

Puerto Rico's National Strike: "Peaceful Insurrection" Against the Wall Street Bankers

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San Juan, Puerto Rico – The aftermath of Puerto Rico's 200,000 persons National Strike is the transformation of a civic struggle into a "Peoples Peaceful Insurrection" against the real power behind Republican Governor Luis Fortuno: the Wall Street's Bankers, who control the Island \$47 Billions public debt. The Oct. 15's one-day strike was led by a broad Coalition for Puerto Rico (CPR) spearheaded by the Methodist Bishop Juan Vera Mendez (JVM), including all key sectors of Puerto Rico's Civic Society and all the labor unions. The big losers were the corrupt two-party system and the US repressive agencies operating in the Island, such as the Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI), the Federal Prosecutor and the FBI-controlled National Police Superintendent and his anti-riot elite units.

Bishop Vera: War Against US "Brutal Capitalism"

Bishop Vera Mendez concluded the all-day National Strike with a very energetic and emotional address, which reminded many of the participants of Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech in 1963 in Washington, D.C. "Today our People's dignity and solidarity have defeated the God of fear" of Gov. Fortuno and his bankers, stated the spokesman for the CPR. "At this democratic assembly the Puerto Rican Nation demanded the repeal of Law #7...which blamed the state workers for the alleged financial crisis, the same brutal capitalist model which push the world's economy into a deep recession," stated the Methodist Bishop. Up to now close to 25,000 unionized state employees have been fired because of Law #7, and about 100,000 workers have been lay-offs in the private sectors during the recent fiscal years. Although the official unemployment rate is 18%, the real unemployment is between 25-30%, if you include permanent unemployed workers who gave up and are not looking for jobs anymore.

In spite of the FBI and Police's anti-riot brutal repression, stressed Vera, "our response is the non-violence's moral force. Guided by Jesus' words we affirmed that those who work for peace are fortunate. .. Today we go from simple protest to resistance and civil disobedience, as we did between 1999-2003 to rescue the Island of Vieques (from the US Navy)." Like Rev. King, Bishop Vera Mendez combined his social struggle analysis with a Christian hope for social justice and freedom. This was Gandhi's moral and spiritual strength, which he used to liberate more than a billion persons in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The End of the Corrupt Two-Party's System

The pro-Statehood New Progressive Party (NPP) is an state of denial of the Island's new social and political reality, which is breaking apart the typical behavior of the ruling colonial

elite. The only exception is radio commentator Ignacio Rivera. In his daily two-hour radio program, the former CIA agent, urged GOP Gov. Fortuno to face reality and start negotiations with Bishop Vera Mendez and the leading Puerto Rican trade unions leaders. I am not questioning the Governor's harsh austerity measures, which are modeled in Reagan's neoliberal policies, but his refusal to even consider negotiations with his labor and civic opponents, stressed Rivera in his radio show.

The situation in the Opposition Popular Democratic Party (PDP) is even worse because it is being run by a pro-Statehood clique led by former Gov. Rafael Hernandez Colon, who is a 100% behind Fortuno's brutal assault against the 4 millions-island population. The former Governor is trying to force out a growing youth faction, which wants to forge a liberal-leftist coalition with Labor unions, pro-Independence and Women groups, organized poor communities and civic groups, such as the lawyers and social workers associations. Although this youth faction forced the PDP to join the National Strike, is still perceived by the population as a corrupt and traditional political party.

In spite of the fact that the pro-Independence forces represent today only about 10-15% of the total population in the Island, they embodied the moral and intellectual strength of the Puerto Rican Nation. After more than 500 years of Spanish and American military occupation, our culture and nationality is alive and still resemble more the traditions found all over Latin America. Many of the 4 millions Puerto Ricans, who lived in the US mainland, still considered themselves part of our nation and our mix afro-hispanic-indian culture, including US Supreme Court Judge Sonia Sotomayor.

Because of all the above reasons pro-Independence leaders, such as radio commentator Wilda Rodriguez and Juan Mari Bras, the former head of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), are the best qualify to understand the present economic Depression hitting the Island. In addition, they are the most capable to propose short and long-term solutions to the ongoing political and economic crisis.

The Coalition Transformation Into a National Reconstruction Alliance(NRA) & the Formation of a Pro Independence Congress

In a recent newspaper analysis, Ms. Rodriguez put forward a futurist scenario, where Bishop Vera's Coalition become a NRA Party to be able to participate in the 2012 election against the corrupt NPP-PDP's two party system. This new liberal-leftist alliance has a 10-point program, which is based in the Island struggle to regain its own sovereignty, which was taken away by the US Congress through the military occupation of Puerto Rico in 1898. Among the key point of the NRA program is the power to make our own trade accord with other foreign nations, including the US, Europe, Africa and Asia. We could also join the South American Common Market Union (UNASUR) and America's Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA). The UNASUR and ALBA are two trade and economic alternatives to the US-led North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA), its affiliates in Central and South America and the Caribbean.

During the last year, Mari Bras has spearheaded a nation-wide campaign to forge an alliance among all the pro Independence groups through the creation of the Third Pro Independence Congress. Although this organizing drive is being torpedoed by the odd alliance between the conservative Puerto Rican Independence Party and the ultra-leftist Socialist Workers Movement, Mari Bras and his allies are still very optimistic because the economic Depression will force a new realignment of all the political forces in the Island.

According to the former head of the PSP and founder of the 50 years-old weekly pro-Independence newspaper Claridad, the present task of a revolutionary living in the Island is to propose short-term and practical solutions to the people's daily struggle, and in that way, "we get closer to our strategic goals." This means supporting the proposal put forward by leaders of different political ideologies, which urged Gov. Fortuno to tax by 10% all US corporations doing business in the Island. This would solve our immediate financial crisis, and put back to work the 25,000 state workers, which have been lay-off during the last two month. This represents a creative way "to find real solutions in order to go through turbid times, like the present one, and thus, at last enter the XXI Century," concluded Mari Bras in a recent analysis for Claridad.

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