



Vito Marcantonio
U.S. Congressman (1934-1950)

**Fighter for
Puerto Rico's
Independence**

**Selected
Speeches**

Introduction by
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The Third World Coalition is a nationwide program funded by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which serves as a resource and communication center for all third world staff of the AFSC and for various progressive third world organizations, nationally and internationally.

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The two commissions are on culture and Native Americans, around which information is being gathered and developed which will guide TWC in its work around these topics.

This publication represents the first of a series of such documents to be produced by the Latin America task force. Other TWC publications include a monthly newsletter and a series of information packets. For further information concerning TWC, its task forces, or its publications, write to Third World Coalition, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, Pa., 19102.

Introduction

In the early 1940's one of the questions on a state-wide civics examination read: "Has Puerto Rico a Congressman?" A junior high school student at Benjamin Franklin answered: "Yes; Vito Marcantonio."

The mistake was a reasonable one. Marc, as the whole of El Barrio and almost everyone else called him, was certainly not elected by the island of Puerto Rico which, indeed, he visited only once—in 1936—to assist with the legal defense of Pedro Albizu Campos. He was elected and re-elected for seven two-year terms by the 18th Congressional District on the East Side of Manhattan. Yet he certainly did have a very special relationship with Puerto Rico and its people. He explained this in a speech on the floor of Congress May 11, 1939, saying:

....My interest in Puerto Rico is due not only to the fact that I represent the largest Puerto Rican constituency, of which I am proud, but also to my desire as a progressive to defend the most exploited victims of a most devastating imperialism. I have no personal or political axe to grind, nor have I any relatives to protect on the pay roll of the government of Puerto Rico. I have no right, nor any interest, in the politics of the island. That is the business of no one but the people of Puerto Rico. I have a right, however, to defend the people of Puerto Rico against exploitation, tyranny and betrayal. I have a right as a Member of Congress to fight for their economic and social welfare, and to fight for their liberties. Puerto Rico is part of the United States, and until its status is changed it is our duty to give as much attention, as much care, and as much sympathetic treatment to Puerto Rico and its problems as we do to the problems of any of the people in the United States....

Vito Marcantonio was born on December 10, 1902, in East Harlem, lived in East Harlem all his life, and was buried from East Harlem three days after his sudden death on August 9, 1954.

Even as a high school youngster Marcantonio was concerned with the special hardships of the poor and crowded East Harlem

community. The great majority of his neighbors, like his own family, were then immigrant Italian-Americans. In addition to economic insecurity a large number faced language difficulties and the disturbing effects of a new culture on old family ties and traditions. The frequently hostile attitude of older Americans toward newcomers intensified their problems. Derogatory references to East Harlem in newspaper reports, then as now, made it harder still for many of its people to envision for themselves acceptance as equals or a full participation in American life. But Marcantonio, who never lost his profound feeling of identification with his community, developed early in his high school years an equal sense of kinship with the democratic spirit of the American people.

Unlike many young people who became totally embittered or cynical as they saw the discrepancy between the glowing picture of American life taught in the schools and its reality in such communities as East Harlem, Marcantonio kept his faith in the people's ability to make the American dream come true in a nation which would "overhaul an unjust and inequitable economic system" to begin "producing for use instead of profit." He set himself the task of interpreting the unrealized possibilities of democracy for his neighbors, and of helping them to achieve the dignity and security they deserved.

As a first step he led a group of schoolmates in organizing Citizenship and English classes for adults at a neighborhood church, and he continued to teach similar evening groups for many years. At 18 he became a leader of the East Harlem Tenant League and conducted its successful 1920 rent strike. Such concern with individual human problems and such attempts to solve them through cooperative social action remained to the very end of his life the essence of politics for Marcantonio.

In the depth of the depression November 1934 he defeated Tammany Hall in a hotly contested election by the narrow margin of 247 votes, and took his seat in the 74th Congress January, 1935. From the very beginning of his first term Marcantonio established the pattern of regular daily personal service to the people of his community which he maintained for the rest of his life. His unpretentious headquarters on the ground floor of an old brownstone house at 247 E. 116 St., which had formerly been Mayor LaGuardia's East Harlem center, was open seven days a week throughout the year for all who wished free assistance with health, citizenship, relief, workman's compensation, tenant, immigration or other legal and family problems.

While Congress was in session these services were necessarily provided by Marcantonio's associates but every weekend, despite his

extraordinarily heavy program of legislative work in Washington, he returned to New York to meet personally with the hundreds of neighbors who needed his help. At the same time his attendance record on the floor of the House remained outstanding for the next fourteen years, and the volume of outside work he did—studying and writing bills, organizing congressional and public support for, or opposition to, specific legislation, planning and directing parliamentary strategy—was certainly unexceeded and probably unequalled by any other Congressman.

In 1938 he affiliated himself with the newly organized leftwing American Labor Party and, despite desperate efforts to defeat him by both the major parties, he won repeated victories by ever increasing popular majorities. In 1942 and 1944, for example, he won in both the Democratic and Republican primaries and swept the district with a majority of 66,390 votes! The ultra-conservative *Saturday Evening Post* ran an article in its issue of January 11, 1947, in which Sidney Shallet, who had covered the election campaign for the magazine, wrote an explanation of why "They Couldn't Purge Vito." He said:

....What matters to them is not whether Marcantonio is red, pink, black, blue or purple, but that he is "their" Congressman—a tireless fighter for the man on the streets of East Harlem.

He is willing to live in their slums, rub elbows with the best and the worst of them, work himself to the thin end of a frazzle for them. He spends his dough on them, takes up their battles against the landlords....On occasions...the Congressman even has carried scuttles of coal personally to heatless tenements. Anyone who wants to see him...can do so....

As the above excerpts indicate, Marcantonio again won the Democratic primary in 1946 and carried his district in the face of a virulent redbaiting campaign by both the Democratic and Republican organizations. Although the New York State Legislature then passed a law forbidding anyone not registered in a party to enter its primary without permission from the party leadership Marcantonio was re-elected in 1948 running on the American Labor Party ticket alone.

But in the reactionary 81st Congress he was increasingly isolated. His opposition to both major parties on such fundamental issues as foreign policy, labor's rights and civil liberties became so troublesome that extraordinary measures were taken to prevent his re-election in 1950. A three party coalition of the Democratic, Republican and Liberal parties, supported by every major newspaper in New York and generously funded by the largest financial interests, backed a single Wall Street candidate against him. Even so Marcantonio won over 40% of the votes in the 18th Congressional District; his American

Labor Party vote exceeded the Democratic vote for his opponent by 10,880, the Republican by 17,065, and the Liberal by 30,892. The combination was, however, sufficient to defeat him.

After his defeat he maintained his two neighborhood offices, supporting them by the dollar-a-year dues of the thousands who remained members of East Harlem's Marcantonio Clubs and his own private earnings in his downtown law office. To his neighbors he was still "the Congressman"—the man everyone called Marc—close to their problems, concerned with their welfare, ready to devote time and energy to meeting their needs.

During this period his main concern was, as it had been in the 81st Congress, to secure world peace and battle the rising tide of domestic reaction. In a speech during the 1952 presidential campaign he said:

....Tragically, after 27 months of killing in Korea, with 119,000 American casualties, some of us accept the Korean conflict as we do the flowing of the Hudson River. After 14 months of talk at Panmunjom some have come to feel that this so-called "police action" or "little war" is something with which we can live. They have forgotten that war in our time is like cancer—if it is not stopped it will spread.

....The resolving of every other issue, civil rights, labor, civil liberties, agriculture, the economic well-being of the American people, depends on cease fire in Korea.

For those of us who have lived through the Vietnam War this speech is as prophetic as the one Marcantonio had made on the floor of Congress during his last term opposing the establishment of the CIA. He said on March 7, 1949:

....There has never been, and there can never be, any justification at any time for the representatives of the people, who are elected to Congress, to abdicate their function of legislating with full knowledge on the matters which come before them. This bill suspends that function and says, "You must not have knowledge of all the provisions of the bill." It says, "You must vote blindly and must take the word of a committee.".... This is the first time that members of the House are told: "You must not have any full explanation of this legislation. It is highly confidential. It deals with espionage."

As a result of the hysteria under which this bill is being passed I suppose a majority of the House will vote for it, even though in doing so you are suspending your legislative prerogatives and evading your duty to the people of this nation.

....You are opening the doors for the entrance of intelligence agents into labor organizations; yes, to spy on labor and carry out antilabor activities. I am sure if it were not for the cold war hysteria very few members of Congress would vot for that provision... despite its serious implications against the security of the liberties of

the American people.

....Congress is suspending its right to legislate and we are being asked to do this in furtherance of a cold war. This is illustrative of what this imperialist cold war is imposing on the people of a country. Suspending its civil liberties, invasion of the labor movement by intelligence agents, admission of [Fascist and Nazi] undesirables—undesirable in any democracy—and asking members of Congress to suspend their prerogative to pass on legislation.

....Hysteria is used to undermine the civil liberties of the people and extend the military control—military control—I emphasize that, over the lives and thinking of the people of these United States.

In the early months of 1954 Marcantonio began to canvass opinion in his district and by Spring he had decided he could run successfully for his former congressional seat even though a coalition against him remained in force. On Monday, August 9, he was hurrying to his office to receive the first stack of nominating petitions with which to open the campaign when he was felled by a sudden heart attack.

In 1956 a group of his friends and supporters published *I Vote My Conscience*, a memorial volume including many of his congressional speeches, selected and edited by his associate, Dr. Annette T. Rubinstein, vice-chairman of the American Labor Party during his chairmanship. The following material is taken, with permission, from that volume.* It presents, in chronological order, some of his legislative efforts on behalf of the Puerto Rican people during his years in Congress.

* *I Vote My Conscience, Debates, Speeches and Writings of Vito Marcantonio 1935-1950, Annette T. Rubinstein, The Vito Marcantonio Memorial, New York, 1956.*

May 6, 1936

On this date, Congressman Marcantonio introduced his first bill for the independence of Puerto Rico. He presented it in the course of a debate on a Senate bill which he characterized as "the Tydings Bill for fictitious independence."



Mr. Speaker, today I have introduced a bill providing for the sovereignty of Puerto Rico.

Several days ago a bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator Tydings, offering apparent independence to the people of Puerto Rico. Instead of offering genuine independence to the people of Puerto Rico, his bill offers them an American-controlled plebiscite and a commonwealth which will be under the thumb of the American government. The independence subsequently offered by the Tydings bill would be considerably curtailed by the menacing presence of an American naval reservation, the scene of the Atlantic fleet maneuvers, on their supposedly sovereign territory. At the same time the Tydings bill, with its tariff provisions, threatens to ruin the only present source of Puerto Rican income, which is the sale of their cash crops in the American market. His bill does not provide for the development of substitutes for the dominating, and American-dominated, sugar industry.

Such a bill is not desired by the Puerto Rican people, as their concerted protest shows. They would welcome real and absolute independence; and the American people, who once themselves formed a colony of the British Empire, have no desire [to be], or interest in being, lords and masters of a smaller and weaker nation. Only these gentlemen who stand for reaction in America, the American Tories, the banks and sugar corporations, who have kept the Puerto Rican people in hunger and misery, are interested in Puerto Rico as a colony, not only for their profits but also as a fortified war base. If we really want to be the initiators of a Pan American peace conference, let us be honest and clear in our dealings with the peoples of a sister republic. That means that one of the bases of peace is the freedom of nations.

It is in viewing this question fairly and from the point of view of the interests of the American people, as well as the desires of the people of Puerto Rico, that I have presented my bill.

The dignity of the American people as a freedom-loving nation

demands that Puerto Rico be judged under the principle of self-determination of nations. This means that the United States remove completely and forever all interventions, all fingers, from the affairs of the Puerto Rican people. This means that it grant complete sovereignty to the Puerto Rican people, so that as a nation among other nations of the world Puerto Rico may work out its own destiny in such manner as it sees fit. Such complete independence will do much for real harmony in the Americas.

Genuine independence and the declaration of the responsibility of the United States for the present disastrous state of the economy of Puerto Rico, and the abysmal poverty of its people, is the purpose of my bill.

Puerto Rico, taken as the booty of war from Spain in 1898, has been successively ruined.

Four large American sugar corporations own over half the good sugar land and produce over half the total crop. Sugar now composes about 75% of the exports of the island, whereas tobacco and coffee have been relegated to the background. The once land-owning farmers, dispossessed by the huge sugar plantations, today work the unfertile mountain soil or are landless. Only 7% of the native dwellers in the rural regions are landowners in Puerto Rico, and agrarian country. Over the heads of these small farmers hangs a total mortgage debt of about \$25,000,000. For years they have been unable to pay taxes.

The landless peasants have been converted into a great army of colonial slaves in the sugar plantations, or are unemployed. The reports of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor for 1935 show an average wage for male workers in the sugar fields of \$3.34 per week, and for female workers of \$1.96 per week. This same wage scale runs through the other island industries, and in tobacco and coffee they are much worse.

The lack of industry, and the conversion of the island into a huge sugar-producing factory, has meant a great toll in unemployment. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration in Puerto Rico for February, 1936, reports a total of 408,000 fathers of families in need and soliciting work or relief—a figure which includes 84.4 % of the population.

Even in 1927 Governor Roosevelt pointed out the high percentage of tuberculosis, hookworm, malaria, and other diseases directly caused by the hunger of the people.

Responsible... for this misery, hunger, and disease is the maintenance of Puerto Rico as a colony of the United States, thus giving ample room for American interests to penetrate as deep economically as they wished, while the Puerto Rican people could not develop their own

country. But the Puerto Rican people have manifested their refusal to take this situation lying down. The great pressure for independence in the island is undoubtedly a determining factor in the sudden appearance of the Tydings bill with its apparent independence.

I propose that the United States take its hands off and let the Puerto Rican people do as they wish with their own country. The hunger and misery, the economic catastrophe, can certainly be laid at the door of the policy of the United States in Puerto Rico, whether it is the do-nothing policy of Hoover or the do-very-little-policy of Roosevelt.

Those people who favor the continuation of this "shame of the Americas," which is Puerto Rico as a colony, are trying to make it appear as though independence means more hunger for the people. The Tories know that such a statement is a solemn lie. It is, to say the least, unfortunate, that the Tydings bill with its provisions for a tariff on Puerto Rican products has added fuel to their flames.

My bill proposes that there be no tariff on Puerto Rican products shipped to the United States until the people of Puerto Rico do so desire. This is done so that Puerto Rico may have the necessary chance to build up her own industry, and develop trade with whom she sees fit for her best advantage. Neither shall there be any restrictions on Puerto Rican immigration. These principles are to be ratified in a treaty between the two nations made 90 days after the new government of Puerto Rico expresses its desire to begin discussion. In the interim between the proclamation of independence and the signing of this treaty, the present status quo in regard to trade relations is to be maintained. In this way there would be avoided, as far as possible, an undue cracking of the whip over the new nation.

Furthermore, in the 38 years that Puerto Rico has been a possession of the United States, American citizens have extracted from the economy of the island over \$400,000,000, which never returned to Puerto Rico for the well-being of its people or the development of its resources. This simple fact, verified by the Brookings Institute in 1929, is a major reason for the present difficulties of the people of Puerto Rico. That huge sum of money, and the promise of more, is why the American reactionaries try to make a genuine independence appear as a mistake and harmful to the people of Puerto Rico. but the hunger is the result of imperialist domination, and that is the real enemy of the Puerto Rican people.

I believe that it is only consistent with the dignity of the American people that a substantial indemnity be paid to the long-suffering people of Puerto Rico, to make up in part for the years of hardship that they have undergone, and to enable them to better find their feet and take boldly the path of freedom they ardently desire.

These are the principles of my bill [as opposed] to the Tydings bill for fictitious independence. I propose genuine and immediate independence. I also believe, in presenting this bill, that the Puerto Rican people should hold no illusions. Only their own united strength, the formation of an anti-imperialist front of the whole people against the foreign dominators and their own national traitors, is the best guarantee of achieving independence. Waiting for the Tydings bill or my bill, or any other bill to grant them independence on a silver platter, would be a great mistake. Behind them will stand the overwhelming majority of the great American people, who hate oppression and love freedom.

It is up to the people of Puerto Rico to take the initiative; and the more they develop that and make it known to the entire world, the better are the chances of the passage of my bill and the achieving of independence.

(From 1936 on Congressman Marcantonio introduced 5 bills for the independence of Puerto Rico; the last, during his final term in Congress, on March 16, 1950.)

August 14, 1939

In this speech Congressman Marcantonio outlined his charges against Governor Winship's administration, which he described as "Five Years of Tyranny in Puerto Rico." He had presented these charges to President Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior Ickes several months earlier. As Mr. Marcantonio announced on the floor of the House on August 5, 1939, "Blanton Winship was dismissed by the President of the United States."

The speech Mr. Marcantonio then made has become a classic document in Puerto Rican history. It consists of an introduction and three numbered sections. Substantial excerpts from the introduction and the first section, "Civil Rights and Murder," are given below. The last two sections, which are omitted here for lack of space, are entitled "Misrule is the Twin Brother of Tyranny" and "Suppression and Distortion of the News of Conditions in Puerto Rico."

The entire speech is contained in the Congressional Record of August 14, 1939.



....Ex-Governor Blanton Winship, of Puerto Rico, was summarily removed by the President of the United States on May 12, 1939. I had filed charges against Mr. Winship with the President during two visits that I had with him, and subsequently, on April 27, 1939, I wrote a letter to the President filing additional charges in support of my request for the removal of Mr. Winship. During my visits at the Executive Office of the President of the United States I informed him of many acts of misfeasance as well as nonfeasance, among which were the tyrannical acts of the Governor in depriving the people of Puerto Rico of their civil rights, the corruption and rackets that existed, and were made possible only by the indulgence of the governor, and the extraordinary waste of the people's money.... My written, as well as oral, charges were transmitted by the President to Secretary Ickes, of the Department of the Interior....

The Secretary of the Interior, by code, wired Mr. Blanton Winship to return to the United States. In response to this wire, Mr. Winship came here and visited the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary of the Interior demanded that Mr. Winship resign. Mr. Winship flatly refused to resign, and stated that inasmuch as he was a Presidential

appointee, he would not resign until he had had an opportunity to appeal to the President. After various unsuccessful efforts, Mr. Winship finally saw the President, and pleaded that he be permitted to remain Governor of Puerto Rico on the ground that his resigning while he was under fire might be misinterpreted. What the President told Mr. Winship I do not know. I do know, however, that he made a very unfavorable impression on the President. When Mr. Winship left the White House with the bravado which is characteristic of a swivel-chair general, he invited friends of his and newspapermen to visit him in Puerto Rico in September of 1939, thereby giving the impression that he would remain as Governor.

On May 11, 1939, I took the floor in the House of Representatives, objecting to exempting Puerto Rico from the provisions of the wage-and-hour amendment, and in that speech I made an attack on Mr. Winship, and revealed that I had made charges against him, and stated specifically that the charges were being investigated by the Department of the Interior at the request of the President of the United States. The following day the President made the announcement that Admiral William D. Leahy would succeed Mr. Winship as Governor of Puerto Rico. Up to and including the time that this terse announcement was made, Mr. Winship had not resigned. Even a school child knows that the announcement of one's successor before one has resigned is tantamount to dismissal. Blanton Winship was dismissed by the President of the United States....

He devoted all of his time since he was kicked out as Governor to two tasks: first, to that of self-glorification; and second, to further damage the best interests of the people of Puerto Rico.

....In the second category, his activities were in keeping with his 5 years of terror in Puerto Rico. He acted the part of a slimy lobbyist, and fought by means fair and foul to have the wage-and-hour law amended so that the sugar companies could continue to pay 12 1/2 cents an hour instead of 25 cents an hour, and thereby gain \$5,000,000 a year; so that the exploiters of labor in Puerto Rico could continue to pay the intolerable wages they have been paying, a wage system which was made possible under his regime; so that the system of abysmal wage slavery could be perpetuated in Puerto Rico. Up to the very closing days of Congress this kicked-out governor fought to have Puerto Rican workers removed from the protection of the wage-and-hour law. He made a frantic appeal to the Speaker, Hon. William Bankhead, to suspend the rules and recognize someone who would offer the amendment which would have removed Puerto Rico from the provisions of the wage-and-hour law. This was done after he, together with his stooge and personal lobbyist, James J.

Lanzetta, had made all efforts and failed to have the Barden and other amendments considered by the House, which not only would have affected the workers of Puerto Rico but would have also exempted 2,000,000 workers in the United States from the protection of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The welfare of 2,000,000 workers in the United States meant nothing to Blanton Winship or his appointee.

.... The sacrificing of 2,000,000 workers in the States and the sacrificing of labor's welfare in the States, as well as in Puerto Rico, meant nothing to these gentlemen who were hell-bent on doing the bidding of the financial and industrial corporations of Wall Street that have kept the workers of Puerto Rico in the tentacles of imperialism and wage peonage. I take this occasion to praise the patriotism and statesmanship of our Speaker, Hon. William Bankhead, who treated the dismissed and disgraced ex-Governor of Puerto Rico with a flat and patriotic "no." This "no" was given after I had spoken to the Speaker, who had promised me that there would be no suspension of the rules, or the considering of any legislation that would exempt Puerto Rico from the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, at this session of Congress.

In the face of these activities, treacherous and detrimental to the people of Puerto Rico, I felt that I should no longer remain silent. I felt that I should not permit this ex-Governor or his stooges to any longer use the prestige of his office which he so disgraced, to the benefit of the exploiters of the Puerto Rican people. I would be derelict if I did not tear off the cloak of virtue in which this destroyer of liberty, protector of grafters, and exploiter of the people of Puerto Rico had enshrouded himself. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, here is his record:

In his 5 years as Governor of Puerto Rico, Mr. Blanton Winship destroyed the last vestige of civil rights in Puerto Rico. Patriots were framed in the very executive mansion and railroaded to prison. Men, women, and children were massacred in the streets of the island simply because they dared to express their opinion or attempted to meet in free assemblage.

Citizens were terrorized. The courts became devoid of any prestige because of the evil influence exerted upon them by politicians who acted with the connivance and consent of Mr. Winship. American workers were persecuted and shot down whenever they sought to exercise their right to strike, or to organize and protest against the abominable wages that were paid to them by Mr. Winship's pals. The insular police was militarized and transformed from an honest police organization to an organization of provocateurs and murderers, such as existed in the darkest days of czaristic Russia... Nero played the

fiddle while Christians were massacred in the days of ancient Rome. Winship drank cocktails and danced in the Governor's palace while the police ruthlessly killed and persecuted Puerto Rican citizens. The following are just a few cases illustrative of Winship's Neroism. Neither time nor space permits me to give a full history, or the list of victims, of which the American people know very little or nothing at all.

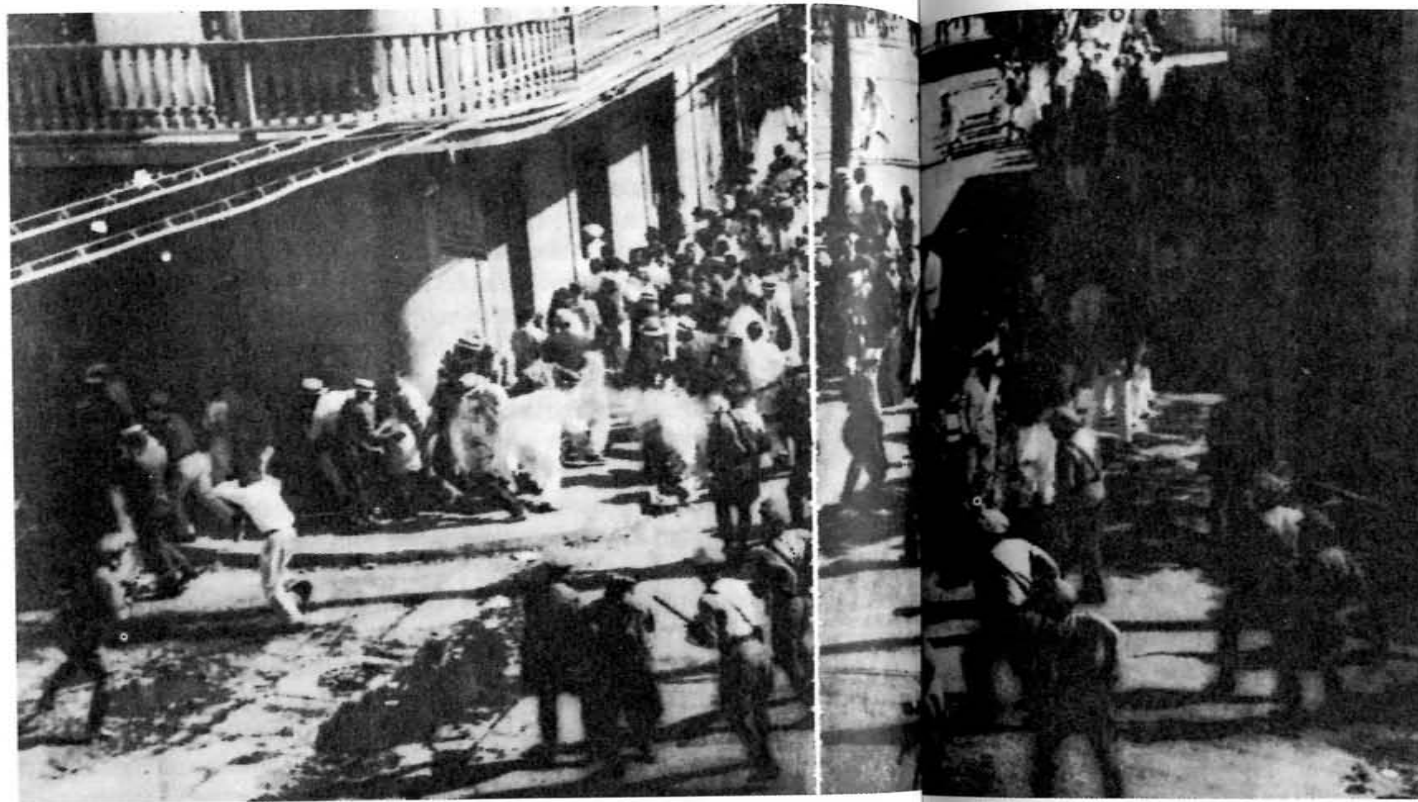
On Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937, in Ponce, the second largest city in Puerto Rico, the police forces fired with machine guns, rifles, and pistols into a crowd of marching Nationalists. Seventeen were killed, more than 200 wounded. The Nationalists were going to hold a meeting and a parade in Ponce on March 21. The mayor, Tormes, issued a permit. One hour before the time set for the parade, and when the demonstrators were ready to march, the mayor canceled the permit on frivolous grounds. As Winship pointed out in a statement issued after the massacre, the parade was called off by the mayor at the request of Governor Blanton Winship and Police Chief Colonel Orbeta.

Governor Winship went out of San Juan. Colonel Orbeta went to Ponce and concentrated there a heavy police force, among which he included all the machine gunners. For many days the government had been planning action in Ponce.

Chief of Police Guillermo Soldevilla, with 14 policemen, placed himself in front of the paraders; Chief Perez Segarra and Sgt. Rafael Molina, commanding 9 men, armed with Thompson machine guns and tear-gas bombs, stood in the back; Chief of Police Antonio Bernardi, heading 11 policemen, armed with machine guns, stood in the east; and another police group of 12 men, armed with rifles, placed itself in the west.

The demonstrators, at the order of their leader, and while La Borinquena, the national song, was being played, began to march. Immediately they were fired upon for 15 minutes by the police from the four flanks. The victims fell down without an opportunity to defend themselves. Even after the street was covered with dead bodies policemen continued firing. More than 200 were wounded; several were killed. Men, women, and children, Nationalists and non-Nationalists, demonstrators, and people passing by, as well as the people who ran away, were shot. They were chased by the police and shot or clubbed at the entrance of the houses. Others were taken from their hiding places and killed. Leopold Tormes, a member of the legislature, told the reporters how a Nationalist was murdered in cold blood by a policeman, after the shooting, in his own arms.

A 7-year-old girl, Georgina Maldonado, while running to a nearby



church, was shot through the back. A woman, Maria Hernandez, was also killed. Carmen Fernandez, aged 33, was severely wounded. After she fell down a policeman struck her with his rifle, saying, "Take this; be a Nationalist." Marie Hernandez was a member of the Republican Party, and while running away was clubbed twice on her head by a policeman. Dr. Jose N. Gandara, one of the physicians who assisted the wounded, testified that wounded people running away were shot, and that many were again wounded through the back. Don Luis Sanchez Frasquiere, former president of the Rotary Club in Ponce, said that he had witnessed the most horrible slaughter made by police on defenseless youth. No arms were found in the hands of the civilians wounded, nor on the dead ones. About 150 of the demonstrators were arrested immediately afterward, several of them being women. All the Nationalist leaders were also arrested. They were released on bail. More than 15,000, as was reported by *El Mundo*, a Puerto Rican newspaper, attended the funerals at Ponce, and more than 5,000 at Mayaguez.

PONCE MASSACRE

On Palm Sunday, March 21, 1937, seventeen Puerto Ricans were killed and more than 200 wounded....

The above is not a description of the Ponce events by a Puerto Rican Nationalist. It is... from a speech of Representative John T. Bernard, of Minnesota, in Congress and appeared in the Congressional Record of April 14, 1937. Does not this bring to mind the Boston Massacre in 1770 and the shooting of Russian peasants by the czar in 1905? Remembering the events of Easter Week in Dublin, 1916, do not you agree with Jay Franklin, Washington commentator for the Stern papers, that Puerto Rico is the Ireland of the Caribbean?

April 16 is a legal holiday in Puerto Rico. It is the anniversary

of the birthday of José de Diego, former speaker of the House of Delegates, noted orator, poet, jurist, and outstanding advocate of independence. Every year the Nationalist Party celebrates a mass, a demonstration, and a meeting in his honor. Wreaths of flowers are deposited on his tomb. Another demonstration and a meeting are held to honor Manuel Rafael Suarez Diaz, a martyr to the cause of independence. Flowers are deposited on his tomb also.

In 1937, a few weeks after the Palm Sunday massacre, the city manager of San Juan, under Winship's pressure, denied permits for these meetings and demonstrations. As was even reported in the New York newspapers, although the ecclesiastical authorities gave authorization to hold the mass on the 16th, the Cathedral was closed, and policemen posted at its doors. The cemeteries were closed and the Puerto Rican people forbidden to go in groups larger than two to deposit flowers on the graves of the patriots. General Winship again mobilized the Regular Army and National Guard, subject to call.

Arthur Garfield Hays, attorney for the American Civil Liberties

Union, went to Puerto Rico and investigated the Palm Sunday massacre, and his conclusion as reported in the report of the American Civil Liberties Union was as follows:

"The facts show that the affair of March 21 in Ponce was a massacre."

.... Governor Winship tried to cover up this massacre by filing a mendacious report... However, the photographs that were brought to Secretary Ickes by a committee consisting, among others, of former Congressman Bernard, of Minnesota, and myself, photographs of children shot in the back and of police wantonly firing on unarmed people from four sides, could not be ignored. What did the tyrant do? Instead of ceasing the terror, he continued it; and immediately had arrested the friends of people who had been killed, on charges of conspiracy to commit murder. Two trials were held. The first trial resulted in a mistrial, and in the second trial the defendants were acquitted.

In the meantime the reign of terror continued. While the victims of the Ponce massacre were being tried for murder, the police forces were given a free hand to continue the orgy of murder....

(Here, as well as in the next omission indicated below, Congressman Marcantonio described in detail a number of killings by the police.)

An indignant public opinion forced the Government to convene the grand jury, which... bitterly assailed the practices of the police and tried to determine the responsibility, if any, of the Governor.... They left the door open for further inquiries. Governor Winship got the law (providing for investigation and indictment of public officers, including the Governor, by a grand jury) repealed soon afterward. So that at the time of the Ponce massacre, denounced in this House by Congressman John T. Bernard on April 14, 1937, in the brilliant and moving speech which appears in the Congressional Record of that date, page 4499, and to which I referred above, the district judges of Ponce denied a petition made by prominent citizens of that community, who represented every sector of public life, when they asked for the convening of a grand jury to investigate the case. As the law now stands, the citizens are helpless when the aggression originates with the top public officials, because the prosecutors are appointed by and are to a great extent responsible to the Governor....

... A frame-up "a la Medici" was something at which Mr. Winship would not stop. Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, a Harvard graduate and leader of the Nationalists, together with several of his followers, were indicted under a post Civil War statute of a conspiracy to insurrect

against the Government of the United States. They were framed at the Governor's palace. Mr. Rockwell Kent, famous American artist, describes what took place at a cocktail party in the Governor's palace immediately after the first trial, and I quote from his letter to Senator Henry F. Ashurst, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, dated May 21, 1939:

I was present in San Juan during the progress of the first trial of Albizu Campos for treason, and I was a guest of Governor Winship's at a cocktail party on the terrace of his residence a few hours after the conclusion of that first trial through a disagreement of the jury. The party was a large one and the guests were mainly Americans—tourists and residents of San Juan—and upper class Puerto Ricans. There was naturally a great deal of talk about the trial, and much of this talk centered about Judge Cooper, who had presided. The comments were heatedly pro-government; and in my hearing condolences upon the miscarriage of justice were repeatedly voiced to the judge. These were received without rebuke. At that party a Puerto Rican friend of mine introduced me to a Mr. Cecil Snyder as the prosecuting attorney in the Campos case. We three withdrew for conversation to a corner of the terrace. My friend complimented Mr. Snyder upon his brilliant summing up and deplored the judge's failure to bring in a conviction. Mr. Snyder assured him that he had already received a dispatch from Washington telling him to go ahead with a new trial and that the Department of Justice would back him until he did get a conviction.

Mr. Snyder drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to my friend, saying "This is to be my next jury. What do you think of them?" I recall that my friend was familiar with the name and position of all but one of those listed, and that he assured Mr. Snyder that they could be counted upon for a conviction. This appeared to agree with Mr. Snyder's own knowledge. The jury of the second trial of Albizu Campos contained several men whose connections were identical with those in the list submitted to my friend by Mr. Snyder. How the prosecuting attorney could determine in advance who would compose his next jury, I don't know. I do state as a fact that Mr. Snyder said, "This is to be my next jury." I have subsequently given this information all possible publicity. The defense counsel at the Ponce trials asked me to come to Ponce to testify to what I knew about Federal prejudice. I was accompanied on the plane by the Federal marshal of San Juan. He spent literally hours of the trip attempting to persuade me not to go to Ponce, not even to leave San Juan. He urged me to put myself under his protection, to stay with him at the Condado Hotel, to meet his friends, who, he said, were the people I ought to know in Puerto Rico, and to avoid association with friends of the defendants. He warned me that my life would be in danger from the moment I set foot in Puerto Rico. From the moment of my arrival in Puerto Rico I was viciously attacked in the government-controlled evening paper. Before my appearance on the witness stand, it was published that Cecil Snyder and the prosecuting attorney of Ponce, after a session together of some hours the night

before, had agreed that I should not be permitted to testify. It was rumored in Puerto Rico that if I did testify, I would be immediately arrested.

A suggestion as to the origin of these rumors is contained in a statement attributed to Cecil Snyder and published in a recent issue of *Ken*. I was not permitted to testify, although the entire matter of my testimony was put into the record by the defense counsel. You will recall that the Ponce trials resulted in the acquittal of all the defendants. As a result of these experiences my own feeling is, naturally enough, one of serious distrust of Federal Law enforcement in Puerto Rico...

Sincerely yours,
Rockwell Kent

The trial took place, and by a prejudiced jury, by jurors who had expressed publicly bias and hatred for the defendants, Campos and his colleagues were railroaded to jail. Mr. Speaker, these innocent men languish in Atlanta Penitentiary today because they were convicted by a fixed jury, a jury representing the economic interests of Wall Street in Puerto Rico. They did the bidding of Blanton Winship. An idea of what took place in the jury room is contained in the following letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt by Elmer Ellsworth, one of the jurors who convicted Campos:

(The letter, written in support of a petition for clemency, concludes)

...I cannot refrain from saying that my associates on the jury seemed to be motivated by strong, if not violent, prejudice against the Nationalists and were prepared to convict them, regardless of the evidence. Ten of the jurors were American residents in Puerto Rico and the two Puerto Ricans were closely associated with American business interests. It was evident from the composition of the jury that the Nationalists did not and could not get a fair trial.

Very sincerely yours,
Elmer Ellsworth.

This frame-up is one of the blackest pages in the history of American jurisprudence. The continuance of this incarceration is repugnant to our democratic form of government; it is repugnant to our Bill of Rights and out of harmony with our good-neighbor policy. There is no place in America for political prisoners. As long as Puerto Rico remains part of the United States, Puerto Rico must have the same freedom, the same civil liberties, and the same justice which our forefathers laid down for us. Only a complete and immediate unconditional pardon will, in a very small measure, right this historical wrong.

.... When we ask ourselves, "Can it happen here?" the Puerto Rican people can answer, "It has happened in Puerto Rico."

July 17, 1942

When in 1942, a bill was introduced giving the people of Puerto Rico the right to elect their own Governor, Congressman Marcantonio said that this would be "only an improvement within the structure of colonialism." In a speech to the House on July 17, 1942 he made another plea for the full independence of Puerto Rico.



The proposed plan... to grant the people of Puerto Rico the right to elect their own Governor, must be accepted in its true character. It is an improvement within the colonial structure. But it must be accepted only as an improvement within the structure of colonialism. It is not an improvement of the colonial status.

The plan can be accepted by the people of Puerto Rico and Latin America, and by the people of the United States, as a decoration on the facade of the building of colonialism, whose beams are rotten and whose foundations are crumbling.

Further, such a move will in no way solve the question which is agitating the mind of every Puerto Rican and of the 100,000,000 people of the 20 Latin American republics—the problem of the political status of Puerto Rico. To these people it will represent merely an artifice and a subterfuge at a time when honest dealing with our friends and neighbors is essential to winning the war against the Axis.

What the people of Puerto Rico want, and have a right to demand, what the people of all Latin America look to from the United States, is the immediate unconditional freedom of Puerto Rico.

During the first World War, President Woodrow Wilson brought about the granting of United States citizenship to the people of Puerto Rico. This concession raised high the national hopes and aspirations of the Puerto Rican people. But nothing came of it, and it was soon evident that this was also merely an improvement within the colonial structure. It was not an improvement over colonialism. Time and events have demonstrated that this proved to be no solution to the problem of the political status of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico today is the key to Western Hemisphere solidarity. So long as the question of its political status remains unsolved, so long as we adhere to outworn policies of colonialism, so long as we seek by

artifice and subterfuge to hide the real answer which is the complete freedom of Puerto Rico, just so long will this problem remain a deterrent to Western Hemisphere unity against the Axis Powers and to pan-Americanism....

What is Puerto Rico? It is an island nation in the Caribbean, with a population of close to 2,000,000 Latin Americans. It is a colonial possession of the United States. It is one of the nations of Latin America, and the last one to retain its complete colonial status. And it is the United States, not Spain or any other non-American power, which has insisted upon continuing the status of Puerto Rico as a subject nation.

In the Bolivarean era, Puerto Rico and Cuba were closely linked in the fight for independence from Spain. Following the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States permitted Cuba to become free. But it took possession of Puerto Rico.... The economy of the island was shattered by American capital. It was reduced to a monoculture, a sugar colony of the United States. With deliberation it was made dependent upon the United States to the extent that even vegetable gardens, competing with expensive long-hauled American produce, were looked upon askance.... Its main industry is sugar, and 70% of the arable land is owned by four large Wall Street corporations. Even articles of food grown on the island must be shipped to the United States, processed, profits and expenses of the shipping monopoly added, before they can be consumed by the people who grew them—and who labor for \$1 a day or less.

The people of Puerto Rico have attempted to remedy this situation by enforcement of the 500-acre law [that no one owner may possess more than 500 acres of land], which is being sabotaged by reactionary interests both in the States and on the island.

For no other crime than advocating the independence of the island, many Puerto Ricans have been sent to the penitentiaries of the United States. The leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, Don Pedro Albizu Campos, is still in Atlanta, serving a 10-year sentence on such a charge. The island has had many governors, most of them known for their ruthlessness. Nineteen-hundred and thirty-five through 1939, when the island was ruled by Governor Blanton Winship, is known there as a period of tyranny. The courts of Puerto Rico have been ruled by lynch judges imported from the States, administering kangaroo lynch justice. The chief Federal judge, Cooper, has become known to the Latin American people as Bloody Judge Jeffries of the Western Hemisphere.

Little is known of these facts by the people of the United States. If they were known the American people, who do not love imperialism,

would long ago have demanded that the feudal subjugation of Puerto Rico, in their name, be ended once and for all.

To the people of Latin America, whom it is so necessary that we draw into bonds of brotherhood with us in our fight against the Axis, these facts are only too well known. So long as Puerto Rico is not free, they wonder: "If the United States wants Puerto Rico for a colony, what are its true intentions toward the other 100,000,000 Latin American peoples and their republics? Can we trust the United States in partnership?"

It is clear, therefore, that to us in the United States, to our Government, and to the United Nations, the question of Puerto Rican freedom becomes a key question and one which cannot be answered by mere embellishments such as those now proposed in Washington....

June 16, 1947

On this date, when a bill was again introduced permitting the people of Puerto Rico to elect their Governor, Congressman Marcantonio, while not objecting to this legislation, analyzed its "diversionary nature" and reiterated his demand for full Puerto Rican sovereignty.



Mr. Speaker, I did not object to the present consideration of this bill, because it is of small value to the people of Puerto Rico and utterly meaningless. I do, however, want to expose its empty and illusory character. It will be utilized by imperialist elements in the United States, and by opportunists in Puerto Rico, as a means by which to evade and postpone the determination of the basic issue—the status of Puerto Rico. This bill is not a reform in any real sense. The mere election of a Governor of Puerto Rico does not grant to the people of Puerto Rico any sovereignty. It merely adds an embellishing facade on an ugly and rotten colonial structure.

This Puerto Rican question, the question of the political status of that island, has been talked about in this Congress for many years. Last year the President of the United States made a recommendation to Congress requesting that Congress act on the proposal of submitting to the people of Puerto Rico four propositions: The question of independence, the question of present status, the question of statehood, and the question of commonwealth. The President also stated that before submitting any of these questions to the people of Puerto Rico for a choice, Congress should first state in advance which status Congress would be willing to give. He advised us that it would be unfair to present to the people of Puerto Rico certain propositions, and then have Congress refuse to grant them that which they had chosen. I took the position then, and reiterate it now, that the only just and realistic referendum that can be submitted is one granting the choice between independence and colonial status.

The President's recommendation was presented to Congress; a bill was introduced in both Houses; hearings were held; but nothing has happened. Now we have this bill. Let no one be deceived. It is offered for the sole purpose of bypassing the issue raised in the President's recommendations. It is offered to avoid granting self-determination to the people of Puerto Rico.

This bill leaves Puerto Rico just where it has been: subject to the

shipping monopolies, subject to the tariff, subject to colonial exploitation, subject to the colonial regime that has been taking the lifeblood out of the people of Puerto Rico.

The people of Puerto Rico want an opportunity to determine for themselves their status in this world. It seems to me that at a time when we speak so much of self-determination and freedom for peoples throughout the world, that we are holding ourselves up for severe condemnation before the people of the world when we refuse to grant to the people of Puerto Rico the right to choose for themselves their own form of government.

.... The people of Puerto Rico have been deprived of their freedom. Today they are clamoring for it and all we do is to give them this bill, this exhibition of hypocrisy which, again I say, will be used for one purpose and one purpose alone: that is, to evade our responsibility at this time to grant to the people of Puerto Rico the right to self-determination.

I have not objected to the consideration of the bill...[although] I recognize it as an empty gesture. It is not even a realistic reform within the colonial system, but I do not want to deprive the people of Puerto Rico of even this gesture after we have deprived them of so much and so often. Mr. Speaker, we must not permit this bill to be used as a device by which we can escape our responsibility of granting freedom to a people who have a desire for freedom as strong as ours, a tradition for freedom as great as ours, a culture as old as ours, a right to be free which this bill, this gesture, must not negate. We must act on the question of Puerto Rico's status now. The people of Puerto Rico, I sincerely believe, want independence—a free Puerto Rico. I am confident that the American people agree with them. Let Congress therefore not evade or postpone. Congress must keep faith with both the people of Puerto Rico and of the United States by granting to Puerto Rico its freedom now.

December 18, 1947

In the fall of 1947 several newspapers and magazines published articles "about the alleged problem of Puerto Rican migration." The following radio speech, which Congressman Marcantonio gave over WJZ, was one of many talks he made in reply to such articles. He introduced it into the Congressional Record of December 18, 1947.



The newspapers and magazines of nationwide circulation have printed a great deal about the alleged problem of Puerto Rican migration. Instead of giving you the facts you have been given a distorted picture. The truth has been concealed and a certain section of the responsible press has joined with the irresponsible press in a campaign of vilification.

The stories on Puerto Rican migration is some more evidence that press of our nation is as free as its few owners permit it to be. Our much vaunted freedom of the press is in reality freedom for those who own the press to do and say what they please, and to refuse to permit the same space to those whom they unjustly attack. The recent attacks on the Puerto Rican people once again proves that there is no freedom of the press for the people. Freedom of the press exists only for the owners, and hence freedom so restricted becomes a ruthless tyranny. Now I know that people of Puerto Rican origin have attempted to tell their side. Have you seen their side printed anywhere? I haven't—and I have followed the subject very closely. Consequently, being unable to have the truth presented to the American people through the press, I have had to resort to these few minutes on the radio to tell you what the press has not told you.

The press has not told you that Puerto Ricans are American citizens by an Act of Congress adopted in 1917; and that they have a perfect right to come to New York City to live, to work and to be treated with absolute equality. They have as much right to come to New York as a citizen of New Jersey has the right to come to New York.

The press has not told you that the island of Puerto Rico, consisting of 3500 square miles, is a colony, and that the two million people who live on that island have been treated as colonials since the United States took possession of Puerto Rico in 1898.

The press has not told you that Puerto Rico in 1898 had an agriculture of its own that afforded its people a fairly decent standard of living. Today 70% of the good land in Puerto Rico is owned by 4

large sugar corporations whose headquarters are in the City of New York. In 1898 there were over 60,000 land owners in Puerto Rico. Today there are not quite 5,000 land owners in Puerto Rico. The owners of the 70% of the good land are absentee corporations, who have been taking out of Puerto Rico millions and millions of dollars annually in profit. Worse than that, they have turned Puerto Rico into a one crop, cash crop, diabetic economy. Because of their ownership of the land, Puerto Rico cannot have a diversified crop and raise food for its people. The result is that the entire economy of Puerto Rico is based on the production of sugar. This means that the people are employed only during 3 months of the year, the harvest season on the sugar plantations. The pay during these 3 months amounts to \$18 a week. When the harvest season is over there is nothing to do, so that the Puerto Rican is forced to live on an income of about \$300 a year.

Now, you may say, why doesn't the Puerto Rican get a job in industry after and before the harvest period. Again, the press has not told you that Puerto Rico has been unable to develop any industries. Why? Again, the press has not told you that whenever attempts to build an industry are made by the Puerto Ricans, industries up here go down there and dump at cut-throat prices. For example, some time ago the Puerto Ricans attempted to establish a soap factory. One of our soap concerns brought soap down to Puerto Rico and sold it at four cents a cake. The Puerto Ricans could not stand this competition. The factory closed down and its workers became unemployed. Now that same U.S. soap concern sells the same bar of soap at ten cents a cake. This has happened time and time again. Is it any wonder that the Puerto Rican cannot find work in his native land? Is it any wonder that he and his children are underfed, and that their main diet is dried codfish, beans and rice? Not even half the families use milk, and those that do get less than a half pint per person. The life of most Puerto Ricans is that of a marginal existence for 3 months of the year, and unemployment for the balance of the year. All this, the press, of course, has never told you.

Now let us see what happens to the Puerto Rican as a consumer. You think prices are high in New York. You and I know that they have reached an all time peak. However, the press has not told you that in Puerto Rico the people have to pay 30% more for anything that we purchase in New York. Why? Because Puerto Rico must buy from the United States. Congress passed laws which place Puerto Rico within our tariff laws. This prevents Puerto Rico from purchasing from other countries at cheaper prices, so that the Puerto Rican, receiving no benefits from our tariff, has to carry the load of 30% more than we have to pay. The press has not told you that Puerto Rico

has been placed under the coastwise-shipping law. This means that only United States ships can carry goods to Puerto Rico from any port in the United States. The result is that Puerto Rico has been subjected to a shipping monopoly adding to the cost of existence of two million Puerto Ricans.

Now you see that the plight of the Puerto Rican is caused by selfish monopolies in the United States. The Puerto Rican is subjected to unemployment, abnormally high cost of living, and a one crop agriculture making it impossible for him to raise his own food. All this is not the fault of Puerto Rico or the Puerto Ricans. It is not caused by Puerto Rico or the Puerto Ricans. Why doesn't the government of Puerto Rico do something about it? Why don't the people of Puerto Rico pass laws to protect their industries against dumping? Why doesn't the government of Puerto Rico use ships of other nations to break the monopoly? Why doesn't the government of Puerto Rico pass a law to exempt it from the tariff act, so that it may purchase cheaply from other countries? You have right to ask these questions, because the press has not told you why. The press has not told you that Puerto Rico has no sovereignty. It has no power to make any laws with respect to tariff; to protect its own industries; against shipping monopolies; and it cannot for all practical purposes enforce any law that will liberate it from the tyranny of its present one crop agriculture. It cannot legislate over basic questions of life and death. It is subjected to the will of the Congress of the United States and to the veto of the President. The Supreme Court in describing the status of Puerto Rico has stated that Puerto Rico is a territory of, but not part of, the United States. Puerto Rico's economic plight, which is the main cause of the migration to the United States, cannot be resolved until Puerto Rico is granted sovereignty. Puerto Rico can never have the sovereignty that it needs to resolve her economic problems caused by selfish interests in the United States, mind you, until Puerto Rico is given her full independence. I can hardly conceive how it can starve if given independence. I can hardly conceive how it can starve any worse than now. What is more, only with independence and a favorable reciprocal trade treaty, which we have give to other countries, can Puerto Rico protect its own industries against dumping, protect its people against the tariff, and develop an economy which will produce food for the people of Puerto Rico. This again, the press has not told you. Any why? The truth would expose what a cruel Wall Street imperialism has caused in Puerto Rico. It would expose that while Puerto Ricans are unemployed, while its industries are destroyed, and while Puerto Ricans are unemployed, while its industries are destroyed, and while Puerto Ricans have to pay 30%

more for their food than you and I do, that one share of a sugar corporation stock paid \$6 as a dividend last year and \$7.35 this year. This, of course, the press has not told you. The campaign of vilification against the people of Puerto Rico has two purposes.

1. To conceal who is responsible for the conditions in Puerto Rico.
2. By vilification, cause discrimination against the three hundred some odd thousand Puerto Ricans in the City of New York, and thereby force them into a condition of second class citizenship, and force them into a cheap labor market. I have the proof. The articles in the press have caused me to receive a great number of letters from people throughout the country offering Puerto Ricans work. What is the kind of work they offer? Domestic, servants, represents 97% of the offers I have received.

This is the old, old story. The same campaign against the Puerto Ricans was carried on against the Irish when they first came here, the Jews, Poles, and Italians. It is always the game of those whose only interest in our nation is profit and more profit, to force the newly arrived into a cheap labor market.

Puerto Ricans in the City of New York live in slums. That is true. Does any one want to live in slums? The answer is not vilification of the Puerto Ricans, but a genuine slum clearance program, and the enactment of a National Housing program for everyone including our Puerto Rican citizens. The Puerto Ricans are being subjected to discrimination. The answer is not vilification and more discrimination. In our democracy, the answer is the enactment of the Fair Employment Practices Act. Puerto Ricans are the last hired and the first to be fired. Is this the only answer that our democracy can give to these newly arrived?

June 19, 1948

On this date, Congressman Marcantonio said, "the so-called New Deal Popular Democratic Party of Puerto Rico has moved steadily away from its original program and swung further and further to the right side of big business." He showed how this was affecting civil liberties and academic freedom in Puerto Rico.



Mr. Speaker, the island of Puerto Rico is small, its population is great, and the working people lead a life of poverty and privation which is not duplicated in any other part of the United States. And because that is so, and because the politicians now in power are trying to ape the reactionary leaders on the mainland, this United States possession has recently produced the most outrageous spectacles of violence against workers and students; the most unrestrained of antidemocratic demonstrations have taken place in Puerto Rico.

We in Congress, in looking at Puerto Rico, can see the hysteria, the terror, and intimidation spreading like wildfire. And what is happening there will certainly take place in our own cities and towns if our reactionaries and witch hunters have their way.

In all of this the rough hand of certain misguided Puerto Rican political leaders cloaks the direction that comes from the American financial and sugar interests on the mainland. For it is these groups who are attempting to make Puerto Rico into a "paradise" for American businessmen; and a purgatory for the poor people of that island.

A recent item in the New York Herald Tribune—June 10, 1948—described Puerto Rico as "the last frontier of free enterprise, where business has a better run for its money than on the prosperous mainland."

The story goes on to quote an industrialist as saying:

"You can practically write your own ticket. They'll build you a modern factory. Plenty of labor at half the scale back home; hydro-electric power; government cooperation; and no taxes for 12 years."

Behind this pleasant picture—and an essential part of it—has been the manner in which the so-called New Deal Popular Democratic Party has moved steadily away from its original program and swung further and further to the right side of big business.... Senator Muñoz-Marín, head of the Popular Democratic Party, has replaced

the old theme of "state enterprise for the people" with the slogan of "private enterprise for profit."

The recent political crises reflect the strains of imposing such a callous program on a people crying desperately for social and economic reforms along the lines of our own New Deal; greater security for the poor and aged, wage increases, housing, medical care, and the eventual establishment of a balanced and stable economy....

Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, head of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, has recently returned to Puerto Rico. He has spent 11 years in exile and imprisonment. He has been Puerto Rico's No. 1 victim of Wall Street imperialism.

The antidemocratic outbursts have become intensified since Campos returned to Puerto Rico.

Early in April of this year Campos was invited to speak at the University of Puerto Rico. The university officials denied him a meeting place and—as students always have in the past—the students of the University of Puerto Rico protested this denial of academic freedom and free speech.

From such a seemingly innocuous incident there developed violence, arrests, and the eventual closing down of the university itself.

The one-day student strike on April 13 was described as an outbreak of violence by the university rector. He immediately closed the university grounds to the students; and the police, armed with clubs and guns, were called upon to enforce this ruling.

Although some weak-kneed political figures—forgetting their own past and their own promises—backed the rector in this action, the students, prominent faculty members, and leaders of Puerto Rico from every walk of life, unanimously condemned the police interference and the decision to close the university.

Many students were jailed. Protest meetings were broken up by police clubs and tear gas. Students were expelled from the university in wholesale lots. Even faculty members who expressed sympathy with the students were dismissed from their positions.

On May 7 the shut-down of the university was made permanent and the 1948 commencement exercises were never held.

What is really behind this action on the part of the university authorities?

In Puerto Rico the students have always participated actively in politics. From their ranks have come many of the island's political leaders. And this crack-down is not merely an isolated student escapade. It is in reality a blow at a substantial part of the progressive movement in Puerto Rico.

It is the result of fear and hysteria on the part of the present politi-

cal leaders. Little men who are bent on establishing a paradise of free private enterprise are ruthlessly suppressing the student movement and every other progressive force in Puerto Rico....

It is the result of fear and hysteria on the part of the present political

Part and parcel of the situation in the university, and reflecting the crackdown on all civil rights in Puerto Rico, was the passage on May 22 of three bills designed "to control all activities aiming at destroying the insular government, and so forth."

The Mundt-Nixon technique has its counterpart in the three laws, H.R. 23, 24, and 25. The laws were rushed through the Puerto Rican Legislature at 5:30 on the morning of May 22.

It is interesting to notice that these legislative monstrosities—cloaked in the hysteria which we in this House have recently experienced—were introduced shortly after the recent visit of President Truman to Puerto Rico. In the President's party was Admiral Leahy, former Governor of Puerto Rico, and still a shadowy background figure in the political life of the islands.

I have learned on unimpeachable authority that these gag laws—in their original version—came to Puerto Rico in English. An import from the mainland. And they were translated into Spanish and then passed through the legislature.

The insular government was ordered to pass these laws to get at any individual or group refusing to fall in line behind the program acceptable to the mainland masters.

The gag laws specifically vest the district courts with jurisdiction, and explicitly provide for trial by the court without jury.

Like the infamous Mundt-Nixon bill, H.R. 24, in defining a felony under the acts, enumerates the illegal actions and concludes that these are proscribed, as well as organizations formed to accomplish these ends or formed "for other purposes."

The unanimity with which the legislature passed these laws is a true reflection of the pressure that has been put on them. Certainly there is no threat to the government of Puerto Rico today; excluding the threat to continued office that comes to any official in a democracy who has forgotten the needs of his constituents. But called to heel by the political leaders who do not speak in the name of the people of Puerto Rico, the legislators cast their vote against freedom and against their own good conscience.

The bills were passed without hearings and after but one day of debate.

This legislative development in Puerto Rico, like similar actions we have seen in other countries in Latin America during the past year, are clearly the result of United States pressure. In Cuba, in

Chile, in Peru, in Brazil, and also in Puerto Rico, the crack-down against the progressive forces, against the trade union leaders, against every possible group which speaks for the downtrodden people, has developed even as the people in power in these areas have drawn closer to the United States. It is a sad realization that is forced upon the people of these countries that today, everywhere the United States government pushes its hand, there the ordinary man feels the increased weight of oppression while the man of privilege and wealth becomes more powerful....

October 19, 1949

On this date, Congressman Marcantonio asked the House to "see to it" that the "outrageous... police intimidation" of the Nationalist Party in Puerto Rico be ended at once.



Mr. Speaker, again and again over the many years that I have been a Member of this House, I have taken the floor to plead the cause of the people of Puerto Rico.

They are a fine and noble people who for the past 50 years of occupation of their land by the United States have suffered a mounting toll of disease and poverty.

They are a proud people who—as American citizens—in moving to the mainland in a desperate effort to better themselves, have found nothing but slums, discrimination, and low-paid jobs as their lot in our cities.

They are a people whose treatment every day gives the lie to the fine talk of our delegates to the United Nations—talk of the dignity of the human person and of the equality of economic opportunity.

The Puerto Rican people know nothing of these fine things in their lives, and as they read of our delegates to the UN arguing fervently for human rights for men everywhere, they have but to look at themselves and their children, at the disgraceful hovels in which they are crowded, at the walls of discrimination surrounding them, to dismiss all such talk by their own UN representatives as the sheerest hypocrisy.

As I have said again and again—and as I repeat here today—there can never be a solution of the economic difficulties of Puerto Rico, the root of every other ill suffered by the Puerto Rican people, until independence is granted to them. So long as Puerto Rico remains a colonial appendage of the United States, an exploited, one-crop sugar economy, it will continue to wallow in disease and poverty.

There can only be a resolution of these many problems by the Puerto Rican people themselves, working energetically and purposefully in their own interests and in their own sovereign independent land.

Despite this fact, despite the increasing conviction among the Puerto Rican people that only through independence can they ever hope to build decent lives for themselves and their children—the Nationalist Party is daily harassed and terrorized by the police and the territorial government of the island. And the leader of that party, Pedro Albizu Campos, is hounded like a common criminal.

In 1947 he returned to his home after 10 years of exile in the United States. And to the eternal disgrace of our country, which itself was born out of a bitter struggle for independence and today still honors as its greatest heroes those men who led this struggle, this leader of Puerto Rican independence spent 6 years of his exile in the penitentiary in the United States.

Today he lives in San Juan under the type of police surveillance and intimidation that could only have been duplicated in Hitler Germany.

The home of Pedro Albizu Campos is surrounded day and night by police patrols, police cars, and jeeps with mounted machine guns. When Dr. Albizu Campos walks along the streets of San Juan, he is closely followed by four or five plainclothes policemen on foot, and a load of fully armed policemen in a car a few paces behind.



Marcantonio arrives in Puerto Rico to defend Pedro Albizu Campos.

Every shop he enters, every person to whom he talks, is subsequently visited by representatives of the police department. A reign of terror descends on the luckless citizens of Puerto Rico who spend a few minutes talking to Dr. Albizu Campos.

When the leader of the Nationalist Party leaves San Juan to attend a meeting or to make a speech, his car is trailed through the countryside by an armed column of police cars and jeeps. Every hotel or home in which he stays is immediately surrounded by a cordon of police. Every meeting of the Nationalist Party takes place behind police lines.

The Nationalist Party is a legal party in Puerto Rico. Its leader is an American citizen, supposedly enjoying all the rights and liberties of any other American citizen. Yet both he and his party are harassed and intimidated at every turn.

This absolutely unjustified and inexcusable conduct upon the part of the police and the higher authorities of Puerto Rico must stop at once.

This is still a Government of laws and not of men. We have laws to protect us and to punish evildoers. We need no Gestapos in the United States.

The situation which I have described here is an outrageous example of police intimidation.

This House should take notice of what is happening in Puerto Rico and should see to it that the Territorial government and the Territorial police are put on notice to cease these activities at once.



March 16, 1950 *On July 12, 1949, the Committee on Public Lands of the House of Representatives convened to consider legislation "to provide for the organization of a constitutional government by the people of Puerto Rico."*

After an eight month recess the Committee reconvened on March 14, 1950, to continue its deliberations on H.R. 7674, a bill for "the Puerto Rican Constitution." The bill was introduced by Antonio Fernos-Isern, Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico.

Congressman Marcantonio opposed the bill in a series of speeches before the House and before the Committee. He called it "a supine reaffirmation of the status quo in Puerto Rico under the guise of a meaningless self-government."

H.R. 7674 was supported by Luis Muñoz-Marin, Governor of Puerto Rico. He and Commissioner Fernos-Isern had been elected as candidates of the Popular Democratic Party in 1948.

Congressman Marcantonio, at a Committee hearing, declared:

"The new colonial position of Muñoz-Marin has been officially and openly adopted since his inauguration as colonial Governor of Puerto Rico in January 1949. Since then he has been saying that Puerto Rico is not a colony, but a 'new kind of state,' in open violation of the program and tradition of his own party, the Popular Democratic Party, whose members he has betrayed and in open violation of the commitments he made before the 1948 elections.

... The elected candidate Muñoz-Marin promised the people, after a vigorous condemnation of the colonial status, to work for the approval of a law allowing Puerto Rico to draft a constitution of its own with a complete self-government... also to ask Congress... to include in the same law... a provision authorizing the legislature of Puerto Rico to submit to a vote, at any time the Legislature of Puerto Rico would consider it feasible from the economic viewpoint, the alternative of statehood or independence, on the promise on the part of the Congress that it would approve the alternative selected by the people of Puerto Rico. This was the proposition submitted by Luis Muñoz-Marin to the people of Puerto Rico, on the basis of which he won the 1948 elections..."

Four selections from Mr. Marcantonio's speeches against H.R. 7674 are presented in the following pages. The first, made on the floor of the House on March 16, 1950, is given in part below.

Mr. Speaker, the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, the Honorable Fernós-Isern, introduced the other day H.R. 7674. The bill is described as a bill to provide for the organization of a constitutional government by the people of Puerto Rico.

The mere fact that this bill was introduced is a confession on the part of the present rulers of Puerto Rico that the Puerto Rican people are restive under the present colonial status, and that they no longer want any part of it.

The question of colonialism in Puerto Rico, however, will not be solved by H.R. 7674. This bill is an evasion of the real question. It dodges the issues. . . . and is an attempt to put to sleep the aspirations of the Puerto Rican people for democracy and independence. . . .

What this bill actually is can be found in the words of Mr. Fernós-Isern in a statement he inserted in the *Congressional Record* on Tuesday, March 14, 1950:

The Congress of the United States since 1900 has provided for the operation of Federal Laws in Puerto Rico. It has determined the economic relationships to exist between Puerto Rico and the mainland. It has determined that the people of Puerto Rico are United States citizens. Such legal and economic provisions of our organic act the people of Puerto Rico are not aiming to disturb. Rather, they wish to reaffirm them and expressly register their consent to their application.

This is an admission on the part of the author of the bill that its purpose is to perpetuate the present system of colonialism under which the people of Puerto Rico are now suffering. Here is a bill that does not even ask for statehood. It is a supine reaffirmation of the status quo in Puerto Rico under the guise of a meaningless self-government.

This proposal of the Muñoz-Marín administration cannot be accepted as having been offered in good faith. Mr. Muñoz-Marín knows better than to expect the establishment of a commonwealth which cannot be established under the provisions of our Constitution.

This latest proposal of Muñoz-Marín can be described as Operation Desperation on the part of those who in the past have led the people to believe that they supported independence, when they were out of power, and now, when confronted with responsibility of office. . . . renege on past promises and declarations for independence.

As against this empty gesture, I today have reintroduced my independence bill.

Mr. Speaker, in order to pass honest judgment on this last empty proposal of the Muñoz-Marín administration, in contrast with my proposal for genuine independence, I submit that it is of utmost

importance that we must first examine our relations with Puerto Rico; that we examine its present government, and that we seek a solution of its most pressing problems.

Puerto Rico was taken over by us by force of arms. This action was subsequently ratified by the treaty of Paris in 1898. As a result Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States.

When we took over this country, which was discovered by Columbus in 1493, and which was under the jurisdiction of Spain until 1898, the Puerto Rican people had won over from Spain, through centuries of struggle, an autonomous charter which guaranteed the people substantial sovereignty. Under that charter the people of Puerto Rico had complete home rule, and besides, had the power of making their own tariff laws and of entering into commercial trade agreements with other countries. The autonomous charter could not be revoked or amended but on the petition of the Puerto Rican parliament.

We substituted for the autonomous government which the Puerto Ricans had won over from Spain, a colonial form of government. Under our present relationship, which the Fernós-Isern bill would not change, Puerto Rico, according to our Supreme Court, "belongs to but does not form part of the United States." The government of Puerto Rico is organized under an organic act passed by this Congress, the Jones Act, which can be amended or annulled by us without consulting the people of Puerto Rico. The laws passed by the legislature of Puerto Rico can be amended, suspended, or revoked by Congress. Every law approved by the legislature must be sent to this Congress which can exercise its veto power over them. The Supreme Court of the United States can declare unconstitutional the laws passed by the legislature of Puerto Rico. The President of the United States holds a veto power over the Puerto Rico legislature. The President of the United States appoints the judges of the supreme court, the auditor for Puerto Rico, and all Federal officials on the island, including the judge of the Federal Court. Appeals are taken from the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico to the Circuit Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in Boston. We have exclusive jurisdiction in such vital matters as bankruptcy, navigation, air law, radio, immigration, conscription—in time of peace and war—and other matters. The structure within which the Puerto Rican government operates cannot be altered, annulled, or in any way modified by the people of Puerto Rico.

We have encircled Puerto Rico within our tariff walls. We have imposed upon that country the coastwise-shipping laws. We bind the Puerto Ricans with the treaties we negotiated without their participation in such negotiations. We can force Puerto Rico, as we have done

twice through the past 50 years, into a war without consulting them in advance; and we can take over their territory, as we have done on numerous occasions,—in spite of the great need that they have for land—for air, naval, military, and submarine needs of ours.

All this the Muñoz-Marín empty proposal for alleged self-government would perpetuate. All this the Muñoz-Marín government accepts. All this would be continued, this status quo would be made permanent under H.R. 7674. Not one iota of this colonialism that I have described would be changed by the recent Fernós-Isern/Marín proposal.

Let me remind you that the Puerto Rican people have no representation in this Congress. The Puerto Rican people are allowed only to send here a Resident Commissioner who has a voice in matters affecting Puerto Rico, but who has no vote.

Under the Spanish regime, at the time we took over Puerto Rico from Spain, the people of Puerto Rico had representation in the Spanish Cortes or Parliament. They had representation in the Senate and 16 representatives in the Spanish House at Madrid.

We can tax the Puerto Rican people besides having the power to send them to war. Thus we do not only impose upon the Puerto Ricans taxation without representation, but we also impose upon them a tax on the blood of their people.

This, too, Muñoz-Marín would perpetuate through the enactment of H.R. 7674.

During the 51 years that Puerto Rico has been under our jurisdiction we have used that island and its people to our advantage. We have established, as I have said before, air, naval, military, and submarine bases in Puerto Rican territory. We have conscripted Puerto Ricans in two wars and have sent them to fight for us in two wars. In the last war over 500,000 Puerto Ricans were drafted and 80,000 were actually under arms. Many of them were in action and many died for the cause of democracy.

As a result of the workings of the tariff laws, and the imposition upon the Puerto Ricans of the coastwise-shipping laws, and the denial to them of power to negotiate for reciprocal trade agreements, we have excluded them from world markets. They buy 98 percent of their imports in the United States. In 1948 Puerto Rico bought \$337,000,000 in goods from the United States and sold us \$199,000,000 worth of goods. The balance of trade thus favors us by \$138,000,000. The shipping companies which hold a monopoly in Puerto Rico have made huge profits in the island during the last half century. This can be said also of our banks which are doing business on the island, of the insurance companies, of the Wall Street financial

interests, and of several other big American concerns. We have found in Puerto Rico an outlet for our rice, our beans, our codfish, our shoes, clothes, manufactured products, and many other items which number over 1,000.

Again, all this is not changed one iota by the Muñoz-Marín proposal. In fact, H.R. 7674 accepts this form of exploitation.

.... We have heard through the fancy, high-paid advertising, a great deal about Operation Boot Strap, but to the people of Puerto Rico the Muñoz-Marín administration can be called Operation Booby Trap. The following story of the Caribe Hilton Hotel demonstrates what I mean when I say the Muñoz-Marín administration is Operation Booby Trap for the people of Puerto Rico.

The story on the Caribe Hilton Hotel is an example of the Government's policies to attract industries. The Government of Puerto Rico built the hotel at a cost of \$7,000,000. The hotel has 300 rooms. Then, after it was built, the Government leased the hotel to the Hilton Hotel Corp. on a 20-year lease.

Muñoz-Marín has not even revealed the amount for which the hotel was leased, even though the people have asked for this information. This is part of the policy of secrecy in the Government—the people are never given information about the way the money is expended. Everything that was used, including furniture, was flown from the United States. Even the sugar came from the United States to Puerto Rico, and also most of the employees were taken from the United States to Puerto Rico. The expenses for propaganda, as announced by the management, went over \$150,000, and the government of Puerto Rico pays half of that amount. Up to this time they have paid \$75,000.

The Government policy to attract industries to Puerto Rico is based on the principle of constructing the plants for the firms to go into (in) Puerto Rico, and to equip them. Then the firms are tax-exempt for a period of 12 years. These firms, like Textron, want a guaranty that the minimum salary will not be raised, so that these firms expect to do business on the basis of paying starvation wages to the workers of Puerto Rico. Textron recently said that if the minimum wage is increased from 25 cents an hour, which they are paying now, they will move from Puerto Rico.

The Caribe Hilton Hotel was also exempted from paying taxes.

All these industries which may go to Puerto Rico can leave the island whenever they choose, and leave the Puerto Ricans with all the expenses already incurred. So we can see that all this industrialization program of Muñoz-Marín is just hooey. It is, I repeat, not Operation Boot Strap, but Operation Booby Trap for the people of Puerto Rico.

While Muñoz-Marín is engaged in Operation Booby Trap for the

people of Puerto Rico, let us see what is happening to the people themselves.

The cost of living in Puerto Rico has gone up about 300 percent since 1940 while salaries and wages have had only a slight increase and now are going down again. The huge amounts of money which entered the Puerto Rican treasury were because of the revenue on rum, and the high taxes collected from the people of Puerto Rico. I would like to here note that in Congress I protected the income from rum for the treasury of Puerto Rico.

There was in general an artificial atmosphere of prosperity because 80,000 Puerto Ricans were under arms and their relatives were receiving benefits; war construction was going on and there were war government jobs. Muñoz-Marín squandered the huge amounts of money received. No permanent works were built by him. No substantial reserve was established. Muñoz-Marín received from 1940 to 1948 in his government more money than the total amount of money received by the successive governments of the island from Juan Ponce de Leon, the first Governor under Spain, to 1940.

During the war the price of sugar was frozen to prewar prices, 1939. On the other hand, no control was put on the items imported from the United States. The result was that while the price of sugar was kept low the price of rice, beans, codfish, lard, meat, butter, bacon, machinery, and so forth went up to a fantastic level. It has been figured out by economists of great prestige in the island that, because of this, the people of Puerto Rico lost an average of \$80,000,000 a year since 1940, or about \$540,000,000 during the war years.

And again let me repeat, the number of unemployed in Puerto Rico totals 300,000 out of a population of 2,200,000 inhabitants.

Yes, the Muñoz-Marín rule is indeed Operation Booby Trap for the people of Puerto Rico.

.... I could go on and recite many more phases of the exploitation of the people of the Puerto Rico. I shall from time to time recite more chapters from the story of the sordid saturnalia of corruption and graft which now exists under our Nero of Fortaleza, the puppet of our colonialism.

My purpose in this speech, however, is to establish, which I believe I have done:

First: That H.R. 7674 is an empty gesture and a device to cover up, and to perpetuate the colonialism and exploitation imposed on the people of Puerto Rico by selfish interests in the United States.

Second: That the graft and corruption by the present rulers of Puerto Rico is not the product of the people of Puerto Rico, but the byproduct of the system of colonialism and exploitation under which

the people of Puerto Rico are suffering.

Third: That the suggestions which I have made for immediate solution of Puerto Rico's immediate problems are of immediate character and must be enacted immediately to solve the Puerto Rican people from further suffering.

Fourth: That the only real solution for Puerto Rico and its problems is to grant to the people of Puerto Rico full sovereignty; the only guaranty which the people of Puerto Rico can have to solve their problems—yes, the full sovereignty of a free and independent nation, and this, I submit, can be achieved by the enactment of my bill.

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