

VIVA PUERTO RICO LIBRE!

By ALBERTO MOREAU

The inhuman U.S. military operations on the island of Culebra, which endangers the lives of its inhabitants, once again bring before world attention the fundamental question of Puerto Rican independence.

It is indeed outrageous, especially in this age of world-wide national liberation, to hear and read cynical comments and so-called analyses justifying these actions. Reactionary justifications even disregard the mild protests by liberals who oppose the operations on simple humane grounds (see the New York Times of July 10 and the subsequent letters to the editor.) It is obvious that the cardinal question in the debate is by-passed, that is, that Culebra is part of U.S. imperialist policy to keep Puerto Rico in bondage and control the area as a strategic location for intervention in Latin America. The military behave as if Culebra and all of Puerto Rico were God-given property to the all-mighty industrial-military complex.

In commemorating Grito de Lares (the cry for independence, September 23, 1868), under the banner of "Viva Puerto Rico Libre," North Americans must pay tribute to the past and present heroes and fighters for liberation. Never are we to forget Lenin's teachings on the responsibilities of the working people of the oppressor nation in support of the oppressed.

In this issue, articles discuss the economic, political and social forms of U.S. imperialist colonial domination of Puerto Rico. Here we wish to discuss briefly and combat two false ideas being daily inculcated into our minds which, in one way or another, aid in perpetuating the state of bondage of the island and its people.

It is constantly propagated that Puerto Ricans are rapidly being "absorbed" and becoming part of the United States of North America. This is nothing but an impossible supposition and a chauvinist-racist assertion used as a pretext to deny them the right as a nation to decide their own destiny.

The other fantastic idea is that Puerto Rico is not part of the family of na-

tions of Ibero-America, traditionally, culturally and otherwise. Both ideas are interrelated and serve the specific purpose of imperialist domination of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican minority in this country.

The revolutionary traditional ties between Latin America and Puerto Rico are well known. Puerto Rico was from the beginning part and parcel of the Latin American rebellions for liberation from Spain. Ramon Emeterio Betances (1827-1899), considered the father of Puerto Rico, fearing that his country might fall under U.S. tutelage, sent a message from his death bed:

"I want Puerto Rico to be neither a colony of Spain nor of the United States."

He, like all Latin American liberators conceived the plan for an Antillean Confederation (Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, etc.) As the struggle for the abolition of Black slavery was raging in Latin America, Betances never separated it from that of independence.

Simon Bolivar exercised great influence in the Caribbean islands. At the 1826 Panama Conference initiated by him, Bolivar proposed an expeditionary force to liberate Cuba and Puerto Rico. Guided by the expansionist Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. delegation vehemently opposed it. Thereupon, Bolivar made the significant prophecy confirmed by subsequent events:

"The United States seems destined to plague America with miseries in the name of liberty."

Eugenio Maria de Hostos (1839-1903), considered as the ideologist of Puerto Rican independence, travelled extensively in Latin America. He was invited to Chile in 1885, and was in Venezuela and other countries to cement the unity required for the freedom of his beloved country. In many respects, Hostos was more advanced than some of his contemporaries. His social ideal was independence that will guarantee "work for all," that everyone should be involved "in production and consumption." His program for victory over foreign domination included anti-feudalism. He wrote: "a few proprietors among a multitude of proprietors of nothing, a few rich in a multitude of

air consumers.”

Anti-slavery rebellions continued for decades throughout Latin America, and those in Puerto Rico, of course, were part of them. Between 1811 and 1856, slavery was abolished in Colombia and Venezuela. Puerto Rico saw slavery's end in 1873, Cuba in 1883. A close study of the causes for the persistence of slavery in Puerto Rico and Cuba reveals the influence of the United States pro-slavery forces on those of the islands.

Thus, anyone slightly acquainted with the past history of Latin America will reject the chauvinist idea of separating Puerto Rico from its sister nations and peoples.

Similarly with regard to linguistic and cultural ties binding all Latin American nations while each bears specific national characteristics. The Nicaraguan Ruben Dario, the superb Chilean Pablo Neruda and the incisive Afro-Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen are part of

Puerto Rican letters and their works are cherished by the people. And Puerto Rican writers and poets, folklore and dances are in the Latin America nomenclature. We mention Luis Llorens Torres, Luis Pales Matos, Julia de Burgos from among the long list of illustrious men and women we are forced to omit here because of space.

Puerto Rican culture today bravely resists the intrusion of “Americanization” and “absorption.” It is growing and developing in combat with the pernicious foreign imperialist influences. This is having its reflection in the United States as the Puerto Rican minority is winning the just demand of bi-lingualism in New York and the teaching of Puerto Rican history and culture in public schools and colleges.

Puerto Rico today takes a meritorious place in the cultural map of Latin America, having its roots in the heart of the Antilles.

Viva Puerto Rico Libre!