

## PIÑEIRO'S APPOINTMENT AND THE ELECTIVE GOVERNOR BILL OF 1947

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In July of 1946 Luis Muñoz-Marín definitely abandoned the idea of establishing an independent Puerto Rico and embraced autonomy. The economic realities of the island and his frustrating experience with a conservative Congress (it refused to pass the Tydings-Piñero bill which most Puerto Ricans thought would solve Puerto Rico's status problem) made him realize that the independence he wanted was an impossibility.

Yet Muñoz and the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) did not try to establish an autonomic regime during the last two years of their term. For more than a year the Popular leader had been attacking the independence bill presented in Congress by Senator Millard Tydings (D., Maryland) in January of 1945 (Muñoz believed that its economic clauses would cause havoc in Puerto Rico), and the independentists within his party that supported it, arguing that the PPD platform prohibited its members to support any specific political alternative. If Muñoz and his party wanted to maintain their credibility, they could not do now the same thing that they criticized. In addition, dealing with Puerto Rico's socio-economic problems was still Muñoz' main priority. It was between 1946 and 1947 that he and his associates shifted to a strategy of industrialization which they hoped would improve the islanders' fortunes.

This did not mean that the PPD leadership was not willing to defend the implementation of political reforms in the next two years. They were willing to do so, but only if the reforms really increased the island's autonomy, did not interfere with the PPD's socio-economic program, and did not obstruct the

search of the political option defended later on. During these years two reforms were granted: the appointment of a native governor in 1946 and the permission to elect the chief executive in 1947.

The opportunity to appoint a Puerto Rican governor emerged when Rexford G. Tugwell announced on December 20, 1945, that he would resign to the governorship to become a political science professor at the University of Chicago. He had to report to the University the first of July of 1946 and would therefore, leave the post by the end of June.<sup>1</sup>

As in previous occasions, scores of messages poured into the White House with recommendations of candidates for the position.<sup>2</sup> Many were Americans, but this time a considerable number of Puerto Ricans were also put forward. Three insular candidates distinguished themselves over the others: Martín Travieso, Pedro del Valle and Jesús T. Piñero.

A graduate from Cornell Law School, Travieso had served as District Attorney in the city of Mayagüez, as member of the Executive Council of Puerto Rico (the upper legislative chamber under the Foraker Act), as Senator-at-large (under the Jones Act), as Mayor of San Juan and, on some occasions as Acting Governor (he was, indeed, the first Puerto Rican to act in this capacity). At that moment he was Chief Justice of Puerto Rico's Supreme Court.<sup>3</sup>

Major General Pedro A. del Valle was a graduate of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis and had accumulated an impressive record with the Marine Corps in World War II. He distinguished himself in the battles of Guadalcanal (he was decorated with the Legion of Merit Medal for his actions), Guam, the Solomon Islands and Okinawa (where he commanded the First Marine Corps Division). Between 1930 and 1932 he served with the American forces occupying Nicaragua. His administrative experience consisted in having served as a

Naval Attache in Rome, in working with the Plans and Policies Division of the Marine Corps Headquarters, and acting as an Inspector General of the Marine Corps.<sup>4</sup>

A University of Pennsylvania engineer, Jesús T. Piñero, had occupied various of public posts during his political career, including the chairmanship of the municipal assembly of his home town, Carolina (1928-1933) and a seat in the House of Representatives (1940-1944). In 1936 he lost a Senatorial bid for the Liberal Party. Piñero also served as president of the Puerto Rico Sugar Cane Farmers Association, and was a member of the board of directors of the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration. When Muñoz-Marín founded the PPD, Piñero was one of his main assistants. He was elected Resident Commissioner in 1944, and was the PPD's choice for the governorship.<sup>5</sup>

A prominent Puerto Rican absent from this list was Muñoz- Marín. He did not want to be considered for the governorship as long as the chief executive was appointed by the American President and not elected by the people of Puerto Rico.<sup>6</sup>

These Puerto Rican candidates had good chances of being appointed to the governorship. The times demanded that the United States showed its commitment to grant greater degrees of self-government colonial subjects. Filling a vacant governorship with a native constituted a natural and important gesture in this direction. The Department of State understood the situation well. When on January 14, 1946, one of its officers recommended José M. Gallardo (one of the least considered candidates) for the position, he asserted that appointing the Puerto Rican "will greatly enhance the prestige of our nation in the international circles," particularly in Latin America, for "it would show... that fifty years of American rule have produced American citizens in

Puerto Rico whose loyalty and devotion to our country are beyond doubt, and whose ability and fitness are of a high order."<sup>7</sup>

Truman was also aware of the opportunity presented by the situation, and seemed willing to take advantage of it. He answered to most of the persons who proposed American candidates, that he desired to appoint a Puerto Rican to the governorship. Thus, when on January 22, 1946, Robert E. Hannegan, chairman of the Democratic National Committee and Postmaster General, wrote to the President to recommend Nebraska's former governor, Robert L. Cochran, to the post, Truman replied that although he knew the candidate well, "I am anxious to get a native Puerto Rican for Governor of Puerto Rico; they [the islanders] are entitled to that recognition."<sup>8</sup>

The Department of the Interior encouraged Truman's attitude. On February 21, 1946, Acting Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman, who supported the appointment of Jesús T. Piffero, told the president:

I believe in the first place, that the next governor should be a Puerto Rican. You expressed to the Congress on October 16 your confidence in the ability of the Puerto Ricans to manage their own affairs, and there have been frequent similar statements by this Department. The nomination of a continental now, in view of the very touchy status problem, might well be regarded by many Puerto Ricans as an indication that we were more generous with words than with deeds. The nomination of a Puerto Rican would, in contrast, be very welcome evidence that we do in truth believe Puerto Rico able to carry an increased measure of self-government. Your action would have added significance at this time, when peoples are under active consideration by the European powers and the Latin American countries.<sup>9</sup>

Some weeks later, the new Secretary of the Interior, Julius A. Krug sent the President a similar letter.<sup>10</sup>

The Truman administration procrastinated though, and for many weeks did not take any step to select a Puerto Rican for the governorship. Such attitude was partly explained by Truman's belief the most Puerto Ricans found Tugwell acceptable, and that the governor would be able to remain in office

until "the middle of September or first of October."<sup>11</sup> Truman confided to Tugwell that he wanted "to get a native to succeed you," but added that "I have not been considering a successor of yours to take office before you were ready to leave."<sup>12</sup> The President believed that he had plenty of time to make any decision.

The pressure put by the Democratic National Committee and by a number of congress- men and public officials in favor of American candidates also influenced Truman's attitude.<sup>13</sup> These people usually underplayed their candidates' abilities to do a good job, and emphasized, instead, the fact that they had served the Democratic Party in good fashion. The Puerto Rican governorship was seen by most as a foward for political favors, one that could be used as a stepping stone to advance in the federal bureaucracy.

Muñoz and the PPD leaders liked the idea of having a Puerto Rican governor, but only if--like Tugwell--he was willing to support the PPD's program. Muñoz summarized the party's position as follows:

As for the appointment of a man unsympathetic to the policies voted for by the Puerto Rican people would create incalculable confusion. In the last elections in Puerto Rico, Governor Tugwell received a two-to-one indorsement against the most virulent opposition ever encountered by an insular administration. Our people want Governor Tugwell to stay. But if his post becomes vacant, as now appears probable, to be ruled by a governor appointed out of a clear sky--or a clouded one--by influences completely alien to Puerto Rican democracy. Nor are we to be flattered by the mere appointment of a man born in Puerto Rico. We would rather have a Chinese with a policy supported by the people than a Puerto Rican with a policy repudiated by the people. We are interested in Puerto Rican democracy, in Puerto Rican well-being, not in the accident of Puerto Rican birth.<sup>14</sup>

The PPD staunchly opposed the appointment of Travieso or Del Valle (neither belonged to the PPD) because, as Muñoz told Secretary Krug, they "definitely fall in the category of persons inimical to the program" of the party.<sup>15</sup> If Piffero could not be considered for the position (some

questioned the propriety of selecting an elected officer to an appointed office) the PPD's second choice was Esteban Bird, whom Muñoz described as "a banker, formerly an economist at the University of Puerto Rico, a very able man, under forty, of liberal views." Bird, the Popular leader believed, would not be a controversial candidate because he was an independent individual not identified with any party. In the 1940 elections, he publicly voted for a mixed ticket, mainly against the PPD, and later, refused an offer to direct the important Puerto Rico's Land Authority.<sup>16</sup>

On February 19, 1946, at the insistence of Senator Dennis Chavez (D. New Mexico) and of the Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce, Truman interviewed General del Valle. This alarmed the PPD leaders, but, fortunately for them, The General announced in April that he would not be available for the position anymore "due to delay in appointment and personal reasons."<sup>17</sup> The PPD's leaders were now confident that their candidate would be chosen. It seemed, indeed, that the only gain obtained by the ill-fated status commission that went to Washington to convince Congress of approving a plebiscite bill, was the assumption that Piñero would be appointed to the governorship.

Things did not work as expected though, and for a time it seemed that even the attainment of this concession would be lost. Problems began on June 25 when Tugwell announced that he could not obtain an extension from the University of Chicago and that, therefore, he would have to leave the governorship by June 30.<sup>18</sup> Now the Truman administration could not procrastinate any more, and had to find for a replacement fast. Taking advantage of the situation, Robert Hannegan called Krug, and persuaded him not to support Piñero, because he "would turn out to be a stooge of Muñoz-Marín."<sup>19</sup>

The attitude of the Secretary of the Interior represented a complete shift of his previous position. Just some weeks before, Krug had asked Truman to

appoint Piñero because he believed that it was very important to select for the governorship "not any Puerto Rican, but one in sympathy with the program of the Popular Party which represents by far the majority of the people of Puerto Rico."<sup>20</sup> Under-Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman had also supported Piñero's appointment for the same reasons. "It would be thoroughly unfortunate," he said, "if the Puerto Ricans' efforts to work out their destinies in purely insular matters were impeded or thwarted by the selection of a governor who was out of sympathy with their views,"<sup>21</sup> As late as April 19, Chapman was telling Secretary Krug that he had "surveyed the political situation in Puerto Rico, [and that he had] never before been so convinced that he [Piñero] is the fellow [who ought to be appointed] if we are to avoid trouble."<sup>22</sup>

When all these statements are taken into consideration, it is difficult to understand the sudden shift of the Department of the Interior. Hannegan's utterances about the convenience of appointing an "impartial" American, free from the influences of the island's political struggles and of Muffoz-Marín sounded good, but the argument that Piñero ought to be appointed because he had the support of the party which received an overwhelming victory in the 1944 elections was much more convincing. Moreover, as both Krug and Chapman recognized, appointing a native to the island's governorship would enhance America's international image.

Under these new circumstances, Secretary of the Interior met with Tugwell in late June to try to convince him to stay in the governorship some more months. Tugwell reaffirmed, however, his determination to be in Chicago by the first of July.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Chapman met with Truman and, after explaining to him the Department's position on the issue, convinced the

President to adopt it. Truman told Chapman that now "he would not appoint a native" to the governorship.<sup>24</sup>

The search for an appropriate American candidate started. Dillon S. Myer, a public officer who had occupied a number of positions including the direction of the War Relocation Authority (1942-1946) was the first person considered.<sup>25</sup> On July 3 Krug called to offer him the post. The Secretary told Myer that he and the President considered him the best person for the job. Myer replied that he would have to give some thought to the offer before responding.<sup>26</sup> The candidate then met with Truman who told him that he had been considered for the position mainly because he was not "a political man." Afterwards, Myer called Krug to inform him about the meeting. The Secretary used the occasion to try to convince Myer once again of accepting the post. He told the candidate that if he accepted the governorship "he will be one of the few Governors ever selected who had complete support of the President and the Secretary of the Interior." If his "interest is in public service," Krug added, "I can't think of any finer stepping stone than this." Being appointed governor of an important possession, the Secretary concluded, was an "achievement any man can be proud of for all time."<sup>27</sup>

On July 12, Myer called Krug and told him that for personal reasons he would not accept the governorship of Puerto Rico.<sup>28</sup> That day Myer also wrote Truman that "I have made the decision not to accept the flattering offer which you have made to me."<sup>29</sup> Both Krug and Truman regretted the decision and as the President wrote to the Secretary, "I guess we will have to make a further effort to get a Governor of Puerto Rico."<sup>30</sup>

The next person to which the governorship was offered was O. Max Gardner, an official in the Department of the Treasury. Although he did not respond



immediately, Krug realized that the prospects of Gardner's accepting the position were slim.<sup>31</sup>

By this time the Department of the Interior was slowly returning to its original position of advocating the selection of Commissioner Piffero for the island's governorship. During the previous days, the White House and the Department of the Interior were flooded with scores of messages from Puerto Rican and American individuals and groups requesting the appointment of a native governor. The overwhelming majority of the people who wrote supported Piffero's selection. By echoing these sentiments, the American and Puerto Rican press put additional pressure on the Truman administration. Most messages and editorials stressed the fact that the United States ought to appoint a Puerto Rican to the governorship to prove the world that it practiced the principles it professed. The majority favored Piffero's selection because he was the candidate of the dominant insular party.<sup>32</sup> On July 9, the Puerto Rican legislature increased the pressure by sending Truman a joint resolution approved by 54 (all from the PPD) of the 58 legislators requesting Piffero's appointment.<sup>33</sup> Undoubtedly, all these communications convinced the Truman administration that a significant number of people wanted to see Piffero appointed governor of Puerto Rico and that a refusal would taint America's image in the eyes of Puerto Ricans and the world. The administration must have started to question the wisdom of its policy of appointing a continental to the post.

The failure of the insular status commission to achieve the approval of a plebiscite bill that would have solved the island's political status, increased the Truman administration's urgency to appoint an insular candidate. Puerto Ricans of every political denomination were frustrated by the setback and many were starting to believe that, despite its rhetoric, the

United States was not really disposed to settle the status problem.

Appointing a native to the vacant governorship would constitute a gesture that would mollify the Puerto Ricans and that would create the impression--not only in Puerto Rico, but in the world--that America was indeed doing something to grant the islanders a greater degree of selfgovernment. No agency was better aware of this reality than the Department of State. In a memorandum of July 22, Spruille Braden, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs analyzed the problem as follows:

The appointment of a continental American, particularly if the appointee were not in sympathy with the advanced socio-economic program of the Popular Democratic Party, might be expected to intensify the dissatisfaction of the Puerto Rican people with the failure of Congress to provide for a modification in the island's political status. Such an appointment might be particularly unfortunate from an international standpoint, since it could be interpreted as contrary to this country's settled policy of promoting the political, social, and economic development of those peoples who have not yet attained full self-government.<sup>34</sup>

An unsigned study on the problem, circulated among government circles, asserted that to dependent peoples in the world, and especially in Latin America, United States' policies toward Puerto Rico were particularly important for they "reflect the sincerity of our professions of benevolence toward colonial people and the people of other national origins and races who reside outside the United States." The United States' position among dependent peoples had weakened, the study complained, because "ever since the San Francisco conference, the Soviet Union has waged an aggressive and successful campaign to assume the leadership in this field." Appointing a native governor in Puerto Rico would be a step in the right direction for it would show America's "good faith [and] benevolent policy toward dependent peoples" and would help the nation "recapture the leadership of the dependent areas of the world which are of crucial importance strategically."<sup>35</sup>

All these factors made the Department of the Interior revert to its old position of supporting Piffero. On July 16, 1946 Krug sent a letter to President Truman recommending the Resident Commissioner for the governorship. The reasons the Secretary alluded for the recommendation were the same he expressed in the first message he sent to the President on the matter. The insular legislature's joint resolution favoring Piffero was mentioned in Krug's message, a fact that underlined the role that it played in making up the attitude of the officers of the Department of the Interior.<sup>36</sup>

Although Truman was now willing to appoint Piffero, he still vacillated somewhat due, in great part, to the pressure exerted over him by the Democratic National Committee to name an American candidate.<sup>37</sup> When the leaders of the committee realized that they were losing the struggle, they started to use a number of unethical tactics. Some of its members went as far as telling Presidential aide Mathew J. Connally that "we are informed from reliable sources that Piffero is an outspoken Communist."<sup>38</sup> In the end Truman did what most people considered was best for American and Puerto Rican interests. On July 25, he announced that he had appointed Piffero to replace Tugwell in the island's governorship.<sup>39</sup>

Secretary of the Interior Krug, expressed his satisfaction with the nomination and said that this event "is concrete evidence of President Truman's belief that the Puerto Rican people are fully capable of administering their own governmental responsibilities." The new governor, he added, could count on the full backing of the Department of the Interior for "solving the many problems of the insular government."<sup>40</sup> Tugwell was also pleased with the appointment. He wrote Truman that, "you have made a wise choice, not because Piffero is a Puerto Rican, but because he is an exceptionally able and dependable American."<sup>41</sup> Piffero was glad with the

appointment and told the press that if the Senate ratified it he would do everything he could to "carry out with efficiency the great responsibility" given to him.<sup>42</sup>

The reaction of the Puerto Rican political leadership was mixed. Muñoz was pleased with the appointment, but warned the Puerto Ricans of the enormous responsibility they now had, for if they wanted to obtain further political concessions they would have to demonstrate that they could govern themselves efficiently.<sup>43</sup> He shared this concern with Edwin G. Arnold, Director of the Division of Territories of the Department of the Interior:

The nomination of Jesús T. Piñero, not only as a Puerto Rican but also as a man with clear public support, is cause for rejoicing but still more it is a motivation for deep reflection. Now the responsibility of all Puerto Ricans is more on our shoulders than ever before. Now the conduct of each of us in standard of good government, in strengthening of civil service principles, in continued guarantees of democratic electoral processes, has to be more responsible still than before.<sup>44</sup>

The president of the fading Liberal Party, Josefina Barceló de Romero, regretted that someone belonging to a political party had been appointed to the governorship. She believed that the President should have nominated a non-political person who had the support of all the political, economic and social sectors of the island. The president of the Socialist Party, Bolívar Pagán complained about this too, but was pleased with the fact that, at last, a Puerto Rican had received the opportunity of serving as governor.<sup>45</sup> The president of the CPI, Concepción de Gracia, argued that the appointment did not have any significance because the nominee would have to be responsible to the American government, not to the Puerto Rican people. Piñero, moreover, defended a colonial ideology, and his nomination could be used to further delay the concession of independence to Puerto Rico.<sup>46</sup>

The messages sent by numerous individuals and groups to the White House and to the Department of the Interior had a different tone. Most showed a

deep gratefulness for having appointed Piñero, and expressed the conviction that the new governor would do a good job.<sup>47</sup>

Muñoz now tried to secure Piñero's ratification in the Senate. He sent a cable to the members of that body's Territorial Committee emphasizing the importance of doing so. The nomination, he said, was "high recognition of democratic principles and capacity of our people," and a confirmation would be "of high significance to good will for American policy throughout Latin America and the world." The nominee, Muñoz added, had been elected in 1944 by a two to one margin, and had been overwhelmingly endorsed by the insular legislature.<sup>48</sup> The Senate presented no obstacle, and on July 31, it ratified Piñero's appointment.<sup>49</sup>

The Popular leaders were elated with this event, and taking advantage of the situation, tried to get Truman to attend Piñero's inauguration. Muñoz wrote to both the President and Krug to emphasize that Truman's attendance "would be of great importance in intensifying the publicity of this democratic action throughout Latin America and the world, and thereby gathering the greatest possible goodwill for American policy."<sup>50</sup> The President could not go to the inaugural ceremonies, but sent a message (prepared by the Department of the Interior) to be read by Krug.<sup>51</sup>

Piñero's inauguration took place on September 3, 1946. He arrived at San Juan's airport from Washington at 9:00 in the morning. After being greeted by dozens of Puerto Ricans and American public and private figures, he went in an open convertible to the insular Capitol. On the route, thousands of Puerto Ricans cheered the Governor from the buildings and the streets. At the Capitol, between 30,000 and 40,000 people watched as Piñero received the oath of office from Chief Justice Martín Travieso. Afterwards, American and Puerto

Rican functionaries congratulated the new chief executive, and an elaborate parade which lasted about two and a half hours took place.<sup>52</sup>

Speeches followed the parade. Piñero spoke first. His appointment, the governor said, "gives renewed meaning to our hope that the promise of the Atlantic Charter respecting the right of all peoples to determine the form of government under which they will live will be fulfilled here in every sense of the word." It, however, by no means fulfilled the final goals of the Atlantic Charter provisions or the aspirations of the Puerto Ricans. For this, "I pledge myself to make my own terms of office as short as possible, and to strive to win for the Puerto Rican people the right to elect their own chief executive as soon as possible." He ended his remarks asking all the Puerto Ricans to support his efforts for effectively dealing with the island's economic and political problems.<sup>53</sup>

Secretary of the Interior Krug was the next speaker. He read a message sent by Truman in which he described Piñero's inauguration as "perhaps the most significant in the history of Puerto Rico, for it marks the first time that a governor has been so closely representative both of the people of the United States and of the people of Puerto Rico." Truman recognized, however, that, "Much remains to be accomplished, and I am hopeful that working together we shall see progress along all lines in the next few years." Krug agreed that the appointment of a Puerto Rican to the island's governorship constituted a significant event, but asserted that by no means could it be considered a final step in the achievement of complete self-government. The Puerto Ricans, he believed, "should have the form of government they desire," and hoped "that the next time a Secretary of the Interior visits San Juan at inauguration time it will be to attend the ceremonies of your own elected governor."<sup>54</sup>

In his speech Tugwell asserted that, despite the "pessimists" who argued that Puerto Rico's problems were "insoluble," much had been done to deal with them. This had been possible because he and his colleagues had always strived to do the best they could. Now one of those colleagues was replacing him in the governorship and Tugwell believed that under the new Governor's helm, the island's conditions would continue to improve.<sup>55</sup>

Muñoz addressed the crowd last. He received a greater ovation than any of the previous speakers, a fact that prompted the representative of the Department of State to recognize that Muñoz "is even more popular than Governor Piñero and that much of the success on Puerto Rico's progress toward democracy is generally attributed to [him]."<sup>56</sup> In Muñoz' opinion, Piñero's appointment marked the beginning of a new era and the end of another: "It is the mark that indicates the beginning of the last stage for the achievement of the final political liberty that the people will choose with their votes." He then proceeded to lecture the audience on how the politicians and the people ought to behave to permit democracy function properly.<sup>57</sup> This speech was a continuation of the task Muñoz began in the late 1930s to try to teach the "jíbaros" how to vote and behave under a republican system.

After the inauguration, the United States began to spread the news of the appointment. The event constituted good propaganda, for it perfectly exemplified how the United States translated its words into deeds. The Department of State recommended "that every effort be made to disseminate news releases and newsreel concerning the inauguration throughout Latin America," and assigned an officer to fulfill the task.<sup>58</sup> The United States scored—or so it believed—some points in the international arena with Piñero appointment.

In the mid-term congressional elections of 1946, Republican candidates won decisively over Democrats. The new Congress reorganized its committees and as

a result the Senate and House Committees on Territories became subcommittees of the Committee of Public Lands. The elections also marked the end of Tydings' and Bell's influence over insular affairs. Both lost the chairmanship of the Senate and House Territorial Committees and were replaced by Republicans. In the Senate, Hugh Butler (R., Nebraska) became chairman of the Public Lands Committee and Guy Cordon (R., Oregon) was the new chairman of its Sub-Committee on Territories. In the House, Richard Welch (R., California) now presided over the Public Lands Committee and Fred L. Crawford (R., Michigan) was named chairman of the Sub-Committee on Territories.

Muñoz and the PPD leaders did not openly admit it, but the Republicans' victory scared them.<sup>59</sup> Until now, the opposition from conservatives in Congress toward their socio-economic reforms, had been overcome through the support of the Roosevelt's and Truman's administrations. Both had, for example, appointed liberals, like Tugwell and Piffero to the island's governorship.

Now it seemed that the Truman administration would be defeated in 1948 and that a conservative Republican President would come to power. If this occurred, Congress could count on the help of the Chief Executive to dismantle most of what the PPD had done or planned to do. The new President could, for instance, oust Piffero and replace him with a conservative American or Puerto Rican governor. A Republican administration could also hurt the chances of solving the island's status problem the way the PPD considered best.

To try to avoid this scenario, Muñoz went to Washington in January of 1947 to get acquainted with the new legislators and to promote his party's socio-economic and political goals. He was aided by Governor Piffero and by Puerto Rico's new Resident Commissioner, Dr. Antonio Fernós-Isern. The three met with numerous legislators from the House and Senate Public Lands



Committees, including Crawford and Welch, and explained them their views. In the political sphere, Muñoz did not openly defend autonomy (although Fernós-Isern did) but continued to advocate the need to hold a plebiscite in which different options with adequate economic concessions were offered to the Puerto Rican people.<sup>60</sup> These points were also expressed to President Truman.

The most important meeting of the trip was the one that took place between Muñoz-Marín, Fernós-Isern and Oscar Chapman. Chapman told his guests that the Department of the Interior was examining the 1943 elective governor bill with the intention of presenting it to Congress at its next session. Muñoz-Marín and Fernós-Isern agreed with the proposal, but the Resident Commissioner stated that it would be inappropriate for him to introduce the bill. Such an action, he said, could be interpreted as meaning that the islanders did not have further political demands, and that was not the case. The Puerto Ricans wanted more than a mere reform to the Organic Act; they wanted a definitive solution to the status problem. Chapman understood Fernós-Isern's position and said that he would ask Senator Butler to introduce the bill.<sup>62</sup>

Muñoz-Marín, Fernós-Isern and Piffero were pleased with Chapman's proposition. They did not publicly admit it, but during their stay in Washington they privately promoted the possibility of allowing the islanders to elect their governor.<sup>63</sup> Muñoz' complete support of the measure represented a shift from his 1943-44 position when he advocated a similar project only half-heartedly and stopped defending the same when Congress substantially amended it. The Popular leader's change of mind responded to two factors. First, Muñoz' fear that a Republican victory in 1948 might hurt the PPD's socio-economic and political objectives made him think that a good way to avoid this was by amending the Organic Act to make the governorship elective. In this way no President could appoint a governor who did not agree

with the goals advocated by the local population.<sup>64</sup> Muñoz' frustrating experience with a conservative Congress in 1945 and 1946 also influenced his thinking. It showed the Popular leader that this body would not grant Puerto Rico political concessions which seemed to give too much at once, and made him think that the PPD's political goals could only be achieved gradually, by obtaining a number of reforms that facilitated getting additional concessions later.<sup>65</sup>

The three Popular leaders were satisfied with the results of their visit to Washington. They were, indeed, surprised by the interest the Republican Congress showed toward Puerto Rico's problems. On their return to the island both Muñoz and Piñero declared that there were good chances of Congress' taking some action on Puerto Rico's status during the coming session and that, most probably, the elective governor project would be one of the measures conceded.<sup>66</sup>

On February 18, 1947 a congressional delegation of five Senators and ten Representatives--mostly Republicans--belonging to the Territorial Sub-committees visited the island. They came to get acquainted with the island's affairs and, in the words of Senator Cordon, "to determine what amount of self-government we should give Puerto Rico in the present session of Congress."<sup>67</sup> The legislators announced in the insular press that on February 22 an Open House session to which everyone could attend to express his views would be held. During that session the American congressmen listened to professionals, workers, businessmen and teachers express their concerns about the political status, the economic situation and the educational problems of the island for almost three hours.<sup>68</sup> The legislators expressed their satisfaction with the results of the session, and as they left the island announced that they were confident that at its next

session, Congress would approve an elective governor measure. The Puerto Ricans were heartened by these declarations.<sup>69</sup>

That optimism increased when on March 2, the Department of the Interior officially announced that it would request Congress to approve such project. The new measure, Krug asserted, would be drafted in simpler terms than the 1943 project and the clauses not dealing strictly with the election of the governor (the 1943 bill included a number of steps for solving the island's political status) would be deleted. With these changes, the Department expected to significantly augment the chances of getting the bill passed.<sup>70</sup>

Puerto Rico's political leaders received the news with a mixture of joy and cautiousness. The presidents of the Progressive Republican Union Party (Celestino Iriarte), of Socialist Party (Bolívar Pagán), and of the Liberal Party (Josefina Barceló de Romero) asserted that they would welcome any reform that increased the island's self-government, but warned that they would never consider such concession a final solution to the political problem.<sup>71</sup> Muñoz-Marín share these sentiments.<sup>72</sup>

After some delays, the Department of the Interior got Senator Hugh Butler to introduce the bill in the Senate (S. 1184) on April 29, and congressman Fred. L. Crawford to do the same in the House (H. R. 3309) on May 2.<sup>73</sup> The project provided for the election by Puerto Ricans of their governor as of the 1948 elections. The elected officer would be able to appoint the heads of the executive departments, and the judges of the island's Supreme Court.<sup>74</sup>

In Puerto Rico, the presidents of the Republican and Socialist parties reaffirmed their support to the bill as long as it was not considered a final solution to the political problem. The president of the Liberal Party reversed her stand, and decided to oppose the measure because she believed that it might delay the attainment of a definite solution to the status issue

indefinitely. The president of the recently- founded Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), Concepción de Gracia, also opposed the bill. In his opinion, the project did not change the colonial relations existing between the United States and Puerto Rico because Congress' control over the island and its prerogative to take away any reform it granted would remain unscathed.<sup>75</sup>

The PPD leaders were strongly behind the bill. Muñoz believed that, although the project did not fundamentally change the existing colonial status, it would provide a significant increase in self-government, and would not delay solving the status problem in the future. His experience in dealing with the United States' government, Muñoz said, showed him that the opposite was true.<sup>76</sup>

The House of Representatives acted on the bill first. On May 19, Acting Secretary of the Interior, Warner W. Gardner, sent a report to the chairman of the House Committee on Public Lands requesting the measure's approval. The report acknowledged that acquiring the right to elect their governor would not be considered by most Puerto Ricans as a final solution to the status problem, but added that the bill "places Puerto Rico a little further along the road to full self- government... and its provisions are entirely desirable and would be acceptable to the people of Puerto Rico, the political leaders of the island, and to Governor Piñero."<sup>77</sup>

That day the House Sub-Committee on Territorial and Insular Affairs held hearings on the project. Secretary of the Interior Krug advocated the bill's passage in strong terms. "It has long been the policy of this Government," he said, "progressively to reinforce the machinery of self-government in our territories and island possessions."<sup>78</sup> By signing the United Nations Charter, Krug continued, the United States

publicly promised to the international community that it would pursue such policy. Consequently, approval of H. R. 3309 was important to maintain America's credibility, especially in Latin America. He said:

The nations of the world, and particularly of South America match our words of adherence to the principles of democracy and self-government, our proud statements that we have no colonial empire against our deeds. We can only enhance our position in the eyes of the world by granting to Puerto Rico the right to elect its Governor.<sup>79</sup>

The Secretary reassured the congressmen that, although the bill would grant the Puerto Ricans a significant concession, Congress' power over the island would not be diminished. "We have nothing to lose," he concluded, "by making the governorship an elective position."<sup>80</sup>

Governor Piñero testified next. He emphasized that most Puerto Ricans wanted to acquire the right to elect their governor because they felt that they had the "political maturity" which entitled them to it. Many islanders, he said, resented having an appointed governor and being regarded in the United States as "political infants." The Puerto Ricans saw their neighbors in Latin America elect their chief executives, and "cannot understand what it is that they lack that makes them unfit to enjoy a similar right." They heard United States' leaders "speak of democracy and the right of self-government" and wondered why they still did not enjoy these rights. It may be true, Piñero continued, that a final solution to the status problem "cannot be reached overnight, but this did not mean that some reforms could not be granted in the meantime. Like Krug, the Governor remarked that the bill would not reduce Congress' control over the island, but would nonetheless enhance America's image in Puerto Rico and in the world. When this is considered, he concluded, "It is very hard to think of a good reason why the people of Puerto Rico should not be allowed to elect their Governor."<sup>81</sup>

To reinforce Piñero's assertion that most Puerto Ricans favored the bill, congressman Crawford introduced in the record a series of cablegrams and messages from people who supported it. Among them were cables from 62 Puerto Ricans mayors, 14 presidents of municipal assemblies, and one telegram signed by 14 insular senators and 31 representatives.<sup>82</sup>

Former governor of Puerto Rico, James Beverly, spoke next. After specifying that he did not favor any insular political party, Beverly affirmed that after "50 years of tutelage under the American flag," the Puerto Ricans had acquired a high degree of political maturity. "[T]he people of Puerto Rico," he said, "have made the most remarkable progress ever made in the history of the world in such a short period of time..." He, therefore, strongly urged the congressmen to report the bill favorably.<sup>83</sup>

Ruth Reynolds, secretary of a small organization (it only had about 50 members) known as the American League for Puerto Rico's Independence was the last person to appear at the hearings. Between 1945 and 1946, this group joined the CPI to attack in Congress a plebiscite bill defended by the PPD (the Tydings-Piñero Bill of May, 1945) and to support and independence measure (the Tydings Bill of January, 1945) opposed by the Popular administration.<sup>84</sup>

Now it joined the PIP to oppose the elective governor bill because, in Reynold's opinion, it "merely adds another billow of smoke to veil the true situation, and alters the complete control of the United States over Puerto Rico not an iota." She asked the representatives to discard the project "and to adopt in its place a measure recognizing the independence of Puerto Rico." Nobody paid much attention to her arguments.<sup>85</sup>

After Reynold's testimony, Fernós-Isern (who was a member of the Territorial Sub-Committee) asked his colleagues to insert in the record a

where Welch requested to the House Clerk that it be considered by "consent calendar." This is a procedure used to expedite the approval of non-controversial measures. Any such project was read along with other similar bills at a specific time the first Monday after it was handed to the House Clerk, and if no one opposed, it was considered approved. If anyone opposed "with prejudgement" (meaning that somebody was completely against the bill) the project was retired from the "consent calendar" for the remainder of the session; if the opposition was "without prejudgement" (a legislator only opposed certain parts of the bill) the measure was kept on the "consent calendar" and debated again two Mondays from that moment. If on the second occasion the bill was opposed by three or more congressmen, it was retired from the "consent calendar" the remainder of the session. A bill retired from this calendar was not necessarily defeated. The proposer of the measure could ask the chairman of the House Rules and Means Committee to allocate time to debate the bill in the usual form. The problem was that this body rarely acceded to the request. At every legislative session the committee had to consider thousands of projects, and it usually allocated time only to those that it deemed important.

On Monday June 2, the elective governor bill was read by the House Clerk, and to the surprise of most Puerto Ricans, congressman W. Sterling Cole (R., New York) opposed it "without prejudgement."<sup>91</sup> The measure was, consequently, retired from the consent calendar. The islanders would have to wait until Monday June 16--when the bill would be considered for a second time--to know the fate of the project. Some observers regarded Cole's objection fortunate, for just as he was expressing his opposition, Vito Marcantonio was standing up to speak about the measure. The observers speculated that Marcantonio, a staunch advocate of independence for Puerto

statement he prepared in favor of the bill. The committee acceded to the Resident Commissioner's request, and adjourned.<sup>86</sup>

With the exception of Reynolds, all the persons appearing at the hearings defended the bill in strong terms. Some of the Sub-Committee' members objected to parts of the measure but, as a rule, they were receptive to the arguments presented and showed much willingness to recommend its approval. Such attitude prompted Piñero and Fernós-Isern to tell the press that the project would be approved soon.<sup>87</sup>

On May 26, the Sub-Committee released its report and, as expected, recommended the bills's approval. The reasons for such request were summarized in the following paragraph:

The changes which would be made by the enactment of H. R. 3309 would not alter Puerto Rico's political or fiscal relationship to the United States. Congress does not surrender any of its constitutional authority to legislate for Puerto Rico or to review insular laws. Neither would this legislation prove an obstacle to a subsequent determination by the Congress of the permanent political status question. The passage of this bill, however, would stand as an evidence of our good will toward the people of Puerto Rico and as a demonstration to the nations of the world, at a time when territorial administration is a matter of international interest and concern that the United States practices as well as preaches the doctrines of democracy and self-determination.<sup>88</sup>

The reservations expressed at the hearings by some congressmen were dealt with by adding two amendments to the project. The first authorized the governor to appoint the Supreme Court justices as originally stipulated in the bill, but added that if the Puerto Ricans wanted, they could—acting through the insular legislature—make the positions elective. The second removed "the auditor from the line of succession for the Acting Governor since the auditor will continue to be a Presidential appointee..."<sup>89</sup>

The House Committee on Public Lands accepted the Sub-Committee's recommendations that same day, and on June 2 sent the bill to the House floor



Rico and a strong ally of the PIP, intended to oppose the measure "with prejudgement." Had he done it, the projects would have been retired from the "consent calendar" the remainder of the session, something that, most probably, would have defeated it for that year.<sup>92</sup>

These events alarmed Muñoz and the PPD leaders. They remembered the defeat of the 1943 elective governor bill, and feared that the new project might suffer a similar fate. Unlike the previous occasion, however, this time they were fully behind the measure and were determined to do their best to get it passed.

The Popular leaders desired to get the measure approved at the next "consent calendar" session of June 16, but if this could not be obtained, they wanted the Rules Committee to allocate time to debate the bill on the House floor. Representatives Crawford and Welch helped the islanders in pressuring the Committee on this matter. They were not successful though. The Committee announced that it would consider the petition on June 17, but its chairman, Leo E. Allen (R., Illinois) asserted on several occasions that the chances of allocating time to the project were remote.<sup>93</sup>

This prompted an angry Muñoz to write a letter to Under-Secretary Chapman saying that, "a very undesirable psychological situation may develop here if the elective governor bill is not approved." A rejection at this particular time, the Popular leader argued, would be especially disturbing, because, due to the federal government's inaction, the Puerto Rican candidate (and the PPD's) for Commissioner of Education decided to withdraw his candidacy to the vacant position, which, most probably, would now be filled by an "unknown" American. Muñoz added:

...to me it is inconceivable that we can go again, in a year or so, through a period in which the governorship of Puerto Rico may be treated as a gamble of remote political forces. With an Independence Party being registered, with the extreme

Nationalist Party expecting the return of Mr. Albizu-Campos, now free on his parole, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain an attitude of good sense in Puerto Rico in the face of the lack of such attitude in the Federal Government as it presents itself to public opinion here. The weak cannot be expected to be the only ones that show consistent good sense under provocation. The strong should try to show it also. Only prompt action on the elective governor bill can free us of very bad potentialities.<sup>94</sup>

The PPD's president asked Chapman to use his offices and those of some legislators sympathetic to the Puerto Rican cause, to make the members of the Rules Committee understand "the realities and the importance of the situation." If the bill was passed, Muñoz concluded, "all other psychological difficulties can be dealt with; if not, "there may be some needless hell to pay."<sup>95</sup>

The officers of the Department of the Interior were also upset with the House's attitude, but they recognized that the chances of getting the bill through were small. On a telephone conversation, Chapman told Krug that, following Muñoz' request, he would speak with the chairman of the Rule's Committee, but that, in his opinion, it would be very difficult to get a rule on it. An angry Krug replied that "I am sure if there is opposition, it is because the Communists are running wild down there."<sup>96</sup>

In spite of Muñoz' warning and of Krug's anger, the reality was that the chances of the Rules Committee's allocating time for discussing the project were slim. The only opportunity of getting the bill approved that year lay in convincing those who objected, not to oppose at the next "consent calendar" session. Fernós-Insern worked diligently behind the scenes to try to persuade Cole and Marcantonio to vote for the measure. On June 16, just before the bill was to be considered in the House's floor, Fernós asked Cole about his attitude toward the project. The representative replied that he would not oppose the measure if two amendments were added. The first dealt with the

clause declaring that "until otherwise provided be the Legislature of Puerto Rico, all justices of the Supreme Court shall hold office during good behavior," Cole wanted the first part ("until otherwise provided by the legislature of Puerto Rico") of this section deleted. The second amendment added a new section which provided that up to 75% of the excise taxes collected on Puerto Rican products in the United States should be deposited in a "special fund" to be used by Congress for public works, relief projects and other purposes in the island.<sup>97</sup>

Fernós told Cole that he was willing to accept the first amendment but did not say anything about the second one. The Resident Commissioner could not accept it because by reducing Puerto Rico's fiscal autonomy and increasing Congress' control over the island, it undermined the objective of obtaining more self-government for Puerto Rico. Cole said, however, that if the two amendments were not accepted he would oppose the measure. Anyway, he added, his vote would not make any difference, for Marcantonio would also oppose the bill. Believing that if the radical New York congressman could be persuaded to support the bill, Cole would change his attitude, Fernós-Isern met with Marcantonio some minutes later. Marcantonio told the Resident Commissioner that he would make a statement on the bill, but that he would not vote against it. Fernós explained Marcantonio's attitude to Cole, but the representative insisted on opposing the project if his amendments were not accepted.

The Resident Commissioner spoke with three congressmen-- Dean Taylor (R., New York), William Lemke (R., North Dakota) and Fred L. Crawford, author of the project--who well-acquainted with Cole. He asked them to try to change recalcitrant representative's mind. They spoke with Cole but had no success. Taylor, however, told to a deeply concerned Fernós that the bill could still be saved. In his opinion. Cole's second amendment was out of place for it

death with an economic matter (the collection of duties) that had nothing to do with the political issue (the election of the governor) sought by the bill. The amendment, Taylor argued, could be defeated by calling a point of order in the House floor and assent that the alteration could not be considered because it was not germane. Congressman Antonio Fernández (D., New Mexico), he added, could be asked to present the point of order when the amendment was offered in the floor. A relieved Fernós welcomed Taylor's idea.

Taylor, then, met with Fernández, who agreed that Cole's amendment was not germane. However, he added, that before acceding to call the point of order he would like to be completely sure of this. Both went to see an aide of the Houses's speaker-- the officer who would decide if the the amendment was or was not germane--and much to their satisfaction, the adjutant confirmed that the amendment was out of order. Fernández now accepted Taylor's request.<sup>98</sup>

Some minutes later, the House Clerk presented the bill and asked if anyone opposed it. Nobody did and the officer proceeded to read the measure. Afterwards, Marcantonio requested and was granted an opportunity to make a statement. The representative described the bill as "an exhibition of hypocrisy" designed "to avoid granting self-determination to he people of Puerto Rico." He would not oppose it though, because he did not "want to deprive the people of Puerto Rico of even this gesture after we have deprived them of so much and so often." Marcantonio finished his remarks by asking that a statement prepared by the PIP against the bill be included in the record.<sup>99</sup>

Cole then stood up and presented his amendment to the bill's Supreme Court section. The House members accepted it. Crawford then presented Cole's second amendment. As planned, Fernández called a point of order and complained that the amendment was not germane. Surprisingly, Marcantoino rose

up to support Fernández contention. After considering the petition for a moment, the Speaker of the House ruled that the amendment effectively was not germane. The bill was, therefore, approved.<sup>100</sup>

It took less than five minutes to pass a measure that most Puerto Ricans wanted, but though that was already doomed. Unconscious of Fernós-Isern's working behind the scenes, most islanders were surprised by the approval. Knowing that the bill still had to be approved by the Senate, they were also extremely cautious.<sup>101</sup>

At first it seemed that there would be no problem in getting the bill through the Senate. Indeed, to expedite its passage, the Senate's Sub-Committee on Territories announced that it would not hold public hearings and that, instead, it would send a representative to the House's hearings to present its view on the matter.<sup>102</sup> This was never done though, and in the end at a closed session held on June 22, the subcommittee (following the Department of the Interior's suggestion) evaluated the bill's merit based on the statement presented at the House's Sub-Committee hearings, on short statements offered by congressman Crawford and Fernós-Isern, and on a report prepared by the Department of the Interior.<sup>103</sup>

The bill was sent to the Senate's Public Land's Committee which planned to consider it on June 24.<sup>104</sup> This was postponed until the 26th, and then the measure ran into a number of difficulties because some Senators wanted to include new amendments. Four alterations were proposed. The first pretended to keep the Attorney General as a Presidential appointee, the second proposed to do the same thing with the Supreme Court's justices; the third would have created the post of Federal Coordinator to supervise all federal activities in the island; and the fourth specified that no discrimination could exist in Puerto Rico against continental Americans.<sup>105</sup> Discussion on these proposals

prevented the committee from reporting the measure until July 3. The report accepted the House's amendments and added two of the four alterations discussed in the committee: that asking for the establishment of the "Coordinator of Federal Agencies in Puerto Rico," and the one specifying that "the rights, privileges, and immunities of citizens of the United States shall be respected in Puerto Rico to the same extent as though Puerto Rico were a state of the Union..."<sup>106</sup>

Two obstacles now stood in the way of the bill's approval. Time was one. Congress would adjourn on July 26 and it had to debate and consider hundreds of important measures in the short amount of time left. Finding a moment for discussing the Puerto Rican bill would, therefore, be extremely difficult.

The powerful Republican Senator from Ohio, Robert Taft, constituted the second obstacle.<sup>107</sup> He had been the proposer of two of the four amendments discussed in the Public Lands' Committee: that of the Federal Coordinator, and the one that would have kept the Supreme Court justices as presidential appointees. The second amendment was defeated, but Fernós suspected--correctly -- that Taft would try to re-introduce it when the bill came to the Senate floor.<sup>108</sup> The longer it took for the project to reach the Senator floor, the more difficult it would be to successfully oppose Taft's amendments. If the Senate adjourned without any agreement being reached on the matter, the bill's consideration would be postponed until Congress reconvened.

Time went by and the bill was not brought up to the Senate floor. The Puerto Ricans optimism plummeted. Many were disheartened and believed that, as had often occurred in the past, their expectations would be dashed once again.<sup>109</sup> In another desperate attempt to save the project, Muñoz-Marín sent cables to both Krug and Chapman explaining that the Senate's inaction was "causing uneasiness" in Puerto Rico "specially in view of the

news now published [of the] withdrawal [of] Villaronga [the PPD's candidate for Commissioner of Education] by the President and of certain discrimination subsisting against Puerto Rico in [the] sugar bill." To avoid troubles, Muñoz asked both to urge Congress to take action on it. A similar cable was sent to the chairman of the Senate's Territories' Sub-Committee, Guy Cordon.<sup>110</sup>

The Senate, however, took no action on the bill until the afternoon of July 26, -- the last day in which Congress would be in session. To expedite matters the projects that were to be considered were read and if no one opposed them they were approved. If anyone objected a measure--the word "over" was used to do this--the same would be left on the air until a new reading was made. If by midnight that objection had not been eliminated, consideration on the bill would be postponed until Congress reconvened again.

Due to the lack of time and to the urgency of getting the bill approved, the Puerto Ricans were now willing to accept Taft's Federal Coordinator amendment and, if he proposed it, the Supreme Court amendment. When the project was read, Taft did not propose any new amendment. Nonetheless, he opposed it. A nervous Fernós-Isern left the Senate floor to speak with Senator Butler. He assured the Resident Commissioner that there was nothing to worry about and that the bill would be approved. However, every time that the project was read in the Senate floor, Taft repeated what Fernós called "the fateful word... 'over'."<sup>111</sup>

By the evening the Resident Commissioner was desperate. Against all advise, he went to speak with Senator Dennis Chavez who said that he knew how to force Taft to give up his intransigence. Minutes later a project very dear to Senator Taft was read in the Senate's floor and somebody said the word "over." A stunned Taft searched the floor to see who opposed his cherished project. It was Chavez, Taft raised and went to speak with the New Mexico

Senator. Chavez explained to the Ohio legislator why he acted the way he did. Taft then made a proposition: he would not oppose the Puerto Rican bill if Chavez promised to retire the objection to his project. Chavez accepted the offer. Taft later spoke with Fernós-Isern and reassured him that he would not oppose the elective governor bill the next time it was read.

It was 10:00 in the evening, though, and nobody knew when the project would be read again. If it was read too late, not only would it be impossible for the House to oppose any amendment that Taft might present but, even if it was accepted, there might not be enough time to take the steps required to adopt the alteration. At 11:55 the project was finally read. As he had promised, Taft did not say "over." Instead he offered his Supreme Court amendment which was quickly accepted. The bill was approved in less than one minute.<sup>112</sup>

The Senate's amendments now had to be accepted by the House. Fernós-Isern spoke with Crawford, who was in the Senate's floor at the moment, and asked him to rush to the House's floor to hold its members while he went to the Senate's secretarship to transact the details of the amended bill. Crawford acceded. Some minutes later the Resident Commissioner appeared at the House's floor with the amended version of the project. Crawford presented the bill and the Clerk read it with the Senate's amendments. Nobody objected and the project was approved: it was 12:05 in the morning.<sup>113</sup>

The bill now went to President Truman for his signature. Before submitting it to the President, the Bureau of the Budget asked the Department of Justice and of the Interior their opinion on the project. Both agencies recommended its approval.<sup>114</sup> Based on their advise, the Director of the Budget sent a letter to Presidential aide M. C. Latta, requesting Truman to sign the bill.<sup>115</sup> The President did this on August 5. Puerto Rico had just



become the first American territory allowed to elect its governor. Truman sent Governor Piñero a message (prepared by the Department of the Interior) in which he described the bill as " a great step toward complete self-government." The president added:

It is unfortunate, in my opinion, that the Congress did not enact the House version of the bill, which would have permitted the Governor to appoint the members of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico. However, when the bill passed the Senate, the time of adjournment was so near that there was no opportunity for a conference. If the Senate amendment had not been accepted by the House of Representatives, no Puerto Rican bill would have been enacted at his session.<sup>117</sup>

The Department of the Interior began to publicize the event that same day. On a radio address, Krug declared that the bill's approval "will catch the eye of people and nations all over the world who will see in it an evidence that the United States puts into practice its principles of democracy and selfdetermination." Using a paternalistic argument he justified not granting this concession before:

Now, it has always been the policy of the United States to give increased responsibility to the people in the territorial areas, as they show that they are able to carry further responsibility. The Interior Department was well aware that the people of Puerto Rico had managed their own affairs in a highly capable manner in the legislative field. The logical step was to grant further powers in the other branches of government. It was clear that all Puerto Ricans, whatever their views on permanent political status might be, agreed that they wanted the right to elect their governor. It also seemed logical that after the long experience of the people of Puerto Rico in enacting their own laws, they should be entirely capable of making a wise selection of a man to administer those laws.<sup>118</sup>

Although many American officers probably believed that this argument was true, there were other reasons explaining America's inaction in the past and its activism in the postwar period. Before, Puerto Rico was seen as a local affair of the United States. America could ignore its demands on the status

not guess how would the next "unknown" American governor behave. Now this element of uncertainty was greatly diminished.

The measure could not be considered a final solution to Puerto Rico's status problem, though. As a result of Congress' actions, the reform itself had many defects: the Supreme Court justices and the Auditor were still presidential appointees, and the Federal Coordinator could greatly undermine the authority of the elected governor. Moreover, Congress' power to revise and annual Puerto Rican legislation, (the President also retained the power to do so in certain situations) and to legislate for the island remained unimpaired. The international situation did force Congress to grant something to Puerto Rico, but this body's conservatism prevented it from conceding anything that might seriously undermine its basic control over the island. And although Puerto Rico's relations with the United States benefited the island, every one of its aspects was unilaterally legislated by Congress. This body never consulted the Puerto Ricans when it established the conditions governing that relation. Puerto Rico's self-determination, then, was not fulfilled with the elective governor bill. The islanders were not granted statehood, independence or autonomy, but only a colonial reform-- however liberal it might have been.

Most people were conscious of this reality. When reacting to the news of the bill's approval, Muñoz and Fernós-Isern expressed that they were extremely happy about it, but added that the most important things that the bill did was to open more doors for obtaining a definitive solution to the status issue.<sup>119</sup> Bolívar Pagán and Celestino Iriarte, presidents of the Socialist and of the Progressive Republican Union Party respectively, also manifested their pleasure toward the reform, but specified that they considered it just a step toward obtaining their cherished goal of statehood.<sup>120</sup> Only the

leaders of the Liberal and the Independentist parties condemned the bill. The president of the Liberal Party, Josefina Barceló de Romero, complained that the amendment that established the Federal Coordinator (she called him the "super-governor") sabotaged the spirit of the project, and therefore, what was granted amounted to little. PIP's president, Concepción de Gracia, argued that the project only pursued, to elevate the United States' international prestige and that Puerto Rico did not obtain anything with it. The Federal Coordinator appointed by the President would be the "real governor," he said, and the elected governor would only be "a mere puppet of the American government."<sup>121</sup>

The federal authorities also acknowledged that the elective governor bill did not close the status issue. Under Secretary Chapman specified that "it is important to [point out] that the enactment of this bill does not mean that Congress or the Interior Department will now turn its attention away from Puerto Rico, and give no further consideration to its political status."<sup>122</sup>

President Truman personally conveyed this attitude to the Puerto Ricans when he visited the island on February 21 of 1948. The President had been planning to come to Puerto Rico for some time (first in March of 1947, then in August of that year) but for a number of reasons, could not make the trip.<sup>123</sup> Taking advantage of a Caribbean tour, Truman came to the island and spent a day there. Fearing that the Nationalists might make an attempt against his life, the security forces took unprecedented measures to protect him. In spite of Piffero's recommendation that Truman address the Puerto Ricans by radio, the President went ahead and read a message prepared by the Department of the Interior, to some 4,000 islanders assembled at the airport. Although the message mainly praised the Puerto Ricans for their achievements in the face of so many adversities, Truman also dedicated some time to the

status issue. The maturity shown by the Puerto Ricans, the President said, had entitled them to the political reforms granted the previous years. Although significant, these achievements were not enough and Truman believed "that the Puerto Rican people should have the right to determine for themselves Puerto Rico's political relationship to the continental United States."<sup>124</sup>

Muñoz was delighted to hear this, for unlike 1940 and 1944, he knew now what political status he wanted and was determined to seek it. On August 15, 1948 the PPD's Assembly approved the party's platform for the upcoming elections. Muñoz Marín's ideas determined the content of the part dealing with the status issue. The program declared that after the elections, the PPD would pursue a three step strategy on this matter. First, "preserving the economic and fiscal relationship existing at the present time between Puerto Rico and the United States," the islanders, through the legislature or through a constitutional assembly authorized by that body, would draft a constitution "in accordance with the structure which it may judge more in consonance with the democratic administration of the public interest." Second, when the legislature considered that the "necessary conditions" for holding a plebiscite had been achieved, it would call the Puerto Ricans to choose between independence granted "under the most favored conditions that the United States now extends to independent nations," or statehood conceded "under the same conditions now governing the other States of Union." Third, in the plebiscite the islanders would also be asked if they disagreed with the legislature and did not think "that the existing conditions" make statehood feasible. The platform finally stated that Congress should express "its agreement to act in accordance with the preference shown by the people of

Puerto Rico in the aforesaid plebiscite."<sup>125</sup> The party nominated Luis Muñoz-Marín as its candidate for governor.

Two groups defending other political alternatives opposed the PPD. The Puerto Rican Statehood Party, the Reformist Party (composed of the remaining members of the old Liberal Party) and the Socialist Party joined forces to defend the search for immediate statehood. They nominate Supreme Court justice Martín Travieso as their candi- date for governor.<sup>126</sup> The PIP, which sought immediate independence, chose the ex-speaker of the House, Francisco Susoni, (who had broken with Muñoz-Marín and the PPD just some weeks before) as its candidate.<sup>127</sup>

The leaders of the three groups believed that they had good chances of obtaining the political formulas that they advocated. Even the pro-statehood forces felt confident, for the United States' Republican Party, which seemed to be the sure winner of the 1948 elections, defended statehood for the island (the Puerto Rican Statehood Party sent voting delegates to the Republican Convention to secure the inclusion of this alternative in the Republican platform).<sup>128</sup>

However, to be able to attain their objectives, the pro- statehood forces and the PIP would have to win the 1948 elections. This they could not do. In spite of the indepen- dentist dissidents, the PPD whipped the opposition and obtained a bigger triumph than in 1944. The Populares obtained 392,386 votes; the PEP's 89,441; the Socialist 64,396; the Reformists 29,140 (the combined votes of this pro-statehood coalition were 182,977 votes, less than half the amount obtained by the PPD) and the newly founded PIP 65,351. The PPD elected its candi- dates to governor and to Resident Commissioner (Fernós-Isern), won the island's seven senatorial and 35 representative districts and all but one municipality. The prostatehood forces only elected two Senators at large

(Bolívar Pagán and Celestino Iriarte), one representative at large (Leopoldo Figueroa) and one mayor. The PIP did not obtain a single legislative seat or any municipality.<sup>129</sup>

Although the successful economic program implemented by the PPD and the presence of the charismatic Luis Muñoz-Marín in the Popular Party's ticket accounted for much of the party's success, it was widely-known that the status problem was on issue at the elections. After the PPD's overwhelming victory, nobody could say that the party did not now have a mandate to search for the political objectives it advocated.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

<sup>1</sup>El Mundo, December 21, 1945.

<sup>2</sup>Most of this correspondence appears in the Truman Library (from now on TL), Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico, May-December, 1946; and on the National Archives (from now on NA), RG 46, 9-8-104.

<sup>3</sup>A short biography appears in TL, Papers of Harry s. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico.

<sup>4</sup>A biographical sketch appaears in Chavez to Truman, August 10, 1945, TL Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico.

<sup>5</sup>Piñero's biography appears in TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico; and NA, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>6</sup>El Mundo, March 4, 1945.

<sup>7</sup>Memorandum of Juana C. Spaulding, January 14, 1946, NA, RG 59, file 811c. 01/1-1-45.

<sup>8</sup>Hannegan to Truman, January 18, 1946; Truman to Hannegan, January 21, 1946, TL, President's Secretary's File, Subject file, Puerto Rico.

<sup>9</sup>Chapman to Truman, February 21, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico; and NA, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>10</sup>Krug to Truman, April 11, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>11</sup>Tugwell to Truman, February 22, 1946; Truman to Tugwell, February 26, 1946; Tugwell to Truman, March 15, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Hannegan to Truman, January 18, 1946, TL, President's Secretary's Files, Subject file, Puerto Rico; El Mundo, May 22; June 27, 29; July 16, 1946.

<sup>14</sup>The Nation, May 11, 1946.

<sup>15</sup>Muñoz to Krug, June 18, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104. See also John Steelmant to Truman, June 7, 1946, TL, President's Secretary's File, Subject file, Puerto Rico.

<sup>16</sup>Muñoz to Krug, June 19, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104. See also Steelmant to Truman, June 7, 1946; Muñoz to Truman, July 15, 1946; and Truman to Muñoz, July 18, 1946, TL Presidents's Secretary's File, Subject file, Puerto Rico.

<sup>17</sup>Chavez to Truman, February 15, 1946; Truman to Chavez, April 4, 1946. See also del Valle to Chavez, June 24, 1946; Chavez to Truman, June 25, 1946; and Truman to Chavez, June 26, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Tuman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico.

<sup>18</sup>El Mundo, June 26, 1946.

<sup>19</sup>Library of Congress (from now on LC), Krug Papers, Conference Record, June 25, 26, 1946. See also El Mundo, June 19, 1946.

<sup>20</sup>Krug to Truman, April 11, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>21</sup>Chapman to Truman, February 21, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico; and NA, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>22</sup>LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, April 19, 1946.

<sup>23</sup>LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, June 27, 28, 1946. See also New York Times, June 29, 1946 and El Mundo, June 28, 29, 1946.

<sup>24</sup>LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, June 28, 1946.

<sup>25</sup>Who's Who in America, A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women, vol. 27, 1952-53, Chicago, The A. N. Marquis Company; 1953, p. 1753.

<sup>26</sup>LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, July 3, 1946.

<sup>27</sup>LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, July 10, 1946. See also the record of July 11.

<sup>28</sup>LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, July 12, 1946.

<sup>29</sup>Myer to Truman, July 12, 1946, TL, President's Secretary's File, Subject file, Puerto Rico. An unsigned copy of the letter appears in LC, Krug Papers, Subject File, Puerto Rico: General.

<sup>30</sup>Truman to Krug, July 12, 1946, TL, President's Secretary's File, Subject file, Puerto Rico.

<sup>31</sup>LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, July 12, 1946.

<sup>32</sup>The messages of the Puerto Rican and American individuals and groups appear in TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official file, 400, Puerto Rico, May-December, 1946; and NA, RG 46, 9-8-104. New York Times, July 22, 1946.

<sup>33</sup>Three of the four minority legislators opposed the resolution; one did not vote because he was absent. New York Times, July 10, 1946; El Mundo, July 10, 1946.

<sup>34</sup>Braden to Acheson and Byrnes, July 22, 1946, NA, RG, 59, File 811c. 01/1-1-45.

<sup>35</sup>Unsigned and undated memorandum, RG 46, File Sen. 79A-F28, 214, folder on Puerto Rico.

<sup>36</sup>Krug to Truman, July 16, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104. Another copy of the letter appears in LC, Krug Papers, Correspondence, Official Letters, July 16, 1946; and in El Mundo, July 19, 1946.



<sup>37</sup>Memorandum from Braden to Acheson and Byrnes, July 22, 1946, NA, File 811c. 01/1-1-45.

<sup>38</sup>Early to Connelly, July 18, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File 400, Puerto Rico. See also El Mundo, July 20, 25, 1946.

<sup>39</sup>Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1946, Washington, U.S. Printing Office, 1962, Press Conference of July 25, 1946, p. 355. See also New York Times, July 26, 1946; and El Mundo, July 26, 1946.

<sup>40</sup>Krug's Press Conference, July 25, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-68; El Mundo, July 26, 1946.

<sup>41</sup>Tugwell to Truman, July 30, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico. Another copy of this letter appears in NA, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>42</sup>El Mundo, July 26, 1946.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Muñoz to Arnold, July 25, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104

<sup>45</sup>El Mundo, July 26, 1946.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., July 27, 1946.

<sup>47</sup>Most of these messages appear in TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico, June-December 1946; and NA, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>48</sup>Muñoz to Arnold, July 25, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104; Muñoz and Susoni to Hayden, July 25, 1946, NA, RG 46, File Sen. 79A-F28, 214, folder on Puerto Rico.

<sup>49</sup>El Mundo, August 1, 1946.

<sup>50</sup>Muñoz to Krug, July 29, 1946, NA, RG 126, 9-8-104. See also Muñoz to Truman, July 29, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico.

<sup>51</sup>Connelly to Muñoz, August 8, 1946, TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico. The documentation related to the preparation of the message appears in NA, RG 126 9-8-104.

<sup>52</sup>El Mundo, September 4, 1946.

<sup>53</sup>Copies of the address appear in NA, RG 126, 9-8-104; and in El Mundo, September 4, 1946.

<sup>54</sup>Copies in NA, RG 126, 9-8-104; El Mundo, September 4, 1986.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Report of Ambassador to Cuba R. Henry Norweb (he was chosen to represent the Department of State at the inaugural ceremonies) to the Secretary of State, September 6, 1946, RG 126, 9-8-104.

<sup>57</sup>El Mundo, September 4, 1946.

<sup>58</sup>Memorandum from Stevenson to Barber, Trueblood and Briggs, September 12, 1946, RG 59, File 811c. 01/1-145.

<sup>59</sup>José Trías Monge, Historia consitutucional de Puerto Rico, 3 vols.; Río Piedras, Editorial Universitaria, 1980-1982, II, p. 314.

<sup>60</sup>El Mundo, January 4, 6, 11, 14, 15, 16, 27, 29, 30, 1946. See also the report sent to Senator Hugh Butler by Muñoz and Fernós on the politico-economic situation of the island, January 21, 1947, NA, RG 46, File Sen. 80A-F10, 216, folder on Puerto Rico.

<sup>61</sup>TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, President's Secretary's File, President's Appointment File, January 23, 1947. El Mundo, January 24, 1946.

<sup>62</sup>Antonio Fernós-Isern, Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico: Antecedentes, creación y desarrollo hasta la época presente, Río Piedras, Editorial Universitaria, 1974, p. 70; El Mundo, February 8, 9, 1947.

<sup>63</sup>El Mundo, December 23, 1946; January 4, 6, 14, 15, 19, 20, 27, 1947.

<sup>64</sup>Trías Monge, Historia constitucional de Puerto Rico, II, pp. 314-315.

<sup>65</sup>Fernós-Isern, Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico: Antecedentes, creación y desarrollo hasta la época presente, p. 72.

<sup>66</sup>El Mundo, January 27, February 12, 1947.

<sup>67</sup>The five Senators were: Hugh Butler, (R., Nebraska); Guy Cordon, (R., Oregon); Zales N. Ecton, (R., Montana); George W. Malone, (R., Montana) and George C. O'Mahoney, (D., Wyoming). The representatives were: Fred L. Crawford, (R., Michigan); William A. Dawson, (R., Utah); Wesley A. D'Ewart, (D., West Virginia); Edward H. Jenison (R., Illinois); Charles H. Russell, (R., Nevada); John C. Sanborn, (R., Idaho) and Dean P. Taylor, (R., New York). El Mundo, February 12, 1947.

<sup>68</sup>El Mundo, February 24, 1947.

<sup>69</sup>See Butler's report on the trip, February 24, 1947, NA, RG 46, File Sen. 80A-F10, 216, "Puerto Rico trip,"; El Mundo, February 19, 21, 24, 25, 27, 1947.

<sup>70</sup>El Mundo, March 3, 1947.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., March 5, 1947.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., March 5, 1947.

<sup>73</sup>Congressional Record, 80th Congress, first session, pp. 4183, 4478. El Mundo, March 10, 15, 17; April 22, 30; May 3, 1947.

74S. 1184, 80th Congress, first session.

75El Mundo, May 8, 11, 17, 1947.

76Ibid., May 14.

77Gardner to Welch, May 19, 1947, NA, RG 126, 9-8-68. Another copy appears in RG 48, 9-8-14.

78Hearings before the Sub-Committee on Territorial and Insular Possessions of the Committee on Public Lands, House of Representatives, 80th Congress, first session on H. R. 3309. A bill to amend the Organic Act of Puerto Rico, May 19, 1947, p. 3.

79Ibid., p. 4

80Ibid

81Ibid., pp. 8-15.

82Ibid., pp. 8-29.

83Ibid., pp. 3-37.

84Most of this documentation appears in NA, RG 126, 9-8-68.

85Hearings on H. R. 3309, pp. 37-56.

86Ibid., pp. 57-58.

87El Mundo, May 21, 23, 1947.

88House Report No. 455, 80th Congress, first session.

89Ibid., pp. 3-4.

90El Mundo, May 24, 27, 1947.

91Ibid., June 3, 1947.

92Ibid., June 5, 1947

93Ibid., June 14, 16, 1947.

94 Muñoz to Chapman, June 14, 1947, NA, RG 126, 9-8-14.

95Ibid.

96LC, Krug Papers, Conference Record, June 16, 1947.

97Congressional Record, 80 th Congress, first session, pp. 70-79;  
Fernós-Isern, Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico; Antecedentes, creación y desarrollo, p. 72.

<sup>98</sup>Fernós-Isern, Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico: pp. 74-75; El Mundo, June 20, 1947.

<sup>99</sup>Congressional Record, 80th Congress, first session, pp. 7077-7079.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., pp. 7079.

<sup>101</sup>El Mundo, June 17, 1947.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., May 16, 17, 1947.

<sup>103</sup>Krug to Butler, June 23, 1947, NA, RG, 46, 80th Congress, File on S. 1184; El Mundo, May 22, June 23, 1947.

<sup>104</sup>El Mundo, June 23, 1947.

<sup>105</sup>The first three proposals are discussed in El Mundo, June 27, 28; July 3, 1947. The documentation for the fourth one appears in NA, RG 126, 9-8-68.

<sup>106</sup>Senate Report No. 422, 80th Congress 1rst session, pp. 1-2.

<sup>107</sup>This is ironic, for previously Senator Taft had expressed his desire of granting the Puerto Ricans the right to elect their governor, Puerto Rico Bulletin, vol. II, no. 4, February 15, 1947, p. 13; El Mundo, February 2, 1947.

<sup>108</sup>Fernós-Isern, Estado Libre Asociado, p. 77.

<sup>109</sup>El Mundo, July 8, 14, 15, 18, 22, 24, 27, 1947.

<sup>110</sup>Muñoz to Krug, July 21, 1947; Muñoz to Chapman, July 21, 1947, NA, RG 126, 9-8-68. Muñoz to Cordon, July 22, 1947, RG 46, Docket 310, envelope on H. R. 3309.

<sup>111</sup>Estado Libre, p. 77.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-79; Congressional Record, 80th Congress, 1rst session, pp. 10389, 10402.

<sup>113</sup>Congressional Record, 80th Congress, 1rst session, p. 10402. Fernós-Isern said that it was 12:05 in Fernós-Isern's Estado, pp. 78-79. A El Mundo reporter said it was 12:10, El Mundo, July 28, 1947.

<sup>114</sup>Douglas McGregor to James A. Webb, July 30, 1947; Chapman to Webb, July 31, 1947, TL, Bill File, H. R. 1730-H. R. 4168.

<sup>115</sup>Webb to M.C Latta, July 31, 1947, TL, Bill File, H. R. 1730- H. R. 4168.

<sup>116</sup>Chapman to Truman, July 30, 1947. TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico. Another copy is in NA, RG 126, 9-8-68.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Chapman radio address, August, 1947, NA, RG 126, 9-8-68.

119El Mundo, July 29, 30, 1947. See related information on the issues of August 12 and September 11.

120Ibid., July 29, 31, 1947.

121Ibid.

122Chapman radio address, August 5, 1947, NA, RG 126, 0-8-68.

123The documentation for this and the other trips appears in NA, RG 126, 9-8-111; and in TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico. See also El Mundo, February 10, 20, 22, 23, 1947.

124Copies of this address appear in NA, RG 126, 9-8-111; and TL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Official File, 400, Puerto Rico. See also El Mundo, February 22, 1947.

125The PPD 1948 platform appears in Partido Popular Democrático Compilación de Programas, 1940-1964.

126Bolívar Pagán, Historia de los partidos políticos puertorriqueños, 1898-1956, 2 vols. San Juan, Librería Campos, 1959 II, pp. 262-273; El Mundo, September 30, October 17, 1947; May 17, 18, 21; June 7, 19; July 3, 5, 6; August 16, 20, 1948.

127Pagán, Historia de los partidos políticos puertorriqueños, 1898-1956, pp. 75-77;

128El Mundo, June 19, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29, 1948. National Party Platforms, 1840-1972, compiled by Donald Bruce Johnson and Kirk H. Porter Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1973, p. 453.

129For the official results see C. H. Terry, Superintendente General de Elecciones, Estadísticas de las elecciones celebradas en Puerto Rico el 2 de noviembre de 1948 y los nombres de los candidatos con el número de votos recibidos según resultado de escrutinio de dichas elecciones practicado por la Junta Insular de Elecciones.