piri's reminiscences and philosophy poured forth. He showed us pictures of countries he and his late wife, Betty, had visited. They had been engaged for fourteen years, and married for seven, in a warm and loving relationship. The decor is all Betty's, he told us. Plaques on the wall testified as to her scholastic achievements as a lawyer specializing in international law. "I feel her loss in every hair of my body," he once confessed. He told of shouting his rage over her passing, to the ocean, and wishing that he could follow her in death. To help ease the pain, he is writing a book about her he calls *Lady Justice*.

We sat only briefly in his office for a formal interview, while a huge fish, ingeniously decorated and seasoned, baked in the oven. Soon we moved to the appointed table for a continuing flow of recollections and wisdom.

I knew much about his childhood from having read *Down These Mean Streets*, a vivid account of life in the Harlem Barrio, New York. The language and the descriptions portrayed, with shocking realism, the struggle for survival in a brutal world. Wrote Daniel Stern in a *New York Times Book Review*: "A report from the guts and heart of a submerged population group, it claims our attention and emotional responses because of the honesty and pain of a life led in outlaw, fringe status where the dream is always to escape." Piri had given us a copy with the precious autograph, "*To my Brother and Sister in the struggle to free all children from human bondage no matter whether it's mental, physical, economic or spiritual.*"

I questioned Piri as to why his parents had come to the United States. I was aware of the problems facing Puerto Ricans in an inhospitable land. Statistics show that the 2.6 million Puerto Ricans living here have an average income considerably lower than that of any other Hispanic families, and also have a higher unemployment rate.

Piri's father, Juan Tomás, had been raised in an orphanage in Cuba by missionaries. He migrated to Puerto Rico at the age of sixteen; his intention was to enter the United States as a Puerto Rican. After all, he reasoned, Puerto Ricans and Cubans were "kissing cousins." Tired of living on colonized islands, he ventured to live "in the belly of the shark." He was brought to the United States by friends and dumped in Harlem at the age of seventeen. Life there was rugged. Though he was trained to be a tailor, he could only find menial jobs. He changed his name from Tomás to the anglicized, Thomas, something he would be ashamed of for the rest of his life.

Born John Thomas, the younger Tomás disliked his name, and so adopted Piri, from the word, "spirit." Though not a talkative person, his father did imbue him with an interest in Cuba and took him to political meetings to hear, among others, Vito Marcantonio, a staunch champion of justice and human rights for the poor and independence for Puerto Rico.

Piri's mother was visiting from Bayamón, Puerto Rico, when she met her husband-to-be. She was light-complexioned, Juan was dark, so their seven children ranged from fair to dark-skinned.

From his mother, Piri gained spiritual insight, but never could relate to spirituality in the context of priests or organized religion, unless it was in the sense of sharing and respect for human dignity. As an adult, he has long believed that we all need each other. He quipped on God once being spelled "Good." When someone dropped an "O", that's when all hell broke loose! His mother, a Seventh Day Adventist, wanted him to become a minister. But writing was in his blood. He always had a flair for words. Once scolded by an irate teacher for speaking Spanish, he determined to master the English language. Spanish, he knew from his parents; English, he had picked up on the streets. His mother was a great story teller, passing on to him folklore of Puerto Rico.

In protesting the removal of *Down These Mean Streets* from some libraries, Piri related how much the library had meant to him in his childhood. He used to spend a great deal of time in the library, borrowing the allotted two books and slipping three or four more under his coat. Through books he had learned of the world outside. He smiled shyly as he said, he "always returned the liberated books, liberating new ones in their place."

He completed his high school credits during a seven-year stretch in prison for armed robbery. Upon his release, he expressed his concern for his brothers and sisters in Harlem by working with street gangs there.

On his first visit to Puerto Rico, he drank in the beauty of the scenery, and the ugliness of colonialism. He was offered a scholarship towards a doctorate in psychology at the University of Puerto Rico. But after a few months, he found it too boring. His years in prison had been a learning experience beyond what he could learn in college. He decided that he wanted his doctorate in the art of living, rather than in academics. He worked for a time as assistant to the Director of the Hospital of Psychiatry in Río Piedras. As an ex-addict, he was able to help develop a successful program of rehabilitation for addicts.

He soon found his true calling, however, in writing. After *Down These Mean Streets* he wrote *Savior, Savior Hold My Hand*, also autobiographical, of which critic Dorothy Eastland wrote: "...throughout its pages is the author's credo: 'Walk tall or not at all.' "

Surviving an upbringing in a world of racism and brutality, he could still write, "My world is really loving, despite promises that never come to be," (Eastland quotes him as saying.)

It is a tough book, yet at the same time it holds gentleness. "... a happy book, too," she continues, "for it is one of faith in the future if there is enough inner strength to face each day."

Then there was *Seven Long Times*, a description of his prison days. Of this critic Gladys P. Graham writes, "It recounts the loneliness, terror, shake-downs, stir-crazy days, humiliations, anger, and dull meaninglessness of his seven years in prison ... a nightmarish indictment of so-called rehabilitation, and offers ample evidence that what's happening in our prisons is criminal."

Chago was a screenplay, another critic states, “of one man’s agonizing struggle to retain by fact or fantasy his rights as a human being, and his mental hold on the island of Puerto Rico as a base of identity.”

There was more writing of prose and poetry, along with lecturing at universities, and giving dramatic poetry readings at Puerto Rican patriotic events in San Francisco.

Piri and Betty were in Geneva at a conference on human rights and genocide, when they learned of the August 30, 1985 invasion of homes, and arrests. He wrote to PEN Club (Poets, Essayists & Novelists) denouncing the FBI for their stormtrooper-type invasion, one of the many since the first invasion of 1898 when the United States took over Puerto Rico. He rued the United States’ spirit of “Manifest Destiny” which serves as a rationale for conquest, pointing out that Puerto Rico has the same claim for independence as did the thirteen colonies. He sees that in time, colonialism will become as extinct as the dodo bird. “No country, including Puerto Rico, should be forced to bear the humiliation of its dignity on bended knees.”

His ambition, he tells us, with tongue in cheek, is to be the one to accept the unconditional surrender of the United States forces in Puerto Rico—peacefully, of course!

Josefina Rodríguez

The President of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, listened attentively to Josefina Rodriguez as she described the situation of the Puerto Rican political prisoners. As Director of Foreign Affairs MLN (National Liberation Movement), and a paralegal, she was assisting a Congregation of Women and Legislation in Managua. She carried the message very close to her heart, having sacrificed two daughters to the cause of independence: Alicia and Ida Luz, who are serving sentences of 85 years in Dwight, Illinois and Pleasanton, California. She explained the censorship, long sentences, the torture of prisoners, and the government’s abuse of their families.

Embracing Josephine, Ortega promised to free certain prominent Contras if, in exchange, the United States would free Puerto Rican patriots, “the true fighters for liberty, who struggle for the independence of the fraternal country, Puerto Rico.”

Josefina’s message, not just to more than a hundred congressional representatives from Latin America, Spain, the United States and Canada, but to radio and press as well. Next, the Congress of Women and Legislation approved a resolution in favor of Puerto Rican independence, recognizing that international laws have declared that colonialism is “a crime against humanity.”

Born in Las Marías, Josefina left Puerto Rico, along with her husband and three children, due to the economic conditions of the 50s. Political turmoil had led to the arrest of 3,000 Nationalists

and sympathizers in an attempt to destroy the Party. This resulted in negative feelings towards independence and no one in his family sympathized with the struggle for independence. They moved to Chicago in search of better economic conditions.

In 1954, with the assault on Congress, Josefina again ceased feeling sympathy for the independence movement. However, finally, in 1974, she founded the FALN, to work for the freedom of five nationalists: Lolita Lebrón, Irvin Flores, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Andrés Figueroa Cordero and Oscar Collazo. Her children were involved in the organization and she found the reception in Chicago of the free nationalists an emotional experience. Thousands of people gathered in the church of Rev. Torres; there were so many that couldn't fit in the church that they joined those gathered outside. It was then that Josefina met Lolita Lebrón and understood the reasons for their actions, their sense of frustration with the United States for constantly refusing to hear Puerto Rico's cry for freedom.

In 1980, her daughter, Ida Luz, along with two others, was captured after spending four years in hiding. They also joined Alicia, Josephine's other daughter, along with other *compañeros*, making a total of fifteen "Prisoners of War." Since the military invasion by the United States in 1898, the Prisoners of War believe that Puerto Rico is still at war with the United States. Accused of Seditious Conspiracy (Intent to overthrow the government by means of force and violence), they declare that such accusations are illegal because Puerto Rico is not [an American] state and has the freedom to defend its independence by any means necessary. Ida Luz and Alicia are serving their sentences with courage and dignity, despite their separation from their families, feeling that no sacrifice is too great if done for one's country.

Alicia describes herself as the prisoner who been under guard the most at the FCI in Dwight, Illinois. Going from one cell to another requires an escort and often a long wait. Being constantly under surveillance creates a psychological pressure. She admits that being incarcerated for any other reason would be a fearful experience. In her nine years there she has developed a patience, knowing that her incarceration is due to her beliefs and political aspirations.

She spends her time on academic and vocational programs. Having developed a passion for photography has given her a perspective on life, and has broken the monotony that can sometimes lead to insanity. "As I look at those nine years," she writes, "I feel that instead of developing symptoms of depression, cynicism or fatigue, I've developed more patience, more security in myself and positive hope. I realize that I have lost a lot of time, but the lesser or greater triumphs keep us safe and confident in the future."

Ida Luz, a graduate of the University of Illinois, mother of a child, saw the crime against patriotic Puerto Ricans as a way of sowing fear in the movement and paralyze its intent to fight to win. "We will not be intimidated," she writes, "nor will we be forced to submission by fear of repression. We do not pretend to be supernatural. Fear is something we all feel at times.... The fear that we may feel cannot be any greater than the hatred we felt for imperialism. Our struggle must be to know and face the enemy with the necessary valor and sacrifices. Our struggle must ensure a bright and safe future for our children and other generations on Earth. Our actions should be based on the dignity of life on Earth. My actions are not of an exceptional person, I'm not

exceptional, but necessity compels me to fight and I believe that that same need affects all Puerto Ricans ." She explains how international laws maintain the premise that to fight for one's country is not a crime, but a necessity for the eventual destruction of colonialism.

Meanwhile, Josefina's friend, Alejandrina Torres, wife of Rev. Torres, pastor of the United Church of Christ in Chicago, very busy in the communitarian work of the church, was arrested for seditious conspiracy. She, also, took the position Prisoner of War. First she was detained in the Metropolitan Correctional Center, Chicago, where he was brutally assaulted by guards and dislocated her shoulder. Condemned to thirty-five years, she suffered a Heart attack and finally, in precarious health and suffering from the pain of her injured arm, was incarcerated in Federal Prison in Lexington, Kentucky. Confined to a very small cell and with almost no light, one of sixteen 16 cells in a basement reserved for political prisoners, was constantly monitored via video cameras.

Besides her they took two more political prisoners pol, the Italian Sylvia Baraldini and Susan Rosenberg. The atmosphere was designed to destroy the prisoners' morale. They had no contact with other prisoners. All actions were recorded in a book. They often conducted surprise strip searches. Her visits were limited to the immediate family, all correspondence was censored, she was granted no access to religious services, nor was she given adequate medical attention and there were frequent sexual humiliations. These women came to a point of disorientation, dizziness, vomiting and loss of weight. The national and international outrage for this denying of human rights was such that the government was forced to close the mind control unit in Lexington, Kentucky. Alejandrina was transferred to the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC), San Diego, and finally to the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI), Pleasanton, California.

Alejandrina's family has been greatly affected. Besides her, her son, Carlos Alberto Torres and daughter, Haydée Torres were also incarcerated as prisoners of war. They all had been active in the Puerto Rican Community and Cultural Center in Chicago, which founded a museum and Pedro Albizu Campos High School, which has been recognized as one of the best alternative school in the nation. The hope that Josefina maintains for prisoners is that, in time, international pressure will secure their freedom. Letters were sent to fifteen countries outside the socialist bloc and to members of the Special Committee of 24 of the United Nations, asking that they be granted political asylum. Each prisoner has been assigned to a country. The visit of a Puerto Rican patriot in Japan was well received and widely publicized. Denmark has responded expressing interest. It has formed a national campaign for the release of prisoners, called "Freedom Now", which already has offices in several cities, seeking the freedom not only of Puerto Rican prisoners, but of all political prisoners.

Josefina has testified before the Special Committee of 24 (Decolonization) twice. She denounced the incarceration and maltreatment of political prisoners and the farce of a plebiscite. She the plebiscite as a U.S. plan to annex Puerto Rico, and to be able to strengthen the control that

has so long strangled the economy and has sucked the life blood of the continent of Simón Bolívar, Marti and Pedro Albizu Campos. She asked the committee to not to be convinced by the imperialist appetite of the U.S., but to firmly maintain its commitment to full independence and to continue his opposition to the “Master-slave” relationship between the United States and the Puerto Rican people.

Josefina also spoke of conditions at the federal prison in Marion, Illinois, where she met the prisoner of war the Oscar López Rivera. He, along with other prisoners, is forced to drink water contaminated with PCB, and 20% of the prisoners are infected by a parasite called “giardia lamblia”. They suffer from diarrhea, weight loss and skin lesions.

Josefina concluded by asking the Committee to maintain the high principles of the United Nations and all that is “noble and humane, equality and respect for humanity and the promotion of peace between peoples.”

“It is worthwhile to live and fight courageously for sacred ideals.” The Puerto Rican political prisoners may repeat those words of Dr. Norbert Čapek, who was killed by the Nazis in Dachau, and who also wrote, “Blow, angry winds, through my stony body. You will not conquer my soul. Whoever has broken his shackles and given wings to his mind is marching into a golden future.”

(Translation by Norma López)

[Pepín Monsanto is a dear friend who came to feel like a son to my parents. He did most of the translating for the Spanish language edition of this book.]

José Manuel (“Pepín”) Monsanto

Interview With the Translator

A number of years ago, finding myself visiting in Yauco, Puerto Rico, I received a letter from Pepín Monsanto, motivated by an article of mine what had just been published in the periodical, The Peacemakers. Based on this letter, and as I found we shared the same opinion concerning Puerto Rican independence, Pepín and I continue corresponding. On two occasions, my husband Abe has visited him in the Glades Correctional Institution, where he is currently incarcerated.

Pepín’s admiration of us has grown to the point of becoming elevated to that between parent and child.

Though Pepin is not technically a political prisoner, I considered his arrest and excessive incarceration part of the harassment that usually applies to independentistas. Therefore, I include his voice as an strong cry for the independence of Puerto Rico.

Jean Zwickel: Pepín, tell us briefly about the circumstances under which you found yourself imprisoned.

Pepín: It is difficult to summarize briefly. But I can begin by saying that by 1973, I was under persecution by the police. It came to attention that the “Death Squads” had accepted an offer to kill me, for about \$ 50,000. Thank God I had time to escape to New York City, from which I later traveled to Florida.

Unfortunately, I was doing business with a Cuban who worked for the same people from the police that sought my death, and it was not difficult for them to fabricate a murder case [of a jeweler] there in Florida, for which I am still a prisoner, after having escaped the death sentence in the electric chair that I had originally received. I am currently working on the preparation of my appeal in order to get a chance to prove my innocence and regain my freedom.

J.Z.: What time have you already served in prison and what are the chances of being released?

Pepín: I was arrested on September 17, 1975, two months and a half after having reached Florida. My current sentence is twenty-five years to life, which means that I can't receive parole until I have completed 25 years of the sentence. I am short ten more years, however, I am confident that my appeal will allow me to leave in two or three years at the most.

J.Z.: What have been your main activities in the prison?

Pepín: First of all, I taught myself English so that I could have a voice within the system.

Then Sonia, the mother of my youngest son, got me a law course by correspondence from the Instituto Didáctico y de Derecho in Mexico City, and began to learn the proper way to litigate my own case, as because of the complexity of my case, no lawyer would touch it.

Another major activity has been dedication to my spiritual growth. I have taken courses in different religions, Eastern and Western. I have also studied metaphysics, parapsychology, philosophy, sociology, and psychology. I've gotten many degrees, including one in Biblical Education and an Honorary Doctor of Divinity. I continue studies with the Southern Baptist Convention and with Moody Bible College. I have also studied meditation and spiritualism. The greatest achievement of my studies I attribute to my initiation into San Mat (the path of the Masters), the spiritual science that leads to the unification of inner being with the Supreme Being or Universal Spirit (God).

The activity that most occupies my time these days is to help other prisoners with their legal problems. I also want to organize those sentenced to death, creating a “Death Row Inmates Project” in order to educate both inmates and society regarding possible alternative to the death

penalty. This project was deemed counterproductive to the purposes of the penal system. In the end it only served me to earn the repression and persecution of criminal authorities. Some petitions asking President Carter to abolish the death penalty were destroyed upon their arrival here, and I was prevented from distributing them.

J.Z.: What has been your spiritual development in prison?

Pepín: Apart from what I have already indicated, my spiritual development has consisted of a clear perception of Original Creative Power, or that which we call God. I no longer see myself as a puppet created and manipulated by God according to his unquestionable will, but recognize myself as an emanation of the same God, as a fragment of the Divine itself from which everything has emanated. I am so much a part of the heavens as I am of the earth, the air, the water, the animals, plants and rocks. I recognize my place Cosmic Plan, as I recognize that of all other beings and species that populate this planet Earth. We all play a role, we all respond to a defined purpose and all of us are necessary.

J.Z.: What lead you to offer to translate my book?

Pepín: I think I was spiritually motivated. From some revelations I had in Puerto Rico, I was convinced that in my destiny there exists a political-spiritual work I have to do on my little island. Since then I am convinced that spiritual forces have been pulling the strings of my life to help me fulfill that mission. To this I attribute our meeting, and other related coincidences of our lives, as we are along the same lines of spiritual philosophy and our position in favor of the independence of Puerto Rico. Upon reading his book, something inside told me that Puerto Ricans need to read it in Spanish. I didn't think twice and I offered to translate it.

J.Z.: How did you get involved for the first time in the independence movement?

Pepín: The corruption and indifference of our political leaders to the basic needs of the masses, convinced me of the need for political change. The chaos I attributed to the corruptive influence of the U.S. government that was felt on my land. Washington has always manipulated elections in Puerto Rico, from its invasion in 1898 to the present.

So rulers rise and fall, and the people continue in the same increasing misery and neglect, while those who sit in the executive office have already been bought beforehand to defend U.S. interests above all. Poverty, hunger and ignorance serve those interests, the people, in their misery, hunger and ignorance, are like a lap dog that is always faithful to his master, if only thrown the bones left over from his table.

Among the factors that led me to wrap myself in the pro-independence movement was my miserable childhood, the wretched, abject poverty in which my family lived, despite my father working like a slave seven days a week. The hunger that I had to deal with daily, often killing it with

rotten fruit obtained from the garbage cans I passed on my way to school. All this made me realize from a very young age that something was wrong with the management of our governmental structure, that the liberation from U.S. dominance was the solution to our problems.

As a pro-independence awareness was growing and was united with the pro-independence movement on the island, though with some suspicion, as I didn't perceive in any of them a realistic work program that entailed truly progressive change.

A godfather of mine introduced me to the Puerto Rican Independence Party, my having already been introduced to Jorge Luis Landíng. By this I knew Dr. Gilberto Concepción de Gracia, Francisco Colón and Rubén Berríos Martínez. My godfather was a nationalist and told me about his participation in the attack on the Capitol. The violence of our nationalist heroes did not attract my attention, as I figured that it only helped the U.S. instill more fear in the people in regards to independence. I have always believed that the vote of the people ought to be the only power which will convert Puerto Rico into a free and sovereign people, for there always exists the peace and unity necessary peace and unity finally enable us to forge a solid future and a progress ever growing.

I was chairman of the committee of PIP in the *Tras Talleres* barrio. Upon the death of Dr. Concepción de Gracia, very disagreeable changes occurred in the PIP. Berríos took the same direction without giving the leaders of San Juan the opportunity to vote for the nine directors. Many decided to retreat. Landíng exhorted us to reconsider for the welfare of the pro-independence cause, but we the offended could not conceive of a movement of liberation in which members lack the freedom to choose their leaders. We definitely decided that our struggle was to continue apart from the PIP and convinced Landíng to accept the leadership of a new party. Thus we founded the Partido Auténtico Soberanista (Authentic Sovereignty Party), whose work program was offering a more progressive line for the future of the island.

The PAS did not survive its first electoral participation, and funding shortfalls made us desist from going ahead with the Party. Many returned to the ranks of the PIP and this is made it more solid. PIP today has its representation in the legislatures and Senate of Puerto Rico and it seems that its leaders do not aspire to anything more. The very words of Senator Rubén Berríos Martínez, great leader of the PIP, "We just hope that independence is achieved before the social disintegration plunges the country to chaos," have a gloomy tinge of conformist pessimism. It sounds like the feeling of someone who has been able to obtain their good slice from the pork barrel and the rest does not matter much now. I personally believe that their attitude toward planned plebiscite will definitely let us know if their ideals aren't under the control of "Establishment."

I, for one, only pray to God that I be permitted to return to my land before plebiscite to do everything in my power so that the people will not be deceived once again by their "free" vote let them know if they definitely want to be free or be one of the United States of America.

J.Z.: Pepín, what chance do you see that Puerto Rico may gain independence one day?

Pepín: I am convinced that I will live to see my land run by its own government. The 21st century will write new pages in political history, not only in Puerto Rico, but also in the entire world. [Political] scandals have discredited the American nation in world opinion. Internally, discrimination and corruption have brought the discontent of the masses.

The United States urgently needs a radical change in political philosophy, both locally and internationally. There is no longer [in Puerto Rico] the right to privacy. The police can enter our homes at will and shoot us at will, since there exists for them all a legal technicality to justify such actions.

Now that world communism has received its final blow with the trend towards a new democratic system in the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the possible unification of the two Germanys, and the old myth that a Puerto Rico free of the U.S. would become a victim of communism, it will not frighten our people any more. These global changes also will be a harbinger for the United States that they also have to change their attitude, and for their own good and for to the benefit of their national pride, be encouraged to begin these changes voluntarily, before it is forced on them, which would result in a global discrediting, which this arrogant and proud nation can not afford to allow.

Now the United States has abandoned its support for the tyrannies of the Shah, the Somozas, the Duvalier and many others, it will soon see fit to cease its colonial rule, and the first of its colonies to be free will be the island of Puerto Rico.

Advent

I have to force myself to climb to the top
Where tomorrow and yesterday merge,
I of the torch kindle the fire
That of the "light" of "that" that so they said,
That shows man that God the Son
The grand advent is coming.

The new life will come, the lengthened sky
Beautiful Eden, that sweet paradise,
The original land as God had made
Without wars, without madness and without crime
Without those souls that moan in misery
Consumed by sorrow laden with mourning.

Wake up, my brother and open wide your eyes,
Look for torch that marks the trail

That must take you to a happy destiny,
Far away from the pain to which you succumb
And do not permit it to overwhelm the soul
I make myself prostrate at your kneeling feet.

Not from the spirit will victory be made
Nor from the meat of unhappy failure.
Both are melted in bound men
To overcome their undignified situation
They must achieve their divine condition
One body and soul lead to glory.

That we are gods, it is said in Scripture,
All of us children of the supreme God,
And before the God the Father have the obligation
To wage war of God against ignorance
And nurture the intellect at our breast
That we come from God who became Christ.

The fight is ours, and ours is the battle,
We march to the fore to combat
Wickedness, injustice and ignorance,
Let us give honor to that from which we spring,
And finish the labor resoundingly
For that which gave us our stature.

I invite you, brother, to meditate,
Within you, in life, in God and Universe,
Humanity marching in retreat,
The total destruction looming,
Do not take to sitting on your hill,
Regarding evil with listless humor,
Without worry that merits attention
The relentless war that gives sin
Without giving from you that which God has given
A little love which avoids evil.

—Pepin

Proofreaders

Pepo Gonzalez

I met him on a visit to Nicaragua with a group of Puerto Ricans. He wrote us:

“SOY ALBIZISTA (I am an Albizuist), and like him, I believe only in a free and sovereign Puerto Rico, without conditions imposed by the American invader.”

Juan Segarra Palmer

To Juan Segarra—like the others sentenced (for Wells Fargo robbery in Hartford, Connecticut)—was not found culpable of any offense involving firearms or murder or attempted murder, according to *Claridad*. Nevertheless, his sentence is much longer than that of one convicted of such offenses (65 years). Those who committed the biggest robbery in U.S. history were sentenced to serve only 15 years in prison.

Robert Rabin

After publishing my book, *Voices for Independence*, I had the opportunity to meet Robert Rabin and his compañera Nilda Medina, and enjoy his friendship and hospitality on the island of Vieques.

Before moving to Vieques, where he works as a history teacher at the high school since 1981, Robert received his BA in History and Sociology and took studies toward a Masters in Latin American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. There he worked in public schools as a bilingual teacher.

In Vieques he has participated actively together with Nilda organizing against the presence of the U.S. Navy. He organized the Vieques Collective, the center of socio-historical research that includes a wide section of documents and audiovisual materials about the military presence and about the struggle of the people to rescue the three-fourths of the island expropriated by the military over forty years. He has lectured on military presence in Vieques for various groups at the University of Puerto Rico, Inter-American University, Oxfam America (Boston), the Ateneo Puertorriqueño, the Bilingual Education Association of the Virgin Islands, school groups on Vieques

and on the Big Island of Puerto Rico. During the past ten years he has given talks and orientation for a great number of groups that have come to Vieques to learn more about the impact of the military presence on the island and on the historic struggle of the people of Vieques to live in peace in their own land. Professor Rabin has published articles in the local newspapers and magazines of the University of Puerto Rico and the University of America in Bayamón.

The occupation of Vieques by the Navy of War of the United States is a grave aspect of the colonial situation of Puerto Rico and exemplifies the exploitation of the land and people of Vieques and Puerto Rican have suffered.

Alejandrina Torres
[A revision of an article in *Unidad Communal*]

A Puerto Rican woman, mother, wife and freedom fighter for her people was dying little by little in an underground dungeon of a federal prison, without seeing the light of day, under the eye of a camera that continuously watched and recorded her every movement.

Who is she, and what “atrocities” has this woman committed to be punished like this by the U.S. government?

Alejandrina Torres was born in the Florida barrio of San Lorenzo forty-nine years ago, the ninth child of a family of ten children. Her family was forced to emigrate in search of work to New York City when she was eleven years old. Alejandrina studied in American public schools and since her teens began volunteering with government agencies that offered social assistance to poor communities. She was a victim of racial prejudice in school and has testified as to the injustice in which the poor live, dependent on government agencies to survive. These early experiences caused her to understand very soon in life the importance of the Puerto Ricans’ organizing to find solutions to their problems of housing, unemployment and education. She was also came to define herself as an independence fighter, and to recognize the right of people to use all existing means of struggle to achieve freedom.

At the age of 24, Alejandrina moved to the city of Chicago, and later married Rev., José A. Torres, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Chicago, which was attended largely by the Hispanic community. Upon joining the church, Alejandrina dedicated herself to working with religious groups that provided social services to the needy people in the community. She spent much of her effort to develop projects to improve education and health of Puerto Ricans. Along with other Puerto Ricans, she co-founded a high school in that taught history and values of Puerto

Rico. Later, she worked as a teacher at the school. She was also one of the founders of the Ramón Emeterio Betances Clinic, which offered medical services to indigents of limited means.

June 29, 1983 Alejandrina Torres, along with other Puerto Ricans, was arrested by the FBI and charged with Seditious Conspiracy. This means “meet and make agreements with others to oppose by force the authority of the government of the United States.” For this “crime” she was sentenced to 35 years in Federal prison. This woman, who has committed no crime of violence and has dedicated her life to fighting for the rights of the poor, must serve thirty-five years in prison for believing in and for affirming the right of people to fight for their freedom. This is a right that the United Nations has recognized for all colonial people, but which the U.S. government does not recognize for the people of Puerto Rico.

However, the U.S. government decided that 35 years in prison for Alejandrina was not enough punishment. She was transferred to the Control Unit in the Federal prison in Lexington, Kentucky. This unit’s purpose was to force political prisoners to renounce their political convictions or to commit suicide, through various forms of mental torture such as the following:

1. Being locked in a small underground cell, more like a dungeon, continuously illuminated by bright and focused light;
2. Being constantly monitored by a video cam inside the cell, with no privacy;
3. Undergoing full body scans, including humiliating vaginal and rectal exams conducted by male guards, every time entering or leaving her cell
4. Being deprived of medical services and the requisite diet for her heart condition;
5. Being subjected to constant noise to deprive her of deep sleep;
6. Being denied any communication with other prisoners;
7. Being denied religious services and group prayer.

The brutal conditions of imprisonment which the U.S. government had inflicted on Alejandrina Torres had affected her health to such an extent that her family and friends feared for her life. Alejandrina had been losing her sight, suffering from dizziness and having difficulty concentrating. But more serious still is that her heart ailment worsened, and she had lost about 40 pounds.

Six years of humiliation and torture have not broken the spirit of Alejandrina Torres. She She continues to face with courage and dignity the abuses and the brutality of the American prison system

In 1990 the Control Unit in the Federal prison In Lexington was closed, and Alejandrina moved to the Federal Correction Institution in Pleasanton, California.

A personal note from the Editor: The conditions under which Alejandrina suffered are unimaginable. And yet this courageous woman, wife of a sweet gentle pastor called, affectionately, “El Viejo”, never exhibited, in all my visits with my parents, anything but joy for life and a passion for justice.

Doña Ruth Reynolds

I cannot end this “Hall of Fame” of *independentistas* without paying tribute to my Harlem Ashram roommate, Ruth Reynolds. She, also, spent entire days at the bedside of Don Pedro. We struggled together in the founding of an American League for Puerto Rico’s Independence, and tried our hand at giving speeches. But then I went off to California to get married, while Ruth continued on, loyal to Don Pedro and the cause of independence.

Ruth and I were among the five full members of the Harlem Ashram, putting into the community pot whatever we earned. There was also Walter Bullen, a retired Baptist minister, J. Holmes Smith, former missionary to India, and Maude Pickett. I joined the cooperative when I lost my job teaching French and German. It was the outbreak of World War II. I felt I could not conscientiously participate to the extent of helping register soldiers for combat.

The Ashram was a very religious, pacifist group. We had morning prayers at Mt. Morris Park, prayers again at night, and Bible study. We put in a minimum of time on paying jobs so that we could do “kingdom work,” as Jay phrased it. We conducted a “play-street” in an area that was predominantly Puerto Rican. We organized games and activities for the young people in a block considered one of the worst in Harlem. Finding it too crime-ridden, with gambling houses, street fights and riots, recreational directors had given up on it. But in the interest of promoting interracial good will and associating ourselves with people from our Caribbean colony, we took on the project. In time, our friendliness broke through barriers of mistrust.

We lived austere so that our time and energies could be directed towards our work. Our food costs were something like \$2 a week. We ate a lot of soy beans and kale. Ruth and I rebelled at times over the Ashram austerity and would “sin” by going out for an ice cream cone.

It was this group that Don Pedro invited to his bedside, having heard of our work with Puerto Ricans, and our involvement in the “Free India” movement. He set about to convince us that “Free Puerto Rico” should be of greater importance to us, since it concerned our own government. We disagreed with him only on the issue of how to confront overt violence, but became thoroughly converted to the cause of independence. Ruth describes Don Pedro as “a man of the greatest intelligence, and of supreme goodness; a man of true peace situated in the center of the most concentrated violence of the most powerful empire of the world.”

Don Pedro wrote to us after we had left New York, “Ruth has been most active. She has been attending hearings on the Tydings Bill and has met with remarkable success. She has matured remarkably in this task. We are extremely grateful.”

In the spring of 1951, I received a crumpled letter from Ruth asking for help. It had been smuggled out of prison. Ruth had been arrested on November 2, 1950, along with Blanca Canales, Isabel Rosado, and some 2,000 Nationalists. It was following the 1950 revolution, and in enforcement of the "*Ley de la Mordaza*," Law 53, which was a gag law, an insular version of the Smith Act.

In a letter to her sister Helen, she described the arrest. "I was asleep in my bed at 2 a.m.... And then, more than forty policemen and National Guardsmen, armed with rifles, machine guns, and revolvers, came to the house where I was living alone. I dressed and went outside to ask them what they wanted. They said they were going to search my house and I told them to show me their search warrant. They told me 'afterwards' and I told them, 'No, now.' However, with more machine guns pointed at me than I had ever before seen collected together in one place, I did not resist. After stealing all my books and papers, they told me that they had no paper, but that they did have orders to arrest me. Without an order of arrest, no one can be arrested legally, unless he be caught doing an illegal act. Sleeping is seldom considered illegal."

Ruth was taken to police headquarters and held for several days before being interrogated. On November 12, they took her out of the police headquarters to the waterfront of San Juan. "At that same moment in another car," she wrote, "arrived my great friend Don Pedro. We greeted one another and I, with a sense of undeserved privilege, walking at his side, entered the home of the valiant, the La Princesa Prison."

Finally, in January of 1951, Ruth was arraigned. They came up with two charges: one, that she had been riding in a car that carried weapons for the October 30 revolution, and for the purpose of participating in the revolution. It was true that she had hitched a ride in that car from Fajardo to San Juan, for Ruth had never been reluctant to accept rides from Nationalists. The other charge was that she "pledged life and fortune to overthrow illegally, criminally, and maliciously the government of Puerto Rico" when she stood up in the December, 1949 meeting. Witnesses claimed to have seen her take the pledge, which was actually "to give life and property for the independence of Puerto Rico." They placed her as having been in several different parts of the hall, but the charge held, and she was sentenced to six years imprisonment. My personal suspicion is that one primary goal was to get hold of the manuscript she had written based on her research of the strife at UPR and her year's investigation of the colonial situation. But she wisely had another copy in safe keeping in New York.

Prison conditions were unbearable. Windows were boarded up in a crowded cell. Ruth was held in isolation at times, transported handcuffed, fed on bread and coffee for breakfast, and beans and rice the rest of the day. But, "There is no pain so great," she said, "that I could not suffer gladly and perpetually if because of it one Puerto Rican child might grow up a free person."

Finally, with the help of lawyers and a largely pacifist Ruth Reynolds Defense Committee she was released from Arecibo Prison, June, 1952, after nineteen months in prison. The North American League for Puerto Rico's Independence she had founded ran scared during her imprisonment and disbanded without offering her any support.

With an M.A. in English from Northwestern University, and two years of high school teaching, including one year on an Indian reservation, Ruth was well equipped to communicate her research to the American public. Descendant of fighters in our own revolution for the freedom of the thirteen colonies, she felt commitment to the struggle of others as part of her heritage, albeit as a pacifist.

As early as 1946, the League for Puerto Rico's Independence had presented a brief to the United Nations. On the Board of Directors of the League at that time were such notables as Rachel DuBois, Rev. Donald Harrington, A. Philip Randolph, and Dr. John Haynes Holmes. Pearl Buck was taking an interest, as well, and had once met with us in a moment of crisis. The League charged that the treatment of Puerto Rico by the United States was in violation of the "Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories" set forth in Chapter 11, Article 73 of the United Nations Charter.

In 1952, Ruth presented, on behalf of the Organizing Committee of Americans for Puerto Rico's Independence, a petition to the General Assembly of the United Nations. She defined her group as composed entirely of citizens of the continental United States, pledged to work through educational and political channels for the independence of Puerto Rico, and completely unrelated to any other organization ... opposed to the assertion of the United States that since the formation of the Puerto Rican Constitution, it was no longer a non-self-governing country. She petitioned the United Nations to establish a permanent commission to investigate claims that Puerto Rico now had a full measure of self-government, and to study the treatment accorded the independence movement of Puerto Rico.

In 1977, Ruth again made a presentation, this time to the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations. As National Coordinator of Americans for Puerto Rico's Independence, Ruth traced the history of the United States conquest of Puerto Rico and the continuing struggle for freedom.

In June of 1984 we were fortunate enough to be in New York for a celebration in Ruth's honor. A large assemblage, primarily representing the destitute of the ghetto area, paid homage to Ruth for her great work in defense of independence, and showered her with flowers and speeches. A lavish buffet supper followed.

Further honor was paid Ruth in November of 1984, when she came to Puerto Rico for a short visit. We went to the Bar Association building to meet with her. But it was not easy to get her attention. She was besieged with reporters, photographers, and old friends. *Claridad* paid her homage in a full-page article with pictures. She was praised as one of the closest and most faithful of the collaborators with Albizu Campos, and a fervent fighter for independence since 1943.

Now retired from her position as assistant librarian and archivist at the New York Psycho Analytic Institute, she "commutes," as she phrases it, between her home state, South Dakota, and her humble apartment in New York. Sorting out her enormous accumulation of materials on Puerto Rico, and giving interviews for an oral history conducted by the Center for Puerto Rican

Studies at Hunter College keep pulling her back to New York. Video-taping by the Schomberg Center for the New York Public Library and Columbia University has also kept her from her ardent wish to retire in South Dakota and write up her rich experiences in the independence movement.

In the process of publication is Ruth's book "*Campus in Bondage: a 1948 Microcosm of Puerto Rico in Bondage.*" It tells the story of the revolt and strike at the University of Puerto Rico in rebellion against denying Albizu Campos permission to speak on campus.

Ruth's book and mine are proof of the dedication she and I share for the cause of independence.

It would not be fitting to close without paying a Special Tribute to the Puerto Rican political prisoners and POWs for their sacrifice in the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico. *!Que Vivan!*

—Jean, Abraham and Daniel Zwickel
Pittsburg, California
June, 1993



Dedicado a la Abuela Jean

Suenan las campanas
vuelven a sonar,
todas las mañanas
para ir a rezar...

The bells are tolling
they toll again,
every single morning
calling to prayer

La Abuelita anciana
marcha hacia el altar,
porque buena y sana
quiere a Dios llegar.

The elderly little grandmother
walks toward the altar,
for good and healthy
she wants to meet God.

Ya la marcha es lenta
porque por la edad
no puede avanzar,

Her march is slow
because of age
her advance is impeded,

mas la nieta atenta,
buena de verdad,
la ayuda a llegar...

but her attentive granddaughter
truly kind
helps her arrive...

— Sicomoro Zón (Colombia)
(English translation by Hector Lugo)

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