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The Colonizing Mission of the United States in Puerto Rico, 1898–1930

Pedro A. Cabán

In the summer of 1898 the United States attained its long-standing goal of acquiring strategic insular possessions in the Pacific and the Caribbean. Moreover, with its decisive defeat of Spain, U.S. expansionists could rightly claim that their nation had achieved imperial status. But the United States not only appropriated far-flung exotic islands but also claimed sovereignty over approximately 10 million inhabitants of the lands ceded by Spain.¹ The sobering question that confronted the United States after the euphoria of military victory was the legal status and political rights of these subject peoples. Eventually it devised a complicated structure of laws that prescribed a distinctive citizenship status for the subjects of each of its territorial possessions (Smith, 1997: 428).

While the inhabitants of the territories were all perceived to be so racially and culturally different as to justify their permanent exclusion from the American polity, U.S. empire builders believed that effective colonial rule required that they be Americanized. Colonial administrations embarked on ambitious campaigns to transform the legal systems and codes of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines and to install a program of universal public education of which English-language instruction was the cornerstone. While Americanization, or the colonizing mission, was never a coherent policy, it did identify the general outlines of the institutional transformation and political change that the colonial governors were expected to undertake. Colonial officials were permitted, indeed expected, to modify the content of the Americanization programs to adjust to local conditions.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the methods and goals of the colonizing mission in Puerto Rico during the first thirty years of U.S. rule. I document the contradictions inherent in the mission, some of the more

salient episodes of opposition, and ultimately the failure of the colonial authorities to attain their imperial objectives. I am more interested in specifying the content of this program and how it was related to larger imperial objectives and explaining how paradoxically it created a space for opposition than in examining the complex history of the diverse and elaborate attempts by Puerto Ricans to deter, modify, or benefit from the Americanization campaign.² I discuss two colonial administrations that Congress imposed on Puerto Rico. The Foraker Act, in effect from 1900 to 1917, set up a civilian colonial administration that accelerated the transformation of Puerto Rican life inaugurated during the period of military occupation. The Jones Act modified the least democratic and most authoritarian features of the previous regime but sustained its pursuit of Americanization of the subject population. Although the legislation established seemingly different structures for colonial rule, in both regimes three departments were pivotal for carrying out the colonizing mission of the central government during these three decades: the Departments of Education and Interior and the Office of the Attorney General.

AMERICANIZATION AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY

When Henry Luce prophesied the start of an “American century—America’s century as a dominant power” in 1941, the United States had had territorial possessions and colonies in the Caribbean and the Pacific since 1898. Scholars differ as to the reasons the United States embarked on war with Spain over a century ago, but they concur that by the waning years of the nineteenth century the country was rapidly emerging as an economic power with global aspirations. Ever conscious of European designs on the Caribbean and expanded commercial presence in the Americas, the United States was determined to demonstrate to its competitors that the Western Hemisphere was its exclusive sphere of influence. An influential and highly active coalition of manufacturers and export agricultural producers lobbied for an aggressive foreign trade policy, while an ultranationalist cadre of expansionists in government, the media, and the academy demanded decisive military action against Spain, the last vestige of European power in the Americas.

This alliance between internationalist corporate capital and an evolving imperialist state was in its infancy when the United States embarked on a war with the decaying Spanish empire. Over a century later, the same array of public and private power drives the Summit of the Americas and its goal of neoliberal trade liberalization. The expansionism of the late nineteenth century was built on an ideological edifice of virulent nationalist social Darwinism. Imperialists preached that the superiority of U.S. institutions was divinely ordained and that the nation had a moral imperative to implant these institutions

and the values they embodied throughout the hemisphere. The contemporary justification for a U.S.-dominated regime of free trade and investment no longer relies on racially constituted dogma. Yet it is undeniable that a celebratory, almost chauvinistic, conviction of the superiority of the United States, particularly the democratic republicanism that is embedded in the free-enterprise mentality, underpins the discourse on U.S.-led hemisphere globalization.

The imperialism of the late nineteenth century required modernizing the political institutions in the “host country” and creating the sociopolitical environment that would permit the rational implantation of capitalist production relations (Sklar, 1988: 81). Americanization in Puerto Rico and other U.S. territorial holdings entailed very similar processes of transformation of political institutions, property relations, and class structure. The contemporary discourse on globalization underscores the indispensability of liberal democratic political institutions because they harmonize with capitalist economic organization and practice.³ It is a familiar argument to those who have studied the history of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century U.S. colonial rule and imperialism. In Puerto Rico, colonial officials had the extraordinary opportunity to implant those institutions and practices they believed were necessary to effect the colony’s transformation into an appendage of the metropolitan economy. While such overt intervention has disappeared since the demise of the Soviet Union, the political corollary of globalization is the extension of formal democratic systems—preferably the one that prevails in the United States—because these have demonstrated their adaptability to the requirements of highly internationalized capital.

In 1898 the United States exacted Puerto Rico from Spain as indemnification for having lost the war. For almost two years Puerto Rico was a “department” under the jurisdiction of the War Department. During this brief period of military rule the foundations for a radical and sustained transformation of Puerto Rico’s political institutions, legal codes, and education system were firmly established (see Berbusse, 1966; Santiago-Valles, 1994; Cabán, 1999). On May 1, 1900, the Foraker Act established a civil colonial administration in Puerto Rico. By far the most important feature of this administration was the Executive Council. It was to be responsible for overhauling Puerto Rico’s political and judicial institutions, installing an insular constabulary, modernizing the infrastructure, and installing a system of public education. In the following pages I will examine three key Executive Council agencies that were responsible for these tasks: the Department of Education, the Interior Department, and the Office of the Attorney General. U.S. colonial officials were confident that the Executive Council would transform Puerto Rico’s institutions and people so that the island-nation would assume its required role in the American century. Since Americanization entailed the implantation of government and judicial institutions patterned on those of the United States, the Foraker Act was the first stage of the colonizing mission.

THE IDEA OF AMERICANIZATION

The U.S. acquisition of Puerto Rico and other insular Spanish possessions—the Philippines, Guam, and Cuba—was a unique event in the history of U.S. territorial expansion. First, it was the result of conquest of a European nation that had claimed sovereignty over the inhabitants of the islands for over four hundred years. These established overseas societies possessed definable cultures, languages, values, and political systems, but they were different from each other and each posed distinct challenges to U.S. colonial officials. Puerto Rico and Cuba, for example, were perceived as partially European societies, while the Pacific islands were popularly viewed as exotic and somewhat more primitive. Nonetheless, by virtue of their cultural, linguistic, and racial characteristics the people of the former Spanish possessions were judged inferior and would be excluded from the body politic of the United States. U.S. colonial officials believed that through a campaign of Americanization these strange and exotic peoples would be converted into semiliterate, loyal subjects who would apprehend the legitimacy of U.S. sovereignty and accept the new political and economic order that would be imposed on their societies. Although they would be educated and incorporated into colonial administration and partially assimilated into the norms and values of U.S. society, they would forever be barred from full and equal participation in the U.S. polity. Politically excluded, these possessions were nevertheless to be fully incorporated into the circuit of U.S. production and trade as sugar producers and markets for the industrial and agricultural products of the North.

The rationale for Americanization was popularly portrayed as a noble and selfless effort to bestow on the unfortunate primitive peoples the possessions and virtues of U.S. civilization. Yet Americanization was driven by a strategic and economic calculus that was pivotal to the United States' aspirations for hemispheric hegemony and national security. Political stability and social order were vital in these militarily strategic insular possessions. Since the islands were destined to be either territories under *de facto* regulation or formal territorial possessions for an unspecified period, their inhabitants had to be socialized into accepting as legitimate their subordination and exclusion from the U.S. body politic. The insular possessions were quickly to take on an important role in the remarkable expansion of the U.S. economy during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Before the war with Spain, expansionists had envisaged U.S. control of sugarcane producing islands in the Pacific and Caribbean and an escape from dependency on imported European beet sugar. By stabilizing and modernizing the financial and revenue-generating institutions and adopting business practices and corporate legal codes from the mainland, colonial officials laid the foundations for a rapid transition to capitalism in the underdeveloped and war-torn possessions. Such a transformation was not merely economically

beneficial but politically necessary since the ideology of commercial expansion closely associated capitalism with democracy. Finally, U.S. empire builders learned from the experience of their European predecessors and quickly moved to create an indigenous cadre of political leaders and managers who would participate in the task of transforming the colonies.

While Americanization was never more than a broadly conceived, loosely defined conception that rationalized the necessity to transform subject peoples and their institutions in the service of empire, U.S. officials aspired to convert Puerto Rico into a commercial bridge to Latin America and its people into ambassadors for U.S. interests in the hemisphere. Notwithstanding these grandiose aspirations, which should be viewed with a measure of skepticism, Puerto Rico was an invaluable strategic commercial and military asset, and the loyalty of its people to the new sovereign had to be secured.

Americanization was predicated on belief in the superiority of Anglo-Saxon cultural and industrial capabilities.⁴ According to the Senator Albert Beveridge, a vocal ultranationalist of the 1890s, the United States was "an industrial civilization" and had reached such "a state of enlightenment and power" that "its duty to the world as one of its civilizing powers" was to embark on a "period of colonial administration" (Beveridge, 1907: 3-5). The proponents of Americanization argued that the United States, because of its Anglo-Saxon heritage, was the epitome of industrial modernity and possessed the most developed form of republican democracy. As practiced in the overseas possessions, Americanization required English-language instruction to provide the subject peoples a functional knowledge of the customs, national character, and political principles of the new sovereign. Because it was a process specifically devised by the central government to influence the political behavior and attitudes of a subject people, Americanization in the insular possessions differed from its practice in the United States (see Cabán, n.d.).⁵ It was more comprehensive because it called for the systematic replacement of Spanish legal systems and political institutions. The War Department, especially the Bureau of Insular Affairs, its specialized agency for colonial administration, periodically had jurisdiction over Puerto Rico, but the bureau's influence in setting colonial policy was always compelling.

Although some enthusiastic officials called for the virtual eradication of indigenous culture and language, others recognized that it was not only futile but unwise to adopt such a radical approach.⁶ Education Commissioner Edward Falkner may well have most accurately assessed the objective of Americanization in Puerto Rico in describing it as "our national social laboratory" (Falkner, 1905: 159-60). While the process of replacing Puerto Rico's institutions was important, Falkner believed that "the primary object of our administration in Puerto Rico should be to infuse into the political, social and economic life of the Puerto Rican people the spirit, rather than the form of American institutions" (Falkner, 1908: 171).

The political education of Puerto Ricans was a key goal of the Americanization discourse (U.S. Department of State, 1905: 41). Although colonial managers never formally defined what political education entailed, they propagated the notion that Puerto Ricans were woefully unprepared to exercise self-government. This presumed incapacity justified restrictive colonial rule and careful oversight of Puerto Rican political behavior (see Go, 2000; Clark, 1973). Expressing this imperial arrogance, General George Davis, Puerto Rico's last military governor, assured Secretary of War Elihu Root that "the knowledge which I possess of the inhabitants of this island . . . forces me to the conviction that, [self-government] would be a disaster to them and to the best interest of their fair island" (U.S. Department of War, 1900: 75). In 1899 Root justified strict colonial rule by arguing that Puerto Ricans "would inevitably fail without a course of tuition under a strong and guiding hand" (1916: 203). Governor Beekman Winthrop crisply reported that "the work of U.S. officials was to install American institutions and American governmental principles, and to educate the Puerto Rican on these lines" (U.S. Department of State, 1905: 41). Of course, U.S. officials would ultimately decide if and when Puerto Ricans had acquired the capabilities and temperament to exercise self-government in harmony with Anglo-Saxon principles of republican democracy. Ironically, the goal of "educating the natives in self-government" was stymied by the Bureau of Insular Affairs, which resisted relinquishing its centralized control over Puerto Rico. As late as 1932, when jurisdiction over Puerto Rico was transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Insular Affairs asserted that it could supervise the unincorporated territories more efficiently than their inhabitants (Clark, 1973: 233).

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND AMERICANIZATION

The appointed eleven-man Executive Council was a singular institution in U.S. territorial history in that it had both executive and legislative functions. It was the cabinet of the presidentially appointed governor and the upper chamber of the legislature. Six of its eleven members were male citizens of the United States, and each was assigned a cabinet post. No fewer than five Puerto Ricans were appointed to the council, although more than a decade would pass before any were put in charge of insular departments. Congress felt compelled to abandon the hallowed constitutional checks and balances here because it feared that otherwise the popularly elected lower house would be able to impede the work of the council. This arrangement also ensured that the Americanization of Puerto Rico would be closely directed by the central government, which virtually prohibited any Puerto Rican participation. According to William Willoughby, who served as council president,

"The greatest freedom was given to the newly constituted government to work out practically every question requiring the exercise of governmental authority." He wrote that the council constituted "the center or keystone to the whole system" of government (1902: 35; 1905: 98). Although the Executive Council was independent of the War Department, the Bureau of Insular Affairs worked closely with it in implementing the colonizing mission.

While the Executive Council's mandate for transformation was sweeping in its scope and touched virtually every area of Puerto Rican economic and political life, three functions predominated. These I identify as ideological, developmental, and coercive. These categories do not sufficiently convey the diverse and contradictory tendencies and policies that characterized the work of the Executive Council, and they were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, at times they were complementary. For example, laws favorable to foreign corporations were enacted and enforced by the attorney general and complemented the efforts of the Interior Department to attract U.S. investment, particularly in sugar. By broadly identifying general tendencies in the Americanization campaign, however, we can generate a clearer understanding of imperial thinking as it pertained to transforming the people of Puerto Rico into loyal wards of the empire and incorporating the island into the metropolitan economy. The ambitious program to remake Puerto Rico's institutions and people and to sustain the operations of the colonial administration was financed overwhelmingly from internal revenue sources.

The Department of Education was most directly involved in the ideological component of the Americanization process. One of its most important tasks was to teach the colonial subjects the language of the colonizer. The education commissioners set about to instill popular understanding and acceptance of U.S. norms, customs, and historical myths. They were keen to implant a patriotic spirit and socialize Puerto Ricans into accepting the superiority of U.S. institutions and way of life (see Negrón de Montilla, 1971; Osuna, 1949). The department was crucial in constructing and implanting a new and alien worldview divorced from the historical context of the Puerto Rican people's lived experiences.

The Department of the Interior, the director of health, and the director of public charities were charged with developing Puerto Rico's physical and human infrastructure. The director of public charities and the director of health were responsible for staving off mass starvation and destitution and eradicating the diseases that depleted Puerto Rico's workforce and endangered the lives of U.S. colonial officials. Officials were convinced that investments in education and vocational and industrial training would not only improve the material conditions of Puerto Rico's population but result in significant increases in the productivity of labor. Further investments in improved sanitary conditions, public health, and physical education would ensure an ample supply of healthy and energetic workers for the emerging industries. The Interior

Department modernized the country's infrastructure through ambitious public works projects: irrigation systems, hydroelectric plants, roads, warehouses and piers, and a telegraph system.

The attorney general was the chief legal officer and, like the commissioner of education, was appointed directly by the president. In addition to the attorney general, the coercive apparatus of the colonial state included the system of local courts, the bureau of prisons, the insular constabulary, the Porto Rico Regiment, and the federal district court. The courts were directly engaged in protecting private property, enforcing compliance with the laws, apprehending and prosecuting violators of the law, and enforcing commercial transactions and contracts. The courts and the body of jurisprudence that guided their conduct were among the most important institutions for advancing the Americanization of Puerto Rican society. Each Executive Council department employed its own staff of workers, and collectively this bureaucracy was the primary employer of the country's educated and professional strata. As Puerto Ricans were hired to work in the colonial administration, they became purveyors of the standards and values of the metropolitan power. The attorney general's office and the courts, as well as the insular police and the Porto Rico Regiment, were important agents for socialization and legitimated the new institutional order. Hundreds of Puerto Rican lawyers and judges acquired knowledge of a new body of jurisprudence and developed an understanding of U.S. legal codes and traditions. Thousands were trained for service as government clerks, technicians, managers, tax assessors, police officers, laborers, teachers, and so forth. In the midst of the increasing unemployment and widespread poverty that followed the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico, these workers became dependent on the colonial state for their livelihood.

NEW LAWS AND NEW COURTS

A court system and a legal code patterned on those in the United States were among the most important institutions for advancing the Americanization of Puerto Rican society. Two months before General Nelson Miles landed in Guanica, Lawrence Lowell (who would become president of Harvard University) insisted in an influential article on the importance of implanting the "authority of American courts." It was chiefly by means of the courts and U.S. legal codes that the people of Puerto Rico "would acquire our political ideas and traditions" (1898: 58). Indeed, the military governors reported that Puerto Rico's legal system was strange and un-American and, according to one observer, "seriously obstructed the introduction of American ideas and methods" (Wilson, 1905: 105).

The Foraker Act set up a three-person commission appointed by the president to compile and revise Puerto Rico's laws. By 1902 the Spanish penal code and laws of civil and criminal procedures had been replaced with exact duplicates of the California and Montana codes. The commercial codes were amended according to the Louisiana Civil Code, while the codes of civil and criminal procedure were replaced with analogous legal codes from other states (Graffam, 1986: 115; Rivera Ramos, 2001: 70). (Governor William Hunt observed, "There is no more ready or more practical method of Americanizing our new possessions than by the enactment and enforcement of American laws, and the introduction and practice of American jurisprudence" [U.S. Department of State, 1904: 26]).

The Office of the Attorney General wielded considerable power. The supreme court, district courts, municipal courts, and justice of the peace courts all reported to the attorney general. In 1915 the Executive Council established a juvenile court system to try minors under the age of sixteen. One of the most controversial reforms was the extension of the U.S. federal district court system to Puerto Rico. The court was an important institution for socializing the population in the norms of the U.S. jurisprudence as well. Originally all the presidentially appointed judges were from the United States, and its proceedings were and continue to be conducted in English. The district court was bitterly opposed by Puerto Rico's political leaders, who saw it as an instrument of the metropolitan state to protect the interests of its citizens against claims brought by the colonial subjects. Various attempts were made to exclude Puerto Rico from the district court system. R. L. Rowe, an important colonial official, observed that "as a distinctly American tribunal it has done much to acquaint the native population, especially lawyers, with the procedure of American courts" (Rowe, 1904: 212).

Although subsequently much of the original legislation was modified, the initial alteration of the system of courts, civil and criminal law, and judicial procedures was swift and comprehensive. The task of overhauling the legal codes was greatly facilitated by the cooperation of the Puerto Rican Republican party. The Republicans were staunch supporters of the colonial regime and had exclusive control of the lower house of the legislature.⁷ Within a decade of the acquisition of Puerto Rico, Willoughby announced that "in no other regard have institutions of Porto Rico existing under Spanish rule undergone so complete a change at the hands of the Americans as in respect to judicial organization and procedure" (1905: 107). Instead, Puerto Rico had "a complete system of practice in the courts, similar in its main features to that existing in the code states of the United States" (U.S. Department of State, 1905: 32).

Legal reform was key to establishing a favorable investment climate, which in turn was necessary for attracting U.S. corporations to Puerto Rico. It was commonly argued that U.S. men of business would further the Americanization

of the island. Spanish commercial law was revised to reflect U.S. concepts of corporate rights and protection. In order to establish a favorable investment climate, the colonial state passed generous corporate tax laws modeled on those in industrial states. Indeed, since Puerto Rico was absorbed into the U.S. district court system, the full weight of federal legal protection was extended to U.S. firms operating in Puerto Rico. After these sweeping legal changes went into effect, Governor Allen informed potential investors, "Capitalists can be assured of protection to their property and investments, guaranteed in the form of government, in the tax laws, and in the reorganization of the courts, and capital is pretty sure to take care of itself" (Wood, Taft, and Allen, 1902: 366).

During the life of the Executive Council (1900–1917) expenditures for the coercive apparatus of the colonial state consumed about a quarter of the insular budget. Expenses for operating the penal institutions were the most rapidly increasing budget item (Cabán, 1999: 160). The rate of arrests increased over thirteenfold from 1899 to 1905 but declined slightly by 1916, when about 4.5 percent of the population was incarcerated (Santiago-Valles, 1994: 72).

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AMERICANIZATION UNDER THE FORAKER ACT

The remarkable industrial and technological advancement of the United States during the Progressive era was popularly attributable not only to the dynamism of the Anglo-Saxon entrepreneurial spirit but to the system of universal public education. Among European governments the radical American idea that education was a right available to all and not a privilege reserved for an antiquarian elite was seen as a force behind the country's rapid emergence as a world power. The British journalist William Stead extolled the idea that "the superior education of the American common people was the secret of their growing ascendancy." In contrast to the elitism of much of European education, which was private and designed to preserve class privilege, the "universality of education in the United States is probably more calculated than all others to accelerate their progress towards a superior rank of civilization and power" (1902: 148).

Government interest in vocational education, especially manual training in the industrial arts, accelerated during the 1890s. By the end of the century the United States was a world leader in the manufacturing of machinery. The new economy demanded skilled workers, managers, and technicians, and the high schools were expected to provide this training. But industrialization required the immigration of millions of Europeans, many desperately poor and illiterate. While they provided the human labor power that fueled the industrial revolution, they also constituted a potential threat to national unity

because of their alien political values and ignorance of the English language. Here as well, the public education system was expected to play a vital role.

Educators were developing an awareness of the centrality of public education in creating a sense of national identity among ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous European populations. State officials were also developing an appreciation for the systematic use of public education for political socialization. The Americanization of the foreigner became a project for local and federal government. The noted educator Ellwood P. Cubberley preached widely that the public schools should take "on the task of instilling into all a social and political consciousness that will lead to unity among the great diversity" (1918: 357). School authorities experimented with curricula that not only provided vocational training but included English-language instruction, civic education, patriotic exercises, and the transmission of values and beliefs through the study of U.S. history.

Given the importance of education to the development of the nation, it is not surprising that U.S. empire builders made universal public instruction the cornerstone of their Americanization campaigns in the former Spanish colonies. The appointments of Major John Eaton, who had served as the first commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Education, and the influential educator Martin G. Brumbaugh as education commissioners demonstrated that Puerto Rico would be an important laboratory for testing the latest education theories—enculturation, vocational training, language acquisition, and political socialization. The education commissioner was appointed directly by the president and given unrestricted authority to design and administer Puerto Rico's public education system. The Department of Education was entrusted with the task of transforming a Spanish-speaking people with a four-hundred-year history and distinct culture into patriotic subjects conversant in the language of the colonizers, familiar with their political values, and trained for work in the new economic order. In addition, education officials tested the applicability of industrial arts, vocational training, and other manual education programs in Puerto Rico.

The department's mandate was extensive: (1) imparting English-language skills, (2) instilling civic values, patriotism, and adherence to the colonial regime, (3) training Puerto Ricans for managerial, supervisory, and technical positions in government and industry, (4) installing a gender-based educational program in which women were socialized and trained to perform tasks that would preserve the traditional male-centered family, (5) providing job-related skills in manual and industrial trades for the boys and needlework and domestic service for the girls, (6) preparing a select group of Puerto Ricans to assume high-level administrative positions in the government, and (7) conducting physical education and hygiene instruction.

The significance assigned to these various goals depended upon the priorities of the education commissioners. Invariably instruction emphasized

instilling in youngsters a work ethic that was in harmony with the anticipated labor requirements of a new corporate order, as well as providing political socialization that emphasized the superiority of U.S. governmental organization and institutions. U.S. officials felt that the public education system would build loyalty for the United States by generating increased employment and earning power among the poverty-stricken rural population. An early government report noted the public schools were “organized to provide training for good citizenship, and one of the first essentials is that the individual shall be so trained as to support himself and those dependent upon him” (U.S. Department of State, 1903: 265). The increased earning capacity attributable to education and training would, according to one education commissioner, “convert our rural people into citizens capable of maintaining the sovereignty of the state” (quoted in Negrón de Montilla, 1971: 153).

School officials passionately enforced English-language instruction, and many considered this the department’s most important educational task. Indeed, according to Commissioner Brumbaugh, “The first business of the American republic . . . is to give these Spanish-speaking races the symbols of the English language in which to express the knowledge and the culture which they already possess” (Brumbaugh, 1907: 65). Implicit in all this, of course, was the deeply prejudicial view that English-speaking peoples were the custodians of democracy and enlightened republicanism. Over the decades thousands of teachers were recruited in the United States and brought to the island to teach English to the students and teachers. In 1904 the Department of Education hired 120 teachers from the United States to provide English-language instruction (U.S. Department of State, 1904: 16). In 1917, 193 teachers came from the United States (U.S. Department of War, 1917: 461).

School officials aspired to educate an indigenous political elite that would be at the service of the colonial government. They emphasized the necessity of instilling “civic virtues” among members of Puerto Rico’s “upper class, from which must be drawn the directors and administrators of public affairs.” To this end, scholarships for young Puerto Rican men and women were provided in 1900 as “part of the plan for instituting American culture and American educational ideas into Porto Rico” (U.S. Department of State, 1903: 157). They would return to Puerto Rico to assume the role of ambassadors of the new sovereign and, with their newly burnished status as cosmopolitan and educated colonials, legitimate the material and social gains to be achieved by passively submitting to the assimilationist credo of Americanization. Racist constructions of Puerto Ricans as falling short of the vastly superior Anglo-Saxon intellect were at the core of American perceptions regarding the ability of Puerto Ricans for advanced education. According to key officials, the type of instruction that was required in Puerto Rico was “primarily and essentially one of training rather than of education, of character-building rather than scholastic instruction” (Willoughby, 1909: 162–65). While Puerto Ricans

lacked the innate cerebral capabilities for abstract thought, they could be adequately trained to mimic the colonizer and perhaps learn to appreciate its higher moral character.

U.S. education officials understood that the school system had an explicit ideological role in the imperial project; it was, after all, an agency of Americanization. These men regularly organized activities and educational programs to foster patriotism for the United States. Commissioner Brumbaugh's first report emphasized the centrality of patriotic exercises in the curriculum. Rev. James H. Van Buren, the Protestant Episcopal bishop of Puerto Rico for over a decade (1902–1912), went so far as to write that “loyalty to American principles and standards is a leading feature of the public school curriculum in Porto Rico” (Van Buren, 1913: 151–52). Educational attainment was promoted as essential for fostering responsible citizenry. Elihu Root insisted that Puerto Ricans were incapable of self-government because of their Spanish cultural legacy and lack of education. The electoral franchise, he argued, should be limited to the minuscule percentage of the male population that was literate. He felt that with universal public education men “should acquire the suffrage on this basis as soon as they are capable of using it understandingly” (1916: 167). Paradoxically, he also endorsed the franchise for males, literate or otherwise, who paid taxes to the insular treasury. Root and others entertained grandiose aspirations to mold Puerto Rico's people into a bilingual community and convert the island into “a liaison point between English speaking and Spanish speaking America” (Clark et al., 1930: 90).

Officially, one of the objectives of the public education system was to prepare Puerto Ricans for eventual self-government. However, since educational instruction seldom went beyond the sixth grade for the vast majority of Puerto Rican children, the capacity for the society to exercise self-rule could not be demonstrated. Ultimately, it would be Congress that would determine whether Puerto Ricans would be granted the autonomy to conduct the affairs of state within their own country. Universal literacy was never a condition for admittance of territories as states into the union or, indeed, for individual states to govern within their boundaries. In reality, public education was perceived as a fundamentally conservative influence that would counter what were perceived as radical tendencies among the poor and illiterate rural and urban working class. Colonial officials were implanting a system of education that almost a century later Howard Zinn would refer to as “education for orthodoxy and obedience” (1992: 258).

Despite the goals of colonial officials and despite the fact that it consumed over a third of the insular budget, the system of public education failed both to prepare a literate and patriotic citizenry in sufficient numbers, and to produce young men and women with the skills that industry demanded. English-language instruction was consistently challenged by Puerto Ricans, who recoiled against the often crass and insensitive attitudes

of school officials (see Negrón de Montilla, 1977). In 1915 the commissioner of education reported that the deplorable material conditions of the population were hazardous to colonial rule and could not be mollified by the educational system, whatever its effectiveness as a socializing agency. The commissioner observed with alarm, "The enormous mass of illiterates, in its primitive, uncured condition, is not safe timber to build the good ship of state. We realize that there are serious social and economic problems that have to be solved before the people of Puerto Rico reach the desired goal" (U.S. Department of War, 1915: 316).

The educational process in Puerto Rico was imbued with the ideological vision of exercising direct domination over the colonial subjects by persuasively devaluing and diminishing their identity. The everyday representation of Anglo-Saxon civilization as a desirable but ultimately unattainable goal for the inferior colonial subject was a conscious device for holding Puerto Ricans in a permanent state of subjugation. Referring to British imperial exercise of ideological domination in India, Edward Said called this "the quotidian processes of hegemony" (1993: 109).

BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR ECONOMIC EXPANSION

While public education harbored an explicit ideological project, it had an immediate and pragmatic goal as well. The Department of Education had a definite role in advancing Puerto Rico's conversion into a dependent of the metropolitan economy. The curriculum was designed in part to teach rudimentary skills and help turn out a healthy and obedient labor force for an economy dominated by sugar and tobacco production and needlework.

In the decision to employ public education to develop the island's human resources, two factors were probably decisive. First, such programs had been developed and employed with some success in a number of industrial states, and their adoption in Puerto Rico seemed appropriate given the anticipated direction of economic growth. Second, Puerto Rico had a demonstrated capacity as a sugar and tobacco producer and a "superabundance of labor." In fact, it was purportedly endowed with such a bounty of natural agricultural resources that one excited official was motivated to utter the preposterous claim that "the inhabitants can . . . exist without any remuneration" (U.S. Department of War, 1900: 36). Because of this "abundant labor force . . . Puerto Rico had a decided superiority over its natural competitors," [Cuba, Mexico, and Central America], "in the most essential element of industrial prosperity" (U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, 1907: 10). But these same officials cautioned that Puerto Rico lacked the entrepreneurial talent and business acumen to develop industrially. The first colonial governor agreed that the country had "plenty of laborers and poor people generally" but what it des-

perately needed was “men with capital, energy, and enterprise to develop its latent industries . . . and make the country hum with the busy sound of commerce” (U.S. Department of State, 1901: 75).

Official reports portrayed a languorous island patiently waiting for its vast pool of labor to be efficiently exploited by these “men with capital.” Dreams of a vast productive pool of labor were confounded by the reality that 90 percent of the population was afflicted with hookworm, a debilitating intestinal disease. Puerto Rico could not hope to develop industrially unless the deplorable health and sanitary conditions of the population were dramatically improved. Driven by a combination of humanitarian, strategic, and economic considerations, the colonial government set about to improve sanitation and health conditions. Accordingly, the government initiated a campaign to “stamp out the disease” in order to succeed in the “rehabilitation of the physique of the Puerto Rico laboring people” (U.S. Department of State, 1904: 28). The school system was recruited into this campaign to provide instruction on personal hygiene, sanitation, and nutrition as part of the larger campaign to eradicate hookworm. The epidemic-like status of hookworm persisted until the 1940s.

Employment opportunities for the island’s impoverished masses did not increase during the steady transition to a corporate-dominated, export-oriented economy. In fact, in 1915 the Commission on Industrial Relations reported that “unemployment was very prevalent in the Island” and estimated that there were between two hundred thousand and three hundred thousand more workers available than jobs (Puerto Rico, Bureau of Labor, 1916: 9). According to the Bureau of Labor, “It may be said beyond any doubt that the most serious labor problem of Porto Rico . . . is unemployment. . . . It is absolutely necessary to take some steps . . . to diminish the great evils of unemployment” (U.S. Department of War, 1915: 428). Yet these same officials reluctantly had to acknowledge that the school system had failed to educate a self-reliant population with marketable skills for new labor markets. A special commission reported as early as 1912 that “although the Island schools are unquestionably helping to make good citizens, it is a grave question whether the present arrangements contribute materially to the making of home-makers, producers, skilled workers, self-reliant and efficient breadwinners” (cited in Clark et al., 1930: 83). Remarkably, despite the demonstrated inability of the education system to impart vital skills to the rural population and the documented failure of the corporate sector to absorb the massive surplus of labor, school authorities continued to request additional allocations for programs of dubious social value. In 1916, despite official acknowledgment of a surfeit of workers in virtually all labor categories, Commissioner Miller reported, “There is a demand for skilled labor—and unless industrial education is emphasized for the express purpose of training artisans skilled in various trades, serious labor troubles will probably ensue” (U.S. Department of War, 1916: 357).

Making healthy and reliable workers was an important component of the colonizing mission, but the Executive Council had a mandate to transform the physical landscape in preparation for a rapid transition to corporate-dominated export agriculture. In 1898 Puerto Rico's physical infrastructure was rudimentary and incapable of supporting a modern agricultural export economy. The council pursued the task of modernizing Puerto Rico's primitive and collapsing infrastructure with single-minded determination. It granted exclusive franchises to U.S. firms to build and maintain the roads and transportation, communications, and related facilities essential for economic development. Using the War Department as its fiscal agent, the colonial state issued bonds to generate millions of dollars in loans to finance this ambitious undertaking. A pattern of extensive colonial state engagement in sustaining a cheap, publicly financed and subsidized infrastructure was established during the council's seventeen-year life.

Puerto Rico's commercial development depended upon making the fertile interior of the country accessible to commerce and expanding the opportunities for the agricultural exploitation of these regions. Road construction and maintenance became the single most important—and costly—component of the ambitious program to rebuild Puerto Rico's infrastructure. According to Governor Allen, "It is an imperative necessity to devote every dollar which can be spared from the surplus revenue to the construction of permanent roads" (U.S. Department of War, 1901: 73). By 1910 approximately a thousand kilometers of first-class roads had been built, almost four times the amount built by the Spanish (Rigual, 1967: 90). Road construction and maintenance was the Interior Department's largest single expenditure in 1912, consuming over half of the department's budget and about one-tenth of all funds disbursed by the insular government (calculated from U.S. Department of War, 1912: 323–24).

The ambitious road construction and maintenance program helped dampen the acute unemployment problem, but the demand for jobs among the unemployed "was so great many have to be refused." Those fortunate enough to get hired received "30 cents per day—a small amount, but doing a great deal of good" (U.S. Department of War, 1901: 328). However, even these paltry expenses for labor were considered excessive as construction costs for the road-building program threatened to consume a dangerously large share of the state's revenues. In 1903 the department terminated the program to hire day laborers as a way of temporarily alleviating unemployment, but road building was too important for economic and military security to scale back. The agency sought to resolve its budgetary problems by relying on convict labor wherever possible as a cost-cutting measure, this despite the fact that unemployment hovered around 20 percent. The governor applauded the success of the convict labor program and its cost-efficiency. "Prisoners . . . are paid a wage of 5 cents per day," which amounted to "less

than one fourth the wage paid free labor" (U.S. Department of War, 1914: 307). In 1915 the attorney general also happily reported that the convict labor program had saved the treasury over \$76,000, about 10 percent of what the colonial government spent on salaries (calculated from U.S. Department of War, 1915: 33, 262). Prison maintenance expenses were amply reimbursed by the savings realized with convict labor. Given the profitability of this venture, the governor authorized the Interior Department to employ convict labor for road construction whenever possible. Despite its preference for imprisoned labor, the department reluctantly had to employ free wage labor, but, mindful of the wage structure in effect in the plantations, the government capped the daily pay of common laborers hired by state agencies at 45 cents. The law equalized wages in order "to protect the coffee and sugar districts from the loss of labor consequent on the payment of greatly increased wages by the government" (U.S. Department of War, 1904: 23).

The development of the sugar industry was an integral part of the U.S. colonizing mission. However, large-scale commercial sugarcane cultivation could not be undertaken profitably in the southern coastal plains, since the area lacked adequate water and rainfall. In 1908 the legislature authorized construction of an extensive irrigation system for the region. This project was directly beneficial to the United States, according to the chief engineer, because the country depended "heavily on Puerto Rico for its supplies of raw sugar" (U.S. Department of State, 1908: 184). The irrigation system became operational in 1914 and supplied water to twenty-four thousand acres in the southern coastal plain of Guayama (U.S. Department of War, 1914: 42). Naturally, sugarcane acreage prices soared, given the increased yields and reduced risk. In Guayama the value of cane land jumped from \$99 in 1907 to between \$350 and \$400 an acre in 1917 (U.S. Department of State, 1908: 76; US Department of War, 1917: 336). The large sugar corporations were the primary beneficiaries of the new irrigation system. Small sugar producers, burdened by high property taxes, monopoly prices for railroad transit, and expensive imported fertilizers and other inputs, were highly motivated to sell their land to the U.S. absentee corporations that began to invest in the area. Guayama became one of the districts most characterized by the concentration of productive assets by absentee corporations.

The sale of insular bonds was routinely arranged by the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the War Department to obtain quick infusions of capital to finance public works projects. The purchasers of insular government and municipal bonds realized substantial earnings on these bonds, which were backed by the U.S. Treasury Department. As early as 1911 the total insular and municipal bond indebtedness for road construction and irrigation projects was \$5.3 million—an unusual level of debt considering that the total receipts in that year were \$6.8 million (U.S. Department of War, 1911: 41, 304). The colonial state's debt continued to increase and by 1918 had doubled, reaching \$10.8

million (Clark et al., 1930: 326). The state turned to the bond market because it could not generate the necessary revenues to sustain the frantic pace of infrastructure development. However, debt financing had serious consequences for long-term development. The Brookings Institute reported that the borrowing policy had “been definitely harmful.” It warned that “borrowing has been a great waste of public revenue by diverting it to the payment of interest, while the piling up of debt charges is almost certain to cause hardships for the country during future periods of reduced prosperity” (Clark et al., 1930: 304).

In 1916 the colonial administration realized that the revenue shortfall was jeopardizing its operations. Governor Yager warned that “the only solution” to the revenue problem was “to increase the tax on the property of the island which receives most of the benefits of government, and whose owners are the most able to pay for this support.” He informed the legislature that “an unusually large percentage of the property of the island is owned by non-residents,” and he criticized “these absent owners” because “they contribute practically nothing to the insular government which has done so much for them. The increase in the value of their property is almost wholly due to the improvements furnished by, and the fostering care of, the insular government” (U.S. Department of War, 1917: 261). Despite this generous treatment, the absentee sugar corporations delayed or refused to pay taxes and effectively orchestrated a tax boycott by engaging the government in protracted legal battles to block enforcement of the tax laws.

By 1918 an infrastructure had been built that included thousands of kilometers of roads, irrigation systems, dams and hydroelectric projects, railways and tramways, telegraph and telephone systems, and ports—many financed and built by the colonial state. These utilities were made readily available to absentee sugar corporations, often at highly subsidized rates. Puerto Rico’s trade profile was altered as the island became a small but important market for industrial goods and technology that were used to build and maintain the infrastructure. Infrastructure development also facilitated the denationalization of productive assets by reducing the entry costs to U.S. firms—by lowering the costs for energy, transportation, and communications. Moreover, this early pattern of direct colonial state financing of infrastructure development is one of the permanent features of capitalist development under colonial management.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS FOR AMERICANIZING PUERTO RICO

The U.S. Army and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) were other institutions actively engaged in Americanizing Puerto Rico. In March 1899 an army battalion of Puerto Rican volunteers was formed under the command

of U.S. army officers. According to U.S. officials, the Puerto Rican Regiment was an important institution for promoting the Americanization of the island. Army training was said to impose the “mental and moral discipline which comes from unremitting enforcement of those rules of conduct without which industrial and moral progress are impossible” (Rowe, 1901: 335). Even before the United States had invaded Puerto Rico, the Harvard law professor A. Lawrence Lowell had recommended that “natives of the island be recruited into the ranks” of the army and the navy because it was “a potent force in fostering the affection of the people of Puerto Rico for the United States. There is certainly nothing that stimulates loyalty to a flag so much as serving under it” (1898: 59). Governor William Hunt was “certain that the organization of the Porto Rican provisional regiment has been of material aid in the general work of education. Its existence has stimulated patriotism and aroused a pride in the honor of the flag” (U.S. Department of State, 1903: 15).

By 1900 the AFL was involved in the Puerto Rican labor scene. Puerto Rico’s largest labor organization, the Federación Libre de Trabajadores (Free Federation of Labor—FLT) was an affiliate of Samuel Gompers’s U.S. labor federation. In Puerto Rico as in the United States, the AFL effectively depoliticized industrial labor relations and focused workers’ demands on immediate economic struggles. Under its guidance the FLT accepted the premise that Puerto Rico’s workers should limit their demands to negotiating improvements in their material conditions within the industrial and political order imposed by the United States. To the extent that the workers were invested in collective bargaining with the employers and not confronting the agencies of the state that protected corporate interests, the FLT and the AFL allayed opposition to colonial rule. Indeed, according to Governor George Colton, by 1916 the AFL “was the most effective factor in Americanizing the people of Porto Rico” (U.S. House, 1924: 82). Samuel Gompers boasted that “there is no factor that has been of such value in Americanizing the people of Porto Rico than has the American labor movement, the American Federation of Labor” (U.S. Senate, 1916: 114, 113).

UNIONS AND THE POLICE

In March 1908 the Insular Police Service was established and placed under the general supervision of a three-person police commission appointed by the governor. The colonial authorities justified the routine deployment of the insular police during militant labor strikes as necessary to protect the property of large landowners. The political consequences of establishing a constabulary of poor Puerto Ricans under the direct command of the governor and commanded by a U.S. military officer were significant. Puerto Ricans in the employ of the colonizers were charged with preserving the very structure

of property relations and social authority that was provoking widespread militancy.

As early as 1905 the police were ordered to handle “a strike situation in the sugar districts,” but the most extensive and militant strikes broke out between 1915 and 1916, when eighteen thousand workers brought twenty-four of the thirty-nine largest plantations to a halt for three months (Fleagle, 1917: 114). The director of labor observed that the strike of agricultural workers “has been considered the most important in Puerto Rico since the American occupation” (U.S. Department of War, 1915: 424). These strikes were also among the most violent of the first two decades of colonial rule. Officials reported that “fires occurred and other kinds of damage were done all over the island during that period” and the “work of the police force was considerably increased during the past year by the strike of agricultural workers which began in January” (U.S. Department of War, 1915: 425; 1916: 18).

During these particularly violent strikes, many of the cane fields were torched and machinery and buildings destroyed by workers. Governor Yager reported that he “could not ignore the appeals for protection against such acts of lawlessness and disorder” (U.S. Department of War, 1915: 36). In the ensuing battles police killed five workers in Vieques and another in Ponce, dozens were wounded, and over three hundred workers were arrested (Iglesias Pantín, 1958: 188–89). Reports leave little doubt that the police used excessive force in suppressing these strikes.

Faced with uncompromising hostility from the sugar corporations and unresponsive colonial authorities, the FLT called on the AFL to come to its defense. The AFL successfully pressed its supporters in Congress to establish an industrial relations commission to investigate state violence against the strikers. According to the commission, the series of strikes “which began in January, 1915, was not only justified but was in the interests of the progress of the island. The long hours, low wages, and exploitation of laborers could not have been relieved except by organized action” (Marcus, 1919: 19). The commission concluded that the insular police were primarily responsible for the violence and criticized the actions of the local police magistrates (Mejías, 1946: 87). The labor bureau critically observed that “whatever the actions of the strikers may have been, there cannot be any justifiable cause for the actions of the police and of the municipal authorities,” who “violated the individual rights of the strikers, often times treating them with unforgivable brutality” (Santiago-Valles, 1994: 114).

The FLT applied for federal government intervention to constrain the exploitative practices of the corporations, while inculcating the colonial authorities for violating the rights of workers, but at no time did it repudiate the sovereignty of the United States. In fact, it supported annexation for Puerto Rico because it believed only if it were a state in the union would workers be protected by federal labor legislation and constitutional guarantees.

THE JONES ACT: THE SECOND COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

In 1917, after almost two decades of growing Puerto Rican frustration with the Foraker regime, Congress voted into law Puerto Rico's second organic act. The Jones Act was a wartime emergency measure enacted by Congress on the eve of U.S. entry into World War I. The imposition of political calm and loyalty in this troublesome insular possession was a crucial security objective for the United States as it made preparations for war in Europe. The metropolitan government saw the persistent challenges by Puerto Rico's dominant political party and other elites and increasing popular opposition to the colonial regime, particularly to the Executive Council, as evidence of the growing appeal of independence. The United States believed that the Jones Act would mollify these disgruntled voices while reasserting its imperial dominance over the island and its people. The Jones Act centralized power in the office of the governor and mandated continued U.S. presidential appointment of the commissioner of education and the attorney general. A Justice Department was established under the authority of the attorney general, who continued as the chief law enforcement officer and administrator of the system's penal administration and control. Nonetheless, the Jones Act was portrayed as an enlightened measure that significantly liberalized the colonial regime by eliminating the despised Executive Council and establishing a popularly elected upper house.

The Jones Act signaled the end of the aggressive Americanization campaign and introduced a new phase in the colonizing mission. Policy makers abandoned any serious idea they may have entertained regarding the use of Puerto Rico as a social laboratory for Americanization. After 1917 the goals of U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico were influenced by the island's changing economic and strategic roles in the American empire.

Puerto Rico emerged as an important sugar producer for the U.S. market and evolved into an even more crucial geo strategic asset during World War I. The European war had devastated sugar beet production and led to worldwide sugar shortages. Suddenly, the sugar-producing insular possessions of the United States became extraordinarily important to a U.S. economy that was becoming increasingly internationalized. As a result of escalating demand for sugar and tropical products, Puerto Rico became a particularly lucrative investment site for U.S. absentee firms. The inter-war period severely tested the ability of the United States to administer Puerto Rico peacefully. By 1932 mass sectors of the population languished in deplorable poverty and enervating disease and malnutrition. Puerto Rico's condition glaringly exposed the fallacy of economic theories that equated capitalist development with social equity. Consequently, Washington's goals in Puerto Rico were to preserve political stability, contain labor militancy, and defend the tarnished legitimacy of colonial rule.

The Jones Act is best known for conferring collective U.S. citizenship on the people of Puerto Rico. This grant of citizenship was novel because it gave Puerto Ricans few of the political and civil rights accorded native-born or naturalized citizens of the United States (see Smith, 1997; Cabranes, 1979: 96). According to General MacIntyre, chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, the purpose of granting citizenship to Puerto Ricans was “to make clear that Porto Rico is to remain permanently connected with the United States” (U.S. Department of War, 1916: 18). The grant of citizenship did not augment the already extraordinary plenary powers that Congress exercised over Puerto Rico and its people, but it did have the perverse psychological impact of dramatically demonstrating U.S. resolve to retain Puerto Rico as a colonial appendage.

Remarkably, while the Jones Act conferred collective naturalized citizenship on Puerto Ricans, it did not require literacy or fluency in the English language. Nonetheless, the public schools intensified English-language instruction in order to further the civic education of Puerto Ricans. Moreover, given the collapse of the insular labor market, public schools became immediately engaged in preparing a barely literate population for self-employment and petty commodity production. By the early to mid-1920s the colonizing mission, heralded with almost evangelical fervor as a moral campaign destined to elevate a dependent and inferior people to the status of Anglo-Saxon civilization, was essentially abandoned as an ideological project.

THE SCHOOLS AND CAPITALISM

Although corporate profits increased during and after World War I, Puerto Rico's economy degenerated into a morass of poverty and social immiseration that demonstrated the failure of the United States, despite its great wealth, to provide its colonial ward with economic security and social justice. By the 1930s corporate domination of the economy had provoked a social crisis that threatened the stability of Puerto Rico. Unemployment, landlessness and disease were so extensive as to place U.S. strategic and political objectives at risk. The superfluity of labor for capitalist production was one of the more serious potential challenges to social stability. The federal government was acutely aware of the unfolding social crisis in the island. Colonial officials repeatedly commented on the depressed wages that kept workers at barely subsistence levels and worried that unregulated market forces would create an unmanageable social crisis.

Puerto Rico experienced the brunt of the global depression of the 1930s. Salaries declined as the cost of imported food increased, and unemployment climbed. Absolute levels of poverty, malnutrition, landlessness, and disease escalated. Governor Theodore Roosevelt Jr. reported in 1930 that “more than

60 percent of our people are out of employment, either all or part of each year" (U.S. Department of War, 1930: 2). Congressman Johnson alerted his colleagues in 1930 that "the distress in Porto Rico among those citizens of ours is almost beyond words to express. More than 600,000 people of Porto Rico are woefully undernourished. . . . They work when they can, but there is so little work at so little pay—pennies not dollars" (U.S. House, 1930: 11345). Even for those lucky enough to find work, wages were often too low to meet their minimum needs. Governor Towner reported that "since 1915 the cost of the sugar laborer's diet has increased 48.6 percent, while his wages have increased but 26.5 per cent. . . . The fact remains that for agricultural laborers the wages paid have not increased as rapidly as the cost of living" (U.S. Department of War, 1925: 35). Puerto Rico's working population was not only poor but sickly and malnourished. Governor Roosevelt observed that the "death rate in this disease [tuberculosis] was higher than that of any other place in the Western Hemisphere, and four and one-half times the death rate in the continental United States" (U.S. Department of War, 1930: 1).

The public education system, after all, was supposed to prevent such conditions. The unconscionable unemployment levels, while ultimately a function of market forces, did expose the fiction in government declarations regarding the success of the education system. After decades of significant expenditures, which consumed almost a third of the insular budget, government officials were forced to admit that massive illiteracy continued to plague the population. In 1931 less than half of the 483,348 school-aged children were enrolled in the public schools, and of those enrolled in the rural schools 83 percent dropped out before completing the fourth grade. Since vocational training began in the second-unit schools, that is, after the sixth grade, only a small percentage of the rural children received adequate industrial and vocational instruction. According to officials, the literacy campaigns amounted "only to a smattering of the rudiments of an education which will probably wear off very soon after the children leave school" (U.S. Department of War, 1931: 69).

Despite these sobering assessments, colonial officials continued to dream of molding Puerto Rico's people into a bilingual community that would serve as a bridge between the United States and Latin America. Juan B. Huyke, the first Puerto Rican education commissioner, reported that bilingual education was emphasized because "Porto Rico is about halfway between North and South America," and it was a "proper location . . . for training of students for the important work of uniting the Americas" (U.S. Department of War, 1929: 375). By the mid-1920s the University of Puerto Rico envisioned itself as a pan-American university with specific diplomatic and economic responsibilities. The university was "to lend to the leaders in extra-governmental activities in North, Central and South America the bilingual, bicultural, and intercontinental resources of Porto Rico" (quoted in Rodríguez Fraticelli, 1991: 155).

By 1931 the hypothesized positive relationship between economic growth, increased demand for trained workers, and higher wages was severely shaken. The economy continued to demand contingents of cheap, relatively unskilled rural labor for employment in the sugar industry as field laborers. Even in the needlework industry, whose relatively skilled workers were trained in the public schools, wages were very low. The pool of unskilled labor required for the sugar-dominated corporate sector readily exceeded demand. The synergy between industry and the school system that had been advocated as a critical function of public education had essentially collapsed by the end of the 1920s. The education commissioner candidly admitted that "the efforts put forth in the past in the direction of vocational education have failed in many cases" (U.S. Department of War, 1931: 76).

Faced with the magnitude of the economic crisis of the early 1930s, the schools attempted to impart skills and knowledge that would assist impoverished families in their struggle to survive. A priority for the system was educating young people in some rudimentary skills so that they could exercise a measure of control over their lives in an economy that had left them behind. Programs in the common schools were expanded to train young people in carpentry, cooking, sewing, cultivation, and other skills that could provide livelihood. These schools were thought to be "the most promising agency . . . for improving the unsatisfactory conditions under which our peasants live and converting them from a liability into an asset" (U.S. Department of War, 1930: 105). In the early 1930s a gender-based curriculum offered boys courses in agriculture, carpentry, and shoe repair while girls were instructed in home economics and social work. Both boys and girls took industrial arts courses; for girls this meant primarily needlework. The purpose of this curriculum was to train the rural poor to eke out a bare living on the margins of the economy as independent commodity producers. If they were fortunate enough to generate a surplus, they could enter the market as petty commodity producers.

The rationale for this curriculum reveals much about the role of public education in developing human resources in light of the disastrous labor market conditions. The objective of the manual training and industrial trades was to "improve the quality of work and establish a standard for the products so that they may be marketable and thus become a dependable means of support." Shoemaking was directly related to the effort to protect the *jibaro* from hookworm since the disease was contracted through the foot. The home economics curriculum emphasized cooking and sewing and was intended to teach the girls of the rural districts to do the things that would allow them to have a "more healthful and happy life with an appreciation for their homes" (U.S. Department of War, 1929: 390). Agricultural instruction consisted primarily of gardening with the aim of raising food crops so that families might be able to meet some of their nutritional needs. By participating in the petty

commodity sector, employed workers could supplement their meager earnings from salaried work. The desperate need to improve sanitation and reduce the spread of contagious diseases prompted the curriculum in physical education and hygiene.

The educational curriculum reflected the bias of the patriarchally constituted social system of the United States. While Puerto Rico was experiencing wrenching economic dislocations, public school authorities employed the school system to re-inscribe women's reproductive role in the male-centered family. The gendered curriculum socialized youngsters into understanding and accepting the legitimacy of a gender-based division of labor within the system of generalized commodity production that was rapidly unfolding. Women were trained in activities and household tasks related to the economic reproduction of the family unit that were not necessarily required in the formal labor sector.

When the war in Europe virtually halted its lace and embroidery exports, manufacturers in the United States increased production, and many turned to Puerto Rico, where labor was abundant and cheap. In 1918, the needlework industry was targeted by the Department of Education for its capacity to employ huge numbers of unemployed young women. José Rosario, an official in the department, pointed to the "pressing duty of the rural schools to train the country girls to do this work in a more efficient way and so increase their income and the income of Porto Rico" (Rosario, n.d.: 691–92). School officials held conferences with manufacturers and designed special needlework courses that met the manufacturers' specifications. Private schools were also accredited in needlework, drawn work, and embroidery (U.S. Department of War, 1923: 182–83). By 1920, projected demand for skilled workers who were "expert in needlework" exceeded supply, and the legislature authorized hiring additional instructors in those municipalities where the prospects of employment were most favorable. Throughout the 1920s, demand for this skilled but very low-paid labor held steady. In 1931 the federal government financed vocational training in Puerto Rico and declared that "the principal emphasis will be laid upon training for jobs in the needle trades which are dominant industries in Porto Rico" (Society for the Advancement of Education, 1931: 558–59). Women constituted by far the majority of the labor in needlework, and their work, despite miserable pay, was skilled and demanding. The schools not only prepared women for incorporation into gender-segmented labor markets but sustained the needlework industry by providing fresh contingents of cheap female labor trained specifically for it.

As an instrument for the dissemination of an imperial ideology the school system appears to have been at best partially successful. Rarely was more than half of the eligible student population enrolled in any given year, and mandatory instruction was seldom enforced past the fourth year. Privately

commissioned as well as government studies documented the failure of the school system to transmit knowledge and training in areas critical to economic growth and societal well-being. The needlework industry represents one of the few sectors in which the hoped-for synergy between the public school system and industry was realized.

The emergence of a vocal anti-American movement was a telling indication of the failure of the colonizing mission. Although the Nationalist party never posed a threat to U.S. colonial control, its violent activities galvanized the nation. The party's charismatic leader, Pedro Albizu Campos, threatened the legitimacy of colonial rule and attracted more adherents to the nationalist cause than the local elites were willing to tolerate.

The Nationalist party emerged as a militant reaction to the corruption and complacency of the Socialist and Republican Party coalition that controlled the legislature during the 1920s and early 1930s. But Albizu Campos directed his most vituperative diatribes against the U.S. government and absentee corporations. He lashed out against the colonialism that was impoverishing his people, and the local capitalist class that had amassed fortunes from this exploitation (Albizu Campos, 1979: 43). He imbued the nationalist movement with radicalism that resonated with ever-growing numbers of Puerto Ricans. He declared, "North American interests occupy a great part of our lands and are owners of almost eighty percent of the total wealth of the country; by virtue of this forced feudalism the majority of the electorate of this country are made dependent on its will" (Albizu Campos, 1930: 15).

By the early 1930s it seemed that the very process of Americanization was generating its antithesis, the formation of a nationalist vision of Puerto Rican identity and the emergence of political forces committed to promoting this identity. Unrestrained market forces had precipitated a social and economic crisis that persuaded the Democratic administration of Franklin Roosevelt in the early 1930s to intervene to save its crumbling Caribbean colonial possession. The modernization of the colonial state's coercive capabilities and its emphasis on protecting the rights of private property were elements of the colonizing mission. But opposition to the colonial order intensified virtually in unison with the growing social and economic immiseration. Opponents of the regime pointed to the growing contradiction between an official ideology of democracy and economic fairness and a colonial policy that increasingly relied on coercion and compulsion to enforce the rule of law.

THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF THE COLONIAL SUBJECT

The arrival of an alien power that usurps a people's sovereignty is always traumatic for the colonized nation and historically has proven to be a wrenching and violent process. While the U.S. invasion and annexation of

Puerto Rico did not precipitate a social uprising or bloody confrontation between the colonizers and the indigenous peoples, it was a traumatic event. The speed and depth of Puerto Rico's transformation into a highly lucrative export platform for U.S. corporations ultimately destroyed a people's way of life. The change in sovereignty not only eradicated the sources of power and privilege of Puerto Rico's traditional political elite but also elevated to prominence other political actors who subscribed to the colonial enterprise.

U.S. officials gained enough support from key sectors to institute widespread institutional changes. Domestic capital and some of the professional strata that stood to gain under the new sovereignty worked closely with the colonial authorities (see Quintero Rivera, 1988). These sectors aspired to form a new economic and social order in which they would assume the perquisites of titular political authority. In the process they hoped to displace the traditional landed elite that had assumed prominence during the waning years of Spanish dominion. Support for U.S. sovereignty extended to other sectors. In a society wracked by unemployment, hunger, and disease, those fortunate enough to be employed by the colonial regime had privileged status. Puerto Rican participation in the colonial administration served to legitimize metropolitan rule and was used by U.S. officials as evidence that Puerto Ricans had consented to their own subordination. Despite these changes in the class composition and domestic political configuration, resistance did emerge to impede the U.S. effort to Americanize the Puerto Rican people.

The system of public education that had been heralded as the jewel of the Americanization program failed to achieve many of its objectives. Rather than preparing an educated, skilled, and loyal colonial subject, the school system was called upon to instruct the impoverished rural population in the skills they needed to survive. Capitalist development in Puerto Rico did not generate a significant demand for skilled labor. What the sugar and tobacco corporations needed was an unskilled, cheap, and complacent labor force—the younger and healthier, the better. Puerto Rico's experience under colonial management and capitalist development exposed the cupidity submerged in the ideological discourse that equated economic growth with political democracy and social equity.

The experiments in social engineering conducted in the great national laboratory that policy makers called Puerto Rico did not convert Puerto Ricans into a bicultural and bilingual people. Many of the broader goals of Americanization went unrealized. Admittedly, many of these goals were often ill-defined and grandiose, but the implied objective was to pacify the Puerto Ricans into accepting the superiority of the U.S. polity and its natural right to rule their lives. Although conflicting policy objectives and political aspirations in the federal government led to inconsistent and contradictory initiatives, the multiple instances of resistance to colonial authority revealed the

durability of Puerto Rican national identity and the resiliency of its cultural sovereignty. Americanization was not only a generalized project to assimilate and transform an inferior people and its institutions but also a celebratory discourse on the power and wisdom of the American political system and American business. The hesitancy of Puerto Ricans to embrace this myth was a sobering realization to U.S. empire builders.

NOTES

1. Technically the United States did not have sovereignty over Cuba. Under Article 1 of the Treaty of Paris (1898) Spain relinquished sovereignty over Cuba, and the United States was to “assume and discharge the obligations that may under international law result from the fact of its occupation, for the protection of life and property.”

2. For a lengthy examination of the complex and varied responses of different sectors in Puerto Rico to U.S. colonial policy, see Cabán (1999).

3. This idea of the concordance between democracy, market economies, and trade was a centerpiece of President George W. Bush’s message at the 2001 Summit of the Americas: “Open trade reinforces the habit of liberty that sustains democracy over the long haul. Free enterprise requires liberty and enlarges liberty.” Bush Comments at Summit of the Americas Working Session, April 21, 2001. <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/summit/opening.htm>.

4. Typified by Senator Albert Beveridge’s statement: “And of all our race he has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world” (quoted in Smith 1997: 431).

5. According to Isaac Berkson, in his 1920 study on the Americanization of Europeans in the continental United States, “Newcomers from foreign lands must as quickly divest themselves of their old characteristics, and through intermarriage and complete taking over of the language customs, hopes, aspirations of the American type obliterate all ethnic distinctions. They must utterly forget the land of their birth and completely lose from their memory all recollection of its traditions in a single-minded adherence to American life in all its aspects” (Berkson, 1920).

6. For example, William Hunt, Puerto Rico’s second appointed governor, believed that “every effort must be made not only to teach new doctrines and ideas, but at the same time to destroy the prejudices, ignorance and the false teachings of the past” (U.S. Department of State, 1904: 13).

7. See Trías Monge (1991: esp. 154-161) for the noted jurist’s views on why the legal changes were effected so quickly and failed to provoke notable resistance. The opposition Federal party boycotted the elections of 1900 in part because Governor Allen did nothing to halt the campaign of physical intimidation against the party’s candidates.

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