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CHAPTER FOUR.

“A Dependent Independence and a Dominated Dominion” Empire and Semi-Citizenship on the Cold War Stage



EARLY ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 1, 1954, DELORES “LOLITA” LEBRÓN, Irving Flores Rodriguez, Andrés Figueroa Cordero, and Rafael Cancel Miranda, all members of Puerto Rico’s Nationalist Party (NP), left their homes in New York City to board a Washington-bound train. After a quick lunch near Union Station, they proceeded to the House of Representatives and seated themselves quietly in the Ladies’ Gallery. In the midst of a debate about a Mexican guest worker program, Lebrón rose and unfurled a Puerto Rican flag, a signal for the four to begin spraying the House floor with gunfire. In the chaos that ensued, five congressmen were wounded, one critically.

None died as a result of the incident, but the dramatic action was met by the combined force of the Puerto Rican police and the U.S. Department of Justice (fig. 8). The four Nationalists were quickly brought to trial and received maximum terms of fifty to seventy-five years. Hundreds of Puerto Ricans were summoned to appear before grand juries, and dozens were arrested in New York City and Chicago. Thirteen of them, including Lebrón and the other shooters, were convicted of attempting to overthrow the government of the United States and sent to federal prisons. The evidence against them came, in large part, from an FBI informant within the NP as well as Lebrón’s brother, a Nationalist leader in Chicago who cooperated with the prosecution. In Puerto Rico,



FIGURE 8. Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, and Andrés Figueroa Cordero after being seized by Capitol police. (Corbis)

officials arrested scores of known Nationalists and leftists, and several activists were convicted of attempting to overthrow the government of Puerto Rico.¹

Also questioned by the grand jury in New York City were North American supporters of the Puerto Rican independence struggle. Two of them, Ruth Reynolds and Thelma Mielke, were each summoned dozens of times, and both lost their jobs after FBI agents visited their employers. This was not the first time that Reynolds's solidarity work had gotten her in trouble. She had been in Puerto Rico during a Nationalist-led uprising in 1950, was arrested for promoting the overthrow of the Puerto Rican government, and served nearly two years in prison there. Thousands of Puerto Ricans were detained, and many received harsh sentences, some up to four hundred years. The political repression unleashed on Nationalist supporters in 1950 and 1954 decimated the party both on the mainland and in Puerto Rico.²

The turmoil in Puerto Rico during the early 1950s was intimately connected to the territory's importance in the global Cold War, both as a symbol of U.S.

commitment to (or violation of) principles of freedom and equality, and as a staging ground for the atomic-era military. U.S. and Puerto Rican officials tried to make it an exemplar of the promises offered by U.S.-style development to emerging nations as well as a signifier of American support for decolonization. But making Puerto Rico a “showplace of democracy” in a decolonizing world required finesse, for residents of Puerto Rico—nominally citizens of both Puerto Rico and the United States—lacked many of the rights of self-governance. They were, to use the political scientist Elizabeth Cohen’s term, semi-citizens, and a massive effort involving Puerto Rico’s ruling Popular Democratic Party (PPD), many departments of the U.S. government, and even the United Nations was required to sustain the illusion that they were something else. This was an effort that was opposed by both the Nationalists and their North American allies. Indeed, American claims to leadership of the free world enabled the criticism of U.S. imperialism and semi-citizenship, facilitating the birth of a homegrown solidarity movement that paved the way for broader protests against U.S. foreign policy in the 1960s.³

The debates over Puerto Rico’s status that raged on both island and continent during the early Cold War focused attention on the failures of American democracy and on the myth of full citizenship that underwrote U.S. policies and ideologies. Efforts to sustain that myth ranged from legislative reframings of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States to discursive reframings of nationalism as madness, colonialism as brotherhood, and continued political subordination as freedom. Rhetorics of gender and race featured centrally in these initiatives.⁴ In turn, Nationalists and their allies sought to make visible the many forms of violence that underlay the national security state in both its domestic and its foreign operations. Although their numbers remained small, their struggles revealed that in these years Puerto Rico *was* the inclusive exclusion, the prototypical state of exception, a place where U.S. citizens were denied the rights of citizenship even as they were declared “part of the independence of the United States.”⁵

“Is That the Kind of Citizenship You Offer Us?”

Semi-Citizenship and Anti-Imperialism

When the United States acquired Puerto Rico at the end of the Spanish-American War, Congress declared its residents citizens of “Porto Rico” but dictated that they would have only the most limited rights of self-government. Unlike

previous territories, this one was not meant for statehood.⁶ In a group of early twentieth-century legal cases that have come to be known as the Insular Cases, the Supreme Court endorsed this position. Creating a distinction between “incorporated” and “unincorporated” territories, a majority of justices agreed that Puerto Rico was “foreign in a domestic sense,” a territory that was “owned by” but not included within the United States. Puerto Ricans were entitled to the natural rights due all individuals—freedom of religion and speech, due process, and individual liberty—but the Constitution did not extend to them those “rights to citizenship, to suffrage, and to the particular methods of procedure . . . which are peculiar to Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence.” Puerto Ricans, U.S. officials agreed, were too different to be extended the full panoply of rights associated with American democracy.⁷

Subsequent developments affirmed that Puerto Rico was the “inclusive exclusion” par excellence. In 1917 the Jones Act declared island residents U.S. citizens and provided enhanced rights to elect members of the local legislature, but Puerto Rican leaders recognized the limits of this “progress.” Summing up their doubts over the benefits of U.S. citizenship, Resident Commissioner Luis Muñoz Rivera had told members of Congress in 1914: “If you wish to make us citizens of an inferior class; . . . if we can not be one of your States; if we can not constitute a country of our own, then we will have to be perpetually a colony, a dependency of the United States. Is that the kind of citizenship you offer us? Then, that is the citizenship we refuse.” In 1922 the Supreme Court confirmed their fears, ruling that even the Jones Act did not serve to incorporate Puerto Rico into the nation. As a result, residents of Puerto Rico were entitled to move to the mainland, but as long as they remained on the island, they were denied many of the rights to which other U.S. citizens were at least theoretically entitled, including trial by jury and representation in the federal government. Those who lived in Puerto Rico remained semi-citizens of the United States.⁸

Its anomalous status enabled U.S. corporations to penetrate Puerto Rico’s economy thoroughly, generating increasing discontent when the Great Depression hit the island economy especially hard. During the 1930s Puerto Rico was roiled by strikes and political unrest, including growing support for independence.⁹ Two pro-independence leaders who came to prominence would play critical roles in postwar Puerto Rico. Luis Muñoz Marín, son of former resident commissioner Luis Muñoz Rivera and well-connected to U.S. officials who sought to bring the New Deal to the island, advocated charting a path toward

independence through economic and land reform. By 1938 Muñoz Marín’s *independentista* leanings led him to help found the Popular Democratic Party, which he would go on to head for many years. Arguing for more immediate independence was Pedro Albizu Campos. A man of humbler beginnings, Albizu Campos was reportedly the first Puerto Rican to attend Harvard University, doing so on a scholarship. He served in the U.S. military during World War I, studied law, and returned to Puerto Rico in the early 1920s, where he became active in insular politics. In 1930 he was elected president of the Nationalist Party, which had been founded as a pro-independence political party in 1922.¹⁰

While Muñoz Marín focused his efforts on establishing himself and building support among the Puerto Rican electorate and federal officials, Albizu Campos quickly abandoned electoral politics to advocate direct action to expel the United States, arguing that its possession of the territory amounted to nothing more than illicit military occupation.¹¹ Soon the NP was organizing quasi-military local units and calling for armed struggle—if necessary—against the United States. U.S. officials’ efforts to suppress the party produced even greater political turmoil and violence. In the wake of the assassination of a police commissioner and the police murder of two Nationalists, the federal government tried eight NP leaders for “conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States.” Albizu Campos was sentenced to ten years in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta.¹²

When U.S. officials decided to incarcerate Albizu Campos on the mainland, they could not know that this would provide the spark for an organized pro-independence solidarity movement in North America. Since the late 1930s, pacifists, liberals, and leftists across the United States had occasionally raised their voices in favor of a resolution of the status problem, but an active movement dedicated to ending colonialism in Puerto Rico emerged first in New York City, where Albizu Campos had been transferred to a hospital after falling ill in prison.¹³ He was something of a celebrity, and many well-known progressive New Yorkers sat at his bedside during these months. Among those who visited him were members of the Harlem Ashram, a center for radical pacifists founded in 1940 by former Methodist missionary Jay Holmes Smith. He had been ejected from India for his support of the pro-independence movement there, and his political commitments helped shape ashram members’ advocacy. The radical Christian peace activists who lived and congregated at the ashram dedicated themselves to antiracist and anticolonialist causes. One of the residents of this intentional community was Ruth Reynolds, who would become the Nationalist Party’s staunchest mainland ally.¹⁴

Ruth Reynolds was an unlikely convert to the cause of militant nationalism. Born in 1916 in the mining town of Terraville, South Dakota to an upwardly mobile Methodist family, she trained as a teacher. Unable to find steady work, she pursued a master's degree in English at Northwestern University. While there, Reynolds "fell in" with a group of pacifists, and in 1941 she moved to New York City to take a "training course in total pacifism" offered by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) at the Harlem Ashram. She settled in as one of five or six permanent residents, living an ascetic life of prayer, Bible study, discussion of Gandhianism, and activism. Reynolds participated in an interracial march from Harlem to the Lincoln Memorial, walked in picket lines protesting British imperialism, and did "volunteer social work" in the ashram's largely Puerto Rican neighborhood. And she became acquainted with many of those at the center of the pacifist and burgeoning civil rights movements, among them Ernest Bromley, Dave Dellinger, Jim Farmer, lawyer Conrad Lynn, A. J. Muste, and Bayard Rustin.¹⁵

It was not until Puerto Rican associates challenged ashram residents to examine imperialism in their own backyard that they began to pay attention to Puerto Rico. Shortly after Albizu Campos's arrival in New York, an ashram member brought Nationalist activist Julio Pinto Gandía to dinner. Both draft resisters (Gandía, in accordance with an NP policy of noncooperation with the U.S. government, had refused induction into the army), they had met in prison. At Gandía's urging, Jay Holmes Smith visited Albizu Campos, and, Reynolds recalled, soon he was "spending all his time down there in that hospital room."¹⁶

As a result, by January 1944, New York pacifists decided to incorporate the cause of Puerto Rico in their anti-imperialism work. For years they had picketed the British consulate on Indian Independence Day, a day dedicated by the Indian National Congress to work for India's self-rule. This year, the Free India Committee joined with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the March on Washington Movement, the Congress of Racial Equality, and others to include Puerto Rican independence in their demands. Smith was away, and so it fell to Reynolds, who by now was assistant director of the ashram, to lead the demonstration. After marching through Harlem, the group took the subway to the British consulate, where about a dozen were arrested. Reynolds's picture made the paper, and Albizu Campos asked that she come to see him. Reynolds later remembered, "Within a month or so of knowing Don Pedro, I really felt that I had to commit myself to the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico, and that it had to be primarily with North Americans, who, like myself, felt

. . . the holding of Puerto Rico to be an outrage to any principles we have.”¹⁷ By October 1944 she was meeting with a group of New Yorkers who were active in the pacifist, civil rights, civil liberties, socialist, labor, and internationalist movements to discuss the possibility of creating a permanent organization to focus on Puerto Rico’s political status, and in early 1945 the American League for Puerto Rico’s Independence (ALPRI) was born. Pledged to work for federal recognition of the island’s independence, immediate amnesty for political prisoners, and “full and speedy reparations,” its members sought to bring NP grievances to the attention of U.S. policy makers and the public.¹⁸ Their numbers were small, but this group and its successors offered an important witness against the violence of empire and the national security state in the midst of the Cold War.¹⁹

“The Great Harshness of Our Destiny”

Dependence, Independence, and Reform

Ironically, at the very moment when North American activists were beginning to organize in support of independence, Luis Muñoz Marín, now the dominant figure on Puerto Rico’s political landscape, chose to move away from that stance. Insisting that the island must remain tied to the United States for the foreseeable future, he emphasized that Puerto Rico’s privileged position as a trading “partner,” as well as federal largesse in the form of the New Deal, made complete independence a chimera.²⁰ But foremost among the PPD leader’s justifications for rejecting independence was Puerto Rico’s alleged “overpopulation” problem. He joined a host of commentators who cited overpopulation as an intractable barrier to independence. In one widely reviewed book, for example, the anthropologist Vincenzo Petruccio argued that the island would need “a large subsidy for many years to come, as well as freedom to emigrate” to the United States, since “the root of the Puerto Rican economic problem” was its “golden-skinned babies, whose nakedness so often decorates the front yards of the cabins.”²¹ Muñoz Marín echoed these thoughts, telling the Puerto Rican people in 1948 that the question of political status had to be decided in light of “the great harshness of our destiny.” He continued:

The condition of Puerto Rico is in its very nature an extremely unfavorable and difficult one. Puerto Rico is a very small island with a great many people. Puerto Rico has a little land and a great many people. Every year

there are more people, but there is not more land. This great number of people must live off the little land there is. With the nature of the condition of Puerto Rico so difficult in itself, the only thing which allows it to live . . . is precisely the fact of its having such a favorable relationship with the richest market in the world.

As the repetitive structure of this speech reveals, by the postwar years, “too many people, not enough land” had become a mantra that rationalized continuing the United States’ rule over Puerto Rico.²²

These assertions of Puerto Rico’s continuing dependence were problematic in the context of the emerging global Cold War. “Dependence” signified femininity and failed masculinity, weakness and vulnerability. It belied the portrait of an autonomous island nation increasingly ready to take its place in the modern democratic world, a view that American policy makers and Muñoz Marín’s PPD were eager to propagate as worldwide pressures for decolonization made Puerto Rico’s status increasingly embarrassing. Nonetheless, Puerto Rico’s strategic location, its close economic ties to U.S. industry, and its cultural ties to Latin America, where the United States was seeking to consolidate its own influence, all made independence risky from the perspective of U.S. policy makers. The 1944 remarks of Representative Fred Crawford of Michigan, an influential participant in the debates about Puerto Rico’s status, reveal that even before the end of World War II, U.S. officials were cognizant of Puerto Rico’s significance in anticipated postwar conflicts with the Soviet Union. As he put it, “Puerto Rico cannot be independent because the United States has to maintain an army and a navy in the island to defend the territory against the Russian menace, which after this war will try to dismember this continent to take possession of South America.”²³ These concerns only grew more intense in the postwar years.

The solution to this dilemma was to shift the terms of the debate from “independence” to “self-determination.” Self-determination could accommodate a wide variety of political processes and outcomes, and unlike independence, it might be reconciled with Puerto Rico’s continued dependence on the United States. Indeed, its focus on *process* rather than *outcome* shaped the postwar universe of political possibilities for Puerto Ricans. Meshing nicely with an older political maturity model that “would grant to the people of Puerto Rico a constantly increasing measure of real control over their local affairs” while putting off “independence” indefinitely, it became crucial to representations of

the United States as a decolonizing power.²⁴ In October 1945 President Truman came out forcefully for self-determination, proclaiming that “[it] is the settled policy of this Government to promote the political[,] social and economic development of people who have not yet attained full self-government and eventually to make it possible for them to determine their own form of government.” He asked Congress to move forward on identifying feasible options, authorizing a plebiscite, and enacting a solution to the status problem.²⁵

Following this, PPD leaders and the Truman administration showcased a new developmentalist narrative, one in which Puerto Rico was making steady progress toward “true freedom,” marked by increasing local self-government, modernization, and economic growth. This progress was traced through a number of discrete markers—the appointment of the first indigenous governor in 1946; the passage of an elective governor bill in 1947 and the inauguration of Luis Muñoz Marín as governor in 1948; the enactment in 1950 of Public Law 600 (PL 600), which enabled Puerto Ricans to write their own constitution (while also leaving substantially untouched the institutional framework that granted the U.S. government authority over trade, defense, foreign affairs, currency, and a host of other matters); and, in 1952, the ratification of that constitution by both the Puerto Rican people and the U.S. Congress and the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, also known as the *Estado Libre Asociado*, or Free Associated State. Puerto Rico’s emergence in 1952 as a U.S. “dominion,” according to this story, not only marked the end of this nation’s history as an imperial power but also proved the superiority of the American way of decolonization. No longer a “stepchild,” the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was the United States’ adult partner in making the postwar order.²⁶

This narrative required resignifying U.S.-insular relations as ties not of paternalism but of fraternalism. To this end, U.S. and Puerto Rican officials offered a repetitious, almost compulsive recitation of the steps by which U.S. control had fostered the ability of Puerto Ricans to govern themselves. Recasting a history of imperialism as a genealogy of ever-increasing self-rule, U.S. legislators described the years after the invasion as a prologue to self-determination, when Puerto Ricans were offered a series of lessons in the art of self-government.²⁷ Each of the postwar reforms then became further development and proof of insular political maturity. Thus in 1946, when Jesus T. Piñero was appointed the first Puerto Rican to serve as governor, Secretary of the Interior J. A. Krug spoke of his hopes that the Puerto Rican people would “continue . . . to stride forward along the road toward full political maturity.” Half a year later, supporting the

elective governor bill, former governor James Beverly testified that the people of Puerto Rico had been “politically mature . . . for some time.”²⁸ Muñoz Marín went a bit further, framing the Puerto Rican constitution as not simply “another step in self-government but . . . self-government within the American Union by the free agreement of the Puerto Rican people and in a new manner.” It did not increase “in any substantial way the real political freedom of the people of Puerto Rico,” because, he argued, islanders were already practicing democracy. The passage of the constitution simply made “the law catch up with the facts so that the United States . . . cannot at all be accused again by communists or by mistaken people of good faith who are not communists in Latin-America and in the world of holding a colonial possession in Puerto Rico.”²⁹ Reforming Puerto Rico’s status crafted a “third way” to a “new state,” substituting a “common citizenship” for the economic suicide of nationalism or the cultural suicide of statehood. With such reforms, U.S. officials agreed, Puerto Rico could take its “due and proper place as another adult member of our political family.”³⁰

Substantial tensions remained in these characterizations of a new relationship between the United States and its “former” colony. Decolonization signified the maturity and masculinization of former dependencies. But since Puerto Rico’s continued economic dependence remained front and center in arguments for self-determination rather than complete independence, gendered tropes of fraternity could not map precisely onto the new political arrangements.³¹ Puerto Rican and U.S. officials sought to grapple with this contradiction by using the conceit of the “compact” to trace the new lineaments of Puerto Rico’s economic and political partnership with the United States. A clause in the preamble to PL 600 stating it was “adopted in the nature of a compact” was meant to convey that this act of Congress created a “voluntary association” based on “mutual consent and esteem,” a “partnership mutually acceptable” to both entities.³² Muñoz Marín offered a stirring declaration of the meanings of such a shift:

There could be no more exciting way than this of abolishing the colonial system . . . no more brotherly way, no freer way . . . no clearer way for Puerto Rico to know that the decision of her political destiny is in her own hands, without her having pressure put on her or being resisted, without her being either hurried or put off, without her being obliged to make her choice under adverse economic conditions, and without anyone interfering

with her judgment as to when economic conditions have ceased to be adverse. This is offering a brother the key to one’s house, so that he may freely depart or freely remain.³³

In his mixing of metaphors—free brothers on the one hand, woman in control of her destiny on the other—he showcased the ability of the compact to reconcile Puerto Rico’s economic dependence with its supposed political sovereignty. But his words also suggest how it functioned like other contracts that masked inequality between partners with the legal fiction of free consent—such as labor contracts and, above all, the marriage contract. Like these, the creation of the Commonwealth purported to detach the economic from the political so that Puerto Rico’s substantial economic dependence on the United States did not prohibit its citizens from consenting to their continued governance, much as the economic dependence of U.S. women on their husbands was widely believed to be compatible with their political freedom. A “grown-up” Puerto Rico might be masculinized—a “brother” to whom you entrust the key to your home—but it also remained feminized: a wife whose “dominion” was restricted to domestic concerns and who remained both financially dependent and unable to contract with others.³⁴ Even though creation of the Commonwealth left Puerto Rico a territory under Congress’s plenary control, when President Truman formally approved the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, he could assert that the Puerto Rican people’s decision to “reaffir[m] their union with the United States” was evidence that America stood for “the right of free peoples everywhere.” Puerto Rico remained the quintessential state of exception, still belonging to but not a part of the United States, its people’s semi-citizenship disguised by the rhetoric of decolonization.³⁵

“Forced to Sacrifice Their Dignity in Order to Live”

Debating U.S. Colonialism

The effort to reframe Puerto Rico’s continued subordination to the United States as self-determination was challenged not only by the Nationalist Party, which worked hard to disrupt the process leading to the creation of the Commonwealth, but also by its supporters in North America. ALPRI members questioned the self-determination narrative at every step. They opposed the elective governor bill, the creation of the Commonwealth, and a variety of plebiscites, arguing that only independence with reparations would provide the

territorial, military, political, and economic sovereignty necessary to “contract on equal terms” with the United States. Drawing attention to the injustice of proposals that would require Puerto Rico to “barter away its birthright of full freedom” in return for economic development, they condemned the “dependent independence and . . . dominated dominion status” that would result from any reforms short of full independence.³⁶ This position, they claimed, was the only patriotic one possible. As Reynolds argued, only by admitting “individual and corporate responsibility for every act of our government—a sense of responsibility without which democracy is nothing but a lie,” could American citizens “begin to free ourselves from the racial and national arrogance that is making our nation a curse in the earth.”³⁷

These sentiments were brought to an international stage when the UN debated Puerto Rico’s status. The question of what role the United Nations would have in monitoring, and perhaps liberating, so-called dependent territories in the postwar years was contentious from the moment the new international agency was envisioned, and in important ways Puerto Rico served as a test case for UN policies and procedures. Independence advocates had looked to the United Nations from its very beginnings. In March 1945 ALPRI appealed to Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, head of the U.S. delegation to the San Francisco conference at which the UN charter was written, urging him to press for granting independence to Puerto Rico before the meeting convened in April. In 1946 Reynolds and Smith spent many hours observing UN committee meetings, and in July of that year ALPRI submitted a lengthy brief asserting that U.S. policy toward Puerto Rico violated the UN Charter. By January 1947 the United Nations had agreed to grant the Nationalist Party “observer” status, and the NP designated as its representatives party member Oscar Collazo and ALPRI activist Thelma Mielke. Mielke went to Geneva, where she attended meetings of the Special Committee on Information, charged with working out the UN’s policies and procedures on dependent territories. These efforts appear to have yielded little, since under pressure from the colonial powers, the committee refused twice to grant a requested hearing to the Nationalist representatives. Nonetheless, as a “permanent observer” Mielke was able to caucus with sympathetic members, provide information about the “true picture” of conditions in Puerto Rico, and gain insight into committee politics.³⁸

Muñoz Marín and the Truman and Eisenhower administrations also treated the United Nations as an important arbiter of Puerto Rico’s status in the court of world opinion. The agency’s charter stipulated that “administering” powers

must report on “economic, social and educational conditions” for so-called non-self-governing territories.³⁹ Barely a month after the creation of the Commonwealth, Puerto Rican and U.S. officials began planning to notify the UN that, since Puerto Rico was now self-governing, the United States would cease reporting on it. Negotiations over how to phrase the announcement were prolonged, as insular and federal authorities disagreed over such weighty matters as whether or not Puerto Rico remained a “territory” and if the “compact” required that further adjustments to the island’s status could be accomplished only by mutual consent.⁴⁰ Perhaps because of these questions, the official notice of the decision to stop reporting was not submitted until January 19, 1953, the last full day of Truman’s term in office.

Despite continuing conflict among and between U.S. and Puerto Rican officials, when they presented the case to the United Nations, any uncertainty about the nature of the compact was buried beneath assertions that this was an unprecedented arrangement that revealed a new way forward for dependent peoples who, in partnership with the capitalist world, were seeking economic, social, and political development. Since PPD leaders originated this interpretation of Puerto Rico’s “new state,” it is no surprise that they were its foremost defenders in the United Nations. At Muñoz Marín’s suggestion, the State Department made Puerto Rico’s resident commissioner, Antonio Fernós-Isern, a member of the U.S. delegation in order to “enhance American prestige” in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Fernós-Isern introduced the U.S. position in August 1953, proclaiming that “any semblance of a colonial relationship was eliminated” with the creation of the Commonwealth. As he explained, “As of July 25, 1952, the jurisdiction of the Federal Government in Puerto Rico is based on a bilateral compact to which it is a party and into which the people of Puerto Rico have entered of their own volition. The Puerto Rican state of today has been created by the will of the people, in the exercise of their natural rights. . . . Puerto Rico is today in the most profoundly democratic sense of the word a free people voluntarily associated with the United States of America.”⁴¹ Addressing the UN later that year, he presented the compact as something magical, a legal and political instrument with transformative powers: “Provisions of law which originally were enacted by unilateral action of the Congress of the United States . . . now became, by virtue of the compact, bilateral stipulations forming the association between Puerto Rico and the United States.” Through this “new form of political relationship,” he asserted, “the last vestige of colonialism has disappeared in Puerto Rico.”⁴²

U.S. officials were just as determined—if, perhaps, more disingenuous—to affirm the inviolability of the new relationship. For example, diplomat Mason Sears defined “compact” in his comments preceding Fernós-Isern’s initial statement: “A compact, as you know, is far stronger than a treaty. A treaty usually can be denounced by either side, whereas a compact cannot be denounced by either party unless it has the permission of the other.” When delegate Frances P. Bolton responded to criticism of the U.S. position, she highlighted two “facts”: that the Commonwealth was grounded in the “sovereignty” of the Puerto Rican people, and that “there exists a bilateral compact of association between the people of Puerto Rico and the United States which has been accepted by both and which in accordance with judicial decisions may not be amended without common consent.” The “judicial decisions” to which Bolton referred were in fact a lone district court ruling that Congress had given up its plenary powers when it approved PL 600, but U.S. representatives presented the question as much more settled than it actually was.⁴³

Both PPD leaders and U.S. officials had second thoughts about the wisdom of declaring Puerto Rico’s sovereignty in the UN, anticipating domestic and international challenges.⁴⁴ Though a feared revolt from Congress did not materialize, the move was the subject of contentious debate at every level of the United Nations. Among advocates of Puerto Rican independence, the Nationalists and the more moderate Puerto Rican Independence Party unsuccessfully sought to testify, while ALPRI members contented themselves with submitting a brief, highlighting the Commonwealth’s lack of sovereignty as well as the undemocratic process by which the constitution was adopted. They made particular note of political repression of the Nationalist Party (discussed later in this chapter), alleging that the referendum on the constitution took place while “the Island was being subjected to a rule close to that of martial law.”⁴⁵

These criticisms were taken seriously by some representatives of UN member states, most notably India, Mexico, and Guatemala, and used as weapons against the United States by the Soviet Union and its partners. In one discussion, for example, Indian delegate Lakshmi Menon zeroed in on Puerto Ricans’ semi-citizenship, questioning whether Puerto Rico could be called self-governing since it had no real representation in Congress. (Equal legislative representation was one of the factors specified by the United Nations for demonstrating self-governance.) At another moment, Indian representatives rejected the U.S. assertion that self-governance was possible even without independence, asserting this was

simply “a new form of colonialism.”⁴⁶ Similarly, a Mexican diplomat denounced the decision to stop reporting on Puerto Rico’s status as coldly calculated to increase U.S. prestige in Latin America. He expressed his hope that a time would come when “no peoples in the world were ever forced to sacrifice their dignity in order to live,” to which Bolton riposted, “Poverty, hunger, and ignorance are not the ingredients with which a society of free people can be established and developed and its dignity maintained.”⁴⁷

Such a contested process was not what U.S. and Puerto Rican officials had had in mind. Although the State Department was relatively confident that the General Assembly would ultimately endorse the U.S. decision to end reporting,⁴⁸ the extended and acrimonious debate had aired doubts not only over whether or not Puerto Rico was self-governing, but also about the intentions of the United States. It was because these proceedings were as much about political theater as multilateral governance and cooperation that President Eisenhower decided to get into the act. At breakfast a week before the General Assembly was scheduled to take up the Puerto Rico question, Eisenhower suggested to his old friend UN ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge that a “dramatic” move might be in order. Lodge took the floor shortly before the General Assembly vote to announce, “I am authorized to say on behalf of the President that if at any time the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico adopts a resolution in favor of more complete or even absolute independence, he will immediately thereafter recommend to Congress that such independence be granted.” Since the PPD-dominated legislature opposed independence, this was an empty promise, but its utterance at the United Nations had an electrifying effect. An exultant Lodge told Eisenhower: “Your idea about Puerto Rico turned out to be a ten-strike. . . . I . . . received an unprecedented burst of applause. . . . The effect will be tremendous in Latin America and in all colonial areas.”⁴⁹

The General Assembly did indeed vote to approve the U.S. decision to cease reporting on Puerto Rico, but some nations still expressed doubt that a dependent Puerto Rico could freely determine its future. Lakshmi Menon had the final word at the session:

There can be no free, just or valid compact, association or agreement between two countries or territories except on a basis of equality. We believe that independence should precede any voluntary association. . . . An association of States under any form in which the inequality of status is not redeemed, would only camouflage the relics of a colonial past.

This would be contrary to the Charter, which aims not at the creation or perpetuation of colonialism in some form or other, but its total and complete elimination from the political system and thought of the new world.⁵⁰

Alluding to the objections voiced by Nationalists and their allies, Menon and a few other representatives of the global South thus called into question the entire project of presenting the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as a “brother” in the postcolonial order, reminding the assembled nations that economic dependence and the inequality it expressed made true self-determination impossible. But at least at this early moment in a decolonizing world, U.S. economic power and Cold War pressures made hers a minority voice.

Still, the contentious debate at the United Nations signaled that Puerto Ricans’ semi-citizenship, and their leaders’ determination to stand outside the nation-state form that was reaching its zenith in the postwar years, could not be so easily resolved.⁵¹ Lodge’s announcement brought a storm of protest from Puerto Rican advocates of statehood, particularly members of Eisenhower’s own Republican Party, who feared that the United States “does not want [Puerto Rico] and is ready to turn the island loose.” Members of Puerto Rico’s legislature also quickly rebuffed the idea of independence.⁵² Eisenhower, encouraged by Lodge’s exuberant assessment of the UN response, seized on the idea of granting Puerto Rico independence as an ideological weapon in the Cold War, but he was forced to retreat. As State Department officials reminded him, independence raised a troubling question for Puerto Ricans, a question that had, much earlier, been asked by Justice Edward Douglass White in one of the Insular Cases: Could the United States “sell American citizens?” Mass expatriation of U.S. citizens—even if the Puerto Rican legislature requested independence—had consequences that could not be easily resolved.⁵³ This question returned again to the paradoxical nature of citizenship for residents of Puerto Rico. PL 600 reaffirmed them as citizens of both Puerto Rico and the United States, but this remained more a semi-citizenship than dual citizenship. Increasingly moving back and forth between the island and the mainland, and in that mobility sometimes repeatedly experiencing enfranchisement and disenfranchisement, Puerto Ricans found no clear path to liberty along the “third way” that was laid out for them. Although the most obvious effects of the U.S. decision to cease reporting on Puerto Rico were to suggest that independence was not the only road to self-governance, and to disguise the role of economic inequality in constituting a postcolonial world, the hotly

contested process also hinted that these were questions that would return to haunt the nation and its territory.⁵⁴

“Imperialism Is the Real Violence”

Terrorism and the National Security State

The legislative and symbolic reframing of Puerto Rico’s relationship to the United States was deeply entwined with the operations of the national security state. Although U.S. military officials moved to create and control a modern police authority soon after the invasion of the island, Puerto Rico’s “surveillance state” was greatly consolidated and strengthened in response to the Nationalist ferment of the 1930s. The enmeshing of the federal and insular security apparatus was significant: as early as 1935 the FBI trained members of the Insular Police; its special agents collected information from a wide range of island authorities and informants; army and navy intelligence officers conducted political surveillance on Puerto Rican dissidents and mainstream political leaders alike; in 1942 the FBI organized and trained an internal security unit in the police force. The tangled relationship between island and federal police efforts was made obvious in the prosecution of Pedro Albizu Campos and other Nationalist leaders in the wake of the shooting by two NP members of a police officer. Charged with conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States, the defendants were first tried before a majority–Puerto Rican jury, whose members could not agree on a verdict. Their second trial, in which it was alleged that federal officials had handpicked a biased jury and then directed it to arrive at a guilty verdict, ended with their exile to a federal prison in Atlanta.⁵⁵

In their insistence that the U.S. presence was nothing more than an illegal military occupation of the sovereign nation of Puerto Rico, and in their unyielding opposition to attempts to reframe the colonial relationship as an equal partnership, Nationalists represented a substantial threat to these policing efforts. Unsurprisingly, then, the intertwined national security states of Puerto Rico and the United States used the strategies of the second red scare to target NP members ever more intensely. In the postwar years, for example, after Albizu Campos returned to his homeland, Puerto Rican officials adapted anti-Communist strategies to control their Nationalist foes. In response to a 1948 student strike at the University of Puerto Rico that erupted when university officials suppressed the activities of NP supporters, the Puerto Rican legislature hurriedly enacted Law 53, popularly known as *la mordaza*, or the “gag law.” Modeled

on the Smith Act, the law made it a felony “to encourage, defend, counsel, or preach, voluntarily or knowingly, the need, desirability, or convenience of overturning, destroying, or paralyzing the Insular Government, or any of its political subdivisions, by way of force or violence; . . . as well as to organize or help organize any society, group, or assembly of persons who encourage, defend, counsel, or preach any such thing.” Although this law would also be used against Communists and more moderate advocates of independence, its primary target was the NP.⁵⁶

So began a rapidly spiraling cycle of violence, as Nationalists, under constant surveillance and harassment, turned to increasingly aggressive tactics, while Puerto Rican and federal authorities used an expanding arsenal of repressive techniques to stop them. But growing Nationalist militancy also responded to the reforms accomplished through the PPD-U.S. alliance. Along with other independence advocates, Nationalists were dismayed by the creation of the Commonwealth and, later, the UN’s endorsement of Puerto Rico’s decolonization. They recognized that these moves did as much to invalidate insular opposition movements as to sanction the island’s continued domination by U.S. capital. Hobbled both by police repression and by the PPD’s political acumen, NP members insisted, “We Puerto Ricans have the right to resist force with force.”⁵⁷ Pointing to the symbolic and real violence that underlay the efforts to cast Puerto Rico as a showplace of democracy and development, they too employed violence in order to “make a demonstration” to Americans and the world that Puerto Rico remained unfree. In response, U.S. and Puerto Rican officials adroitly seized the opportunity to consolidate the national security state further by labeling them terrorists. Thus the conflict over Puerto Rico’s status quickened a debate about the legitimacy of state and extra-state violence.

“Terrorism” had long been used to designate certain forms of political violence as illegitimate. In the 1930s and early 1940s “terror” mostly described “totalitarian” states’ violence against individuals. In the wake of World War II, as some anticolonial movements turned to violence as a strategy for defeating the old imperial order, “terrorism” was redefined again. During these years the term came into wider use to suggest senseless and often random violence against innocent victims, intended to instill fear among both the general population and state officials. Certainly some groups—in Palestine and Malaya in the 1940s, and in Cyprus and Algeria in the 1950s—embraced violence as a psychological weapon, but the label “terrorism” functioned less to denote a set of strategies than to legitimate Western nation-states’ deployment of political violence while

limiting popular support for anticolonial movements. This explains the use of the term against members of the Nationalist Party. Their strategies (their targets were *always* government officials rather than civilians), and the overall rarity of their recourse to violence, made their independence movement quite distinct from these other groups. But by labeling Nationalists “terrorists,” Puerto Rican and U.S. officials could rule their entire critique out of bounds.⁵⁸

Descriptions of the NP as terrorist dated back at least to the 1930s, but during the 1950s this rhetoric became ubiquitous, especially as party members brought political violence to the continent. On October 30, 1950, after a predawn raid by Puerto Rican police on Nationalist supporters in Ponce erupted in gunfire, Nationalists launched an island-wide uprising, attacking federal offices and police stations, staging an assault on the governor’s residence, and occupying several mountain towns. The revolt, which resulted in upwards of two dozen deaths, was soon put down by Insular Police and the National Guard, who not only engaged in pitched gun battles with NP supporters but also used “bazookas, tanks and planes” against rebels in Jayuya and Utuado.⁵⁹ This was more traditional armed resistance than terrorism, but before the smoke had cleared, party members Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola traveled from their homes in New York City to Washington to “make a demonstration” against colonialism and launched an armed assault on President Truman’s temporary residence at Blair House. They did not reach him, but their attack had tragic consequences: Torresola and one of the president’s guards were killed, two other Secret Service agents and Collazo were wounded, and Collazo was sentenced to death (later commuted to life imprisonment) for the crime.⁶⁰ It was little more than three years later when Lolita Lebrón and her compatriots opened fire on Congress, an act that sealed the Nationalists’ reputation as terrorists.

These incidents had serious adverse consequences, including the exclusion of NP observers and the rejection of their petitions at the United Nations, thus depriving Nationalists of access to this international forum.⁶¹ More important, they led to the detention of thousands of Puerto Ricans and, eventually, the imprisonment of almost all Nationalist leaders. After the 1950 insurrection, close to one thousand individuals, including Communists and moderate advocates of independence, were detained by insular authorities. Upwards of 150 were convicted and incarcerated under *la mordaza* and other laws.⁶² In 1954 harassment and imprisonment were aimed at Puerto Ricans on the continent as well as on the island. Collazo, Lebrón, Flores Rodriguez, and Cancel Miranda were not freed until their pardon by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. Albizu Campos,

convicted in 1950 on assault and conspiracy but released for health reasons in 1953, was reincarcerated in 1954 and remained in prison, in declining health, until 1964. He died in April 1965.

These outbreaks of violence were not random, but responses to specific U.S.-PPD maneuvers to “solve” Puerto Rico’s colonial problem. The 1950 uprising was intended, in part, to disrupt the electoral process that would lead to the founding of the Commonwealth. The 1954 attack occurred three short months after the United Nations endorsed the decision to end reporting on Puerto Rico. It was also linked to growing concerns about Albizu Campos’s health that will be discussed shortly; but its broader significance was that, with the purported decolonization of Puerto Rico and widespread support for Muñoz Marín’s economic policies, opponents of U.S. rule were running out of options. Their turn to violence reflected the Nationalists’ marginal position in the debates over Puerto Rico’s status, but it also expressed their simultaneous and somewhat contradictory positions that the U.S. government would respond only to force, and that American imperial power could be made visible and challenged only through self-sacrifice.

If the uprising on the island was intended to meet force with force, Nationalists explained the violent attacks in Washington, D.C., as sacrificial acts. Oscar Collazo, Lolita Lebrón, and their associates maintained that they expected to be killed; all of them purchased one-way train tickets to Washington, presuming that they would have no need for return passage. Self-sacrifice would draw attention to their homeland’s desperate straits, but it was necessitated by the overweening power and arrogance of the United States. As Collazo testified at his trial: “I am sure . . . that the American people, ninety per cent of the American people, don’t know where Puerto Rico is; they don’t know what is Puerto Rico; they don’t know that Puerto Rico is a possession of the United States, even though it has been so for the last fifty-two years. . . . By coming to Washington and making some kind of demonstration in the capital of this nation, we would be in a better situation to make the American people understand the real situation in Puerto Rico.”⁶³ Cancel Miranda told jury members that he had gone to Congress “to demonstrate to the world that the Puerto Ricans not only wanted their independence but also that he fights, that he defends, and that he would offer his life for the independence of his country.”⁶⁴ Cancel Miranda’s willingness to fight for the freedom of his country was a matter of masculine honor, but it also was a testament to the U.S. government’s power to perpetuate a “fraud and falsehood” on the whole world. And, he acknowledged,

it might well result in his death. Juan Bernardo Lebrón (no relation to Lolita), also on trial for conspiracy in connection with the 1954 shooting, scoffed at U.S. pretensions that Nationalists endangered the security of the nation: “Here we are, a few little Puerto Ricans, and here is the great powerful government of the United States—and the United States is afraid that we will overthrow them!”⁶⁵

Lolita Lebrón laid bare the inequities that prompted NP “terror” even more vividly, identifying her own suffering as a woman with the suffering of her country. A twenty-one-year-old Lebrón had come, alone, to New York City in 1940, leaving her young daughter in her mother’s care on the island. A skilled needleworker, she found employment in the textile industry, but her outspokenness on behalf of workers made for much job insecurity. She joined the NP out of anger over the discrimination and abusive treatment accorded Puerto Rican migrants to the city. Lebrón married and had another child, but by the late 1940s her marriage broke up, in part because her husband objected to her political activities, and she was forced to send her son back to Puerto Rico. Shortly before she testified in her second trial, she learned that he had died, a victim of drowning.⁶⁶

Lebrón’s courtroom testimony was infused by her sorrow over this loss, but it also expressed a specific logic of anticolonial struggle. Situating her decision to go to Washington in a broader national and international context, she described how she had ruminated on the words of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln as she walked the grounds of the United Nations. And she located herself within the political economy of American empire: “I was going to my work every day, but I keep on that machine, the machine have taken my life, more than my life. I kept on . . . thinking I should do something for the freedom of my country. I could not live.” Lebrón “could not live” both because she did not make enough money to support her son and because of her homeland’s plight, two issues that were connected for her: “My son believed in the freedom of my life. . . . He wanted me, he wanted my country to be free.” She asked why it was that the powerful representatives of the United States—members of Congress, prosecutors, judges—did not want to hear her speak the “beautiful words” of freedom:

Why am I here, because I want the freedom of my country and the indictment says that we want by force and violence to bring up the independence of my country, and every time our country brings up the question of independence our mouths have to be closed. That is not freedom that

is really the truth. . . . But don't you worry. A woman is going to write in prison—this woman is going to write in prison, because I am going to tell you, somebody else is wrong, more wrong than me.

Finally, she insisted that she and her people hated violence, that she had been badly misunderstood:

I am not the woman you think I am. I say I have a heart who has been crucified. . . . I have lost a lot of things and with terrible suffering. That you would not be able to take, maybe, Mr. Lumbard [the district attorney]. Maybe not many of the people here will take what I have taken. . . . I have paid so hard, and for this moment, to come here to tell you, we want this country to live, this belongs to our new world. . . . We don't want wars. We want to live. We want this country to live. We want the world to live.⁶⁷

Lebrón's testimony, which her lawyer claimed moved even the hard-nosed judge to tears, encapsulated a history of a people struggling against a behemoth for their freedom.⁶⁸ In her cry "I am not the woman you think I am" was the Nationalist defense against the accusation of terrorism.

Nationalists employed both of these gendered discourses—the first emphasizing masculinist defenses of honor, the second highlighting the feminine, suffering, exploited nation—to explain their use of violence against the United States. Both of these were very different from the stance struck by Muñoz Marín, which scholars have associated with the verb *bregar*. Ubiquitous in Puerto Rican culture, *bregar* conveys a range of meanings, but in the political context, one of its most important is a sense of "survival, negotiation, slipping from one position to another to achieve a difficult balance between potentially conflictual elements. . . . It entails struggle without a frontal clash. It implies a pact or a dialogue between parties." Arcadio Díaz-Quinones argues that Muñoz Marín was a master of *bregar*, negotiating with both U.S. officials and the Puerto Rican people to achieve reform that asserted Puerto Rican dignity without subverting the colonial order. He did so by simultaneously inhabiting a paternalist role toward the Puerto Rican masses, whom he promised to rescue from economic and political dependency, and articulating a fraternalist framework for understanding the new Puerto Rican–U.S. relationship. This was a masculinist stance, then, but it was one of compromise and conciliation, not belligerence and bravado, and it concealed inequality rather than naming it. It "avoid[ed] the

violence of radical rupture.” Nationalists, by contrast, contended that radical rupture was necessary.⁶⁹

If Nationalists used masculinist rhetorics to speak back to Muñoz Marín’s strategies of negotiation, their rhetorics grounded in feminine weakness and suffering succeeded in mobilizing North American pacifists on their behalf despite their use of violence as a political tactic. The NP’s defenders highlighted the inequalities between Nationalists and their colonial oppressors, insisting that the episodic violence of the former was less troubling than the structural violence of imperialism. Their efforts, particularly important for keeping the cause of independence alive after the NP was decimated by the imprisonment of its leaders, were, ironically, facilitated by U.S. responses to Nationalist violence. For her promotion of the NP cause, North American activist Ruth Reynolds was convicted and imprisoned under the gag law, and *this* embodiment of the national security state propelled national and international movements in defense of her as well as her Nationalist allies.

Reynolds had first traveled to Puerto Rico in 1945 and had returned to investigate the 1948 student strike at the University of Puerto Rico. She stayed on, writing a book on government repression of the strike and being drawn ever more closely into Nationalist circles. Although she insisted that she never joined the NP, she frequently attended party gatherings and conferences, and her closest associates were members. Just before the 1950 uprising, Reynolds was riding home from an Albizu Campos speech with three friends when insular authorities stopped their car. A search of the trunk revealed several small firearms and Molotov cocktails. The young men were arrested, but Reynolds was merely questioned and released. Then, the day after the shooting at Blair House, she was swept up in the police dragnet. Held in Puerto Rican prisons for nine months before being brought to trial, Reynolds was accused on two counts of violating *la mordaza*. She was acquitted of participating in the Nationalist insurrection but convicted of promoting the overthrow of the insular government. Reynolds had been present at a gathering where Albizu Campos exhorted the crowd: “All those who feel themselves Nationalists; that is true Nationalists, rise. Raise your right hand all who are ready to sacrifice their lives and give up their fortunes defending the cause; all those who are ready to die for the movement that must continue over the bones of Albizu Campos.” She adamantly denied taking this “oath,” but on conflicting evidence was sentenced to serve two to six years. After filing an appeal and making bail in June 1952, Reynolds returned to the mainland, where she sought to raise funds

for her own legal defense. In 1954 the Puerto Rican Supreme Court set aside her conviction, ruling that even had she taken the oath, neither this “nor her affiliation with the Nationalist Party nor her attendance at particular meetings . . . can be classified as criminal acts.”⁷⁰

Reynolds’s arrest provided the impetus for the emergence of a more radical assault on U.S. policy. Her close connections to Nationalists divided ALPRI, which disbanded, but other activists committed themselves to the cause. Dave Dellinger, A. J. Muste, Julius Eichel, Ernest and Marion Bromley, and others, most of whom were associated with the War Resisters League or the “revolutionary pacifist” group Peacemakers, joined with some ALPRI members to form the Ruth Reynolds Defense Committee. They raised money, arranged for the radical lawyer Conrad Lynn to represent her, publicized her case both in the United States and internationally, and lobbied for her release from “behind America’s own iron curtain.”⁷¹ From advocating for Reynolds, they moved on to work in solidarity with the Puerto Rican Nationalist movement. Many of them agitated against the impending execution of Oscar Collazo, participating in a worldwide campaign that succeeded when President Truman commuted his sentence to life in prison on July 24, 1952—not coincidentally, the day of the Commonwealth’s founding. Some also joined Americans for Puerto Rico’s Independence, a group that Reynolds helped organize shortly after her return; later, many of them were founding members of the Committee for Justice to Puerto Ricans (CJPR), which was created in the wake of the 1954 attack. Some remained active in Puerto Rico solidarity work into the 1960s and even the 1970s; others went on to organize against U.S. imperial policies in Cuba and Vietnam.⁷²

It is one of the paradoxes of history that, at the height of the red scare, these internationalists and “absolute” pacifists were defending a nationalist organization that used violence to oppose U.S. power. This was a tricky balancing act, and it led to long debates within the groups, as well as difficulty in attracting supporters, particularly in 1954. Nonetheless, North American activists argued for support of and engagement with the Puerto Rican independence struggle in a variety of ways. One common strategy was to invoke “American” traditions of dissent and revolution, positing that Nationalists such as Collazo were not terrorists but “true patriots” and “heirs of the American Declaration of Independence.” They maintained that “if George Washington was a hero,” then “Oscar Collazo is not a scoundrel.”⁷³ Another was to emphasize the impact of the domestic Cold War on civil liberties, suggesting that in the “hysteria” of the contemporary anti-Communist crusade, it was especially important to guard the

due process rights of those accused of subversion. They particularly emphasized this line of argument in the wake of the 1954 shootings, when outrage against the attack made a civil libertarian stance the only viable defense. It allowed activists to sidestep the question of whether Nationalist violence was justifiable while criticizing the excesses of the national security state.⁷⁴

Above all, these activists situated NP violence as a response to the massive violence of U.S. occupation. Defenders of incarcerated Nationalists asserted that they were political prisoners who had been responding to “the continuous aggression of the United States” against the Puerto Rican people. Peacemakers, for example, sent three members to “witness” at Ruth Reynolds’s trial in 1951. While there, they urged island residents to embrace nonviolence as a way of resistance, but they also acknowledged that “imperialism [is] the real violence” and denounced the “long, continuous domination and exploitation” that had produced the more superficial violence of the 1950 uprising. Reynolds was fond of telling U.S. officials and fellow activists alike that “during the Party’s entire history the acts of violence with which our Government has credited it can be counted on the fingers of one hand (an exceedingly poor record for an organization supposedly concentrating on nothing else).” This she contrasted with a half century’s record of “force and violence as . . . national policy.”⁷⁵

Even after the 1954 attack, some of these solidarity workers tried to teach Americans about the violence of U.S. empire. In New York City, members of Peacemakers picketed the Foley Square courthouse where Nationalists were being sentenced, distributing a flyer that rebuked the U.S. government for “condemning the violence of Puerto Rican Nationalists while practicing violence herself,” and urging, “We believe that, instead of sending Puerto Rican patriots to prison, the American government should TAKE ITS ARMY OUT OF PUERTO RICO.” Reynolds was dismayed and infuriated by the shooting in Congress, but she did not waver in her belief that “empire is in itself the basic violence, and that to oppress with violence is worse than to resist oppression with violence.” This stance fueled her testimony before the grand jury that the NP did not engage in terrorism. When asked how she could defend an “unwarranted attack on innocent men,” her answer was “Innocent? My God!” For pacifists who accepted the Nationalists’ argument that the United States had illegally occupied Puerto Rico for the past fifty-six years, and that Congress was the body most responsible for this continuing occupation, a violent assault on the House of Representatives was not exactly excusable, but it was understandable. They put front and center Puerto Rico’s suffering and its

weakness relative to the United States, insisting that it was the Nationalists who were the victims.⁷⁶

The Cold War accorded these arguments a special resonance as U.S. militarization of Puerto Rico grew in intensity. During World War II, the U.S. Navy and Army had built large installations there. Immediately after the war, the navy appropriated three-fourths of the island of Vieques for munitions storage and training exercises, causing the displacement of much of its population and severe social and economic dislocation. By the early 1950s, Ramey Air Force Base (originally Borinquen Field) had been transferred to the Strategic Air Command; it was home to some of the most advanced weapons of the Cold War, including surveillance aircraft and nuclear-equipped B-36 bombers that could reach into the Soviet Union.⁷⁷ As Puerto Rico's military significance expanded from an outpost overlooking the Panama Canal to an important staging ground for the atomic-age Cold War, Nationalists drew attention to U.S. nuclear capacity there. In the months before the 1950 uprising, Albizu Campos toured the island accusing the United States of making Puerto Rico its "atomic base and the base for [its] most advanced weapons. . . . Ostensibly, they are inviting the enemy to attack Puerto Rico, which has come to be the Pearl Harbor of the Atlantic." Warning that the island was being transformed into an atomic arsenal that could be used against all of Latin America, he railed against U.S. officials' "cynical" belief that "because they possess the atom bomb they can sit on the heads of all human beings. Theirs is a power which respects nothing but brute force." Pacifists, not surprisingly, found such rhetoric compelling, and they joined with Nationalist Party members to charge that "the Puerto Rican people have become a target for death" (fig. 9).⁷⁸

In sum, "terrorism" and "real violence" were the terms used to debate the legitimacy of Puerto Rico's state of exception. For U.S. officials and their PPD allies, the allegation that Nationalists were terrorists was meant to justify the full weight of national security measures that equated resistance to U.S. policy in Puerto Rico with the attempt to overthrow the entire U.S. government. On the other side, radical pacifists and NP members used gendered languages of power and oppression to reveal the structural violence that enabled and even necessitated the suspension of the rights to liberty and self-governance. In no sense were the meanings of these terms self-evident. Rather, in the global Cold War moment, the ferment over Puerto Rico provided an opportunity to dispute what sorts of violence would be recognized or erased, validated or condemned. This was a debate that routinely fused and confused violence



FIGURE 9. In 1959, Reynolds and her compatriots in the radical pacifist movement demonstrated against the military occupation of Puerto Rico. (Photo courtesy of the Ruth M. Reynolds Papers, Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY)

against persons and violence against states, individual bodies and political bodies. And it was a debate that finally pivoted on the contested meanings of Puerto Rican embodiment. In particular, Pedro Albizu Campos’s body—and the psyche it housed—became a synecdoche for the struggle for independence itself. Stories about his body furnished yet another arena for arguing over terror, state violence, and the legitimacy of America’s Cold War empire.

“Lynching at the Height of the Atomic Age”

Minds, Bodies, and the State of Exception

U.S. journalists and officials elaborated on the political consequences of embodiment in endless stories about Albizu Campos. Discussions about the circumstances of his birth were an important medium for conveying the illegitimacy and irrationality of Puerto Rican desires for independence. These accounts proffered

a tragic mulatto story that implicated the United States in the emergence of nationalism but ultimately held the NP leader responsible for its excesses. The basic facts are relatively undisputed: Albizu Campos was born in 1891, the child of Juana Campos and Alejandro Albizu y Romero. But in this typical account of his formative experiences from a 1954 story in *Life*, his parents' identity is less important than is their class, race, and sexual impropriety: "The Harvard-educated son of a Spanish sugar man and his Negro mistress, Campos was treated as a Negro in the U.S. army during World War I and emerged teeming with hatred for the United States."⁷⁹ For U.S. commentators, these racial origins and their consequences were key to understanding the rest of Albizu Campos's career, as his experience of racial categorization in the army allegedly "twisted" and "warped" his life, generated his burning contempt for all things American, and set him on the road to violence.⁸⁰

This racial narrative superficially acknowledged the damaging effects of segregation in the United States but displaced blame for those effects onto Albizu Campos himself. While it might seem to question the United States for its unfair treatment of the young soldier, the recent desegregation of the armed forces blunted this critique; Albizu Campos, who unaccountably could not forget the slight of long ago, was mired in the past. Never referring to the nuances and specificities of racialized systems of respectability in Puerto Rico, this account also presumed a binary racial order that proved troublesome for "mulattos" like Albizu Campos but was not necessarily wrong in itself.⁸¹ The harm resulted instead from Albizu Campos's inappropriate identification with his white father rather than his black mother, and his extreme and irrational response to a supposed insult to his honor. Thus this story also implicitly rejected the NP position that violence was an appropriate defense of masculinist honor.

As with most myths, there may be some truth in this narrative. Albizu y Romero did not legally recognize Pedro Campos as his son until 1914, after he had matriculated at Harvard. The young man may well have resented that the U.S. military did not affirm the shift in social status that such recognition conferred. Nonetheless, by identifying this moment as the "turning point" in a life thenceforth dedicated to violence and destruction, this story disregarded the very real inequalities and injustices enacted through U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico and signified the Nationalist movement itself as racialized Other, a stereotyped expression of Latin emotionalism and pride. Albizu Campos's racially embodied self placed him and his movement outside the bounds not simply of racial order but of legitimate political discourse and action, outside the bounds of reason itself.⁸²

Albizu Campos's supposed irrationality implicated his followers as well. Accusations that Nationalist attackers were "insane," "psychotic," "crazy," "lunatic," "psychopathic," and the like were lodged in 1950 and 1954 at every level of public debate.⁸³ Muñoz Marín memorably called the NP a "serpent of madness in the body of Puerto Rico," observing that Nationalists "live in a completely unreal world, and the trouble is that occasionally they escape from the unreal world and kill somebody."⁸⁴ This madness, it was sometimes intimated, derived from Albizu Campos's "hypnotic influence" over his followers. The universal translation by his opponents of Albizu Campos's moniker "el Maestro" as "the master" instead of the more appropriate "teacher" or "leader" undergirded the implication that the party leader had the ability to compel women and men to commit acts they would never contemplate were they in full possession of their faculties.⁸⁵

These allegations of insanity impugned not only NP strategies but also the very desire for independence. Puerto Rico's political and economic "progress" became evidence of the irrationality of the Nationalist enterprise. Mason Barr, in charge of Caribbean policy at the Department of the Interior, wrote that the Blair House attack was "particularly puzzling because it occurred at a time when the last vestigial remnants of colonialism are being eliminated. These actions cannot be explained on any rational basis, and the answer lies in the field of abnormal psychology." Editorial writers at the *Washington Post* similarly observed that Oscar Collazo's "fanaticism" and "delusions" were "the more preposterous in the light of . . . a recognition by the island's more stable leaders and the bulk of Puerto Ricans that complete independence would be . . . ruinous." In the wake of the Capitol shootings, the *Post* continued this theme, heading a story on Puerto Rican attitudes toward independence "Sane Puerto Ricans Spurn U.S. Break." Another commentator chimed in that "the Nationalist movement in Puerto Rico is about as lunatic a movement as could exist in this world. Puerto Rico is not bound to the United States by iron chains or by any compulsion other than the will of its people." Casting the United States as the guarantor of Puerto Rican democracy and prosperity and Muñoz Marín as its rational and mature partner, these narratives rendered the desire for independence incomprehensible (fig. 10).⁸⁶

This language was so universal that even anti-imperialist activists used the same rhetoric, if only in an attempt to challenge it. The writer and activist Waldo Frank, a member of the Committee for Justice to Puerto Ricans, which was organized to ensure a fair trial for those arrested after the 1954 attack,



FIGURE 10. Luis Muñoz Marín and Dwight D. Eisenhower are pictured as partners guiding Puerto Rico to a more “sane” future. Here, Muñoz Marín has come “to offer his apologies” for the shooting in Congress. (Photographer, Mark Kauffman. Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images)

penned a column for *The Nation* in which he analyzed the “fantastic lunacy” of the attack on Congress. While he acknowledged both economic and political progress on the island, he warned against “writing off the Congress affair as the mere froth of crackpots, signifying nothing.” Frank suggested that the “madmen” who carried out the assault were expressing the “unconscious . . . resentments and hate” of the “sane majority” in Puerto Rico who loathed the imposition of U.S. values and culture on their country. Linking the events in Washington to the informal U.S. empire in Latin America and to the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States for the hearts and minds of peoples of the developing South, he concluded, “In a psychotic world, madness must speak truth.”⁸⁷

These allegations about Nationalist insanity were also articulated—and challenged—through a parallel discourse about Nationalist bodies as diseased. Again, specific stories about Albizu Campos translated into general denunciations of nationalism. But this narrative is more difficult to prise apart, for the etiology of Albizu Campos’s illness was very much contested. And, unlike accusations of madness—which mostly traveled only one way—this story of diseased bodies could be used as a weapon against supporters of the Commonwealth and U.S. empire.

Since his first imprisonment, when Albizu Campos was transferred to Columbus Hospital after a heart attack, his health was made a political subject, with federal officials accusing him of malingering,⁸⁸ and supporters decrying government persecution of a sick man. During his incarceration after the 1950 uprising, however, the issue took on greater urgency. In 1951 Albizu Campos charged that the U.S. government was targeting him with atomic rays, causing debilitating physical injuries. Puerto Rican officials countered that his bodily infirmities were simply a symptom of his mental illness. In this debate, Albizu Campos’s body, and the bodies of other Puerto Rican prisoners, became signs of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Puerto Rico’s relations with the United States, and of U.S. relations with the world.

Nationalist accusations of medical experimentation were not new. Albizu Campos first came to worldwide attention in 1932, when he charged Dr. Cornelius Rhoads, a North American physician working on the island for the Rockefeller Foundation, with killing Puerto Ricans by “injecting” them with cancer.⁸⁹ This was just the first of many accusations by islanders that U.S.-sponsored medical initiatives, including birth control efforts and vaccination campaigns, were genocidal strategies intended “to kill all of us.” These charges may not

have persuaded most Puerto Ricans, but they had at least some credibility in the postwar years, as Puerto Rico became a “social laboratory” for demonstrating the uses of modern science for developing the third world, including body-disciplining techniques like birth control and sterilization.⁹⁰ When the atomic age dawned, these long-standing concerns with the destructive force of U.S. technologies erupted with even greater intensity.

In May 1951 Albizu Campos complained to the warden of the San Juan District Jail (known as La Princesa) that he was being attacked in his cell by “electronic rays” as part of a U.S. military experiment. Prison officials had him examined by a team of doctors and psychiatrists, who diagnosed him as psychotic, paranoid, and suffering a “persecution mania.” Their response was to remove him from solitary confinement and place him in a larger cell. Albizu Campos denied that he was hallucinating, pointing to a variety of physical symptoms, including headache, high blood pressure, weight loss, edema, burns, and fever (fig. 11). Government officials insisted that many of these symptoms were self-inflicted. In 1952 the Nationalist Party presented a petition to the United Nations requesting an investigation into the “cruel and inhuman treatment” that was endangering Albizu Campos’s life. Members charged the U.S. government with trying to “weaken him, to burn him, to make him desperate, to provoke a cerebral attack or a heart attack,” to murder him “without anyone assuming the responsibility.” By mid-1952 Albizu Campos was refusing to allow doctors to examine him, arguing that his problems were “only incidentally . . . medical. . . . It is . . . a case of nuclear physics.” This was, he concluded, “lynching at the height of the atomic era.”⁹¹

Puerto Rican officials were concerned that what they viewed as mental illness might interfere with their efforts to prosecute Albizu Campos further, but these worries came to naught, for two months after his accusations surfaced, he was convicted on additional charges and sentenced to fifty-four more years, bringing his total sentence on charges related to the 1950 uprising to almost eighty years. In September 1953, however, Muñoz Marín was forced to issue a pardon. Media reports that Albizu Campos’s health was worsening, a flood of inquiries and protests from Latin America, and the government’s concern that he might die a martyr in prison all contributed to this decision. Muñoz Marín seized on the opportunity to make the pardon an object lesson in the irrationality of nationalism and the liberal spirit of the Puerto Rican government, releasing to the press an exchange of letters between himself and José Figueres, president-elect of Costa Rica. Figueres, citing Latin American “misunderstanding”

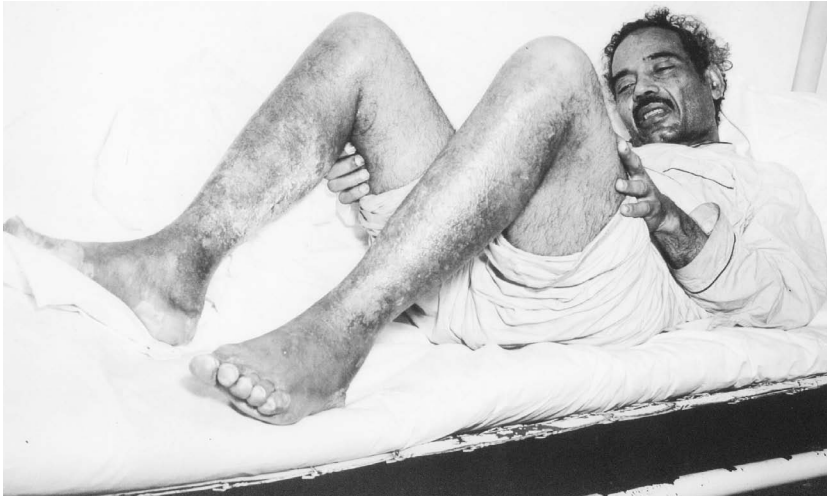


Figure 11. This photo of Albizu Campos in prison shows swelling and burns on his legs. (Photo courtesy of the Archivo Fotográfico, Archivo General y Biblioteca Nacional de Puerto Rico)

about Puerto Rico’s political status and misapprehension of Albizu Campos as a “heroic” figure, urged Muñoz Marín to pardon on humanitarian grounds this most deluded of “a small band of self-deluded men, who pretend to ‘free’ Puerto Rico by means of terrorist attempts.” The governor’s response similarly emphasized not only Albizu Campos’s alleged delusions but also the “unrealistic” nature of the movement he headed, and connected the Nationalists’ current accusations to two decades of “fantastic ideas,” beginning with his publication of the infamous Rhoades letter. Insisting that Albizu Campos was not a political prisoner, and that there were neither political prisoners nor “political crimes” in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, he issued a pardon on the basis of “advanced age” and “state of health,” which could be revoked only if the Nationalist leader “conspire[d] against the public safety, attempting to subvert by violence or terror the established constitutional order and to trample on the will of the Puerto Rican people, as democratically expressed at the polls.” By labeling Albizu Campos crazy and essentially placing him under house arrest through constant surveillance, Muñoz Marín sought to cement the portrayal of nationalism as irrational, terroristic, and undemocratic, and the Commonwealth as the defender of civil liberties and democracy.⁹²

The release of Albizu Campos seemed to solve a political problem for the

Puerto Rican and U.S. governments, but it did not assuage Nationalists' fears about U.S. abuse of nuclear technology. The "attacks," he reported, did not abate, and visitors to his home told of seeing blue, silver, or rose-colored rays of light in his bedroom. For the Nationalists who surrounded him, as well as Ruth Reynolds and her circle, this news was credible in part because other prisoners had complained of similar incidents. During the summer of 1952, while incarcerated at La Princesa, Reynolds and other women prisoners told authorities that they had experienced electric shocks, temporary paralysis, "vibrations," mental confusion and "oppression," and other mysterious ailments. They, too, were convinced that these afflictions resulted from illicit experimentation by the U.S. government, perhaps via laser beams or nuclear rays. That belief may be more comprehensible in light of recent evidence of government-sanctioned experimentation on prisoners and others during these years, including the use of both irradiation and psychotropic drugs. That Albizu Campos's old nemesis Cornelius Rhoades was at this very moment director of the Sloan-Kettering Institute, which conducted human radiation experiments for the Atomic Energy Commission, also fed suspicion that Puerto Rican political prisoners were victims of government experimentation. In any case, this common experience of torture, together with little improvement in Albizu Campos's health, fed anxiety among Nationalists and their allies and convinced them that something must be done to save his life.⁹³

In the winter of 1953–54, friends of Albizu Campos worked furiously to protect him. In Puerto Rico, this ranged from providing personal care to documenting his injuries. In New York, Ruth Reynolds, Dave Dellinger, and others sought to determine whether Albizu Campos was suffering from radiation sickness, sending a Geiger counter to San Juan and appealing to prominent scientists to investigate. On February 24 Dellinger wrote to Albert Einstein, asking for his opinion on the matter. Dellinger confessed that he had "considerable reservations" about Albizu Campos's allegations but thought it important to find out whether such an attack was possible. He was delayed in mailing the letter, however, as a postscript made clear: "The violence in Congress erupted between the time I wrote this letter and the time I got it out. About all I can say is that this probably underlines the urgency of the situation. Apparently those who made the attack are amongst those who accept Albizu's charges implicitly."⁹⁴

When Lolita Lebrón led her compatriots in the attack on the House of Representatives, her immediate motive was to draw attention to the atomic torture of Pedro Albizu Campos. Lebrón had been intimately involved with the efforts

to save Albizu Campos's life. In August 1953 she was arrested along with other members of the Women's Committee for the Freedom of Puerto Rican Political Prisoners who were demonstrating outside the UN to demand his release. She huddled with party members to strategize about how to draw attention to his medical condition, wrote articles for the NP newspaper, attended fund-raising meetings, and spent late nights working on a petition to the United Nations. And in February 1954, at a party meeting at which Lebrón was appointed “general delegate” (essentially Albizu Campos's representative) of the Nationalist Party in the United States, the primary topic of conversation was the “health and welfare of our political prisoners,” particularly Albizu Campos's “critical condition.”⁹⁵

Lebrón's elevation to the highest NP position on the continent was decreed by Albizu Campos, and it was the subject of much speculation at the time and since. Was this evidence that the party leader directly ordered the attack on Congress? Did he view Lebrón, a party activist but one with little official leadership experience, as easier to manipulate than Julio Pinto Gandía, the longtime New York delegate? Or, as some hinted, was this simply a maneuver to distance Gandía from any criminal activity? These questions may never be definitively answered, but substantial evidence of turmoil within the NP at this time suggests that the conviction that Albizu Campos was the victim of atomic torture led directly to the March 1 shooting. Reflecting late in her life, Ruth Reynolds recalled that during the Nationalists' trial, an FBI informer who had infiltrated the party testified that Albizu Campos had sent a message for the New York organization: “He didn't want to hear any more excuses. He wanted to read [it] in the newspapers. . . . That if any of them had been suffering from such burning as he was suffering . . . he . . . would have swept the place with gun fire.” Reynolds was dubious that the party leader had issued a direct order, but she acknowledged that his impatience might well have played a role. “The issue we were all discussing at that time is what are we going to do in relation to Don Pedro's body? What can be done? And Lolita was in on these discussions and so was . . . Rafael Cancel. . . . Let's say, for example, Pinto Gandía was deposed as delegate because there was no action coming out of New York. . . . Lolita is put in his place. Lolita, what's she going to think? Don Pedro is dissatisfied with this way of doing things. We've got to do something else.”⁹⁶

Two pieces of writing authored by Lebrón suggest that these issues were indeed on her mind. The first, found in her purse immediately after she was apprehended, was a note that read:

Before God and the world my blood claims for the independence of Puerto Rico. My life I give for the freedom of my country. This is a cry for victory in our struggle for independence. Which for more than a half century has tried to conquer that land that belongs to Puerto Rico. I state that the United States of America are betraying the sacred principles of mankind in their continuous subjugation of my country, violating [our] rights to be a free nation and a free people in *their barbarous torture of our apostle of independence*, Don Pedro Albizu Campos. I take responsibility for everything.⁹⁷

The second was penned after Lebrón had served three years of her sentence in the federal women's prison in Alderson, West Virginia. While incarcerated, she had begun having religious visions. After one of these visions, in which the ceiling of her prison cell "burst into flames," she composed a long document titled "A Message from God in the Atomic Age," denouncing U.S. nuclear policy. After sending part of it to President Eisenhower, she was transferred to a federal psychiatric hospital in Washington, where she was confined for eight months. While there she, too, complained of medical experimentation and torture.⁹⁸

Lebrón's critique of the United States as an atomic power, like Albizu Campos's accusations of nuclear terrorism against his body and his homeland, like the very idea that Puerto Rico could not be free until it was independent, all became evidence of the irrationality and "political insanity" of the entire Nationalist project. In fact, by drawing attention to *their* experiences of terror and victimization, Lebrón, Albizu Campos, and Reynolds inadvertently contributed to their own marginalization. Their bodies—unruly, frail, disabled—and their allegedly illogical minds came to signal their incapacity to engage in meaningful action and their lack of self-sovereignty. Their political irrelevance rested on what had come before: a concerted effort by Puerto Rican and U.S. authorities to redefine Puerto Rico as "free" even as it remained dependent on the United States for markets, capital, and aid, and the Commonwealth as the rational response to that dependence. To reframe this "dependence" as "independence"—"a part of the independence of the United States," as Muñoz Marín put it—government officials had also to counter the insistence that Puerto Rico was *not* free, that "free association" was colonialism by another name. They accomplished this, in part, by displacing onto the Nationalist Party negative and traditionally feminized and racialized attributes: irrationality, emotionality, and physical vulnerability.

Ironically, they were abetted by Albizu Campos’s willingness to put women in leadership positions. Certainly, most of the power in the NP resided in the hands of men. And there is much contention about his reasons for entrusting certain women—including his wife, Laura Meneses de Albizu Campos, who lived in exile in Cuba, from where she directed much of the party’s efforts to get international support, and Blanca Canales Torresola, who led the 1950 uprising in the mountain town of Jayuya, as well as Lolita Lebrón and Ruth Reynolds—with significant responsibilities. His opponents alleged that he could easily manipulate—or, more to the point, seduce—weak women. Or it may have been because he had a mystical view of women as mothers of the nation, as his public response to news of the 1954 attack reveals: “A Puerto Rican heroine of sublime beauty has again pointed out for the history of all nations that woman represents the nation and that the idea of an enslaved mother is inconceivable. . . . Lolita Lebron and her countrymen . . . have given notice to the United States, made bold with its atomic bombs, that they must respect the independence of all nations.”⁹⁹ Or perhaps it was just that he believed he had to use all the soldiers he had in a war against the most powerful nation on earth. Whatever the reason, when Lebrón led the assault on Congress, she was made to epitomize the “craziness” and ultimate impotency of the Nationalist attack on U.S. power. In her first trial, on charges of assault with a dangerous weapon and assault with intent to kill, Lebrón was convicted only on the first charge, apparently because the bullets from her gun all lodged in the ceiling. Her three comrades were convicted on both counts, and were sentenced to longer jail terms as a result.¹⁰⁰ Although the U.S. and Puerto Rican governments accomplished their goal of incapacitating the Nationalist Party—after a second trial on sedition charges, combined with the prosecutions in the wake of the 1950 uprising, virtually all of the party’s leadership was imprisoned—the fascination with Lebrón that surrounded the trials also figured Nationalist failure.

Perhaps this was an inevitable outcome. U.S. officials had a great deal riding on their success in managing what they heralded as the decolonization and development of Puerto Rico, as did the Puerto Rican leaders who joined them. Not only was Puerto Rico a keystone in U.S. Latin American policy and an important symbol of American support for “democracy”—Nationalists were being rounded up, after all, at the very moment when the CIA was accomplishing the overthrow of a popularly elected government in Guatemala—but also it was essential to U.S. military supremacy in the atomic age. But even when—perhaps especially when—the Nationalist threat was put down through

violence and imprisonment, the contradictions that made Puerto Rico America's most obvious "state" of exception remained.

Those contradictions made for some strange bedfellows, bringing together women and men who embraced violence as protest against injustice with women and men who dedicated their lives to nonviolent resistance. This was not an easy alliance. Lolita Lebrón and Ruth Reynolds did not become friends until much later in life. During her incarceration Lebrón conceived her own style of Christian pacifism, and after her release she continued her anti-militarist activism in the struggle to reclaim Vieques Island from the U.S. Navy; but in the early 1950s, she found Reynolds's pacifism irrelevant and annoying. Still, they agreed, as Reynolds put it, that "no government that takes its authority from anything except the will of the governed can possibly be valid," and that the Puerto Rican people had not yet been able to express their will.¹⁰¹ The Cold War-era resolution of the "Puerto Rican paradox"—an island called free but in fact a possession, a territory neither foreign nor domestic, a people both citizens of a country that did not exist and semi-citizens of the United States—would be only temporary. The repressed would return in the 1960s with the FALN, the Young Lords' Party, and other pro-independence groups, all of whom named semi-citizenship on the continent and the island for the structural violence that it was. Furthermore, while that resolution might have worked to partly silence Reynolds's and Lebrón's criticisms of state violence and its expression in the national security state, there existed other opportunities for articulating such a critique. Fredric Wertham, too, sought to draw attention to the ways in which discourses of national security subjected American citizens to violence. His efforts to change the very meanings of "security" are the subject of the next chapter.