

109th Anniversary of El Grito de Lares--The Path of Armed Struggle to Liberate Puerto Rico from the Colonial Yoke

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September 23 is a day of great significance for the Puerto Rican people's struggle for national liberation and independence. On that date in 1868, one hundred and nine years ago, the Puerto Rican people took up arms against the Spanish colonialists in a heroic insurrection known as El Grito de Lares, launching their great struggle for national liberation. Today, the Puerto Rican people languish under the rule of a new colonial slavemaster, U.S. imperialism and the Puerto Rican people's struggle against colonial tyranny continues. The heroic El Grito de Lares uprising has not lost its significance and the task of waging the armed struggle for the liberation of Puerto Rico from colonial bondage is still on the agenda.

EL GRITO DE LARES

For three hundred years the people of Puerto Rico suffered under Spanish colonialism. Under Spanish rule, the Puerto Rican people suffered the most brutal despotism. The Spanish colonialists carried out genocide against the native people of the island. Africans were brought to Puerto Rico to be bound as chattel slaves to the Spanish masters. The Spanish colonialists cruelly exploited the working people of Puerto Rico and plundered its rich natural resources. Against the tyranny

of Spanish colonialism, the Puerto Rican people waged countless struggles, the most glorious being El Grito de Lares.

El Grito de Lares was led by the Puerto Rican patriot, Dr. Ramon Emeterio Betances. The Lares insurrection was part of a revolutionary plan that was to engulf the entire island of Puerto Rico. It was to have taken place simultaneously with the Cuban insurrection at El Grito de Yara and not before the month of October 1868. Revolutionary committees were formed throughout Puerto Rico in preparation. However, the Spanish colonial authorities discovered the plans for the insurrection. On learning that the Spanish had discovered the plans, 500 revolutionaries took up arms on September 23, and fought the colonialist forces in the city of Lares. By midnight, the revolutionary patriots had defeated the colonial army at Lares and had captured the city. They marched under a banner inscribed with the slogan "Muerto o Libertad! Viva Puerto Rico Libre!" ("Liberty or Death! Long Live Free Puerto Rico!"). The revolutionaries formed a provisional government, proclaimed the Republic of Puerto Rico and declared the end of Spanish colonial rule and the abolition of slavery. The heroic insurrection at Lares was suppressed by the Spanish colonialists after the Spanish brought in reinforcements. The armed insurrection lasted one day, but El Grito de Lares had a great impact on Puerto Rico, its people and its history.

U.S. IMPERIALISM STEPS INTO SHOES OF SPANISH COLONIALISTS

By the end of the 19th century, Spanish colonialism in Puerto Rico was badly shaken and the Puerto Rican people's struggle had reached a new high level. In March of 1897, Puerto Rican revolutionaries again took up arms

in the Yauco rebellion against Spanish colonialism. But by this time, the Puerto Rican people were to be confronted by an even fiercer enemy, U.S. imperialism. From an early date, the Puerto Rican people opposed the colonial designs which the U.S. imperialists had on their country. Expressing the lofty aspirations of the Puerto Rican people, Dr. Betances said: "I do not want a colony, neither of Spain, nor of the United States. I want my country free, independent and sovereign". When U.S. troops invaded Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898, they were met by the armed resistance of the Puerto Rican people.

By 1898, the capitalist system in the U.S. and the other capitalist countries had reached its last stage, the stage of imperialism, of capitalism in decay. U.S. imperialism had embarked on the path of seizing colonies and establishing spheres of influence, markets for the export of capital and commodities and sources of raw materials. The U.S. invasion of Puerto Rico was part of the Spanish-American War, the world's first imperialist war to redivide the world among the "great powers". In the name of "liberating" the Spanish colonies from Spanish despotism, the U.S. established its savage colonial rule over Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam and semi-colonial rule over Cuba. (In this same period, the U.S. imperialists also seized Hawaii and part of the country of Colombia, which became the country of Panama and the Canal Zone.) The U.S. imperialists seized these rich islands as a source of super-profits, to be extracted from the land and labor of the peoples. At the same time, the strategic positions of these islands facilitated the plunder of Latin America and Asia by U.S. imperialism, providing military bases for aggression against the oppressed peoples and for rivalry with the other imperialist powers for spheres of influence. Spanish colonialism was losing its grip on Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines, and the U.S. stepped into its

shoes. This subjugation of tens of millions of people, accomplished before and during the Spanish-American War, was a big part of U.S. imperialism's wild schemes and drive for world domination.

In 1898, U.S. imperialism established its military rule in Puerto Rico, and has kept it under its colonial heel ever since. In 1900, the U.S. Congress passed the Foraker Act, which "legalized" Puerto Rico's colonial status and established a civilian U.S. colonial regime. In 1917, supposedly to "liberalize" Puerto Rico's status, Congress passed the Jones Act, which deprived the Puerto Rican people of their Puerto Rican citizenship and forced them to become "citizens" of the U.S. In 1950, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 600, providing for the election of a "Puerto Rican" governor to administer a phony "constitutional government" to be called the "Commonwealth of Puerto Rico". In 1952, the U.S. colonial authorities imposed the so-called "Commonwealth" or "Free Associated State" status upon Puerto Rico, while maintaining all the colonial provisions intact. Today, Washington controls the political and economic life of Puerto Rico. The U.S. imperialist state machine, with its courts, FBI, CIA and the military (U.S. military bases occupy 13% of the territory of Puerto Rico), are direct instruments of U.S. colonial control over Puerto Rico.

U.S. COLONIALISM HAS BROUGHT DISASTER TO THE PUERTO RICAN NATION

The spokesmen for U.S. imperialism allege that Puerto Rico's "special relationship" with the U.S. has brought Puerto Rico great "advantages", and that Puerto Rico has performed economic "miracles". In fact, U.S. colonialism has brought disaster to the Puerto Rican people. The

Puerto Rican nation has been subjugated and crushed economically, politically, militarily and culturally. The sole purpose of U.S. imperialism keeping Puerto Rico under its colonial yoke is to exploit and plunder the land and labor of the Puerto Rican people to the maximum.

Puerto Rico has been converted into a sweatshop for the U.S. monopolies and a U.S. military base. The economic "miracle" which the U.S. imperialists advertise is the high rate of profit which the New York finance capitalists realize on their nearly \$10 billion of investments in the island, which is three times the rate of profit realized on investments in the U.S. The devastation of Puerto Rico's agriculture by the U.S. imperialists, making Puerto Rico dependent on U.S. foodstuffs, has brought severe hardships to the masses. The peasantry, which once made up the bulk of the population, has been driven in large numbers into the slums of the cities of Puerto Rico and the U.S. The wages of the workers in Puerto Rico are one-third the wage levels in the U.S., while the cost of living is 25% above the cost of living in New York City. Unemployment is at extreme levels. One-third of Puerto Rico's population has been forced to emigrate to the U.S. Once in the U.S., the Puerto Rican immigrants face vicious racial discrimination and oppression, forced into the worst jobs, the worst housing and suffer high unemployment. U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico has not brought any "advantages" to the Puerto Rican people, only poverty and ruin.

THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE HAVE NEVER BEEN RECONCILED TO U.S. COLONIAL SLAVERY

The heroic Puerto Rican people have never been reconciled to U.S. colonial slavery. The history of the

Puerto Rican people is a history of struggle for national liberation and independence.

During the 1930's, the Nationalist Party and its leader, Pedro Albizu Campos, led the Puerto Rican people in major struggles against U.S. colonialism. The Nationalist Party was not a proletarian party and hence although it fought the colonialists it could not lead the struggle through to the end. In cooperation with the communists, the Nationalist Party led the 1934 Sugar Harvest Strike which was aimed at U.S. imperialist control of the sugar industry. The numerous struggles of this period were suppressed by the cruelest persecution and reactionary violence by the U.S. colonialist authorities.

On October 30, 1950, Puerto Rican patriots led by Albizu Campos and the Nationalist Party, exposed the colonialist fraud of the so-called "Commonwealth" status of Puerto Rico and rose up in an insurrection to oppose it. Patriots in Jayuya and other places took up arms and revolted against the colonial authorities. In desperation, the U.S. colonialists called out over 4,000 National Guardsmen, activated four fighter planes and attacked the insurrection with tanks and heavy weapons. This insurrection showed the undying determination of the Puerto Rican people to fight and sacrifice for their liberation and was a big blow to the U.S. colonial rule.

In the 60's and 70's the resistance of the Puerto Rican people to U.S. colonial rule has grown stronger. During the U.S. imperialist war of aggression called "plebiscite", held under the gun and the complete control of the U.S. colonialists, which supposedly shows the Puerto Rican peoples' "choice" to be colonial slaves of U.S. imperialism. They have set up the "Commonwealth of Puerto Rico" in order to create the illusion that U.S. imperialism's colony

of Puerto Rico has entered a "free association" with the U.S. And in recent years, they have been pushing their "statehood" fraud: that allegedly by becoming one of the states of the U.S., the colonial oppression of Puerto Rico will disappear. However, statehood would not relieve the savage colonial oppression of Puerto Rico in the least, but would further intensify it. The state of Puerto Rico would be no less of a colony than the Portuguese African colonies were with the status of "province of Portugal". All the colonialist deception of the U.S. imperialists will only arouse fiercer struggle on the part of the Puerto Rican people.

THE "STATEHOOD" FRAUD AND ALL THE MANEUVERS OF THE U.S. COLONIALISTS WILL NEVER SUBDUCE THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE

The long history of struggle for independence by the Puerto Rican people has forced the U.S. colonialists to resort to countless deceptive maneuvers. Periodically the colonial authorities organize a so-called "plebescite" under the gun and the complete control of the U.S. colonialists, which supposedly shows the Puerto Rican peoples' "choice" to be colonial slaves of U.S. imperialism. They have set up the "Commonwealth of Puerto Rico" in order to create the illusion that U.S. imperialism's colony of Puerto Rico has entered a "free association" with the U.S. And in recent years, they have been pushing their "statehood" fraud: that allegedly by becoming one of the states of the U.S., the colonial oppression of Puerto Rico will disappear. However, statehood would not relieve the savage colonial oppression of Puerto Rico in the least, but would further intensify it. The state of Puerto Rico would be no less of a colony than the Portuguese African colonies were with the status of "province of Portugal". All the colonialist deception of the U.S. imperialists will only

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ONLY THROUGH ARMED STRUGGLE WILL THE
PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE WIN NATIONAL
LIBERATION

The U.S. imperialists will never give up their hold on Puerto Rico without a desperate fight. Any idea that Puerto Rico can win its independence by electing certain officials and then negotiating independence is an illusion. Look at the new Panama Canal treaties, which have not brought Panama's sovereignty over its own territory one bit closer.

The heroic example of El Grito de Lares shows that the colonialists must be defeated on the battlefield. Puerto Rico will not be liberated by the United Nations, the Cubans or anyone else, only by the armed might of the working masses of Puerto Rico themselves. Those Puerto Rican patriots who have boldly taken up the armed struggle against the colonial oppressors have been shown the greatest support by the Puerto Rican people. It is not lack of support which has caused the failure of these attempts, but that they have lacked the necessary consistent leadership which only the proletariat through its Marxist-Leninist party, can ensure. Due to the influence of Browderite and then Khrushchovite revisionism, the Puerto Rican Communist Party did not provide such leadership and at a certain period it degenerated and capitulated to and collaborated with the U.S. colonialists. Thus, the task of liberating Puerto Rico from the barbaric colonial yoke is still on the agenda, and only by taking up the armed struggle in the glorious tradition of El Grito de Lares will this be accomplished.

The struggle of the Puerto Rican people for national liberation is a big support for the struggle of the American working class and oppressed people against our "own" government. The seizure of Puerto Rico by the U.S. imperialists was one of its first steps in building its vast colonial and neo-colonial empire and the liberation of Puerto Rico will be a big blow to U.S. imperialism. The U.S. working class and people are united with the Puerto Rican people in struggle against our common enemy. On the occasion of the 109th anniversary of heroic El Grito de Lares, The Workers' Advocate hails the Puerto Rican people's struggle for national liberation and complete independence.

LONG LIVE THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE'S
STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION AND
INDEPENDENCE!

U.S. IMPERIALISM, GET OUT OF PUERTO RICO!
End.