

# The Struggle for Puerto Rican Independence

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For 38 years American imperialism has owned Puerto Rico, beautiful Caribbean island. During all that time, not one word was spoken in *Washington* of Puerto Rican independence. On the contrary, the program of the present Democratic administration has a plank calling for "statehood" for the island. Suddenly, or so it seemed to the press and the island, the Roosevelt-backed Tydings Bill offering independence to the colony was introduced in Congress. Why this sudden change of front? Why offer independence to this important war base protecting the Panama Canal, this source of huge colonial super-profits for American finance capital, this "model" colony of Yankee imperialism and example of its "civilizing rule" to the other countries of South and Caribbean America? Why, in fact, speak of independence at all – at the worst, a very dangerous business for imperialism?

There are various factors which indicate the reasons for this change of front, but they all revolve around one central point. The "Tydings independence" was offered because the people of Puerto Rico *were taking the road to real independence*. The growing mass struggles for independence, the developing unity of the people, are putting the Yankee rule on the spot, in the island, as well as before the other countries of South and Caribbean America with which Roosevelt is arranging a Pan-American Peace Conference.

Hence, the Tydings Bill and its provisions.

## THE TYDINGS BILL

"The American system is not functioning properly in Puerto Rico," said Senator Tydings on April 24 when he introduced his bill. Backed by the Roosevelt administration, the Tydings Bill contains the following provisions: In 1937 a plebiscite will determine whether the people want the "Tydings independence" or their present ignominious colonial status. Once determined that the vote is for "independence", a constitutional convention will be called *by the present American colonial government* and a "commonwealth" of four years' duration will be instituted. After these four years, sovereignty

will be granted, except for various and omnipotent American naval reservations.

The Commonwealth will be limited by numerous hog-tying clauses. American imperialist supervision will be guaranteed in foreign affairs, debt-making powers, trade, property rights, etc. An American high commissioner "whose authority is to be recognized" will do the supervising. Not losing sight of the strategic importance of this Caribbean island, the bill will recognize "the right of the United States to expropriate property for public uses, to maintain military and other reservations in Puerto Rico, *and to call into the service armed forces organized by the new government*".

Most salient of all is Section III, which provides that "during s the second year after the inauguration of the commonwealth, the United States may charge 25 per cent of the usual tariff rates on articles imported from Puerto Rico; during the third year this rate shall be 50 per cent; and during the fourth year, 75 per cent". (There is at present no tariff on Puerto Rican goods, since the island is a territory of the United States.)

#### THE PAN-AMERICAN PEACE CONFERENCE AND FREEDOM

Not only is the rising national revolution in Puerto Rico the concern of imperialism, but likewise the effect of this unrest in the "model colony" on the position of the United States before the other countries of South and Caribbean America. British and Japanese imperialism wait like lions in the night to spring upon any weakness within the camp of Yankee imperialism in the ruthless fight for the market. All the open scandals must therefore be toned down. Especially the drawing closer of the Pan-American Peace Conference lends added weight to this offer of "independence" to the only direct colony of the United States. Intervention in Cuba "to protect American interests", in Nicaragua, in Haiti, accompanied by mass liberation struggles of the people has sullied quite a bit the shield of the Monroe Doctrine. The ruthless "dollar diplomacy" has been so thoroughly exposed that Roosevelt is forced to seek more subtle methods to continue the same ruthless domineering policy. Hence the "good neighbor" policy of sweet smiles, of abrogating the Platt Amendment in Cuba, of withdrawing the marines from Haiti, of settling the old dispute with Panama, and now of offering independence to Puerto Rico. But imperialism is taking no false steps. As Lenin pointed out long ago:

"Finance capital is such a tremendous, one can say, decisive force in all economic and international relations that it is able to subdue and is actually subduing even states enjoying the fullest political independence."

So what will Yankee imperialism lose in Puerto Rico by granting independence, especially this peculiar castrated sovereignty which the Tydings Bill proposes?

#### YANKEE IMPERIALISM AS LORD AND MASTER

In 1898, when Wall Street took over the island of Puerto Rico as the booty of war with Spain, several salient steps were quickly taken to squelch all independent and native economic development. First, in 1900 the Puerto Rican *peso* was changed into the American dollar, thus reducing the wealth of the native and Spanish bourgeoisie and landowners at one blow *by a third!* Next came the application of the Coastwise Shipping Act which forced all Puerto Rican trade into American monopolist hands by decreeing that all commerce must be carried on in American ships or through American ports. The protective tariff accentuated this trade monopoly by forbidding the independent sale of Puerto Rican goods in the likewise protected world market. In this outrageous manner, all attempts of the native bourgeoisie to develop independently the island economy were nipped in the bud.

With the American army in power, followed later by a succession of omnipotent governors, with the native bourgeoisie seriously weakened, with the market assured, Wall Street scrambled for investments. Coffee, the chief native crop, was sent begging for a market. Sugar, which in 1898 was produced by 400 mills and totaled 54,000 tons, is today produced by 42 mills and comprises 75 per cent of the exports. Four huge American plantation companies alone own over half of the sugar land and produce more than half of the crop; and American holdings in sugar reach 65 per cent of the total. Ruling the sugar roost, as in Cuba, are the National City Bank and the Chase National Bank.

Of the remaining export crops, tobacco is 85 per cent controlled by one American monopoly – the Puerto Rican American Tobacco Company. The coffee crop is gradually being swallowed by the American governmental credit agencies, thanks to the lack of a market (the treaties with Brazil, Colombia, etc.). So undermined is

the market for Puerto Rican coffee, that the native bourgeoisie (whose only remaining base nominally independent of the American banks is coffee) has been able, after years of struggle, to force through a tariff of 15 per cent on coffee *imported into the island!* Since then some strange gyrations have occurred. In 1934 Puerto Rico *imported* 39,000 pounds of coffee. In 1935 the imports grew to 330,000 pounds! Exports to the United States decreased by 500,000 pounds. And exactly 500,000 pounds is reported by the Puerto Rican producers as *an unsalable surplus!* The Yankee credit agencies reap their harvest.

Except for one Canadian power company (against which Roosevelt is taking action through a scheme of "rural electrification"), one municipal light company, and one small native-owned power company, all public utilities, bus lines, power companies, irrigation works and railroads are American owned. Four American steamship lines monopolize all freight trade and charge exorbitant rates.

Two Yankee banks – the National City and the Chase National – dominate the credit scene. Rates are usurious – 8 to 10 per cent for Puerto Rican producers, but only 6 per cent for Americans.

It is estimated by the governmental agencies that mortgages on Puerto Rican land total more than 100 per cent of its total current valuation. The Federal Land Bank alone claims loans of over \$50,000,000.

#### "THE MOST DISTRESSFUL COUNTRY"

Producing only a few cash crops for the world market, buried under debts to the Yankee banks, the Puerto Rican peasant and small landowner have been triply hit by the agrarian crisis. The sugar restriction policy of the A.A.A. and the lowered sugar price have taken the remaining ground from under the feet of the sugar *colonos* (small sugar cane growers). Dominated by the all-pervading power of the American-owned "central" (sugar mill) through credits, ownership of railroads, and monopoly of milling, the *colono*, in return for restricting his crop, did not even get his compensation as promised. The *centralistas* and banks gobbled it all up. Two American corporations alone received A.A.A. checks to the tune of \$900,000 apiece.

For over six years the municipalities have not paid their employees, because the farmers have been unable to pay taxes. Dispossessed and landless, confined to the unfertile mountain soil, the

peasants are starving. Rapidly reaching the conditions of mass famine, faced with the ever-present threat of foreclosure or forced sale for non-payment of taxes, the peasants, in their unrest, are breaking through the landlord-controlled Farmers' Association. In a congress held in March of this year, they voted to call a tax strike, to demand a moratorium on debts, as one of a number of concessions. "If these demands were not granted peacefully, they would take the path of rebellion," they warned.

For the workers, conditions are even worse. Unemployment stalks the island. Over 84.6 per cent of the population is in need (read hungry), reports the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in the island. A million dollars a month is supposed to be spent in the island for relief. But Governor Winship stoutly "vindicated" the Puerto Ricans by maintaining recently that over 80 per cent of that sum is spent in the United States for materials! And on the 30th of June even this miserable pittance will cease.

But, strangest of all, this imperialist-caused starvation and misery are used as an excuse *against independence*. In fact, the arch-reactionary *Herald Tribune* sent down a special correspondent, Edward Angly, to hunt up arguments against independence. But interspersed in his imperialist arguments are some interesting scenes of Puerto Rican life. Let us look at a few of them:

"Suppose [in the United States] there were no schools for half the swarming children, that almost a third of the population was afflicted with hookworm and could not or would not [?] buy shoes and build and use latrines to rid themselves of the disease. Suppose, because of the tariffs of a bigger country that held yours as a colony and bought all but a handful of your exports, that you had to pay even higher prices for your staple foods than you do today, while at the same time, the laborer's hire in the fields came, when he could get it, to merely 40 to 60 cents a day. Assume that the working womenfolk were mostly in the needle trades and received four, even three, sometimes but two cents an hour for embroidering of nighties, panties, hankies and fingertip towels for the use of other women far away overseas....

"Just imagine all that in the United States and still you would be seeing only a few of the shadows in the picture

that make Puerto Rico what an old Irish song called 'the most distressful country that ever I have seen'...."

Angly concludes that the Tydings Bill will not help Puerto Rico. In that he is correct, but for totally different reasons than he presents. His main thesis for this contention is that Puerto Rico cannot develop independently on a "cash crop economy" without the American market. But, with typical imperialist reasoning, he puts the cart before the horse. For it was Yankee imperialism, not internal conditions, which stifled all independent Puerto Rican development in order to convert it into an "agrarian [raw material] appendage of foreign finance capital".

#### ALL IS NOT GOLD

But, as always, behind Roosevelt's gracious "independence" gesture lurks the mailed fist of imperialism. Hand in hand with the abrogations of the Platt Amendment guaranteeing the United States the right to intervene in Cuba came the native-industry-smashing Reciprocity Treaty. In Puerto Rico, the tariff provisions of the Tydings Bill do the trick.

What are the articles imported from Puerto Rico which will be affected by the tariff? First, sugar, which comprises, as we have seen, about 75 per cent of the total exports; then, tobacco and fruit. Coffee is exported mainly to European markets. Thus, the weight of this provision will affect the sugar industry, which in turn is almost the entire economic life of the island. But the sugar industry is owned in the main by American corporations and banks. Is this not then contradictory? Is imperialism going to harm itself?

This seeming contradiction is a response to the sugar industry's own contradictions, and attempts to solve them in a typically imperialist manner. Who will benefit by such a move? First, the American beet sugar growers, who will lose one of their tariffless competitors. Secondly, the Cuban sugar growers. But these Cuban sugar companies are owned mainly by the same banks who in turn dominate Puerto Rican sugar. Here is where two related factors enter. First, the depredations of the agrarian crisis leave the monopoly plantation owners with idle land and factories and willing to curtail production on part of their property. Hence the moves of the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration to buy up idle sugar land to convert into "subsistence farms" in order to "diversify agriculture".

Secretary Ickes, in a recent visit to the island, gave the administration's approval to these measures and attacked the "land-grabber" sugar growers. Secondly, the problem of war preparations involves the securing of the necessary raw materials from as close as possible to the mainland. Puerto Rican sugar, a thousand-odd miles of water away, is not the most strategically located. Hence this long-time perspective of restricting sugar production in the island.

This restriction, however, does not mean that imperialism will abandon its very profitable Puerto Rican sugar fields. On the contrary, the proposed tariff *will harm first of all the smaller native producers*, and will further cement American economic positions. The Puerto Rican producers, of which there are few, will find it more impossible to compete with the superior American mills, which are the possessors of cheaper credit and markets and capable of *ruthlessly reducing wages and oppressing the sugar colonos even more*.

Wrapped in this tariff provision we, therefore, find the subtle hypocrisy of Roosevelt. Constituting a threat to that section of the national bourgeoisie and landowners linked up with the sugar industry, he expects them to fight the national revolution and organize the people to vote *against* the Tydings independence by spreading the tale that it means *more* hunger and economic catastrophe. As Dr. Ernest Gruening, head of the Department of Territories and Insular Possessions, cynically phrases it:

"If the Puerto Ricans in the referendum projected in the bill for November of 1937 should decide against accepting the responsibilities of independence, it would settle the agitation which has long disturbed the insular government. The United States has nothing to lose if the vote went in the other direction."

This independence gesture, therefore, has the added virtue of attempting to split the people on the issue, thus giving imperialism the opportunity it seeks to drown the national revolution in blood. As *The New York Times* succinctly puts it:

"It [the Tydings Bill] may be advocated on the ground that the time has come when our government must sternly suppress acts of political terrorism which have recently increased in number, and that we can best pursue such a

policy if it goes hand in hand with an alternative offer of independence."

#### THE MARCANTONIO BILL FOR IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENCE

What roads offer themselves to the Puerto Rican people in their struggle for complete national liberation? Statehood? But that means only a continuation of the present colonial status and a deepening of the dependency of the *colony*, bringing with it greater national shame. This solution of the sugar interests does not solve the problems of the people. The Tydings Bill? Its tariff provisions would ruin the only source of Puerto Rican income, the sale of its cash crops, *without creating substitutes*. Imperialism would lose none of its economic positions, but would only strengthen them. Puerto Rico would remain a pawn in the war plans of imperialism as the site of some of the most important Caribbean naval bases. Independent development would not be furthered but only hindered. This, likewise, is no solution to the burning problems. What is needed is full, complete and immediate independence.

Such is the purpose of the Marcantonio Bill for Puerto Rican independence, introduced by Representative Marcantonio on May 6. This bill provides: that ninety days after the bill becomes law the President shall proclaim Puerto Rico free and independent; that all American naval and military reservations shall be given up; that the people shall be free to set up any government they see fit without any interference from the United States; that this government shall make any disposition it see fit of the American property now in the island. Recognizing the responsibility of American imperialism for the present economic catastrophe in the island, the bill provides that no tariff on Puerto Rican products be charged until the new government should desire otherwise. It also declares for the payment of an indemnity for any claims that the new government may make. A commission of five from each power would arbitrate all claims.

It would be folly to expect the present imperialist government to pass such a law, as Congressman Marcantonio said:

"The Puerto Rican people should hold no illusions. Neither the Tydings Bill, nor my bill, nor any other bill will grant independence on a silver platter. Only their united strength, the formation of an anti-imperialist front of the whole people against the foreign dominators and their own

national traitors are the best guarantee of achieving independence. Behind them will stand the overwhelming majority of the great American people, who hate oppression and love freedom."

#### THE GROWING NATIONAL REVOLUTION

What are these acts of "political terrorism", which the *Times* refers to, that have caused American imperialism to abandon its traditional position of maintaining Puerto Rico as its direct colony? They are the beginnings of the unity of the people against imperialism and the national traitors.

The immediate act of "political terror" to which the *Times* and Senator Tydings referred was the assassination of the American chief of the Puerto Rican police, Colonel Riggs, on February 24, by two national revolutionary youths. What was the background of this act? The call for a People's Anti-Imperialist Front issued by the Communist Party was meeting with more and more support among the masses and especially the national revolutionary Nationalist Party. The danger to Yankee rule that the Nationalist Party would join in a united front with the Communists led imperialism to attack. "All possible leaders of the growing revolt must be eliminated," was the problem of the imperialists most capably expressed by the aforementioned Colonel Riggs, who gave orders to the police to "shoot first and talk later". On October 24, in the university town of Rio Piedras, the first shots in the offensive were fired. Four Nationalists were massacred by the police.

That bloody action set off the gathering storm. The press united in denouncing the police. One survivor of the massacre, held for attacking an officer, was freed by mass pressure. The Nationalists publicly swore vengeance and raised the slogan of "arms, arms, arms!"

It was in this tense atmosphere that Riggs was assassinated. The two young Nationalists who did the shooting were immediately *lynched by the police in the Central Police Headquarters*. The storm of indignation was so great that the police were indicted for murder by the grand jury.

In the beginning of March, nine of the leading members of the Nationalist Party were arrested by the Federal Department of Justice and held for "inciting to insurrection". The General Secretary of the Nationalist Party, Juan Antonio Corretjer, has been imprisoned for

one year for "contempt of court". Among the arrested Nationalists is Pedro Albizu Campos, President of the Party, and beloved national leader.

The Communist Party, jointly with the Nationalists and individuals of the other parties, began to call a series of mass meetings which shook the country. For the first time, the unity of the Puerto Rican people began to be expressed in reality, and the confidence of the masses in their own strength increased. Around the issue of the defense of the national revolutionary party and its leaders, the united front began to form. Prominent leaders of the national-reformist Liberal Party, including their parliamentary leader, Ramos Antonini, called for the unity of the whole people in defense of Albizu and his comrades.

It was this growing united front, the growing isolation of the pro-imperialist leaders, the anger of the masses leading to hesitations and splits in the national-reformist ranks, which brought about the presentation of the Tydings Bill. As W. F. O'Reilly, *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent, pointed out:

"Probably failure of the leaders and the press to condemn outspokenly the conditions leading up to the murder of the chief of the insular police, Colonel Francis E. Riggs, gave greater impetus than any other happening to the administration's change of policy."

In presenting the Tydings Bill with the intention of sidetracking the national liberation movement into a peaceful waiting for action from Washington, Roosevelt reckoned without the host – the Puerto Rican people.

"Into this growing united front movement, the Tydings Bill offering independence," a letter from the island reports, "fell like a cannon-cracker; and the Marcantonio Bill giving complete and immediate self-determination, like a bomb."

The camp of national revolution united under one slogan – "a national united front for the immediate convocation of a Constituent Convention and the proclamation of the Republic". Released by the Communist, Nationalist, and Independentist Parties, this slogan became the rallying cry of the whole country. The *Daily Worker* has already published a picture of the first demonstration held under this slogan in the coffee and mountain town of Utuado. *All political par-*

*ties participated.* In over 20 of the 73 cities and towns in the island, this action was duplicated.

Before the advancing unity of the people, the class lines and different group interests within the various parties became more sharply drawn. So sharp has the struggle become, and the accompanying protests of the American Tories interested in Puerto Rican sugar and a strong naval base, that Roosevelt, as usual, has capitulated. First, Senator Tydings announced that this session of Congress would not vote on his bill. Then, on May 26, the whole question was sidetracked to an "investigation committee".

#### THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND NATIONAL UNITY

The Union Republican Party, in response to the Tydings Bill, passed a resolution calling for an amendment which added the alternatives of "statehood" to the plebiscite. One section of its leadership is linked directly with imperialism through its integration in the sugar industry owned by the Yankee corporations. Practically, the entire Executive Committee of the Association of Sugar Producers is at the same time the Executive Committee of this party. Another section of its leadership represents the commercial and trading bourgeoisie, mostly of Spanish origin, linked to imperialism in the monopoly of the market. But within this party, whose leadership is openly pro-imperialist, the struggle between these two groups for the opportunity to rob or exploit the masses is causing a split. Already one section of the commercial bourgeoisie split off last October and formed the Regional Party, whose platform advocates a "self-governing Puerto Rico". Direct causes here were the Roosevelt inflation policy and the sugar restriction program reducing the home market. The Union Republican leaders have prohibited their lower organizations from participating in the united front movement. Nonetheless, these organizations are participating. In a convention of the Union Republican Youth a serious fight was started over the whole question which may lead to a split.

In an election coalition with the Union Republican Party is the Socialist Party. Together they now control the insular legislature. Years ago the Socialist Party was born in struggle. Led by leaders with anarchist tendencies, however, they had no revolutionary perspectives in the concrete conditions of a colony. Some of the leaders have sold out to the imperialist-dominated policies of the American Federation of Labor Executive Committee and try their best to bol-

ster up imperialist prestige. Santiago Iglesias, their President and present Resident Commissioner in Washington, is at the same time the Secretary of the "defunct but not yet buried" Pan-American Federation of Labor. In control of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor, these leaders are the most astute promoters of "class collaboration" and the most fertile boosters of the "civilizing mission" of American rule. It is this section of the Socialist leadership which joins with the Union Republicans in advocating "statehood".

But the Socialist class struggle traditions are not dead. Within the Socialist ranks a Left wing is being formed with a Marxist orientation. This has especially taken place when the leaders are connected with the few remaining trade unions. As yet no nation figure has come forward as the leader, but the following directives given out by the Central Committee on the question of the Tydings Bill show where the wind is blowing:

"The Territorial Executive Committee also instructs all organizations and members of the Socialist Party to abstain from taking any part in so-called united front movements which can create confusion in the discipline, in the struggles, of the Socialist Party of Puerto Rico."

This party was once connected with the Second International and later considered itself a branch of the American Socialist Party. Today it is isolated internationally. Its program is limited to petty reforms and parliamentary struggle. Its mass base used to be the Free Federation of Workers, affiliated with the A. F. of L.; but recent years have witnessed a sharp decline in its strength, due to neglect and too shameful strike sellouts.

The leadership of these two parties are imperialism's main direct prop. It appears strange that pro-imperialist parties should win the majority of the electorate in a direct, super-exploited colony. But their campaigns carried out under the "statehood" and "socialist" slogans have as their main thesis the attempt to prove that independence would be "harmful" to the sugar industry and the American market from which almost the entire country derives its support. "Statehood," therefore, is presented as a progressive step, which, while giving the Puerto Ricans the right to elect their own governor, would at the same time assure the American market. The fear of the Yankee warships and the "impossibility" of a successful revolution are constantly harped upon by the "Socialist" leaders.

The Liberal Party is national-reformist; its struggle against the imperialist robbers is constantly vacillating. Under the pressure of the rising mass movement, two wings are becoming increasingly clear in it. One, for accepting the Tydings Bill *as is*, in spite of its attacks on their economic positions; and the other, for rallying the mass struggle under the united front and proclaiming independence immediately.

The resolution of the last Central Committee meeting adopted the waiting attitude. "Within the Tydings granted independence, they would, with order and patience, fight for their economic rights." But the long standing advocacy of independence has forced the Liberal Party to straddle both horses before the actions of the masses and their own lower organs. Their president, Barcelo, speaks from the platform of the united front. So sharp is the fight becoming within the party that there is open talk of a split.

The national revolutionary wing tending to be formed has already taken root. Within it are most of the prominent intellectual leaders, the Liberal Youth organization (which, in turn, called for a united front of the youth) and most of their mass base among the petty bourgeois intellectuals, students, peasants, workers, and small storekeepers. In the localities, the Liberal Committees participate actively in the united front for independence.

In the camp of the national revolution we find the Nationalist Party. Led by Albizu Campos, it is composed in the main of students, petty-bourgeois intellectuals, and some workers. It is rapidly rising to the position of a leading political factor in the island. It stands out as an anti-imperialist sector offering the program of immediate and direct struggle. It considers the Treaty of Paris which ceded Puerto Rico to the United States null and void, because at that time Puerto Rico, with its autonomy won from Spain, had the power to make its own treaties and therefore could not be disposed of as a possession. Among the youth it has organized a corps of "Cadets of the Republic" who drill with wooden rifles. In the middle of May the cadets were officially disbanded by the police and forbidden to drill in public.

A leading factor in all the movements for the anti-imperialist united front is the Communist Party. Its slogans become the everyday slogans of the masses. Even in towns where there are no Communist groups, the Communist Party has been invited. Its influence in the growing united front can be gauged by the fact that the Con-

vention of the Young Liberals gave a vote of thanks to the Chairman of the Party, Lanauze Rolon. One of the prime factors behind the present mass movement was the May First meetings and the appearance of the Communist organ, *Lucha Obrera (Workers' Struggle)* with the call for the Constituent Convention and the united front.

#### THE UNITED PEOPLE'S FRONT IN PUERTO RICO

The present united front for a Constituent Convention remains a bloc of anti-imperialist organizations and individuals having the sympathy of the broad masses of the people. In raising the question of the "Proclamation of the Republic" it has raised the question of winning power. What must it do to achieve this responsible and honorable goal of winning a Puerto Rico for the Puerto Ricans? The answer is clear. Pointing the way is the historic Seventh Congress of the Communist International. Its call for the formation of the anti-imperialist people's front in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is meeting with decisive successes in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and China. In Puerto Rico, direct Yankee colony, super-exploited, economically and nationally enslaved, such a front would include all the political parties, except the national traitors of the Union Republican Party directly linked with imperialism.

The danger that the more compromising of the national reformists will even now desert to the side of the imperialists was vividly brought out by the recent mass student strikes and demonstrations when these compromises raised the question: "Will the republic mean the continuance of this disorder?" All the more does it become necessary for the Communist Party to work together with all anti-imperialist forces, no matter how unstable, how vacillating, particularly with that section of the national bourgeoisie which under the pressure of the mass movement and the pressure of its own contradictions with imperialism supports the common struggle against the *main enemy* – imperialism. Only in the course of this struggle, for a common anti-imperialist platform, will the national betrayers lose the hold they at present have over the masses.

All the more important does it become to win proletarian leadership of the whole national movement, which, in close alliance with the peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie, will be able to fight for and win the immediate burning demands of the people for food and shelter, against the imperialist robbery of the land, etc. For

it is only by their own experience *in the course of the struggle* for these demands which are at the same time directed first of all against Yankee imperialism, that the people will learn of the treacherous nature that characterizes leaders of the national bourgeoisie. Only thus will the Communists prepare the people to meet, with all the weapons at their disposal, the inevitable national-reformist vacillations which will take place when the peasants begin to take over the land of the landowners and when the proletariat wins its historic hegemony.

For it is clear to the Communists that full national liberation will not be achieved by the mere setting up of an independent republic. Complete national liberation means the smashing of the Wall Street economic positions, of the strangulating grip of finance capital which shapes Puerto Rico to its own robber designs – monocultural sugar industry, market monopoly, etc. Complete national liberation means the opportunity to develop native industry and a home market, which, in turn, depends on the completion of the agrarian revolution. But in Puerto Rico, entirely dominated by imperialism, whose weak national bourgeoisie is linked to, or dependent upon, imperialism, these basic questions of liberation will be answered only by Soviet power – the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. It is precisely the development of the revolution through the stage of the united national front which will create the conditions for the stage of Soviet power.

#### AMERICAN HELP IS DECISIVE

One of the main talking points which retard the growth of the mass movement for Puerto Rican freedom, and which is used by the national reformists and national traitors to mislead the masses into the compromising positions of "legislative commission", "bargaining power", is the geographical position of the island. Its small size, its lack of native industry, its proximity to the mainland, the ease with which imperialism could organize intervention and blockade, are real fears for the Puerto Rican people. All the more, therefore, does it become *decisive* for the victory of the national revolution that the American working class support in all ways possible the struggle for freedom.

The effect of the Marcantonio Bill upon the course of the anti-imperialist struggle is only one example of the avidity with which the people await all signs of American support. To win its spurs as a

consistent fighter for proletarian internationalism, to carry out its own tasks in its own fight against American imperialism, the Communist Party of the United States has a grave duty to the peoples of Cuba, Puerto Rico, etc.

It was Comrade Wang Ming, leader of the great Chinese Communist Party, who emphasized this at the Seventh World Congress. In criticizing those Communists who underestimate the importance of supporting the colonial struggles, he said:

"This may be shown by the fact that certain Communists who work in capitalist countries usually regard colonial revolutions as something extraneous, or at best, as insignificant, auxiliary forces of the world revolution. This is an entirely incorrect conception of the role and significance of the colonial revolution of the new epoch – the epoch of world proletarian revolution, one of whose component^ parts, according to Lenin and Stalin, is the colonial revolution.

"It [the colonial revolution] is important because the actual rulers there are the same enemies of the people against whom, and for the overthrow of whose rule, we fight in our own home."

Puerto Rico has taken its place by the side of Cuba as a sore spot of Yankee rule in the Caribbean. Its position as a direct colony nakedly ruled by Wall Street, should make it more than ever a matter of Communist honor to fight for the freedom of its people.

The Marcantonio Bill, which clearly expresses the position of the American proletariat for the immediate national liberation of the Puerto Rican people, can serve as a banner of struggle to rally the American people to the side of their Puerto Rican allies. There is no reason, also, why the nascent Farmer-Labor Party cannot make the fight for this Bill one of its main slogans. For the American people cannot fight for peace without raising the question of the freedom of nations super-exploited and oppressed by Yankee imperialism and over whose fate war is being prepared. A blow for Puerto Rican freedom will cut the ground from under Roosevelt's Pan-American "Peace" Conference war preparations and will greatly impede his war preparations in the Caribbean.