MEMORANDUM TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

The CASE *of* PUERTO RICO

5 cents

FOREWORD

As part of its shameless demagogy about being the leader of the "free world" the United States government is trying to propagate the hoax that it is an anti-colonial power. Its callous refusal to permit the cases of Morocco and Tunisia to be discussed in the United Nations, its crass acts of imperialist intervention in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, its barbarous war of aggression in Korea are sufficient to expose these "anti-colonial" pretensions.

But nowhere is this sham laid bare so clearly and directly as in the treatment of the outright U.S. colony, Puerto Rico. After more than fifty years of U.S. rule, the Puerto Rican people are still denied the right to determine their own destiny, their sons are conscripted to fight in the oppressor's wars, and hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans are forced to emigrate because the one-crop economy imposed by the U.S. trusts prevents them from earning even a miserable livelihood.

Now the Wall Street government is engaged in perpetrating a new fraud: the so-called "Commonwealth" and new constitution that are supposed to spell self-government for Puerto Rico. This is the latest wrinkle in the demagogy by which the State Department is trying to throw dust in the eyes of the Puerto Rican people, our own people, and the peoples of the world. The Eisenhower administration has also informed the UN that, with the establishment of the fake "Commonwealth," Puerto Rico has ceased to be a "non-self-governing territory" and the U.S. will no longer submit reports on this colony.

The Communist Party of Puerto Rico has submitted a memorandum to the UN protesting against this outrageous falsification of Puerto Rico's true status and demanding that the UN reject the claims of the U.S. government. The present pamphlet contains the text of this memorandum. Other Puerto Rican political parties have sent similar petitions to the UN. The working class and people of the United States, whose own liberties are threatened by the same reactionary big business government that enslaves Puerto Rico, have

(*Continued on page* 15)

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MEMORANDUM TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE CASE OF PUERTO RICO

INTRODUCTION

The Government of the United States has resolved to discontinue submitting information on Puerto Rico, as required in Article 73 of the United Nations Charter.

This decision is supported by the argument that, with the establishment of the so-called Free Associated State, the people of Puerto Rico have achieved the complete measure of self-government projected in Chapter II of the Charter of the United Nations.

Sure of expressing the true feeling of our people, we declare that the fundamentals of the governing system in Puerto Rico have not changed. Puerto Rico continues, as it has since 1898, a colony under the political, economic and military domination of the United States.

LIMITED REFORMS

The limited reforms introduced into Puerto Rico by the United States government are similar to those put into practice in their respective colonies by the governments of England, Holland and France. Driven by the growing national liberation struggles of the colonial peoples, all the imperialist powers have been obliged to introduce definite reforms in their overseas possessions. Such reforms, in vogue throughout the colonial world, are not intended to abolish colonialism, but to preserve it. This is the true purpose of the so-called Free Associated State of Puerto Rico.

To accept the position of the United States Government would be a violation, in letter and in spirit, of the Charter of the United Nations. It would mean:

a) Sanctioning the political, economic and military domination of the United States over Puerto Rico; and

b) Justifying the policy of the imperialist powers in general who seek to perpetuate colonial slavery in the world.

UNALTERED COLONIALISM

The process of creating that which in Spanish has been called the "Estado Libre Asociado" and, in English, "The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico," began with Law 600 of the 81st Congress, passed July 3, 1950. The North American rulers claim that this law had the character of a "pact" between the United States and Puerto Rico. The facts contradict this claim.

The statute in question was limited to amending the colonial Organic Charter in force in Puerto Rico since 1917.

With the idea of giving an appearance of self-determination to the introduction of such reforms, the United States Congress ordered the convening in Puerto Rico of a "constitutional assembly." Its work had to be limited to rewriting certain fixed clauses of the colonial Organic Charter, specifically indicated by the law. These, in their new form, would receive the respectable title of "constitution." The remaining clauses of the colonial Organic Charter, precisely its fundamental sections, could not be submitted for discussion or amended by the pseudo constitutional assembly. These remained in effect, with the sole change that their title now is: "Law of Federal Relations with Puerto Rico."

That which the United States Government permitted to be drawn up in Puerto Rico is a mere regulating of the internal government. Questions of a constitutional character—executive, legislative and judicial powers—remain as before as set forth in the colonial Organic Charter of 1917. That law guarantees the continued stay of the same colonial patron: trade monopoly, coastwise shipping laws, tariffs, military, naval and air bases, forced military recruitment, imposition of federal laws, functioning of the District Federal Court, subordination of judicial decisions and limited legislative powers.

Puerto Rico does not enjoy, as the Government of the United States claims, a complete measure of self-government.

Self-government is not an abstract idea but a concrete state of existence of a people. Neither in its political, economic and cultural life, or even less, in the sphere of military action and foreign relations, does the so-called Free Associated State possess even the most elemental attributes of self-government.

CHANGE OF APPEARANCE

Luis Munoz Marin, Governor of Puerto Rico, referring to the reform projected at that time, declared on June 12, 1949, before the Committee on Public Lands of the United States Congress: *

"In practice, the constitution will probably be very similar, certainly it will follow the basic lines, of the one (the Organic Charter of 1917) which is in effect today by congressional edict." And he added, further on, that "in practice, the degree of self-government will be no different."

In referring to the congressional bill in question, the United States Secretary of the Interior announced that there would be no change "in political, social and economic relations between Puerto Rico and the United States."

The Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Washington concurred with the Secretary of the Interior in declaring that the bill "will not alter the sovereign power held by the United States over Puerto Rico, in conformity with the Treaty of Paris."

Judge Cecil Snyder, present Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, commenting on the bill mentioned, declared: "Under it, there is no change of sovereignty. Economic and judicial relations between Puerto Rico and the United States remain unchanged."

Report 1779, June 6, 1950, of the United States Senate, concurs entirely with these points of view and mentions specifically that "the measure will not change the basic political, social or economic relations between Puerto Rico and the United States." For its part, Report 2275 of the House of Representatives maintains the same position.

Conscious that in reality there has been no change in the colonial domination of the United States over Puerto Rico, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Munoz Marin, in a letter sent January 17, 1953 to the President of the United States, affirmed that relations between the United States and Puerto Rico have always been those of "liberty and justice in practice." Nevertheless, he says, these relations "appear to reflect the imposition of the will of one people over another."

Such is the confessed intention in creating the so-called Free Associated State; to change the appearance of colonialism, while preserving in all its oppression and exploitation the colonial regime in Puerto Rico.

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* All quotations from U.S. sources are retranslated from the Spanish.

HISTORIC CONTRAST

With hypocritical and cynical propaganda, the North American rulers pretend to present themselves at the bar of public opinion as "champions of democracy" and of "liberty for the people." But, their own acts, in Asia as in Europe, in Africa as in Latin America, give the lie to this false propaganda. The constitution of the so-called Free Associated State of Puerto Rico, set down within the molds decreed by the United States Congress, does not even compare favorably with the Charter of Autonomy conceded by the monarchic government of Spain to Puerto Rico in 1897.

The United States took possession of Puerto Rico in 1898 by means of war. At the time of the armed invasion, an Autonomous Government ruled in Puerto Rico. The powers which our people enjoyed at that time, and which were abolished by the military government imposed by the United States, were much broader than the present ones.

Under the Autonomous Charter conceded by Spain at the end of the last century, commercial treaties, in order to have the force of law in Puerto Rico, had to be negotiated with the participation of representatives of Puerto Rico and ratified by our Parliament. The Parliament of Puerto Rico had the exclusive power to legislate tariffs, customs duties, the monetary and banking system, public credit and postal services. Puerto Rico moreover enjoyed representation in the Spanish Parliament, on an equal basis with other provinces, through Puerto Rican deputies and senators.

The Autonomous Government was established February 11, 1898. It ruled only until July of the same year, at which time occurred the invasion and conquest of Puerto Rico by the United States armed forces. The new rulers abolished the Autonomous Government and imposed a military regime. Puerto Rico was governed by military decrees until April 12, 1900, at which time the United States Congress passed the Foraker Act, drawing up the organization of a limited civil government. Seventeen years later, March 2, 1917, the United States Congress approved a new colonial Organic Charter known as the Jones Act, which still continues in effect, in all its fundamental points, under the name of the Law of Federal Relations with Puerto Rico.

As the Chairman of the Committee on Insular Affairs said in his

report to the House of Representatives, May 29, 1952, with the new "constitution" the laws of the United States "will have the same force and effect in Puerto Rico." And in order that there be no room for doubt, he declared:

"Puerto Rico will continue to be included in the United States tariff system, and the same tariffs will be collected in Puerto Rico and in the United States. Puerto Rico will continue subject to our coastwise shipping laws, and our monetary laws. In fact, to all the laws which pertain to the sphere of authority of the federal government. . . . The provisions of the Law of Federal Relations, as reaffirmed in Public Law 600, are binding on Puerto Rico. There is no possibility whatever, therefore, that—either by amendment to the Constitution of Puerto Rico or by the passing of laws under the above mentioned Constitution—the Puerto Ricans would be able to exercise powers greater or broader than the limits set by Public Law 600. . . ."

Colonialism continues in effect on all levels in Puerto Rico. The limited reforms have only a formal character. Their introduction has a two-fold purpose:

a) To reinforce the colonial regime in Puerto Rico; and

b) To serve as one more theme of the false North American propaganda.

COLONIAL REALITY

The Government of the United States and the colonial government of Puerto Rico pretend that under the present system there is no colonialism in our country. They admit that actually the citizens of Puerto Rico have no part in electing the government af the United States and have no representation in Congress. The Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Washington has no vote in Congress, cannot speak except by unanimous consent, and his intervention in legislative activities is only by congressional courtesy. Apologists for the regime pretend to justify this situation, claiming that, on the other hand, Congress does not impose on Puerto Rico the obligation of paying federal taxes. Such a justification falls of its own weight. The fact that the United States abstains from one or several arbitrary impositions, cannot serve as a basis for the argument that there is no

colonialism in Puerto Rico, if at the same time other equally or more arbitrary measures are imposed.

It is obvious that in spite of the new title of Free Associated State, colonialism continues to rule in Puerto Rico—and will continue to do so:

—As long as the colonial Organic Charter of 1917—now known as the Law of Federal Relations—is in force;

—As long as relations between Puerto Rico and the United States are determined by the unilateral wishes of the United States;

—As long as Puerto Rico's economic life is interfered with to the point that she is not even permitted to refine the sugar which she produces;

—As long as Puerto Rico is forced to trade only with the United States and our people are not allowed to buy and sell in the markets of other countries;

—As long as North American shipping and airline companies monopolize our maritime traffic;

—As long as North American laws govern in Puerto Rico, like the Taft-Hartley Law which governs employer-worker relations; the coastwise shipping laws which protect the Yankee maritime monopoly; the U.S. Selective Service Law which imposes on our people the tribute of its own blood; the Smith Act and the McCarran Act, which interfere with the political life of our country; and the Immigration Laws which govern the entry of foreigners;

—As long as there is in Puerto Rico a Federal Court composed of functionaries appointed by the North American government;

—As long as our Supreme Court is not a court of last recourse, but on the contrary, its decisions can be overruled by the North American courts;

—As long as the Government of Puerto Rico enjoys only limited powers—delegated by the United States and, therefore, revocable—and not powers emanating from the expressed will of our people.

A nation such as Puerto Rico, living under such conditions, is a colony. No type of mere formal changes can alter, nor will in the least alter, this indisputable reality.

REVOCABLE CONSTITUTION

The revocability of the constitution of the so-called Free Associated State has been clearly established by the Chairman of the Interior Committee of the United States Senate, who in public hearings held April 29th to May 6th, 1953 on Joint Resolution 151 of the 82nd Congress, said:

"I think it should be established as a fundamental question that the Constitution of the United States grants Congress complete authority, and that nothing in the Constitution of Puerto Rico can affect, amend or alter this right. This Constitution is before us and I find nothing in it which goes beyond the local self-government which we have expressly authorized in this law."

The conditions imposed by the Congress of the United States for approving the constitution of the so-called Free Associated State demonstrate its revocable character. Among others, Congress demanded the elimination of Section 20 of the original draft, even though it consisted of a mere declaration without force of law.

Section 20 had been copied from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and projected the following:

"The right of every person to receive free primary and secondary education. . . . The right of every person to obtain work. . . . The right of every person to enjoy a level of living adequate to assure health, welfare, housing, medical assistance and necessary social services for himself and his family. . . . The right of every person to social protection against unemployment, sickness, old age and physical incapacity. . . . The right of every pregnant or nursing mother and every child to care and special aid."

These rights are stated in Articles 23, 25 and 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the United Nations with the affirmative vote of the United States. The fact that Congress demanded their elimination from the constitution of the so-called Free Associated State as an indispensable prerequisite to its ratification proves that this affirmative vote was a mere formality.

There is no guarantee that a future United States Congress will consider itself legally obliged to retain the legislation which gave birth to the so-called Free Associated State. The authors of this international hoax assure us that their moral guarantee is sufficient.

This supposed moral guarantee has no value when it concerns the relations between a great imperialist power and a colonial people. This moral guarantee is all the less truthworthy considering that in the United States itself, in spite of constitutional guarantees, the Negro people, the Jewish people, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and other national minorities are victims of North American chauvinism and discrimination. A government like that of the United States, which destroys democratic liberties, persecutes and jails leaders of the Communist Party and of the working class movement and other progressive sectors and carries out aggressive actions against other nations, cannot guarantee fair treatment for Puerto Rico.

Neither can we, in the light of our own experience, have faith in a government which talks about defending the liberty of other countries while denying it to our people. More than a hundred Puerto Rican patriots, including Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, are in prison for fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico.

The apologists of the regime try to make people believe that the so-called Free Associated State is the incarnation of the desires of our people. To that end, they assert that the proof is to be found in the results of the elections of 1948 and subsequent referendums. But the fact is that such elections, effected on the basis of an anti-democratic election law, did not have the character of a plebiscite. No alternative was offered to the voters except that of accepting the proposed colonial reforms or rejecting them. In any case, the fact that limited reforms were accepted does not justify the conclusion that such an act includes voluntary acceptance of the existing regime.

The facts show that colonialism persists in Puerto Rico. The reforms which have been introduced can be revoked at any moment by a unilateral decision. Under such conditions of inequality, the so-called compact is a mockery of our people and of world democratic opinion.

COLONIAL SUBJECTION

Puerto Rico is a nation of 2,250,000 inhabitants. Its historical roots go back to the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, when Spanish colonization began. With the dawning of the Nineteenth

Century, Puerto Rico showed all the characteristics of a nation. From that time on our people have not stopped fighting to assert their own national identity and achieve the full enjoyment of their national sovereignty.

The culture of Puerto Rico is Puerto Rican, the product of centuries of history and of the fusion on our territory of descendants of aborigines, Spaniards and Africans.

During the 55 years of United States intervention, the people have resisted all attempts to destroy the Puerto Rican nationality. With an educational system dominated by the intervening power, until recent years using English as the language of instruction, the United States has not been able to make Puerto Rico surrender and renounce its legitimate aspirations. Puerto Ricans are not Yankees. We have our own identity, and today, with greater strength than in the past we press forward toward the recognition of our national rights.

The propagandists in the pay of the United States assert that the standard of living reached by our people is the direct result of the subordination of our economy to that of the United States. That standard is actually the result of the hard work of the Puerto Rican people and is in spite of the colonial conditions in which they live.

The rise in production and income registered in recent years is a temporary product of the war economy, and is chiefly due to an increase in the price level. The real sources of wealth, like sugar, coffee, tobacco, etc., far from tending to develop, remain at levels equal to, or lower than, those of twenty years ago. Since 1940 Puerto Rico's commercial balance has been consistently adverse every year, and the commercial deficit of the years 1941-1951 amounted to $724,000,000.

Under the so-called Free Associated State, the subordination of Puerto Rico's economy to the interests of the United States financial oligarchy has been intensified. The total debt of the government, municipalities and public corporations to Wall Street financial circles amounts to $204,000,000. Subjected to the United States war economy, our country lives on the edge of crisis. Only certain elevated strata of the population, consisting of partners and agents of the Yankee sugar companies, industrial, commercial and financial concerns, profit from the present economic situation.

The unemployed, officially estimated at 114,000—or 14% of the working force—actually amount to 300,000 when one adds the part-time workers. The average wage of employed persons (March, 1953) amounts to $13 a week; for women, the average is only $8 a week. Meanwhile the official price index—obviously underestimated—is given for January 1953 as 190.6 (and for food—229.8) on a basis of 100 for the already high prices of 1941.

The apologists of the colonial regime try to justify it by pointing out that the United States has invested millions of dollars in Puerto Rico. These funds are devoted to the construction and maintenance of big United States military, naval and air installations in Puerto Rico, to the support of its armed forces and veterans. The United States allocations to Puerto Rico for the whole period 1898-1939 were insignificant. It was not until 1940 that they were increased—as a result of the United States war policy and with the sole objective of strengthening the United States military position.

IMPERIALIST EXPLOITATION

It is not possible to measure in monetary terms what imperialist exploitation has cost Puerto Rico. But, at least, we can concretize it in certain aspects.

In the ten year period of 1942-51, United States capitalists made $118,182,000 in dividends and interest on their investments in Puerto Rico. This figure represents only profits exported from the island and does not include profits reinvested in the country.

During the same period, Puerto Ricans with investments abroad received dividends and interest amounting to $34,649,000. The difference, in Puerto Rico's disfavor, is $83,533,000. In these same years, Puerto Rico paid the United States $74,507,000 as insurance company profits and for other services, according to the colonial government's Economic Development Administration.

According to a United States Tariff Commission study, Puerto Rico pays $1,220,000 annually over the normal world price for the rice it consumes.

The sugar quota fixed by the United States for Puerto Rico covers the production of both raw sugar and refined sugar. The basic quota is 910,000 tons, of which only 126,000 can be refined sugar. In this

way refined sugar is limited to a small proportion of the total production. This ban on refining all the sugar it produces has cost Puerto Rico many millions of dollars. If Puerto Rico had been able to refine all the sugar it shipped to the United States during the years 1948-50, it would have had an additional income of $78,000,000 in those three years alone.

During the last world war, the United States froze the price of sugar at pre-war levels, while the prices of the consumers' goods sold by the United States rose substantially. This action of the United States affected all the sugar-producing areas, especially Cuba and Puerto Rico, and was possible because of the financial preponderance of the United States. If the price of sugar had gone up proportionately with the prices of the articles sold by the United States to Puerto Rico, our country would have enjoyed an additional income of between two and three hundred million dollars during the whole period of the war.

Many other aspects of the economic relations between the United States and Puerto Rico result in serious harm for Puerto Rico. The coastwise shipping laws, for example, provide that all commerce between Puerto Rico and the United States has to be carried on in ships of the United States merchant marine. This monopoly allows the shipping companies to charge excessive rates in comparison with those which would obtain if Puerto Rico were allowed to use ships of other nationalities.

The conditions which make such economic exploitation possible remain absolutely unchanged with the setting up of the so-called Free Associated State of Puerto Rico.

MILITARY BASE AND TAXATION IN BLOOD

The Government of the United States uses the natural and human resources of Puerto Rico according to its own desires.

In the island of Vieques, which is part of Puerto Rico, the United States Navy has appropriated 71% of the territory (33,000 acres). Its population of about 11,000 has been obliged to emigrate or concentrate into 9,500 acres. Agricultural wealth and livestock have thus been destroyed.

Within the municipal jurisdictions of Coamo and Salinas, in the

south of Puerto Rico, the United States Army has appropriated 13,000 acres, dispossessing the population. On this coast the armed forces are using an additional 14,000 acres of land.

The island of Culebra is also utilized by the Navy as a base. On the East Coast of Puerto Rico, the United States armed forces maintain the large Roosevelt Roads military base. On the northeastern coast, they have establised the biggest military and air base in the Caribbean, Ramsey Field. In the south of Puerto Rico is Loosey Field, another military base. In the center, within the jurisdiction of the municipality of Cayev, is another military establishment called Henry Barracks, and in the north, the Tortuguero training field and Camp Buchanan. In San Juan, the capital, the United States armed forces possess the El Morro and San Cristobal fortresses as well as the Isla Grande airport, where the Tenth Naval District has its headquarters. Also in San Juan are situated the General Headquarters of the Caribbean Military District of the United States.

By a unilateral decision of the United States government, Puerto Rico has been transformed into what has been called the "Gibraltar of the Caribbean."

Under the United States Selective Service law more than 70,000 Puerto Ricans served in the armed forces of the United States during the Second World War. The recruiting of soldiers in Puerto Rico has gone on continuously. Puerto Ricans are obliged to serve in Europe and other distant regions of the world.

Thousands of soldiers participated in the war against the Popular Republic of Korea. Puerto Rico suffered about 3,500 casualties, dead, wounded, and prisoner.

Puerto Rico has no voice in the decisions on war and peace made by the Government of the United States. This situation, which will not be changed in the least with the constitution of the so-called Free Associated State, represents the imposition of taxation in blood on our people, as long as they can in no sense affect the determination of the foreign policy of the United States.

PETITION

In the light of these considerations, the United Nations cannot accede to the claim of the United States.

The obligation of the United States government to render reports on Puerto Rico must continue unchanged as long as present conditions exist.

The people of Puerto Rico look toward a world of peace. The deepest desire of our people is that their inherent rights as a nation be recognized. To that end, reflecting the true feelings of our people, we call upon the United Nations to demand that the Government of the United States recognize the right of our people to true self-government. The recognition of this right can be realized only with the establishment of a free, sovereign and independent Republic of Puerto Rico.

Central Committee,
Communist Party of Puerto Rico

(*Continued from page 2*)

every reason to support these petitions. It is especially important that the trade unions begin to understand the need to stand together with the working people of Puerto Rico, where colonial rule has imposed scandalously low wages—in many cases paid by U.S. runaway shops —that threaten the wage scales of U.S. workers.

Needless to say, this whole struggle is closely related to the question of peace. As this pamphlet points out, Puerto Rico has been converted into a U.S. war base and its manpower figures in Washington's war plans. To oppose this bogus "self-government" and to fight for real independence for Puerto Rico is therefore to strengthen the fight to prevent the Wall Street gang from launching a new world slaughter.

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

RECOMMENDED READING

NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FIGHT FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY by Andrew Stevens	$ .25
BORN OF THE PEOPLE by Luis Taruc	1.75
CHINA'S NEW CREATIVE AGE by Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury	1.50
THE CRIME OF "EL FANGUITO" by William Z. Foster	.03
RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA by Alphaeus Hunton	.35
WHAT PRICE PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE? by George Phillips	.10
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF SOCIALISM IN THE U.S.S.R. by Joseph Stalin	.25
DANGER SIGNALS FOR ORGANIZED LABOR by William Z. Foster	.10
THIRTEEN COMMUNISTS SPEAK TO THE COURT	.25
THE PARTY OF NEGRO AND WHITE by Pettis Perry	.05
JOSE MARTI AND CUBAN LIBERATION by Carlos Rafael Rodrigues	.15
AMERICAN IMPERIALISM by Victor Perlo	1.25
NEGRO LIBERATION by Harry Haywood	1.00
THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND LENINISM by Joseph Stalin	.20
THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION by V. I. Lenin	.90

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