

THE FALLACY THAT THE U.S. FREED

PUERTO RICO

By William Vila

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History text books contain the fallacy that the United States, out of the "generosity" of its democratic heart fought Spain in 1898 to "free" Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines. This fallacy is particularly dangerous at this time since it is utilized by spokesmen of United States imperialism to camouflage its military aggression, as in Korea, and plans for world conquest.

The New York Times of September 10, 1950, entitled an article written by Senator Douglas as follows: "Democracy's Answer to the 'Big Lie' - Senator Douglas cites United States and U.S.S.R. history to show we work for peace and oppose imperialism."

Let's look at United States history and see if the Senator's claim is true.

From its very infancy the ruling class of the United States entertained ideas of expanding into Latin America. This was expressed even prior to the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine when Secretary of State Adams asserted to the United States minister to Spain (April 28, 1823) that "the annexation of Cuba to our federal republic will be indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself." (1) This explains why the United States was opposed to the liberation of Cuba and Puerto Rico by the other Latin American countries. At the time that the liberating armies of Bolivar had defeated Spain the Congress of Panama was called in 1826. On the agenda of this inter-American meeting was a proposal "to consider the conditions of the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico; (and) the expediency of a combined military force to free them from the Spanish yoke...." They knew that their newly won independence was endangered as long as Spain continued to subjugate their sister nations in the Caribbean. But the United States official policy opposed this plan and instructed her delegates to the Congress that she "could not see Cuba's freedom guaranteed by either European or American powers."

As a matter of fact, in 1825 the United States authorized its minister to Spain to reveal to the Spanish government this country's interest in Cuba and Puerto Rico: "The United States are satisfied with the present condition of those islands in the hands of Spain, and with their ports open to our commerce, as they are now. This government desires no political change of that condition....This country prefers that Cuba and Puerto Rico should remain dependent on Spain." (2) Thus it appears that the United States not only didn't "free" Puerto Rico and Cuba but actually prevented the total completion of the liberation of the people of Latin America. The rulers of the United States wanted Spain to maintain its foothold in the Caribbean so that at the right moment the United States would wrest it from Spain and convert it into a beachhead to spearhead its conquest of Latin America.

Twenty years later in 1846, the United States attacked Mexico and later annexed half of its territory. This brutal attack against Mexico was no whim of the moment, but a well calculated plan to expand U.S. control to the whole of the Western Hemisphere. The plan was considered in 1823 by President Monroe's cabinet when they were discussing the proposal of Great Britain which invited the United States to join with them in an Anglo-American declaration against any further colonization of Latin America. According to John Quincy

Adams, then Secretary of State in Monroe's Administration. "The object of Canning (British Secretary of State) appears to have been to obtain some public pledge from the Government of the United States, ostensibly against the forcible interference of the Holy Alliance between Spain and South America; but really or especially against the acquisition to the United States themselves of any part of the Spanish American possessions. Mr. Calhoun (Secretary of War) inclined to giving a discretionary power to Mr. Rush (United States Minister to Britain) to join in a declaration against the interference of the Holy Alliance if necessary, even if it should pledge us not to take Cuba or the province of Texas.....Without entering now into the enquiry of the expediency of our annexing Texas or Cuba, we should at least keep ourselves free to act, as emergencies may arise, and not tie ourselves down to any principle which might afterwards be brought to bear against ourselves." (3)

But the appetites of the expansionists was not to halt at the Rio Grande. The United States was scarcely finished devouring the northern provinces of Mexico when the discussion for the next steps began to take place. The spokesmen for "manifest destiny" had not learned to couch their plans in the demagogic forms used by the present day imperialists. Thus it was that Congressman Davis from the state of Mississippi felt free to predict openly in 1859, "...We may expand so as to include the whole world, Mexico, Central America, Cuba, the West India Islands, and even England and France (we) might annex without inconvenience of prejudice, allowing them their local Legislature to regulate their local affairs in their own way. And this, Sir, is the mission of this Republic and its ultimate destiny." (4) Later, in 1867, Secretary of State Seward boasted: "Give me only this assurance, that there never be an unlawful resistance by armed force to the...United States, and give me fifty, forty, thirty more years of life, and I will give you the possession of the American continent and control of the world." (6) Now the United States pretends that its policy has always been based upon "Freedom and Justice."

Some apologists for imperialism argue that Puerto Rico has now more freedom under the United States occupation than it enjoyed before 1898. They say this to hide the fact that, as a result of their struggle against Spain, the Puerto Rican people were on the verge of independence at the time of United States intervention. In 1868 the Republic of Borinquen was proclaimed in a revolt that was crushed shortly afterwards. Despite this setback the movement for independence gained momentum and united with the Cubans in a concerted effort to free both islands. They decided to free Cuba first. Then in 1895 the Cubans, with the aid of Puerto Ricans (2500 participated) and other Latin Americans, started their revolution. Three years later the United States stepped in and hypocritically pledged to the Puerto Rican people "...protection to you and your properties, exalting and imposing on you the guarantees and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government." These "blessings" include the right of Truman to send Puerto Ricans to Korea to fight for the "freedom" of Koreans. And yet Puerto Ricans can't vote for the United States President or Congress which sends their sons to die in Korea.

The contempt for the intelligence of the American people expressed by the ruling circles in this country is seen by the editorial of the July 7, 1951 issue of the New York Times which had the gall to point to Puerto Rico as "proof" that the United States is not imperialistic. "Puerto Rico is providing a notable example of enlightened control by a governing power. The whole of Latin America has been watching the Puerto Rican experiment with admiration. As evidence of 'American imperialism' Puerto Rico will stand examination by our harshest critics." But three months later the United States policies in

Puerto Rico underwent severe "examination" by its "harshest critics" -- the Puerto Rican people -- in the form of a three day revolt led by the Nationalists. Thus was exposed the "enlightened control" that the United States had in store for the rest of the world. The support given Puerto Rico by the people of Mexico and Cuba symbolized the "admiration" that Latin America had for the United States policies in Puerto Rico.

Is this the history of the United States to which Senator Douglas was referring, to "show we work for peace and oppose imperialism"? Surely not.

Thus; history refutes Senator Douglas.

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SOURCES: "The Fallacy That Puerto Rico Benefits From U.S. Control"

- (1) America's Colonial Experiment, by Julius W. Pratt, N.Y. 1951, p.282
- (2) The Progress of Puerto Rico, U.S.A. by Government Development Bank for Puerto Rico, p.13
- (3) N.Y.Times, October 5, 1952
- (4) Facts For Businessmen, by Puerto Rico Economic Development Administration, p.3-4
- (5) Foreign Affairs, July, 1951, "Population and Progress in Puerto Rico," by Kingsley Davis, p.633
- (6) Puerto Rico - A Bulletin of the Office of Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C. May, 1949
- (7) Theodore Roosevelt: Colonial Policies of the United States, N.Y. 1937, p. 101

SOURCES: "The Fallacy That the U.S. Freed Puerto Rico"

- (1) House Executive Documents, 32 Congress, 1st Session, no.121, p.7
- (2) American State Papers-Documents-Legislative & Executive of the Congress of the United States, Commencing March 4, 1789 and ending March 3, 1859.
- (3) The Diary of John Quincy Adams - 1794-1845, p.301-2
- (4) Congressional Globe, 35 Congress, 2 Session, p.705, Feb.2, 1859
- (5) Baily, J., A Diplomatic History of American People, p.392.