

P U E R T O R I C O

General Information and Recent Developments.

Puerto Rico was discovered by Columbus on his second voyage to the New World. On November 19, 1493, he took possession of the island for Isabella, Queen of Castille, naming it San Juan Bautista.

In 1508, Juan Ponce de León, later to discover Florida (1513) began the process of colonization with a contingent of about 50 Spanish soldiers. He found the Boriquén Indians (a branch of the Arawaks) who inhabited the island a peaceful, friendly, agricultural people. Puerto Rico is still often called Borinquen after the Indians, and Puerto Ricans, Borinquenios or Boricuas. The name Puerto Rico was first given by the Spanish to the beautiful harbor and then to the settlement that has developed into the present capital city of San Juan. Some years later, a mapmaker erroneously reversed the names of the island and the city, and over the years the change was widely accepted and became official.

Puerto Rico was governed by Spain for about 400 years, chiefly valued as a naval outpost of the Spanish Empire. The island's economy functioned primarily for the benefit of a small, wealthy class. The great mass of the people were poverty-stricken, undernourished, and illiterate. The Indians disappeared as a distinct racial group early in Puerto Rico's history. Negro slaves were brought to the island by the Spanish, beginning in 1511. In 1873, slavery was abolished peacefully. The Spanish, Negroes and, to a lesser extent, Boriquén Indians constitute Puerto Rico's major racial heritage, although many other origins are represented to a small degree. The island's population today is about 20% Negro.

The island was ceded to the United States on December 10, 1898, as a result of the Spanish-American War, thus fulfilling Theodore Roosevelt's goal of securing a defense bulwark for the Panama Canal. It was not until then that programs of public health, education and other measures to improve living conditions were introduced. However, very slow progress was made in most fields. While a number of constructive Federal programs, such as public health, were extended to Puerto Rico, the United States seemed to show little real understanding of the island's over-all needs and problems until recently.

United States citizenship was extended to Puerto Ricans by the Jones Act, passed by Congress in 1917. The island's governors, however, were appointed by the President until 1948, when amendments to the act made the post elective. Luis Muñoz Marín then became the first Puerto Rican elected governor by the people of Puerto Rico, taking office on January 1, 1949.

As recently as 1940, Puerto Rico was regarded by many as a land without hope. Often called "the stricken land" it was an underdeveloped area typical of many others throughout the world - the fruits of over four centuries of colonial rule. It bore all the characteristics of underdevelopment - low wages, chronic mass unemployment, poor standard of living, and high disease and death rates - and was almost entirely dependent upon one crop, sugar cane.

Most Puerto Ricans regard 1940 as the beginning of the island's modern era. In that year, a new political party was elected to power in the Puerto Rican legislature - the Popular Democratic Party - with the island's former governor, Luis Muñoz Marín as its leader. This marked the beginning of Puerto Rico's dramatic uphill struggle for progress, which Muñoz has named "Operation Bootstrap".

Together with the planning of Operation Bootstrap came the beginnings of a creative solution to the age-old problem of statehood versus independence, a solution realized 12 years later, when Puerto Rico became a self-governing Commonwealth.

On July 25, 1952, Puerto Rico ceased to be a United States' possession and became the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico). The transformation proceeded in accordance with a compact between the United States and Puerto Rico. A constitution, drafted by Puerto Rico, was approved by Congress and by overwhelming votes of the Puerto Rican people in a series of referendums.

The Constitution of Puerto Rico is patterned after the Constitution of the United States. Besides a Bill of Rights, it contains provisions guaranteeing minority parties a mini-

imum representation in the island's legislature (by increasing its size), even if they do not actually elect a single member by popular vote.

As neither an independent nation nor a constituent state of the United States, Puerto Rico is self-governing in local affairs while preserving economic and political ties beneficial both to the United States and to the island.

PUERTO RICO'S MAJOR PROBLEMS

Overpopulation:

Puerto Rico's population increased from less than 45,000 in 1765 to 2,281,000 in 1957. The island has a population density 12 times that of the United States, and is more densely populated than either Japan or the United Kingdom. (U.S. population is 57 persons per square mile; Puerto Rico's is 664 persons per square mile.) It has been estimated that nearly the entire world population would have to live in the continental United States to achieve a similar degree of density to Puerto Rico.

During the last few years the population pressure has been greatly accentuated by a dramatic decline in the death rate (the result of progress in public health and improved living standards), accompanied by a much smaller decline in the birth rate.

Lack of natural resources:

Only about one half of Puerto Rico's 3,435 square miles is arable. To date, research has failed to discover any mineral resources of sufficient quality or quantity to merit commercial exploitation. A great stir has been caused recently by the discovery of two areas where investigation may indicate copper mining to be feasible.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS

Operation Bootstrap

The program's major goal is an economy based on diversified manufacturing industries-- the only means whereby a small, densely populated area can effect real improvement in its standard of living.

Delayed by World War II, the program did not really get under way until the postwar years. The Puerto Rican Government's first efforts consisted in building and operating factories. Experience showed, however, that the necessary capital requirements and technical and managerial skills could best be obtained through private financing and operation, with the Government supplying technical assistance and financial incentive through 100% tax exemption for a limited period.

Since Puerto Rico has no vote in United States national elections or in Congress, Federal taxes have never applied to the island. In addition, Puerto Rico will exempt a new industry from all local corporate taxes for a period of ten years, provided it is not a "runaway firm" from the United States. No inducement is offered to any firm that closes a factory anywhere in the mainland in order to open one in Puerto Rico.

By November 1957, Puerto Rico had over 500 new factories in operation, employing some 40,000 workers.

In the spring of 1956, Puerto Rico passed a historic milestone. For the first time in its history, income from manufacturing surpassed income from agriculture. For the fiscal year 1956-57, manufacturing income totaled \$213,000,000, while agriculture totaled \$152,000,000.

Puerto Rico's total net income increased from \$225,000,000 in 1939-40, to \$1,007,000,000 in 1956-57. On a per capita basis, income increased from \$121.- per person, to \$443.- Although still considerably below the United States (about one half the per capita income in Mississippi, our poorest State) Puerto Rico's level is the highest in the Caribbean area, and second highest in all of Latin America, exceeded only by Venezuela.

Between 1940 and 1956, the average annual income per family rose from \$660.- to \$2,400.- Allowing for the rise in the cost of living during this period, this means a real increase in family purchasing power of over 80%. Wage earners' family incomes have

increased even more rapidly than family incomes as a whole, showing that the working man is actively participating in the economic advances. Puerto Rico's goal is to match present United States living standards by 1975.

An important outgrowth of Puerto Rico's democratic development is the emergence of a middle class, changing the old colonial picture of only a small class of very rich, and a huge class of very poor, with no group in between.

PUBLIC HEALTH

During 1940-1957, Puerto Rico's annual death rate dropped from 18.4 deaths per 1,000 population to 7.0. During the same period, the infant mortality rate dropped from 113.4 per 1,000 live births to 51.4.

Although the infant mortality rate is still considerably above that of the United States (26.4 per 1,000 in 1957) the general death rate is lower. (7.0 as against 9.6 per 1,000 in the U.S.)

During 1940-1957, the birth rate also decreased - though much less rapidly than the death rate - from 38.5 births per 1,000 to 32.6. A continuing decrease is expected as social and economic conditions and educational facilities continue to improve and the small family ideal takes further root.

Studies of Puerto Rican families show that, as in other countries, family size decreases with increased income and education. For example, mothers with no schooling were found to have an average of 6.1 children; mothers who had attended school only a year or two, 5.0 children; mothers who had completed the 8th. grade, 3.4 children; mothers who had completed high school, 2.4 children. A similar relationship was found between family income and number of children.

In recent years, a notable increase has been noted in the public demand for information on birth control. The dissemination of such information has been legalized in the island, and it is provided on request by the public health centers throughout the Commonwealth. The Family Planning Association, a private organization affiliated with Planned Parenthood, is also conducting an active program of education in family planning.

Life expectancy at birth has increased from 46 years in 1940 to 68 years in 1955 (date of latest estimate), an average annual rise of 1.5 years. This is the most rapid rate of increase known anywhere in the world. Puerto Rico's life expectancy now compares creditably with that of the United States (70 years in 1955).

Dramatic advances in public health have been brought about by the establishment of clinics and hospitals throughout the island, immunization against preventable diseases, and construction of safe water supply and sewage disposal systems. The death rate from tuberculosis, for example, has been reduced by more than 87%, and malaria has been wiped out.

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Although the number of doctors and dentists is slowly reaching the point of fulfilling the island's needs, the recruitment of registered nurses continues to be a problem, as it is in the United States. This is partly because the island's customs still frown upon an unmarried woman ministering to the bodily needs of male patients - one of several factors which tend to give nursing a low social status.

EDUCATION

When the United States took over Puerto Rico in 1898, it attempted to remedy the lamentable lack of educational facilities. But the new system initiated by the Federal Government showed little understanding of, or respect for, the customs and needs of the Puerto Rican people. Except for a brief period from 1930 to 1936, English was the required language of instruction in all school subjects even though Spanish was and is the native language of the Puerto Rican. As a result, learning was greatly hampered and English became a hated symbol of colonialism. Moreover, even as recently as 1940, Puerto Rico's schools were able to accommodate only 51% of the school-age population. Thus, the system administered from Washington, although a notable improvement over the schools of the 19th century, was highly unsatisfactory.

The Congressional legislation enabling the Puerto Rican people to elect their own governor also permitted the governor to appoint a commissioner of education, responsible to him and

to the people, rather than to the Federal Government. This marked the beginning of a new and dynamic era in Puerto Rican education.

Spanish has been restored as the language in which school classes are taught, with English as a preferred subject from the fourth grade on, beginning with conversational English and proceeding to reading and writing. This step is designed to produce a citizenry educated in both languages, rather than illiterate in both - frequently the result of the previous system. In the spring of 1957 there were some 14,400 persons enrolled in adult English classes.

An estimated 35,000 persons are currently receiving some form of vocational training, in trades ranging from aircraft mechanics to practical nursing. Great stress has also been placed on facilities for adult education, such as evening high schools, community education programs, both in isolated rural areas and urban communities, and programs of vocational rehabilitation.

Founded in 1903, the University of Puerto Rico has grown steadily in physical plant, enrollment and academic standing. Not only is it one of the showplaces on the island, with buildings and campus of outstanding beauty; it also ranks as one of the top institutions of higher education in Latin America. Its 19 colleges, divisions and schools are attended by nearly 20,000 students (compared to less than 5,000 in 1940) many of whom work during the day and attend evening classes. The University's faculties include some 1,400 well qualified professors and instructors. Extranural courses offered in various towns throughout the island are also well attended by teachers and others whose places of employment are too far away to permit on-campus attendance. The University of Puerto Rico is the 19th largest United States university in terms of total enrollment.

School enrollment has more than doubled between 1940 and 1957, rising from 297,000 pupils to 715,000. During the same period, expenditures for education rose from \$7,300,000.- to \$66,000,000.-, or \$24.- per pupils to \$92.- In 1956-57, Puerto Rico spent 29% of its total budget on education, a larger proportion than any other country in the world, except Israel.

In 1940, the island's schools accommodated 51% of the school age population; 85% in 1957. 94% of all children of elementary school age are now in school, compared with about 96% in the United States. No country reaches 100%. The literacy rate has increased from 69% of the population in 1940, to 83% in 1957.

HOUSING

Puerto Rico's underdevelopment until recent years has been reflected in poor housing conditions. In 1950, about 95,000 urban dwellings were in slum areas. The mild climate alleviates the seriousness of dilapidated housing to some extent, especially in rural areas where dwellings are not crowded together and there is plenty sunshine and fresh air.

Since 1950, outstanding progress has been made through public and private housing, slum clearance, and rural resettlement. In urban areas, some 25,000 public housing units and about the same number of private dwellings have been constructed. Through public housing programs, 25% of the slums have been eliminated. By 1970, the Government expects to have eliminated all slum dwellings existing in 1950.

In some instances, entire areas of land formerly occupied by slums have been completely cleared of all dwellings, with families moved to low-cost public housing projects and the better houses from slum areas moved to more desirable locations where they are improved by their owners.

The director of the U. S. Federal Housing Administration declared that Puerto Rico is doing a better job in public housing than most sections of the continental United States.

Since 1941, the rural resettlement program has relocated over 54,000 families in low-cost houses in more than 200 resettlement communities, dramatically improving their living conditions and providing community life for many previously isolated families. The striking feature of this program is that it is a self-help enterprise; the Commonwealth Government provides a minimum of technical assistance and the houses are built by the people themselves. The program has attracted wide attention in many of the world's underdeveloped areas.

Exceptional progress has also been made in the private construction of middle-income homes. One such project in Puerto Rico was, at the time it was built, the world's largest private housing project. The style of architecture now being developed in the island, a blend of modern and old Spanish known as "Caribbean contemporary" is attracting increased interest among United States architects.

MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Despite Puerto Rico's tremendous progress in creating new jobs, raising wage levels, and reducing unemployment, there are still too few jobs for the island's expanding population. This is the push factor behind the migration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland.

Puerto Rican workers in search of better opportunities are attracted by the rapidly expanding U. S. labor market, with shortages of workers in many localities and industries, and generally higher wages than Puerto Rican industry is yet able to pay. Like all groups of voluntary migrants, studies show that Puerto Rican migrants include a larger proportion of more skilled and better educated persons than would be found in a perfect cross section of the island's labor force.

One reason why many people do not realize this fact is that they have created in their own minds a stereotype of the Puerto Rican migrant based on the person who tends to be conspicuous in his new environment- the migrant who does not speak English well and is distinguishable by his general appearance and dress. The thousands of Puerto Ricans already well-adjusted to life in the United States are inconspicuous and therefore are frequently not even recognized as Puerto Ricans.

Since Puerto Ricans are American citizens, there are no restrictions on movement between the island and the mainland, just as there are no limitations on movements among the States. Every year, about 10,000,000 residents of the continental United States move across county or state lines for the same reason that Puerto Ricans migrate: better job opportunities in a new area.

There are nearly 1,000,000 persons in the United States who were born in Puerto Rico, or born on the mainland to Puerto Rican parents. The largest concentration are located in the following cities (in order of greater to lesser number): New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Bridgeport, Conn., Camden, N.J., Miami, Cleveland, D., Lorain, O., Perth Amboy, N.J., San Francisco, Springfield, Mass., Newark, N.J., Buffalo, N.Y., and Milwaukee, Wis. There are Puerto Ricans living in all the States of the Union and the District of Columbia. Many are well known, notably such performing artists as actors José Ferrer and Juan Hernandez, actresses Rita Moreno, Chita Rivera, Olga San Juan, sopranos Graciela Rivera and Olga Iglesias, pianist Jesus María Sanromá, and many others in the fields of popular music and entertainment. Puerto Rican baseball players in the major leagues such as Vic Power, Rubén Gómez, Felix Mantilla, Juan Pizarro, Luis Arroyo, Romerto Clemente and Jim Rivera are well known to the fans.

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During the past several years Puerto Rico has served as a training laboratory for the Point IV program of technical assistance to underdeveloped countries. Over 4,000 engineers, factory managers, public administrators, health officers, teachers, labor leaders and planning officials from 103 different countries have visited Puerto Rico to study its methods of economic development. The island's techniques for overcoming underdevelopment have proved more helpful to foreign students and experts than the massive projects carried out in the already highly developed United States. Operation Bootstrap is now known the world over, and to many underdeveloped countries it symbolized what can be accomplished in a short time and in a democratic way.

Puerto Rican experts on education, diet, agriculture, and social and economic development serve with U.S. and United Nations agencies in various countries, and with the Organization of American States. Puerto Rico acts as a cultural meeting ground, contributing to better understanding between the United States and Latin America, and many other countries throughout the world.