

Independence Rejected: Puerto Rico and the Tydings Bill of 1936

FRANK OTTO GATELL*

IN RECENT YEARS Puerto Rico has grown up to its political responsibilities. Nearly two decades ago Puerto Rico and its leader since 1940, Luis Muñoz Marín, came to the realization that without a viable economic life, argument about political status represented a luxury which the island simply could not afford. The establishment of the Commonwealth in 1952 was the result of this realization. It is the purpose of this paper to examine a year during which Puerto Ricans were forced to do some hard thinking about their tie with the United States, and, even more important, about the economic consequences if they should sever it. The year was 1936, and the cause of the island's agitation was the Tydings independence bill.

Shortly before the United States began its occupation of the island, Puerto Ricans had obtained a large measure of autonomy from Spain. The Treaty of 1898 merely meant that Puerto Rican aspirations for self-determination faced a more formidable colonial power—a power new to the colonial field whose physical might was matched by its faith in itself and the beneficent nature of Americanization. For seventeen years the United States administered the island under the terms of the Foraker Act of 1900.¹ This law deprived Puerto Rico of the right to intervene in the negotiation of commercial treaties and to impose customs duties. Most key officials, including the governor and members of the upper house, were Presidential appointees. Puerto Ricans received American protection but not American citizenship. The Jones Act of 1917² gave Puerto Ricans American citizenship and the right to elect members of the upper house, but at the same time strengthened the veto power of the American-appointed governor.

By 1936 the political situation in Puerto Rico was roughly as follows: the island legislature and the post of Resident Commissioner

* The author is a graduate student in history at Harvard University.

¹ 31 Stat. 77.

² 39 Stat. 951. These and other laws pertaining to Puerto Rico, as well as selected court decisions, are conveniently found in *Documents on the Constitutional History of Puerto Rico* (Washington, 1949).

in Washington were controlled by a coalition of two parties, the Union Republicans and the Socialists. The former generally represented business interests, and those connected with them; the latter had nothing to do with Marxism, but was a labor party associated with the American Federation of Labor. Both parties strove for better and closer relations with the United States, while the Republicans sought eventual statehood for Puerto Rico. The Liberal Party, which will be the chief concern of this paper, was the largest single political organization on the island. Originally known as the Union Party, it had been founded by Luis Muñoz Rivera, the man who had obtained self-government from Spain in 1897. In 1936 the party was officially committed to independence.³ Although Antonio R. Barceló was its leader Muñoz Rivera's son, thirty-eight year old Luis Muñoz Marín, also counted for much in Liberal affairs. Writing a decade earlier, he asserted that Puerto Rican sentiment for independence was "real enough among the young fellows and the common people, and it only waits to be organized by a politician with some poetry in his makeup."⁴ It is not difficult to guess whom Muñoz Marín, part-time poet and authorized translator of Markham's "Man with the Hoe," had in mind. There was a fourth group, the Nationalist Party. Weak at the polls,⁵ but strong in its purpose to the point of fanaticism, it was in single-minded pursuit of independence whatever the terms or cost. Its charismatic leader, Pedro Albizu Campos, was in fact the party, and his vitriolic, implacable hatred of the United States and things American set the moral tone for his followers.⁶ The Nationalists refused to recognize American authority in Puerto Rico, claiming that because Spain had granted autonomy to the island, she had no right to surrender Puerto Rico to the United States at Paris in 1898. They regarded United States' authority as being upheld only by force and suppression, and felt that if they used force and violence against the Americans they were merely repaying the "invaders" in kind. It was this spirit of fanaticism that was to trigger the events that followed.

³ The party had "strong leanings" toward independence, Earl Parker Hanson, *Transformation, the Story of Modern Puerto Rico* (New York, 1955), p. 121; see note No. 50, below.

⁴ *Nation*, April 8, 1925.

⁵ The Nationalists received less than two per cent of the total vote in the 1932 elections.

⁶ Albizu Campos, a mulatto, attended the Harvard Law School. His hatred of the United States is attributed to the fact that he was denied a commission in the Army despite having successfully completed a reserve officers training course at Harvard. Although he was later commissioned in Puerto Rico, he was first assigned to a Negro unit.

Of the American officials involved in Puerto Rican affairs, the three most important in 1936 were Governor Blanton Winship, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, and reconstruction administrator Ernest Gruening. The Governor was a retired general born in Georgia. The *Nation* feared he brought to his position "an inbred sense of the superiority of the United States and its institutions, and a kindly contempt for 'backward' and underprivileged peoples."⁷ Gruening, who headed the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration (PRRA) set up to cope with the depression on the island, believes that a military man should not have been appointed to the post.⁸ Ickes wrote of Winship that he was "a fine looking, courteous man, but highly conservative."⁹ Be that as it may, Winship was certainly an improvement over his predecessor,¹⁰ and, while not overly imaginative, he was a conscientious and honest man. In Washington, the transfer of insular affairs from the War Department to the Department of the Interior in 1934 had brought Harold Ickes into the Puerto Rican picture. Gruening served in a dual capacity. He was under Ickes as Director of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions of the Interior Department, but acted independently as administrator of PRRA. This was a cause of friction because Ickes thought the PRRA should have been under his jurisdiction.¹¹

During the first week in January, 1936, the island and the mainland exchanged visitors. Muñoz Marín left for Washington as the Liberals' unofficial "Resident Commissioner" on January 2,¹² and five days later Mr. Ickes flew in to inspect his domain. Exactly a year before, Ickes had added some spice to the Puerto Rican political cauldron in a letter to Senator Fletcher of Florida. The letter, which was meant for public consumption and soon appeared in the island's press, read in part

The Department takes no official stand beyond affirming its belief that the wishes of the people of Puerto Rico should be respected so far as possible and that in case of doubt as to what these wishes are, they should be unmistakably established by referendum duly prepared by the fullest discussion.

⁷ *Nation*, January 4, 1934.

⁸ E. Gruening to F. O. Gatell, October 27, 1956.

⁹ Harold L. Ickes, *Secret Diary: The First Thousand Days, 1933-1936* (New York, 1954), p. 503.

¹⁰ Governor Robert H. Gore lasted half a year, and his administration was a fiasco throughout. For details see Hubert Herring, "Rebellion in Puerto Rico," *Nation*, November 29, 1933.

¹¹ Ickes, *Diary*, p. 594; Gruening worked very closely with Muñoz Marín in the matter of appointing officials to PRRA posts. Their friendship, broken under circumstances to be described, has since been reestablished, L. Muñoz Marín to F. O. Gatell, August 8, 1957.

¹² *El Mundo* (San Juan, P.R.), January 3, 1936.

But the Department, being definitely interested in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Puerto Rico, believes that it might be useful for the Congress and the administration, as well as for the Puerto Rican people, to clarify their respective positions and to remove the element of doubt and uncertainty which in all probability militates against the most efficient development of a social and economic program.¹³

At the San Juan airport, Ickes parried questions on the issue of statehood versus independence and denied that complaints about the PRRA had brought him on the trip.¹⁴ It was all routine, except for a conversation with a Mr. Ferré which antagonized almost everyone on the island. This concerned a section of the Foraker Act limiting corporate land holdings to five hundred acres. It had become a dead letter, and the sugar men claimed that enforcement of the statute would put them out of business. Said Ickes, "No industry has a right to exist if it lives on the hunger and misery of the masses." But, countered Ferré, the sugar companies could be taxed more heavily and thus economic distress could be alleviated with the funds obtained. Ickes snapped back, "Do you think that a legislature controlled by the sugar industry is going to impose new taxes?"¹⁵

The integrity of the legislature had been questioned, and the process of Americanization had not dulled the sensitive Spanish pride of the Puerto Ricans. Chief defender of the legislature's honor was Rafael Martínez Nadal, president of the Senate and leader of the Coalition. Although his defense of the legislature was in general terms, his attack on American officials was explicit. American officials had "something of demi-gods about them. They fly into a place, stay half an hour, and then tell us how to solve all our problems."¹⁶ The Secretary was sarcastically referred to as "San" Ickes, and "San" Ickes was asked to confirm or deny his statement about the legislature.¹⁷ No direct reply was received from the Secretary, who was back in Washington by this time, impressed by the magnitude of Puerto Rico's economic plight,¹⁸ but a spokesman said that if the statement were untrue, the needed legislation would have been passed and the law enforced.¹⁹

¹³ H. L. Ickes to D. U. Fletcher (copy), January 15, 1935, Interior Department Archives, Records of the Office of Territories and Island Possessions, Record Group 126, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (cited hereafter as IDA/OT), File 9-8-2 (Pt. 1).

¹⁴ *El Mundo*, January 8, 9, 1936.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, January 10, 1936; *New York Times*, Jan. 13, 1936.

¹⁶ *La Prensa* (New York), Jan. 16, 1936.

¹⁷ *El Mundo*, January 21, 1936.

¹⁸ H. L. Ickes to E. Totti (copy), Feb. 3, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-2 (Pt. 1).

¹⁹ *New York Times*, Jan. 26, 1936.

Such sniping was routine and attracted little attention, but late in February an assassination suddenly thrust Puerto Rico before American eyes. It was the murder of the Chief of the Insular Police—the first killing of an American official. While returning from Mass on Sunday morning, February 23, Col. E. Francis Riggs was shot down by two men, members of the Nationalist youth movement, *Cadetes de la República*. The assassins were arrested immediately, and shortly after they entered police headquarters a volley of shots was heard by the crowd outside. It was then announced that the Nationalists tried to seize some carbines from a nearby rifle-rack which was unlocked and were killed by their guards. Retribution had come swiftly for the two cadets, but not in accordance with insular law; there was no death penalty in Puerto Rico.²⁰ The *ley fuga* had been invoked.

When asked for a statement Gov. Winship lauded the work Col. Riggs had been doing and, with the smell of powder in his nostrils, warned, “I am going to govern this island. If anybody gets in my way, I’ll go over him.”²¹ Puerto Ricans took a different tack. For once all islanders agreed with the Nationalist party secretary who insisted that the happenings at the police station called for a thorough investigation.²² However, the islanders were divided with regard to the moral implications of what had occurred. For Martínez Nadal neither murder was justified in any way; it was a *double* tragedy.²³ For the Liberal party organ, one murder was less to be condemned than the other. It contended that Riggs’ murder while not defensible, was explicable; whereas, the murder of the Nationalists was neither.²⁴ The Nationalists played upon this sentiment, and the funeral services for their two martyrs were turned into anti-American protest meetings.

In the United States, Puerto Rico’s Resident Commissioner, Santiago Iglesias, told the House of Representatives that “the people of Puerto Rico are absolutely innocent of the slaying. . . . An overwhelming majority of the people resent this crime. We wish the respect and loyalty of the American people and hope someday to be admitted into the Union.”²⁵ New York’s Spanish-language daily, *La Prensa*, saw no honor for anyone in the affair; the Nationalists’ “act of madness” was matched by police bestiality.²⁶ One of the most

²⁰ *El Mundo*, Feb. 24, 1936.

²¹ *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1936.

²² *La Prensa*, Feb. 25, 1936.

²³ *El Mundo*, Feb. 25, 1936.

²⁴ *La Democracia* (San Juan, P. R.), Feb. 26, 1936. For editorial comment along the same lines see also *El Mundo*, *El Imparcial* (San Juan, P. R.), and *La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico* (San Juan, P. R.), all of Feb. 25, 1936.

²⁵ *Cong. Record*, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 2716.

²⁶ *La Prensa*, Feb. 27, 1936.

sensible press comments came from the *Washington Post* which declared that the deed called for some hard thinking about Puerto Rico, and the formulation of a coherent policy. The situation could no longer be ignored, and the question of status had to be considered.²⁷ Ickes' formal statement on the murder contained, in addition to the expected warning that the United States would not tolerate terrorism in its territories, a significant sentence: "The administration will give careful and sympathetic consideration to any definite political demand which is demonstrably backed up by a majority of the people of Puerto Rico."²⁸

Two months after the assassination, a bill designed to set Puerto Rico on the road to independence was introduced in the Senate. Its sponsor was Millard E. Tydings of Maryland, chairman of the Territories and Insular Affairs Committee, who had been an intimate friend of Col. Riggs and had urged him to accept the post.²⁹ There can be no doubt that the lamentable events of February 23 had brought

²⁷ *Washington Post*, Feb. 25, 1936.

²⁸ *New York Times*, Mar. 10, 1936. E. P. Hanson, biographer of Operation Bootstrap, and eulogist of Muñoz Marín's Puerto Rico, pinpoints the Gruening-Muñoz Marín falling out as arising over the Riggs murder. Gruening wanted a statement of condemnation from Muñoz Marín. Instead writes Hanson (using quotation marks but no documentation), Muñoz Marín offered a *quid pro quo*: he would condemn the Riggs murder, if Gruening matched this with a similar condemnation of the police station killings (*Transformation*. . . , pp. 154-155). Twenty-one years later Gruening categorically denies that any such "package deal" was proposed. He recalls that he was profoundly shocked by Muñoz Marín's stand. The latter stated flatly that he would not take on the Nationalists. On another occasion, Muñoz Marín declared that he had taken on the sugar interests, and that he was not going to engage the Nationalists as well. Gruening reports the final conversation on the subject as follows:

GRUENING: I am afraid that you are just another politician. I thought you were something different.

MUÑOZ MARÍN: Ernest, you are excited. Many lives may have to be lost in the liberation of Puerto Rico. I take the long range view in contemplating the destiny of my country.

GRUENING: I am afraid you are now just considering the destiny of Muñoz Marín.

MUÑOZ MARÍN: The destiny of Puerto Rico and the destiny of Muñoz Marín are inseparable.

Interview with Mr. Gruening, Jul. 30, 1957.

Muñoz Marín has since come to regret that he did not make the statement of condemnation. The Riggs murder was "far worse" than the shooting of the assassins. The Governor also rejects the Hanson account, "I would condemn both or none. It was not a *quid pro quo* about Gruening condemning an action and I condemning another." As for the conversations with Gruening, Muñoz Marín writes that he has no recollection of them, and though they seem improbable, he does not question Gruening's sincerity in thinking they took place. L. Muñoz Marín to F. O. Gatell, Aug. 8, 1957.

²⁹ Riggs was from an influential Washington banking family, and his death caused considerable stir in the capital.

about the bill's introduction.³⁰ The question of Puerto Rico had come up previously at the March 18 cabinet meeting. It was feared that there was a plot afoot to assassinate other American officials including the Governor. President Roosevelt asked for opinions on the advisability of obtaining legislation for an independence plebiscite during the then current session. Ickes approved, claiming such a move would have a "quieting effect" on Puerto Rican public opinion, and offered to send a draft bill to Tydings. Roosevelt agreed, although he did not wish the bill to be tabbed an administration measure.³¹

Ickes' diary entry of March 21 is factually correct, but it does not give us the whole story of the genesis of the Tydings bill. Far from "clearing up" the question, as a recent writer states,³² it clouds the issue as half-told tales usually do. There are three candidates for authorship: Tydings, of course; Ickes on the basis of his diary; and to a lesser degree Gruening.³³ Available documents and the recollections of participants shed considerably more light on the matter than previously known sources.

On March 13, 1936, or a few days before, Senator Tydings saw Gruening and asked him to have an independence bill prepared in the Office of Territories. Gruening was in agreement with Tydings that Puerto Ricans should be given their independence if this was what they wanted. The head of the PRRA had no illusions, however, about the effects of such a separation, economically or politically: "our withdrawal would spell alternating periods of chaos and dictatorship." Gruening then sought Ickes' approval and outlined the advantages to the United States of such a proposal. It would be in harmony with the United States' policy of imperial disengagement and help to improve Latin American relations. He recommended a plebiscite for the forthcoming elections on November 3. If Puerto Rico voted "yes," a policy "analogous to that pursued in the Philippines" should be adopted; if the vote were negative, "we may consider the matter settled, certainly for a generation."³⁴

Ickes gave Gruening the green light six days later, after he had been apprised of the substance of the first draft:

It will be all right for you to give this draft of a bill to Senator Tydings, but he should introduce it as his own bill and not as coming from the Depart-

³⁰ Tydings writes, however, "My committee did review our relations with all our dependencies frequently and in *due course* considered the Puerto Rican question," M. E. Tydings to F. O. Gatell, Oct. 29, 1956, italics added.

³¹ Ickes, *Diary*, pp. 547-548.

³² Hanson, *Transformation*. . . , p. 157.

³³ Gruening "came to be widely suspected," *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁴ "Memorandum for the Secretary," E. Gruening to H. L. Ickes, March 13, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Pt. 1).

ment or the Administration. *I haven't read the bill myself*, but I am in favor of the general policy as we have discussed it and I assume that the bill has been carefully drawn and will be carefully scrutinized by Senator Tydings and his Committee.³⁵

The task of drafting the bill was given to a Department lawyer, Frederick Bernays Wiener, who worked under the supervision of Gruening.³⁶ There are two typewritten drafts of the bill in the National Archives, one dated March 21 and the other dated March 26.³⁷ This suggests the existence of a still earlier version since the Ickes Memorandum of March 19 refers to a draft bill. At any rate, the two preserved draft bills differ very little, except in the all-important section 111. The second draft set the tariff schedules that were to arouse so much opposition in Puerto Rico.³⁸ The second draft was deemed acceptable, and on March 27, Gruening handed it personally to Senator Tydings. In a covering letter Gruening expressed expectations that were soon to be dashed.

I am submitting herewith a further revised draft of the Puerto Rico Referendum bill. This has been carefully gone over . . . by our Legal Division and represents I believe a technically and thoroughly acceptable bill.

The revisions . . . were made on the theory that the bill should be generous, so as not to becloud the basic issue of the referendum with recriminations or objections that the question as presented did not offer a fair alternative in view of the conditions attached to the grant of independence.³⁹

Thus two weeks after his request for action, Tydings had a bill in his hands. Gruening had supervised the draftsmanship, probably on very general terms outlined in conversations with Tydings. Ickes was a passive but approving spectator. Senator Tydings, says Gruening, "was the motivating force in the issue."⁴⁰

Two bills were, in fact, presented by Tydings in April, the independence measure and a bill which sought to correct election frauds on the island. He cited many cases of such fraud in the previous election (several municipalities had reported a larger registration than the total adult population), and noted the chronic recurrence of violence at the polls.⁴¹ In addition, a letter from Gruening was

³⁵ "Memorandum for Director Gruening," H. L. Ickes to E. Gruening, Mar. 19, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Pt. 1). Italics added.

³⁶ Interview with Mr. Wiener, Jul. 30, 1957.

³⁷ Draft bills, Mar. 21, 26, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Pt. 1).

³⁸ Wiener cannot recall the reason for the change, or who suggested it to him.

³⁹ E. Gruening to M. E. Tydings (copy), Mar. 27, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Pt. 1).

⁴⁰ Interview with Mr. Gruening, July 30, 1957. In the folder containing the above cited material, there is a copy of the Philippine independence bill which Wiener used as a model. For a significant variation see note no. 43, below.

⁴¹ *Cong. Record*, 74th Cong. 2nd Sess., p. 5925.

read stating that only Congressional action could curb Puerto Rican electoral irresponsibility.⁴² The independence bill called for a referendum in November, 1937, on the question "Should the people of Puerto Rico be sovereign and independent?". If answered in the affirmative by a majority of the voters, complete independence would be affected in four yearly stages. More important to Puerto Ricans than the gradual surrender of the governmental controls was the annual increase in tariffs; each year the duty on Puerto Rican products would be increased by 25% until at the end of four years she would stand on the same basis as any other country.⁴³ Tydings summed up his sentiments by saying, "The American system is not functioning properly in Puerto Rico."⁴⁴

In Puerto Rico the leaders of the Coalition, committed as they were to statehood, were anything but pleased. The Resident Commissioner termed it "unjust, arbitrary and devastating for Puerto Rico . . . a cyclone bill."⁴⁵ Iglesias added that common courtesy would have dictated that Puerto Rico be informed of the proposal before its presentation.⁴⁶ To Martínez Nadal this was a betrayal of the Democratic statehood platform plank of 1932, and Socialist Bolívar Pagan was affronted by the attitude of superiority displayed by the administration and Congress.⁴⁷ The three American officials concerned, Ickes, Winship,⁴⁸ and Gruening, voiced their approval of the bill as

⁴² E. Gruening to M. E. Tydings, Mar. 9, 1936, *Ibid.*, p. 5926.

⁴³ The text of the bill, in translation, may be found in *El Mundo*, Apr. 28, 1936. Tydings as co-sponsor of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, had already started one American possession, the Philippines, on the road to independence. It is interesting to note an important difference in the Philippine and Puerto Rican bills. Puerto Rico, tied economically to the mainland by reliance on the sale of its sugar crop to the United States, was to have tariff increases of 25% yearly. The Philippines, much more capable of economic self-sufficiency, was given yearly increases of only 5%. This despite the fact that Wiener used a copy of the Tydings-McDuffie Act as a working model! Hanson incorrectly gives the transition period as ten years, *Transformation*, p. 387; for an excellent analysis of the backbone of Puerto Rico's economy see Arthur E. Gayer, Paul T. Homan and Earle K. James, *The Sugar Economy of Puerto Rico* (New York, 1938).

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 1936.

⁴⁵ *Cong. Record*, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 6244.

⁴⁶ Tydings sees no slight: "The Puerto Ricans weren't consulted when Puerto Rico was annexed to the United States. It was not necessary to consult them about their independence. It was a matter for us primarily to decide, although no discourtesy was intended," M. E. Tydings to F. O. Gatell, Oct. 29, 1956; Gruening on the same subject: "What injury was done? The bill was just a proposal and a good way of raising the issue," interview with Mr. Gruening, July 30, 1957.

⁴⁷ *El Mundo*, Apr. 25, 1936.

⁴⁸ The Governor was not told that a bill was being prepared. "I was as much surprised at the independence bill as you were, and the electoral bill was also a

consistent with enlightened American policy toward possessions.⁴⁹

The Liberal Party had to proceed gingerly; the object it had sought was now offered to it with no political strings attached. The door the Liberals had spent years pushing against was now flung open, and who knew where the momentum would carry them.⁵⁰ Barceló's first reaction was conditional; while presenting an undoubted triumph for the cause of independence, the bill required many changes. The party paper limited itself to discussing and voicing approval of the accompanying electoral reform bill.⁵¹ In Washington, Muñoz Marín stamped the measure as unsatisfactory for economic reasons, and called for the administration to produce a genuine independence bill.⁵² After several conversations with Gruening, and at the latter's request, Muñoz Marín submitted proposed amendments to the bill. Firstly, he saw two main defects in the measure: the short transition period would wreck the Puerto Rican economy and thus the large Puerto Rican market for American goods, and that Federal expenditures on the island were viewed as charity handouts.

My conception [continued Muñoz Marín] of a fair and mutually beneficial economic arrangement . . . is along the following lines:

1. That the U.S. shall have absolute preference in the Puerto Rican market for all products that Puerto Rico cannot produce. . . .

2. That certain . . . exceptions be made to this . . . to allow Puerto Rico to negotiate treaties with the world favoring its coffee and facilitating emigration. . . .

3. That reasonable quotas for Puerto Rican cash crops in the American market be determined upon . . . and no tariff at all on that part of the Puerto Rican crop that cannot be harmful to the producers of the U.S.

4. Upon the initiation of Puerto Rican sovereignty, a loan be arranged to complete the economic reconstruction plan. . . .⁵³

Whatever the fate of the amendments, however, Muñoz Marín contended the sovereignty of Puerto Rico must be the first object. When Tydings announced that no action would be taken in the current session, Muñoz Marín crowed: "The opposition which all of the

surprise to me. It might be well to give this out for publication," B. Winship to Acting-Gov. J. Padín (copy of cable), Apr. 28, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Pt. 1).

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 29, 1936.

⁵⁰ Liberal sincerity on the desire for independence has frequently been questioned. Mr. Gruening sees much "plain politics" in the cry. Another student of Puerto Rico in the 1930's, Prof. Bailey W. Diffie, has expressed the same misgivings about Liberal professions; E. Gruening to F. O. Gatell, Oct. 27, 1956; conversation with Prof. Diffie. See also Henry Wells, "Ideology and Leadership in Puerto Rican Politics," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. XLIX, No. 1 (March, 1955), p. 27.

⁵¹ *La Democracia*, Apr. 25, 1936.

⁵² *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 1936.

⁵³ L. Muñoz Marín to E. Gruening, Apr. 27, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-2.

political parties have voiced against the bill is of such strength that Mr. Tydings has come to realize that his bill, in the form presented, is a bad one."⁵⁴ Muñoz Marín was not entirely correct about the unanimity of Puerto Rican opposition; the Nationalists were displeased, it is true, but only at the thought of having Americans on the island for another four years.

The dilemma confronting the islanders was a real one. Continuation of the humiliating condition of colonials was not a pleasant prospect, but as the bill was worded it was Hobson's choice: the status quo or economic dislocations, the effects of which would have caused the bravest Puerto Rican to flinch. San Juan's foremost newspaper, in an editorial entitled "Plebiscite or Ambush?", mourned that the plebiscite offer came thirty years too late; Puerto Rico had been given its ideal "wrapped in the black cloud of ruin and economic desolation."⁵⁵ Other responses ranged from emotionalism⁵⁶ to sound advice.⁵⁷ The Liberal Party paper stressed economic considerations, saying it was enough if Puerto Ricans left their children a country where they could live decently, "that is what we propose to obtain now. . . . The rest are mere words."⁵⁸ The American press was sympathetic toward Puerto Rico's plight, and criticized the administration heavily. The bill's proponents were accused of ambiguous if not flatly contradictory motives, and were warned that "no light-hearted approach to Puerto Rico's problems can be countenanced."⁵⁹

After the first burst of oratory and indignation Puerto Rican political leaders realized that concrete plans of action must be drawn up and steps taken to counter what was to all, in varying degrees and for varying reasons, a threat. Republicans met on April 29 and voiced their approval of their party's aims and Martínez Nadal's leadership.⁶⁰ Liberals, after a meeting on May 4, issued a statement

⁵⁴ *La Democracia*, Apr. 29, 1936.

⁵⁵ *El Mundo*, Apr. 25, 1936.

⁵⁶ "Let independence come, though it cost us our lives!", *La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico*, Apr. 24, 1936.

⁵⁷ "The conditions . . . are unacceptable, but it is up to us to improve them. We are claiming rights, not asking for favors," *El Imparcial*, Apr. 27, 1936.

⁵⁸ *La Democracia*, May 1, 1936.

⁵⁹ *New York Herald-Tribune*, Apr. 25, 1936; additional representative press comments follow: ". . . the sponsors have not offered the bill as a remedy for the island's economic problems," *New York Times*, May 9, 1936; some light was observed to break through the clouds, however, "in so far as the measure will induce the Puerto Ricans to review their demands in the cold light of reality it will serve a useful purpose," *Washington Post*, Apr. 25, 1936; others were not so charitable: "Little more than window trimming for the coming Pan-American conference," *Business Week*, May 2, 1936; "this move is as shabby a bit of ethical dealing as it is a sorry piece of statesmanship," *Nation*, May 6, 1936.

⁶⁰ *El Mundo*, Apr. 30, 1936.

accepting independence with full sovereignty, even under the conditions of the Tydings bill, although they were quick to add that they were confident independence would be accompanied by "all legitimate economic rights."⁶¹ Apparently the outcries over the economic consequences of the bill made themselves felt for Gruening instructed the PRRA's Dr. Chardón to begin a study of the effects the measure would have on Puerto Rico's economy.⁶²

While the administration in Washington was dragging its feet, and it was becoming apparent that the bill was not to be pushed, a new figure appeared on the scene. It was Vito Marcantonio, New York City Congressman whose district included areas heavily populated by Puerto Ricans. Shortly after Tydings' move on April 23, Marcantonio declared that he favored "real" independence for Puerto Rico, but not if the economic life of the island was to be left in the hands of Wall Street.⁶³ A week later he presented his version of an independence bill in the House. Moderation did not seem to be the determining element in legislation pertaining to Puerto Rico that session, for Marcantonio's bill was as extreme as Tydings', but in the opposite direction. The net effect of the new bill was to allow Puerto Rico independence whenever she desired it, with no tariff barriers and no restrictions on emigration to the United States.⁶⁴ Muñoz Marín strained the obvious when he commented that these conditions were more acceptable to Puerto Rico than those contained in Tydings' bill.⁶⁵ He pointed out to Ickes that the Tydings bill could have no other effect but to increase the power of extremists on the island, and that Albizu Campos' influence had been "widened and deepened."⁶⁶ As if things were not complicated enough, Marion Zionchek, a Congressman from the state of Washington, asked for Marine Corps protection so that he might "clean up" the Puerto Rican "mess" in one week; he professed to be surprised when this was denied him.⁶⁷

By the end of May, Tydings, while not actually abandoning his bill,⁶⁸ announced his plan for a committee of seventeen to study con-

⁶¹ *La Democracia*, May 6, 1936.

⁶² *El Mundo*, May 3, 1936.

⁶³ *La Prensa*, Apr. 30, 1936.

⁶⁴ *Cong. Record*, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 6726.

⁶⁵ *La Democracia*, May 8, 1936.

⁶⁶ L. Muñoz Marín to H. L. Ickes, May 11, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-2.

⁶⁷ *New York Times*, May 14, 1936; Zionchek's insane antics created a scandal that summer, and he later committed suicide.

⁶⁸ "We decided not to report the bill out of committee. Its introduction served to call to the attention of the Puerto Rican Government and people the great blessing they had in our gigantic market for Puerto Rican products. That was one of the reasons why it was introduced, so that the Puerto Ricans could see what the free market of the United States really meant to them, which I

ditions in Puerto Rico to determine the feasibility of early independence. The committee's report was to be made not later than January, 1937, and Presidential recommendations were to follow within thirty days of receipt of the report.⁶⁹ Tydings said this would be the best way to ascertain the desires of the Puerto Rican people, and declared he wanted as just and liberal an independence measure as possible.⁷⁰ Muñoz Marín was elated; to him the committee was "a definite step toward the rapid establishment of independence without threats of ruin and hunger."⁷¹

Meanwhile another committee, the PRRA's commission under Chardón, was ready with a preliminary report one month after its appointment. The report predicted economic chaos for Puerto Rico should the Tydings bill be put into effect.⁷² Earl Parker Hanson, Executive Secretary of the PRRA's Planning Division, has written a dramatic account of the report's preparation. At a hastily called meeting Hanson held that "if we didn't do what we could to enlighten Washington on the bill's dangers, we would in the end have only ourselves to blame for whatever might happen."⁷³ By "Washington" Hanson meant Gruening. Four days and nights later, the report was ready. According to Hanson, the answer, a cable from Washington, was a "direct slap in the face" and an order to burn all copies of the report in San Juan. Hanson writes he does not have a copy of the report, and that he does not know if there is one in existence.⁷⁴ There is indeed a copy in existence, duly filed with other pertinent material on the bill in the Interior Department files in the National Archives.⁷⁵ Gruening was not oblivious to the economic consequences of Puerto Rican independence, as Hanson believes. This has already been illustrated by Gruening's memorandum to Ickes of March 13, which painted such a dire picture of a future

believe up to that time had been accepted as a matter of course," M. E. Tydings to F. O. Gatell, Oct. 29, 1956.

⁶⁹ *Cong. Record*, 74th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 8460.

⁷⁰ *New York Times*, May 26, 1936.

⁷¹ *La Democracia*, May 27, 1936.

⁷² *El Mundo*, June 5, 1936. Despite near unanimity on the disastrous results precipitous separation from the United States would have brought, and twenty years to reconsider, Tydings still holds, "Independence would have been hard on Puerto Rico at the beginning, but, in my judgment, this hardship would largely have been dissipated later on," M. E. Tydings to F. O. Gatell, Oct. 29, 1956.

⁷³ Hanson, *Transformation*. . . , p. 159.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁷⁵ "Preliminary Report, Planning Division, PRRA," IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Sept.).

Republic of Puerto Rico, that, expanded, the memorandum might easily have been substituted for the PRRA's preliminary report. To Gruening, the Tydings draft bill was nothing but a draft. Should Puerto Rico opt for independence (which he doubted), revisions would be in order. He expressed this view early in May.

The reason for a simple yes or no vote on independence is that the active agitation has been for independence. The Administration has deemed it wise to try and get the expression from the Puerto Rican people, and if that expression is for independence, to abide by this decision.

Needless to say the bill as introduced will probably be modified after hearings in which all the various interests concerned will have their say.⁷⁶

Liberal leader Barceló hurried to Washington, arriving on May 18 for a conference with Muñoz Marín and to do what he could to bring Puerto Rico independence with honor. The two men warned the United States that the loss of the island market was not to be taken lightly, and that if the Tydings bill was meant to frighten sentiment for independence, it would not succeed.⁷⁷ But all was not well between them, for Muñoz Marín announced he would not be a candidate for any office, preferring to "march in the ranks," while continuing to fight for independence.⁷⁸ By the first of June Muñoz Marín was back in Puerto Rico, denying, with more emphasis than conviction, reports of a rift with Barceló. It was believed that the older man had come to favor some form of autonomy, leaving the issue of outright independence in abeyance. Muñoz Marín would not agree to this, yet he was not hothead enough to pursue independence at any price. He believed rather that both independence and economic justice could be obtained in the near future.⁷⁹ With this in mind, Muñoz Marín strove to keep on friendly terms with the Administration, thanking Ickes for his cooperation and sincerity "towards solving the very serious problems of my country."⁸⁰

The official stand of the Liberals was to deny that any irreparable breach had occurred in their ranks. Muñoz Marín was implored to reconsider his decision not to run for office. He was told that the party needed his services in Washington as the next Resident Commissioner, and that the best men had to get behind the Liberal effort to the limit of their abilities. All this talk about "marching in the ranks" would have no effect but to deprive the party of his talents.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Interview with Mr. Gruening, Jul. 30, 1957; E. Gruening to R. G. Lounsbury, May 7, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Pt. 1).

⁷⁷ *La Democracia*, May 20, 21, 1936.

⁷⁸ *El Mundo*, May 30, 1936.

⁷⁹ *La Democracia*, Jun. 2, 1936; *New York Times* Jun. 2, 1936.

⁸⁰ L. Muñoz Marín to H. L. Ickes, Jun. 17, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68.

⁸¹ *El Mundo*, Jun. 9, 1936.

On June 18 Barceló made a spectacular announcement. He called on the leaders of all political parties to suspend the forthcoming November election and join in a United Front to fight for independence.⁸² The leaders of the Coalition were less than jubilant at this prospect. They quickly registered their personal objections and promised final decisions on the matter at their respective party conventions. There was little doubt what such decisions would be.⁸³ Meanwhile, Liberal leaders held further conciliatory meetings but with no result, for a few days later Muñoz Marín issued a personal manifesto to the Puerto Rican people. This was a long-winded plea for singleminded application to the goal of independence. It contained a quotation from Shakespeare, but no application of Polonius' observation on the relationship between brevity and wit.⁸⁴

Next day the party's central committee met to discuss the Barceló proposal to withdraw from the elections. By a vote of thirty two to ten Barceló was voted down, and the old man immediately tendered his resignation.⁸⁵ This was refused, and, as Barceló explained it some weeks later, "In such a situation, then, I could do nothing else but follow the fortunes of my party."⁸⁶ Muñoz Marín, who also favored boycotting the election, was not so amenable to party discipline. He continued to voice his opposition to the party's chosen course of action, and on the eve of the Liberal convention made a radio address bidding for support. The election, he said, would be controlled by the sugar interests and accomplish nothing except to delay independence for twenty years. He argued that independence would be gained in two years if Puerto Rican Liberals stayed away from the polls. However, he neglected to explain how this would come about.⁸⁷

The Liberal party convention was about evenly divided on the question of withdrawal, and with over two hundred delegates voting, the decision to contest the election carried by only one vote. Muñoz Marín promised to support the ticket, but he was openly pessimistic about the outcome.⁸⁸ In August, nominations for the post of Resident Commissioner were announced. The Coalition re-endorsed the incumbent Socialist Iglesias, and when Muñoz Marín proved adamant in his determination to refuse nomination, Dr. J. A. López Antongiorgi, a long-time New York surgeon, was named.⁸⁹ Barceló was thereupon re-elected party president. Muñoz Marín had to content himself with

⁸² *La Democracia*, Jun. 18, 1936.

⁸³ *El Mundo*, Jun. 18, 1936.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Jun. 24, 25, 1936.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Jun. 28, 1936.

⁸⁶ *La Democracia*, Jul. 2, 1936.

⁸⁷ *La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico*, Jul. 25, 1936.

⁸⁸ *El Mundo*, Jul. 27, 1936; *La Democracia*, Jul. 28, 1936.

⁸⁹ *El Mundo*, Aug. 18, 1936.

reminding his fellow Liberals that electoral victory was not the party's true goal.⁹⁰

But admonitions were apparently not enough for Muñoz Marín. On August 23 there convened at Coamo a rump meeting of Liberal leaders, supporters of the Muñoz Marín plan, or sentiment, rather, for independence. They put their champion's views in the form of resolutions and sent them to Barceló. He rejected the form in which these resolutions came to him, but in conciliatory fashion added that everything they contained was inherent in Puerto Rican Liberalism.⁹¹ No one as yet desired an open split, so Muñoz Marín in turn refused to acknowledge receipt of Barceló's reply. "I shall do all in my power," he maintained, "to preserve up to the last minute, the unity of the Liberal Party." This had been the mandate of the Coamo meeting.⁹²

The estranged men then held a series of fruitless conferences in response to urgent appeals from Muñoz Marín.⁹³ The air of politeness which had heretofore prevailed soon vanished; recriminations became the order of the day. Snorted Barceló, "We have been for independence long before Luis Muñoz Marín knew how to spell the word."⁹⁴ Barceló's actions spelled out one thing to Muñoz Marín: a sell-out to the sugar planters.⁹⁵ Yet even when the Caguas meeting of September 10 made the break official, the old bonds, while strained and frayed, were not completely severed. An organization called Social Action for Independence was formed, but no attacks were to be made on Liberal candidates, and the members were free to aid the Liberal cause if they so desired. This is what Muñoz Marín himself promised to do.⁹⁶ Barceló's gruff comment was that there was only one Liberal Party.⁹⁷

In the months that had elapsed since the Riggs murder the Nationalist Party and its fiery leader were most active—this time in legal matters. On March 5 Albizu Campos and six of his subordinates were arrested, charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government. Albizu Campos put his Harvard Law School training to good use that day, for after representing himself and his aides in one court room, he hurried downstairs to defend another Nationalist, on trial as a result of a previous Nationalist-Insular Police altercation.⁹⁸ Free on bail, Albizu Campos intensified his anti-American efforts, scoring "the ridiculous attempt to destroy our Spanish culture . . . and the foolish arrogance to pretend to guide spiritually a nation whose soul

⁹⁰ *La Democracia*, Aug. 18, 1936.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Aug. 28, 1936.

⁹⁴ *La Democracia*, Sept. 11, 1936.

⁹⁶ *El Mundo*, Sept. 11, 12, 1936.

⁹⁸ *La Prensa*, Mar. 6, 1936.

⁹¹ *El Mundo*, Aug. 24, 1936.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, Sept. 5, 6, 8, 1936.

⁹⁵ *La Prensa*, Sept. 11, 1936.

⁹⁷ *La Democracia*, Sept. 13, 1936.

has been created in pure Christianity.’’⁹⁹ Muñoz Marín was not the only poet on the island! Insular authorities were fearful, not of the Nationalist leader’s words, but of an outbreak of violence by his followers. Several times the Puerto Rican National Guard was alerted, and the black-shirted *Cadetes de la República* were forbidden to hold drills or parades.¹⁰⁰

The trial began in July, in an atmosphere of tension. Spectators were searched for concealed weapons, and the number of persons allowed in the courtroom was limited. Both Martínez Nadal and Barceló sent cables to President Roosevelt asking that Albizu Campos be released for the sake of “public tranquility.”¹⁰¹ On July 19, after nineteen hours of fruitless deliberation, the jury was released and a mistrial declared. A new jury was quickly empanelled and, despite pleas for delay from Congressman Vito Marcantonio and others, the second trial began on the 27th. The Nationalists were found guilty and on the last day of July each man received a two to six year sentence. In pronouncing the sentence Federal Judge Robert A. Cooper singled out Albizu Campos to denounce him as a man who had misused and perverted the educational opportunities given him.¹⁰² Gruening was jubilant and sure that the convictions meant the return of order and tranquility.¹⁰³ Two days after the sentencing, Congressman Marcantonio arrived in San Juan. Next day he saw Albizu Campos and promised to do what he could to have the conviction set aside. A defense fund was raised with the assistance and support of the American Civil Liberties Union. Marcantonio was in Puerto Rico for ten days; at his departure he swore he would keep the issue alive and do all in his power to free the Nationalists.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ *New York Times*, May 3, 1936.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, May 20, 1936.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Jul. 9, 1936.

¹⁰² *El Mundo*, Jul. 31, 1936.

¹⁰³ E. Gruening to B. Winship, Jul. 31, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68 (Pt. 1).

¹⁰⁴ *New York Times*, Aug. 1-12, 1936. All appeals were denied, and the convicted men served their terms at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. This was not the last of Albizu Campos, of course. In 1950, he attracted world attention when his abortive revolt was synchronized with an attempt to assassinate President Truman. Albizu Campos went to prison, only to be pardoned in 1953 by Muñoz Marín because of illness, mental as well as physical. A year later his henchmen, and one hench-woman, went after numerically bigger game—the members of the House of Representatives, wounding five. In Puerto Rico, Albizu Campos was captured after a two hour gun battle, and is now back in jail, at last report being on a hunger strike in October, 1956. Muñoz Marín recently referred to the “unreal world” of the Nationalists. This was not so in the 1930’s when the party was “one of the four” political organizations on the island, and treated as such by the leaders of the other parties. The Nationalist catechism never got beyond an emotional embrace of independence. While political status agitated Puerto Rican life, the Nationalists could maintain themselves with some semblance of support; after the subordination of status there was nothing to do but retreat into their “unreal world.”

What of the Coalition and its preparations for the election? There seemed to be no reason to doubt that it would win another victory at the polls in November since the Liberals were shaken and divided. Although Gruening was quoted as saying that the election outcome would not influence the Federal administration's plans for the future status of Puerto Rico,¹⁰⁵ the Republican and Socialist speakers told their audiences that the contest was in fact a plebiscite on independence—an assertion vigorously denied by the Liberals.¹⁰⁶ Toward the end of the campaign Resident Commissioner Iglesias while in Mayaguez was shot in the arm by a young Nationalist. Ickes cabled his encouragement and his confidence that justice would speedily take its course.¹⁰⁷ Four days later Iglesias was back on the stump asserting that the welfare of the island was obtainable only within the "liberality of American institutions."¹⁰⁸

The extent of the victory won by the forces of the Coalition must have come as a surprise even to the most sanguine of their supporters. The Coalitionists won fourteen of nineteen Senatorial seats, a two to one majority in the House, and more than sixty of the island's seventy-seven municipalities. The Resident Commissioner's post went to Santiago Iglesias once again. The Liberals polled a quarter of a million votes, still the largest of any single party, but the combined Republican and Socialist totals exceeded this figure by sixty thousand.¹⁰⁹ Martínez Nadal was quick to call for a burial of the Tydings bill: "Puerto Rico does not want independence. The vote shows this. That should be the last of the Tydings bill unless they want to hold a plebiscite devoid of any importance." Iglesias proclaimed, "if this is not a plebiscite, what is it then?"¹¹⁰ While most Liberals disagreed, or kept silent on the matter, Muñoz Marín said he was not surprised for, according to him, the fate of the campaign was sealed in Washington on April 23 by Mr. Tydings.¹¹¹ As far as the Administration was concerned, the presentation of the Tydings bill and the election results had drawn down the curtain, for the foreseeable future at least, on the status issue. In refusing to support a more liberal independence bill introduced in February, 1937, Gruening wrote

¹⁰⁵ *El Mundo*, Aug. 11, 1936.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1936; *La Prensa*, Oct. 20, 1936.

¹⁰⁷ H. L. Ickes to S. Iglesias (copy of cable), Oct. 27, 1936, IDA/OT, File 9-8-2 (Pt. 1).

¹⁰⁸ *La Prensa*, Oct. 27, 1936; *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1936.

¹⁰⁹ *El Mundo*, Nov. 4, 1936.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Nov. 6, 1936.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 5, 1936.

Until Puerto Rico is rehabilitated economically, it is useless to talk of independence or statehood or any other permanent status. . . . What may be the ultimate political status of Puerto Rico, economic self-sufficiency must come first. Independence in the near future would simply spell chaos. . . .¹¹²

Was the election of 1936 a "great and solemn referendum" on independence for Puerto Rico as the Coalition was so quick to claim? Victorious political parties are all too eager to supply post-electoral interpretations of events. To the victor belongs the spotlight, and Coalition leaders made full use of the glare. The smashing victory which matched the results of the 1932 election, was not solely the outcome of the Coalition's efforts, however. The Liberal Party split—as much a product of the personal struggle for power between the aging chieftain Barceló and the rising Muñoz Marín as of the surface disagreements over party policy—counted heavily, and probably decisively, in returning the Republicans and Socialists to office. Nevertheless, the key issues of Puerto Rican affairs in that year were the Tydings bill and the activities of the Nationalists—one the reaction to the other. All Puerto Rico rang with denunciation of the bill, and in the resulting furor the abstraction "Independence," did not escape undamaged, nor could the party committed to it. It is here that the importance of the Tydings bill lies; not certainly in the ephemeral importance of aiding in the election victory of a conservative political grouping. For many Puerto Ricans independence was the symbol of a better life in a nebulous future; its presentation in concrete terms rudely snapped them out of these day dreams. Gruening writes of the bill's "useful educational value,"¹¹³ and Muñoz Marín, who has since become the island's leader, has described the effects of the measure on his own attitudes

Because of the rigidity of our thinking, we could not disentangle the concept of love for our country from the fixed idea of separate independence. Anything other than independence seemed to clash with our love of Puerto Rico.

The difficult process of clarifying these ideas began when the Tydings bill was introduced in Congress in 1936. The Tydings bill would have made Puerto Rico independent, but it would have shackled the people with economic misery.¹¹⁴

This is a far cry from the Muñoz Marín of June, 1936. To Chardón's

¹¹² E. Gruening to B. W. Diffie (copy), Feb. 27, 1937, IDA/OT, File 9-8-68.

¹¹³ E. Gruening to F. O. Gatell, Oct. 27, 1956; he adds, "The Tydings bill was an imperfect document, but the unfavorable reaction to it in Puerto Rico demonstrated that those who had pleaded most fervently for independence were not fully aware of the economic consequences."

¹¹⁴ Luis Muñoz Marín, "Development Through Democracy," *Annals of the Academy of Political & Social Science*, Vol. 258 (Jan. 1953), p. 1.

declaration that economic development was the supreme issue facing Puerto Rico for the next few years, he had snapped back, "the supreme issue, which cannot be postponed any longer, is the termination of Puerto Rico's colonial status."¹¹⁵ Yet two years later when Muñoz Marín pledged himself to fight for economic betterment, and founded his Popular Democratic Party, his thinking had come full circle on the "supreme issue." Energies once expended on polemics over independence might now be applied to the task of raising Puerto Rico from the economic morass which threatened her very life, and of starting her on the road to Commonwealth status.

Senator Tydings' presentation of the bill was the act of an angry man; there was no statesmanship about it.¹¹⁶ Did the Senator believe that Puerto Rico would accept independence on the harsh terms he presented? The virulence and audacity of the Nationalist attacks on the American administration caused Tydings and the administration to draw hasty conclusions about the strength and nature of Puerto Rican independence sentiment. If Puerto Rico rejected independence, she would have to eat crow and thus appreciate the "great blessing" of the American market; if she accepted independence, the "erring step-sister" could depart in peace and poverty. Tydings had written off the island as incapable of achieving American democracy or an indigenous counterpart derived from it. This is why he offered to wield the champagne bottle at the launching of the Puerto Rican ship of state. The two decades that have elapsed have shown that he was mistaken. For presenting them with this challenge, the people of Puerto Rico owe no small debt of gratitude to Mr. Tydings.

¹¹⁵ *El Mundo*, Jun. 30, 1936.

¹¹⁶ Congressional hearings should have been held on the independence issue. There was a clear precedent, for just one year before (May-June, 1935) hearings on Puerto Rican statehood took place. See *Hearing Before the Committee on the Territories on H. R. 1394, House of Representatives, 74th Cong., 1st Sess.* (Washington, 1935).