

# Juan Antonio Corretjer

Don Juan Antonio Corretjer, Secretary-General of the Liga Socialista Puertorriquena, is a person of great stature in the political and cultural life of the Puerto Rican nation, as well as a representative of the unity of all Latin America in its struggle for liberation.

Juan Antonio Corretjer has been involved in the Puerto Rican independence struggle for over half-a-century; he was formerly the Secretary General of the Nationalist Party and was imprisoned along with Don Pedro Albizu Campos in the U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta from 1936-1940. He is also an internationally recognized poet, and was awarded the distinction of National Poet of Puerto Rico by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture for his book "Yerba Bruja."



Donã Consuelo and Don Juan Antonio Corretjer

... occupation of Puerto Rico, in Ciales, a town in the coffee-growing region of the island. He began writing poetry by 1925, and by 1930 was an activist in the Nationalist Party, writing for its newspaper, "El Nacionalista". Led by its president, Pedro Albizu Campos, the Nationalist Party represented the militant and uncompromising determination of the Puerto Rican people to reclaim their independence and sovereignty from U.S. colonialism. The growing strength and popularity of the Nationalist Party represented a threat to continued U.S. colonial control. The U.S. government responded with a campaign of repression against the Party and the people.

Throughout this period, Corretjer played an active role in the revolutionary process, not only of Puerto Rico, but also of other Latin American countries. In New York, he worked with Socrates Sandino, brother of Agosto Cesar Sandino, to support the struggle for the liberation of Nicaragua from U.S. occupation. In Cuba, Corretjer was imprisoned for involvement in struggles against the U.S.-imposed Machado regime.

In 1936, in Puerto Rico, the U.S. stepped up its repression of the Nationalist Party, subpoenaing all its records to a Grand Jury. As Secretary-General, Corretjer collected the records from all party offices and then informed the U.S. that he would not surrender them. He was jailed for contempt and served over 4 years in the Federal prison.

Working politically in New York City during the 1940's, he founded and edited the newspaper "Los Pueblos Hispanos." He maintained his commitment to the liberation of all Latin America, travelled widely, and was involved in political movements in Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela. At the same time, he has received literary honors from a number of Latin American countries, and is considered an authority on Hispanic-American literature. He has been an outstanding poet expressing the national spirit of the Puerto Rican people, in the tradition of José



Corretjer (ctr) and Albizu Campos (left) on their way to Atlanta Penitentiary in 1936.

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de Diego and Lola Rodriguez de Tio, developing and preserving a Puerto Rican cultural identity in the face of attempted cultural assimilation by the U.S. colonizers. Over the years Corretjer has written over 40 volumes of poetry and prose and such popular Puerto Rican singers as Roy Brown and Andres Jimenez have put his poems to music.

Corretjer led support for the July 26th Movement of Cuba in Puerto Rico, was a personal friend of Che Guevara, and when Fidel Castro triumphed over the Battista dictatorship in 1959, Fidel sent a plane to bring Don Juan to Havana to celebrate the revolutionary victory.

In 1959 Corretjer helped lead the new phase of the Puerto Rican independence struggle, a part of a worldwide upsurge of national liberation. His participation in the revitalized independence movement represented the continuity of a tradition of resistance to colonialism that the repression of the 1950's had failed to crush.

Along with former members of the Nationalist Party, the Independence Party, and the Puerto Rican Communist Party, he formed the Accion Patriotica Unitaria (A.P.U.), in 1959.

In 1962 he was a founding member of the Liga Socialista Puertorriquena, which has since participated in many activities and fronts for Puerto Rican independence, liberation, and socialism, including the Frente Revolucionaria Anti-Electoral in 1976. The L.S.P. maintains that the revolutionary vanguard in Puerto Rico is being developed clandestinely, away from the eyes of the U.S. government and its repressive agencies. It upholds the right of the Puerto Rican people to engage in armed struggle to win their freedom from militarily-imposed U.S. colonialism. Corretjer has also been a leading proponent of the unity of the Puerto Rican and Chicano/Mexicano people, in their struggles against U.S. imperialism.