



BY

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*This book has been manufactured
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Dedicated to

MARGARET CHRISTIE

*whose unswerving belief in the importance
of this book did much to make it possible*

Printed in the United States of America

AUTHOR'S NOTE

While the factual material in this book is correct, certain names of places and people, including all those of students, have been changed.

The quotes from Pedro Albizu Campos are taken from the court records in San Juan. Some of them have been denied by Albizu.

CHAPTER 4

The next morning, I started my career as a teacher. At nine o'clock I was at the office of the superintendent of schools and in due time I was ushered into his private office. He was a stout little mulatto who spoke English sparingly. He told me that I was assigned to the Juan Morel Campos School. A boy was dispatched to show me the route.

We passed an old stone wall on which both flame-vine and bougainvillea grew, then in through a metal gate to a yard of packed brown earth. Neither grass nor flowers grew here, but there were three tall, slanting palms whose swollen trunks jutted from the earth. There was a ceiba tree, too, that made a cool spot in the yard, and in the lawn next door there was a giant mango tree that cast its huge branches over the corrugated tin roof of the school.

The principal, a white-haired woman with a pale gray skin, took me to the room which was to be my classroom, introduced me briefly, and left.

There were sixty-odd children in the room, ranging in age

from eleven to twenty-three. There were about forty-five seats; so many of the children had to double up. Most of the seats and desks were broken and only a few were attached securely to the floor. Fully grown boys straddled desks meant for five-year-olds. Three colored boys sat in a row along one side wall, grinning widely. I walked slowly to the teacher's desk at the front of the room, thinking, "What the hell do I do next?"

I scabbled through the drawers of my desk, looking for chalk, pencils, papers, books—anything I could use. Save for odds and ends of paper, a set of the previous year's report cards, two rusted razor blades, the drawers were empty. I fingered the razor blades reflectively, for I was not yet aware of their full connotation. Then I looked up into sixty round-eyed, expectant faces. Suddenly the whole thing struck me as funny and I broke into laughter.

Sixty kids roared with laughter. The room rang with it until the walls echoed. It was my first experience with mass laughter in Puerto Rico. The laughter of these youngsters bore no relationship to the laughter of American boys and girls. This was high-pitched, almost hysterical. There was no amusement in it whatsoever, but only relief from built-up tension and an undirected mockery. The kids looked at one another, gulped and sputtered and giggled, and seemed unable to stop. The laughter of a frightened people, a hungry people, a dissatisfied people, can be a horrible thing.

The principal appeared at the door.

"Silence," she bellowed at the class. Then to me, "What passes? Have you no control of the class?"

"Nothing's wrong. But haven't you some books, or paper?"

"No, not yet."

"Can't you even get me a piece of chalk?"

"No, why do you need these things?"

"I must have something if I'm to teach these children."

"Why? The Puerto Rican teachers can get along with nothing. Why shouldn't you?"

She stalked out again and I was alone with my class. Tentatively I began to ask questions: "What is your name? . . . How old are you?" and others of a similar ilk. The children looked at me blankly. I knew no word of Spanish and they gave no indication of understanding any English. The class returned my troubled stare in silence at first; then they began to make quips in Spanish, and soon the room was in an uproar.

The only writing in English which I possessed was a copy of the London *Times*, which had reached me that morning via a circuitous rout. Desperately I began to read an editorial to them from this most sedate of English newspapers. Never before had I realized how circuitous, how ponderous, how completely nonsensical the *Times* could sound. I gave it up after a few minutes and contented myself in watching a big colored boy dig lice from his hair and crack them against the side of his desk.

The room was suffocatingly hot, for three sides were enclosed by solid wood, while the paneless windows of the fourth were a few inches from the old wall. The corrugated roof held the heat of the sun and no whiff of air moved through the building. I went to the back of the room and stood in the doorway. In the back seat sat a gangling youth of twenty-three. He was hunched up in a diminutive chair with his feet sprawled out on the desk of the boy opposite. He wore a black and white checkered cap with a broken visor, a faded purple shirt which showed the remnants of a gold stripe, red trousers, and no shoes. His hands were clasped back of his neck and a stubby pencil was gripped between his teeth. From him I received the first evidence that the class knew some English.

He looked up at me, removed the pencil stub from his

mouth, spat an inch or two from my feet. "Goddam f—ing Americucho bastard no good. Some day I kill." Again he spat, and this time the white foam flicked my shoe.

"Viva Carmelo!" came from the kids.

Then another voice, a little frightened by its own temerity: "Kill the Americanos!"

For three hours, I was closeted with these kids on that first morning. Then the noon-day bell rang and they scampered out of their own accord. I went immediately to the town to try to buy some chalk, paper, and a Spanish-English dictionary. Again I was due to be frustrated, for all the stores were closed for the noon-hour siesta. I gritted my teeth and determined I would not go back until I had some utensils with which to work.

In the course of the next few days there developed a certain pattern which made teaching of a kind possible. But far more interesting to me was the gradual emergence of individuals out of this welter of students. The marked development of individuality in character and personality became a fascinating study.

The school day must have seemed interminable for these kids. Each period was ninety minutes in length, and the insufferable heat lasted throughout the day all year long.

One hundred and eighty-six boys and girls passed through my hands each day. Slowly I began to learn their backgrounds. When Matilda slept in class, she was not awakened, for she seldom had anything to eat until she got her penny lunch at noon, and at night she slept upon the floor of a tiny shack beside her six brothers and sisters. Wilfredo was ignored when he began to scream in class. He was in the grips of some deep pathological fear and needed the aid of a competent psychiatrist, which he most certainly would not get. Meanwhile it seemed best to ignore the manifestations of his psychosis. Elba, who sat very still, seemingly sullen and

morose, was to be left alone, too. She had been the victim of an assault by her older brother. Perhaps sometime the scars would wear away and she could adjust herself again to a normal life. I stood helpless amid so much human misery and taught the meaning of the words *goat* and *sheep*, *carrot* and *bean*, *go* and *come*. Maybe, I tried to tell myself, this knowledge of English will help one or two of these pupils to get decent jobs, will help to lift them out of poverty. I looked at Alfredo, the colored boy, whose black face was finely modeled and whose quick wits lifted him far above the rest. Maybe out of this group would spring a leader, strong enough, intelligent enough, idealistic enough, to find a pathway upward for his people. Alfredo leaned forward, coughed, and spat. The spittle was tinged with bright red.

For some time I had difficulty in understanding why some of the older boys like Carmelo came to school. They were outspoken in their hatred of things American and contemptuous of all other studies. They spent their time quarreling, creating disorder in the class, hacking up the desks with knives, or sleeping. They kept their razors handy and boasted openly that they would attack any teacher who sought to discipline them. The streets would seem to offer them more latitude for their hoodlumism, but the school possessed advantages of which I was not at first aware. There was a chance to play basketball or baseball in the schoolyard; then a penny lunch was served at noon, and for many this represented the only meal of the day. But what Carmelo really liked was that, as a schoolboy, he could go to the movies any night for ten cents. Many and devious were the channels through which that dime came to him. Sometimes he would appear with bottles of perfume or lipstick, which he would try to sell to me. Some nights he would be seen steering a drunk along the plaza, or approaching an American seaman to whisper words about a beautiful sister.

Jaime Notiz was one of my favorites. *Jaime* is pronounced as *Hymie* and the last name as *No-teeth*. The name itself intrigued me, but the boy had all the fascination of a tame ape. Jaime was pitch-black and had great white saucers for eyes. Unfortunately these eyes were of very little use to him, for he was so near-sighted that he had to press his face against a book in order to read. The blackboard offered almost insuperable difficulties for him. He would creep up to the board, his eyes popping in their effort to focus upon my scrawl. His nose would come closer and closer until finally it was smudged with chalk. Then the watching youngsters would howl with glee. "Popeye!" they would shout, pronouncing the word *Poepie*. "Popeye, the spinach eater. Popeye, he is blind." Their words seemed to fill them with inexplicable joy.

Jaime would turn, grinning and bowing, his strong white teeth gleaming against his round black face. He would rub the smudge of chalk from his nose, then scratch his head and leave the chalk marks there. Jaime's head was shaped like a bullet. Most of the black kinky hair had been shaven off, but a square of about four inches had been left on top. This clump of hair coiled upward like black wire. The children called this "Jaime's mattress." "Hi, Jaime," they would shout, "how that mattress today? Hi, Jaime, Rosaura she say she want to sleep on your mattress. How you like that, Jaime?"

Jaime's grandfather was a tall, grizzled Negro who was the driver of one of the old-fashioned black carriages that haunted the plaza at night. These carriages were used solely to transport the young blades of the town to evenings of delight with *Las Señoritas*. Old Jaime was the most punctilious of the drivers. He had come originally from one of the British West Indies and spoke English with a burbling drawl. "How-dee, young gemmemen, how you this fine evenin'? P'raps you like to meet lady tonight? She is beautiful like the flower."

Jaime used to doze fitfully in the class. The black, flaked lids would close slowly over the saucer eyes. Then he would jerk awake with a start. "Hi-yi-yi," he would cry and then scratch himself vigorously. "Hi-yi-hi-yi!"

"Be quiet, Jaime," I would order.

"M—me? Me—no say nothing. No me. No me. Me no say nothing, Meester. No, no me." Then triumphantly he would point to the boy across the aisle. "It was he, Meester. It was he—no I, no I." The voice rose to a screaming protest.

Rosaura, pronounced *Rose-sour-a*, was Jaime's feminine counterpart. She was fat, bow-legged, big-breasted. Her hair was braided in black, greasy pigtails, usually decorated with a bow of baby blue or pink. Rosaura's face was wide and blank. She had a habit of sucking her thumb. The big lips formed a thick, red circle about the lower joint. Rosaura seldom spoke when called upon. She stood in the aisle, pigeon-toed, finger in her mouth, swaying from side to side, intermittently giggling and sucking.

"Ro-SAUR-a," the children would shrill. "Ro-SAUR-a f—s Jaime, Ro-SAUR-a!"

Rosaura's vacant smile was deceptive. She kept a razor about her and when goaded too far, did not hesitate to attack, hurling obscenities at her opponent as she did so. Usually, however, she was content to sway and giggle till her whole fat body shook. "Jel-ly," screamed the kids, "jel-ly!"

Ladislao must have been possessed of a genius of sorts; otherwise he could not have been so completely irritating. The other teachers gritted their teeth at mention of Ladislao. "Some day I keel that child," they would assure me; or "I cannot stand heem one day longer. I am going mad weeth that Ladislao, I tell you."

Ladislao at fifteen had reached the stature of five feet-



three. Moreover he had the added dignity of a stringy and somehow revolting black mustache, comprised of at least twenty-five long hairs. Ladislao invariably wore a broad-brimmed sombrero made of brown corduroy, and usually a shirt of bright colors.

Ladislao's face was almost distinguished in its ugliness. The eyebrows were black with heavy tufts in the middle, and they joined together, forming a solid line across the forehead. They possessed the same bright meanness as those of a spoiled lap dog. The nose was narrow save for the nostrils that flared suddenly at the base. The little chin was sharp and peaked. The skin was a sallow brown.

Ladislao walked with a swagger, talked in a shrill voice that could be heard half a block away, jumped up and down when he was excited, and cried loudly and bitterly when threatened with retribution for any of his vexatious acts. Sometimes he would come hurtling through the door of my room with a boy three years younger and two inches shorter than he in full pursuit.

"Save me, Meester Brown, save me. Rigoberto is about to keel me!"

"Hello, Rigoberto," I said on one occasion to his pursuer. "What are you doing to Ladislao?"

Rigoberto wriggled his toes and looked at them reflectively, "Nada—nothing."

"Why?"

"Because Ladislao has a pin in his shoe and all during arithmetic class he jabs me with this pin. Then when I have finally finished my problems, Ladislao grabs the paper and tears it up, and then he tells Mr. Soto that I copy from him. Oh he is an *hijo de puta*, that Ladislao."

"I agree with you, Rigoberto, but will you kindly kick the sh—the stuffing out of him somewhere else."

Meanwhile Ladislao has been jumping up and down, scream-

ing. "It is your duty as a teacher to protect me. You must assist me and punish Rigoberto. Otherwise I shall report you to the superintendent. I will write a letter today."

Ladislao's mother came to school with him on the second day of the school year. Ladislao, she explained, had epileptic fits, so he must never be thwarted or frustrated, but permitted to do exactly as he pleased. This was vital to his health.

The "epileptic fits" were actually tantrums which Ladislao turned off and on at will.

He would trot up to my desk. "Give me one pencil," he would demand.

"Ladislao, you know the school doesn't provide pencils."

"You lie. I saw Mrs. López give you six pencils."

"Yes, she gave me six pencils for my desk."

"I got as much right to the pencils as you have. Give me one or I will write to the Department of Education and say you hit me."

Later I found out that the Department had a whole file of Ladislao's letters and had apparently spent a small fortune in investigating the accusations which he had made.

Quite often Ladislao came to school with a board to which a strap was attached. This contraption was fastened to his neck in such a way that the board could hold a display of penny candies, gum, and cookies. Some of these sweets were apparently made by his mother, while others must have been purchased by the carton. Ladislao walked up and down the aisles of my classroom while I was trying to teach, vending his wares. As long as these business transactions were moderately quiet, I didn't much care. But often loud altercations would spring up between vender and purchaser. Ladislao's voice would rise in shrill abuse, drowning out any sound that I might possibly make. Now and then one of the older boys would pilfer from Ladislao's stores. Then Ladislao would

rush to me for protection and intervention, and belabor me wildly if I did not follow his every desire.

There was not much that I could do about all this. It was strictly forbidden to touch a child—and every child in my classroom knew it.

"You touch me, you lose your job," the kids would say; or, "If you don't give me *A*, I'll say you hit me." Finally Ladislao's candy selling just got too much for me and I forcibly made him sit down. Ladislao thought it over for a few seconds. Then he jumped up in the air, screaming, "Ai-yai, ai-yai, Meester Brown has keeled me. I am dying. I am dying!"

He rushed out into the schoolyard, threw himself flat on the ground, and began to writhe as though in the extremes of agony. "Ai-yai, ai-yai, I am dying. I am bleeding. I am bleeding. The American has keeled me. Oh, oh, I am going to die. Oh, the blood!"

The principal came rushing across the yard. "What has happened to you, Ladislao? What has Mr. Brown done to you? Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear." Mrs. López fluttered helplessly. "What has happened?"

"Oh, I am bleeding. The blood—it is terrible."

Mrs. López ripped up the bright purple shirt, seeking for some sign of deadly assault.

"Where are you bleeding, Ladislao? Tell me, where is the wound?"

Ladislao paused in his yells for a moment. His face took on a look of perplexity. Then he thought of the answer, "Ai-ya. Ai-ya. I am bleeding on the inside. Oh, I am dying. I am bleeding to death, bleeding—in the inside!"

Jesus Jimenez was fifteen also, though he looked no more than seven. I had pronounced his name in the English fashion when I first arrived. This pronunciation had tickled the other

pupils, and soon he was known to the whole school as "Jesus Jiminy."

To the best of my knowledge, Jesus never said a word of English during the year. Whenever there was a test, he always signed "Jesus J." on the paper and then passed in the blank sheet.

From time to time I called on Jesus, but he always buried his face in his arms and refused to sit up again until attention had been focused elsewhere.

Only once did Jesus attempt anything beyond his signature. On this day, he had been assigned with a small group to read a story entitled, "Andrés, the Cane-cutter." Each child was then asked to write a brief resumé of what he had read. To my amazement, Jesus' paper bore four full lines of writing. It read as follows:

Jesus J.

Andres the cañe, she cots cañe. She have
good character. Puth in it. Puth it out. Puth
it in. Puth it out. Puth it in. Puth it out.
fnith.

It took days of probing to decipher the meaning of this script. Mr. Soto, the arithmetic teacher, helped me. Finally we secured the information that Jesus had read the story on page 59 instead of the one on page 159. This story dealt with a robin which was building its nest. The robin found a piece of thread which it wove into the nest. It was as simple as all that.

One bright sunny afternoon, Jesus stayed away from school. Between classes, I walked to the gate and saw Jesus crouched underneath the porch of the little store across the street. He was sucking a big red lollypop and enjoying the coolness of the place. He looked placidly at me and continued to suck.

The next day he arrived at school at the regular hour without the note required, after an absence, for admission.

"Jesus," I told him, "you'll have to go to Mrs. López."

Other children conveyed what I had said to Jesus, and he departed across the yard.

He was back in a few minutes with a note from the principal.

The mother of Jesus put a baby. So he couldn't come to school. Please admit Jesus.

I scribbled on the bottom: "Then why was Jesus sucking a lollypop all afternoon beneath the store across the street?"

The answer came back promptly.

Jesus say his mother put a baby and I have to believe him. Jesus must to be admitted.

Digna was a colored girl with close-cropped kinky hair, lips that were more than an inch thick, and a flat bulbous nose. Her head was long and narrow, her chest sunken. The long, skinny, rickety legs were pocked with patches of unpigmented skin. Her feet were enormous and the knobby knees bumped together as she walked. Digna came to school in the daytime, but plied the oldest of professions at night.

Digna spent most of her time about the cheap *cafés*, but sometimes, late at night, she would sally up to the plaza. I passed her on several such occasions. She flashed me a big smile each time and asked in labored English, "You like to come weeth me, Beeg Boy?"

"No thanks, Digna."

"I can geeve you one good time."

Digna was a recalcitrant student. She never even bothered to copy the vocabulary which she was supposed to learn. One day in vexation I sent her to Mrs. López, who in turn sent back the following note:

In Digna's profession the knowledge of the English is not of the importance.

I looked at Digna's thick lips, her rickety legs and misshapen body, and wondered if Digna could ever earn a living at her chosen life work. I broached the subject later to Mrs. López.

"Oh Digna, she will do all right. There are enough of her kind. Already I found her beneath the school with Carmelo. So you see, she have no need of the English."

This distorted world in which these children lived, spawned much that was pitiable, much that was ludicrous, much that was vicious.

Victor pushed his swaggering way through the packed schoolyard. The other kids were afraid of Victor, and so they were silent when he passed. Victor at the age of eighteen had only reached the seventh grade, but he was already a master of the art of terrorism. He had organized a strong-arm gang on a miniature scale and converted a group of colored boys into young hoodlums.

Victor bore the name of one of the leading colored politicians on the Island. True, he was the offspring of this politician's brother and an "extra" wife; but even so, Ramos Concepcion would protect him, and had proved it several times when attempts had been made to oust Victor from the schools.

Victor ran the athletic teams, levied pennies from the children, and had any who opposed him beaten up. Even the teachers feared him—he had actually threatened, with impunity, to strike them.

The crisis came in my class when Victor struck one of the girls. She was a shy, pleasant child. She came to me to complain that Victor had taken a book from her. I went to Victor and made him return it. Then as I turned away, Victor

struck Dolores on the breast. I heard her cry of pain and shouted at Victor. He scuttled across to the principal's office, who told him he had better go home for the day. Then she came to me.

"No matter what Victor does," she told me, "he is always right. There is absolutely nothing we can do about Victor. I tried it once and I almost lost my job. I can't afford that. It's all very well for you to talk big; you can go back to the States. I've got to stay here. Now I've warned you. Victor comes back into your class and if you have any further trouble with him, I'll file an unfavorable report on you. You've got to get along with Victor."

CHAPTER 7

The Nationalist movement was rife in Puerto Rico in 1936 and 1937, and the center of its activities was in Ponce. Pedro Albizu Campos was the leader. He was a fantastic figure. Albizu was a colored man who aped the mannerisms of the Spanish grandee. He appeared in Ponce's burning streets clad in a shabby Spanish cape and a black Homburg hat. He wore wide sideburns, white shirts, and flowing black ties. On his round face there was always an expression of gracious condescension, save when he talked about the Americans. Then the face was a mask of hate. His high-pitched voice rose to a scream.

"Nationalists should prepare themselves with arms suitable not for picking teeth, but for shooting well," he screamed at those who would listen to him. There were two principal targets for his virulent attacks. First, the Americans; second, the Insular Police. The Insular Police were Puerto Ricans, and their job was to keep some semblance of law on the Island. However, the Chief of Police was appointed by the Governor. At this time the Police Chief was an American,

E. Francis Riggs. Albizu continuously stated that the Insular Police had direct orders to persecute the members of the Nationalist Party. Actually this was not true. However, on several occasions young colored men in Nationalist uniform had assaulted individual police members, and there was extremely bad blood between the two groups of Puerto Ricans.

Albizu's speeches were highly inflammatory. In Mayagüez he shouted, "If the Insular Police fire on Nationalists, then the Nationalists must kill a North American for every countryman who dies." In Ponce he denounced the Americans, screaming, "The enemies of the Republic must be punished by cutting off their heads and piercing their hearts with daggers. It does not matter if some Nationalists must die."

Fear was abroad in the streets of Ponce. None dared raise his voice against the black-shirted thugs who walked the streets in gangs. Albizu Campos had never been elected to any office by the people of Puerto Rico. Yet he called himself the President of Puerto Rico and had appointed a cabinet. Their ambition was to seize the government and set up a black dictatorship in the Island.

The organization was strictly fascist and wore all the trappings of the fascist gangs in power in Italy and Germany. There was a one-man dictatorship and goon squads to do the dictator's bidding. The uniform of the *Nacionalistas* was a black shirt, white tie, and white trousers. Some wore small black and white capes. Most of Albizu's followers were colored boys from fifteen to twenty-five. They had been formed into a unit which they called "The Army of Liberation."

Five thousand armed and trained men was set as the goal of the Army of Liberation; it already claimed to have more than a thousand men trained and ready to fight. *La Palabra*, the official organ of the Nationalist Party, owned by a leading Nationalist, Juan Antonio Corretjer, ran headlines: "Nationalism Calls Its Men to Immediate Military Organization."

Pool rooms, playgrounds, the streets of the slums, were all recruiting places for the "Army." Feeling was high. The inarticulate rage of the Negro against the white burned beneath the false banner of nationalism. Representatives of fascist powers helped to feed the flames. Day after day, broadcasts relating the glories of the Hitler youth movement, or of the gleaming qualities of Spain's little Generalissimo, were blasted in the plaza. Arch-conservatives like Pedro Cofresi helped finance the movement through indirect channels. They hoped for one of two things. One was that the Nationalists would attempt to take the Island by force and fail, then that the reprisals taken by America would serve to suppress the growing political power of the poor. Alternately, if the Nationalists should be successful, there would be a counter-revolution and the rich sugar men had no doubt of their power to take over the government. Either way, the thing which they most feared—the rise of a real spirit of democracy in Puerto Rico—would be thwarted.

"Kill the Americans!" would echo in the dust-laden streets of Ponce's Berlin section. "Kill the Americans!" First it was only a whisper, then a mumble, finally a roar. "Kill the Americans," a naked colored child would lisp, smiling up at me as I passed. "Kill the Americans," she would repeat, having no idea of the meaning of her words.

"Hate is the quick route to power," explained the Nationalist leaders. "Give the people something to hate, and they'll give you the power to destroy."

"While the people are stirred up against the Americans, they won't think about us," says the sugar *central* owner complacently. "They'll forget about the land laws that we're violating. They'll forget that 80 per cent of the Island's income is in our hands. They'll forget to approach their problems rationally. Hatred is our safeguard."

The Cathedral of San Juan Bautista is the mightiest of San Juan's many churches. It has stood within the old walled city since 1511. Through the four centuries of its life, it has shared in the tragedies and victories of the Island. Rich legends have been woven about its ancient arches, traditions shaped within its quiet walls. It was here that the delinquents of the Spanish Inquisition were tried. Those sentenced to die were dressed in *sanbenitos* made of yellow sackcloth with great red crosses upon it and pictures of the devil. Thus clad, they were marched through the narrow streets of the city for execution before the gates of San Cristobal.

The main altar of the church is of ornate white marble, on which are carved the figures of St. Paul, St. Peter, and the Blessed Virgin. To the left of the altar is a commanding statue of St. John the Baptist. This ancient figure was brought from Spain and shows St. John standing in the attitude of benediction. At his feet lies the lamb.

The tomb of Ponce de Leon, his bones embedded in white marble, is in the left transept. The legend of his life, so closely linked with Puerto Rico, is recounted on a heavy bronze plaque.

Francis Riggs, the Police Chief, was a good Catholic. Each Sunday he attended mass at the ancient cathedral. The Nationalists who knew of this custom of his laid their plot for his assassination in accordance with it. Colonel Riggs lived at the Escambrón Beach Club. Each Sunday at twelve he left the cathedral and drove through the deserted streets of the old city to his home. He seldom had a guard, though his chauffeur was armed.

Allen Street, the main business street of San Juan, is very narrow. It passes between lines of old three- and four-story buildings, past blind crossroads, and alleyways that run between warehouses and are dark even in the blazing midday sun. Gambaro Alley is the oldest of these. It is nearly as

wide as the narrow streets, but has no sidewalks. It is paved with large, slippery gray stones. During the week, vendors of oranges and candies block its entrance, and crowds throng along its passageway to Salvador Brau Street. But on Sunday there is no one there.

February 23, 1936, is a hot sunny day. A young man lounges in the entrance of the alley. He is a handsome fellow with clean-cut, boyish features. He is immaculately dressed in a white linen suit. The old orange vender in a doorway opposite notices that the boy is nervous, keeps looking about him furtively.

Colonel Riggs's car moves slowly along Allen Street. The young man waits tensely. As the car is about to pass him, he swings suddenly onto the running board. Riggs is sitting with his prayer book open in his lap. The boy shoots across the driver; the bullet goes into Rigg's chest. The driver grasps at the gun and brakes the car. The young man jumps from the running board, crosses the street, and runs into the other entrance of the alley. The driver chases him, shooting as he runs. A policeman joins the chase in Tetuan Street. Another policeman comes from Colon Plaza and tries to give first aid to the wounded Police Chief.

The young man who is in flight is Hiram Rosado, an ardent Nationalist and a self-styled "disciple" of Pedro Albizu Campos. He stops in a warehouse doorway to take two shots at the pursuing police. Then his pistol jams. He throws it away and runs to a *publico*, idling at the waterfront. Police Officer Juan Alvarez pursues the *publico* in a police car. He overtakes it and removes Rosado. The revolver has been picked up by another officer. Rosado is taken to police headquarters. The paraffin test is given to him immediately and the results are positive.

Meanwhile Colonel Riggs has succeeded in stemming the

flow of blood from his wound. A young man named Elias Beauchamp steps up to the car. The officer stops him, but he smiles and calls out to Riggs, "Colonel, I saw everything. I'll act as a witness."

Colonel Riggs turns to answer him and as he does so, Beauchamp whips out a revolver and fires twice. Both bullets lodge in Riggs' head and he dies almost instantly. Beauchamp, too, runs down Gambaro Alley. Two policemen follow in quick pursuit. Beauchamp keeps turning to fire at them, but his aim is quick and the bullets fly wild. Beauchamp manages to get into a warehouse in Tetuan Street. Finally the police corner him hiding behind huge boxes of rice.

When Beauchamp sees he is cornered, he begins to scream. "Don't fire at me," he shrieks at the police officer. "Don't you know me? We met just a little while ago. We aren't doing anything wrong. We aren't killing Puerto Ricans. We're only killing American bastards. Why don't you leave me alone? I didn't kill Bonilla (Riggs's police guard), did I?"

Young Rosado makes a similar statement at the police station. He seems to believe that the police should welcome as a brother the man who has just shot their Chief. "We are all friends," he explains complacently. "We must join to kill the Americans."

Exactly what happened to Hiram Rosado and Elias Beauchamp has never been completely determined. One thing is certain—they never came out of the police station alive.

The Nationalists declared Rosado and Beauchamp to be martyrs. Their leaders called together a group of boys and asked them to take an oath to avenge their deaths. The boys raised their right hands and shouted, "Yes, we swear."

The Insular Police said, "They'll kill us all unless we can break them up first."

Albizu Campos denounced all men who wore the uniform of the Insular Police as "traitors."

The feud was on in earnest.

Incident followed bloody incident in the fantastic internecine strife. Beneath the cloak of nationalism lay the fundamental issue of race, which was never brought out into the open.

Puerto Ricans like to boast that they have no race discrimination and therefore no race problems. Actually the question of race is so far-reaching, so basic in its pattern, that it can never be brought out in the open.

Many of the leaders of Albizu's movement were men who called themselves white and indignantly denied Negro ancestry. Their distorted shame frequently took the form of exaggerated pride in things Spanish, the exhibition of Spanish coats of arms, the wholesale condemnation of American practices and of American cultural patterns. Shame of race, substituted ingloriously for pride of race, led them into excesses of abuse against the obvious Negro, coupled with an intense resentment against the white. This could not be admitted, even among themselves, but violent anti-Americanism and the outraged cry of persecution could be honorably expressed.

Actually every political party in power has carefully avoided the issues of independence. Puerto Ricans have never asked for independence officially. When Albizu carried his cause to the polls, he received less than five thousand votes out of a population of nearly two million. When Senator Tydings proposed a bill in Congress to give Puerto Rico her independence, many of the men who had shouted loudest in the Nationalist ranks now screamed, "America is trying to evade her responsibilities. For years she has exploited us. Now she wants to get rid of us. Resist. Make America fulfill her obligations."

America's record in Puerto Rico has been neither exces-

sively good nor bad. She has dumped hundreds of millions of dollars into the Island without making any noticeable difference in the slums, the health conditions, or the general poverty. She has been inclined to hand out money in a rather haphazard fashion without proper supervision of its expenditure. The result has been that many a politician has become wealthy and there is many a rich plum for the party in power. Whenever America has sought to regulate this money, she has met with active resistance. At present, in 1945, there is a surplus of 150 million dollars in Puerto Rico's treasury. American senators have asked that this money, which has been collected in America from taxes on rum, should be earmarked for use for slum clearance, the construction of schools and hospitals, health projects, and other similar needs of the people. This attempt to control funds, which have come directly from the pockets of Americans, has led to a bitter denunciation of America. The party in power wishes to spend the money on the purchase of land from the sugar *centrals* and its redistribution among the people, upon the building of industries, and the firm entrenchment of the Popular Party. Such a policy, they claim, will lead to the eventual economic self-sufficiency of the Island.

But such policies had not yet been outlined in the days of Albizu's bid for power. If he had a constructive policy, he kept it well hidden. Meanwhile his financial activities did not invite confidence. Albizu put out a series of bonds which he and his henchmen peddled throughout the Island. These bonds guaranteed huge payments of moneys, collectible twenty-four hours after Puerto Rico became a republic.

Billions in this strange currency must have floated about Puerto Rico. It served a double purpose. It raised money for Albizu and guaranteed loyalty on the part of the purchaser, who naturally hoped to make enormous profits. Bonds for five million were offered for fifty dollars cash, and if the purchaser indicated this was too much, the price would be lowered to

five or ten dollars. It does not appear likely that Albizu ever thought these bonds could be redeemed. Even if Puerto Rico should have become a republic, there was no adequate reason for believing that Albizu would be at its head. His only claim to such a position was that he had so designated himself and that he possessed some support from a political party that numbered less than 3 per cent of the population.

Albizu and his party made their bid for power through the release of a continuous series of abuses, real and imagined, against Puerto Rico. They did not seek for co-operation or sympathetic understanding. They tried in every way to widen the rift of misunderstanding, to create disorder and hate. The Nationalist leaders went out to find wrongs perpetrated against them. If they could not find legitimate wrongs, they made them up. Out of the elaborate maze of lies and half-truths sprang some that were directly harmful to the Puerto Rican people. One of the most injurious of these attacks was a blast against the School of Tropical Medicine. This school is perhaps the finest of its kind in the world. For years it has aided the Island people by an extensive program which has substantially diminished tuberculosis, hook worm, skin infections, and venereal diseases—all of which are prevalent.

Among the doctors at the School of Tropical Medicine was a young Dr. Rhoades, who appears to have possessed a macabre sense of humor. Dr. Rhoades liked to write exaggerated and sarcastic letters to his friends, who undoubtedly understood his particular brand of humor. He wrote of the dirt, the filth, the degradation of the Island, and solemnly assured these friends that he was alleviating the suffering of the people by injecting them with a non-existent "cancer serum." An adherent of Albizu who worked as a janitor in the hospital stole one of these letters from Dr. Rhoades. It was a damning letter and, if taken literally, had all the virulence of Swift's *Modest Proposal*.

The young "patriot" seems to have first made some attempt to blackmail Dr. Rhoades. When this was unsuccessful, he made good his threats to deliver the letter to Albizu Campos. Albizu was quick to see the propaganda value of the letter. He did not place it in the hands of proper authorities, later explaining that he refused to do so because "the Government of the United States was illegitimately established in Puerto Rico." Instead, he held the letter for some time, then released thousands of abusive letters in which Dr. Rhoades was quoted. Albizu carefully timed his letters so that all would reach their destinations at the same time. Thus letters sent to South America were mailed three or four weeks previous to those delivered locally.

Dr. Rhoades had written: "Puerto Rico would be ideal except for the Puerto Ricans. They are, beyond doubt, the dirtiest, laziest, most degenerate and thievish race of men ever inhabiting this sphere. It makes you sick to inhabit the same island with them." This was certainly an unpleasant statement, and one which, unfortunately, has been made in similar form by many an American. Several other such statements have found their way into the American press, and American soldiers even now can be heard stating loudly in the streets that a tidal wave is the only solution to the Island problems. Rhoades went on to say: "I have done my best to further the extermination of the population by killing off eight and transplanting cancer serum in several more." Despite the obvious nonsense of such a statement, Dr. Rhoades' activities were carefully checked and, although he had acted at times in a fashion unsympathetic to the Puerto Ricans, there can be no doubt that his work was done efficiently and well.

Albizu undoubtedly interpreted this letter literally because he wished to do so. It must be remembered that Albizu is an intelligent man, a graduate of Harvard, and one who must know the untruths of the claims he makes. He also knew

that in the Rhoades letter he had a powerful weapon which, skillfully used, might sweep him into power. That he was destroying his people's confidence in the medical care provided for them was a matter of supreme indifference to him. In fact I have seen no indication at any time that Albizu had any love for the people—only his own inordinate passion for power.

In part, his widely publicized letter reads: "The North American Government evidently looks with approval upon the triumph of its policy to exterminate our people. Of course it does not do and will not do anything to remedy the evils it has deliberately created, and counsels such measures as will finish the work of extermination: emigration and birth control. Unsubmissive people coming under the North American empire, under the shadow of its flag, are taken ill and die. Direct inoculation of the virus of incurable diseases, such as cancer, is admitted by Dr. Cornelius P. Rhoades, a prominent member of the Rockefeller Institute, on a mission in Puerto Rico for the avowed generous purpose of treating persons afflicted with anemia and malaria, when the chief purpose is to 'hasten the process of extermination.' . . . Although the number of hospitals has increased, there are more epidemics. This is no paradox." This letter was actually signed by José Lameiro who signed himself as "Secretary to the President."

I have found many otherwise intelligent Puerto Ricans who still refuse to go into an American hospital. "They will inject us with virus," they say. The youngsters fear inoculation or vaccination. "Maybe it is an American plot to kill us." Albizu struck a vital blow at the health of the Island, and consequently at its progress toward independence. He willingly sacrificed the Island for his own most selfish interests.

Meanwhile the black-shirted Army of Liberation was spreading disorder through the towns and villages of the Island. They sent threatening letters to Puerto Ricans who dared voice

opinions contrary to their own. They even sent bombs to some of the professors at the University. They held meetings and shouted the word "Kill!" over and over again. Frenzied colored speakers screamed: "Kill every American on the Island. Sharpen your knives. Every knife must be keen enough to find the heart of an American. Kill! Kill! Kill! Only Yankee blood will wipe out Puerto Rico's disgrace."

Pablo Rosado, a close associate of Albizu, advocated the lynching of Americans. "In the United States they lynch ten Negroes every year. In Puerto Rico we must resort to lynching Americans."

Colored leaders coached by Axis representatives mouthed the propaganda of Hitler and Mussolini. "We must grow strong as the Hitler Youth are strong. We must have the power to strike. Democracy is decadent. It will soon die. We shall destroy it. But now we need a leader, a strong leader, a dictator who will lead us to victory against America. Who shall that leader be?"

The claque of black-shirted boys shouted the answer: "Albizu Campos! Albizu Campos! Albizu Campos!"

The crowd caught up the roar, loving the noise and excitement of it—"Albizu Campos!"

Acts of violence piled up. Puerto Ricans begged for assistance against the black-shirted youngsters. The American government refused to intervene, not wishing to participate in local politics or to make martyrs of the Nationalists.

In the small mountain town of Utuado an open fight broke out between Nationalists and members of the Liberal Party. The direct cause of the fight was the use by Liberal Party members of the one-starred flag of Puerto Rico. Though it was originally designed to be the Puerto Rican national flag, the Nationalists had adopted it as their party symbol. It is similar to the Cuban flag except that the colors are reversed.

There is a triangle of blue with a single white star upon it and six thick horizontal stripes, three red and three white.

The local Liberalists were carrying this in a parade when they were approached by uniformed Nationalists who demanded the surrender of the flag. The Liberalists refused. The Nationalists seized the flag and met with active resistance. A fight ensued in which knives were used. The police were forced to intervene. As they did so, a uniformed Nationalist named Luis Baldoni fired into the crowd. Among those injured were two members of the Insular Police.

Río Piedras, where the University of Puerto Rico is located, was the scene of much disorder. Here the police stopped a car in which four Nationalists were riding. As they did so, one of the young men threw a bomb against the police car. The bomb exploded without doing any serious injury. The police searched the car and found pistols, cartridges, a handkerchief filled with cartridges, and an unexploded bomb. The boys were promptly arrested. There followed a demonstration by the Nationalists.

In Río Piedras, too, an open fight broke out between Nationalist Party members and the police. Four young men were killed. A huge crowd assembled in the cemetery where the four were buried. Albizu Campos was on hand and he publicly besought the crowd to swear that this "assassination" should not remain unavenged.

Black-shirted youths in the assembly shouted, "Yes, we swear."

"Silence!" commanded Albizu. Then as the crowd subsided, he solemnly intoned, "When the day comes, you will die as heroes, because heroism is the salvation of nations as well as men."

The visit of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Puerto Rico helped to bring matters to a crisis. The President

arrived in Mayagüez where he was received with cheers and flowers and put up at Mayagüez's best club.

That night, police seized a young man lurking near the club. He was arrested and identified as Abraham Valentín. At the time of his arrest, he was carrying a package containing three revolvers and a pistol—all loaded—and a box of thirty-four cartridges.

Valetín could give no rational excuse for possessing these arms (which rather mysteriously were wrapped in handkerchiefs). The Nationalists viewed the arrest of Valentín as a case of "social injustice."

Albizu arrived in Mayagüez a few days later. Without any attempt at tact, he hurled accusations against the people of Mayagüez. "You are cowards!" he screamed. "You should have received President Roosevelt with bullets. Instead—" his voice rang with contempt—"you greeted him with flowers."

"But he is our President," said one among the crowd, braver than the rest.

Albizu's dark face turned livid with anger. "Roosevelt is the same as any other good-for-nothing American!" was his screaming retort.

After years of ranting recriminations, after many violent deaths, after thousands of written and verbal attacks upon the United States and its representatives, the leaders of the Nationalist party were finally arrested.

Along with Albizu Campos were arrested seven other Nationalists. One of these was Juan Antonio Corretjer, who owned the seditious sheet called *La Palabra*, which the State maintained was the official organ of the Party. This Albizu hotly denied. The others arrested were Luis F. Velasquez, Clemente Soto Velez, Erasmo Velasquez, Julio H. Velasquez, Juan Gallardo Santiago, and Pablo Rosado Ortiz. The charge

brought against these men was that they had "conspired to overthrow by force United States rule in Puerto Rico."

The trial dragged out interminably amid a constant stream of objections from the defense lawyers. They objected to practically every juror as prejudiced. Later they complained that the jury had been composed of wealthy men and men in the employ of American firms. Yet the record shows that they had registered heavy objections to the very type of men whom they later described as desirable.

As witness after witness took the stand to testify to Albizu's fiery anti-American speeches and his pleas for violence, Albizu simply denied the truth of these statements. Defense lawyers filed objections that the testimony was irrelevant to the charge of conspiracy. In my opinion, Federal Judge Robert Cooper was not completely unprejudiced. At any rate, with decisive regularity he overruled the objections.

Pedro Albizu Campos acted as senior legal advisor to a group of lawyers. After each overruling of an objection by Judge Cooper, he insisted that the objection be noted on the court record.

Meanwhile there were demonstrations throughout Puerto Rico. The disciples of Albizu waited breathlessly for their leader to defend himself. They expected a powerful affirmation of his anti-American stand and a passionate plea for independence for Puerto Rico. They were disappointed. The defense was mild in the extreme. Albizu categorically denied that he had spoken as the witnesses for the State had testified. He called a few character witnesses who vouched for his veracity. He discussed calmly the definitions of the words *conspire* and *force*. Again he repeated that the evidence presented was irrelevant.

The disciples looked with dismay upon the master who had bade them die for Puerto Rico's freedom. But the defense was a clever one. It was based primarily on technicalities.

Was the charge valid? It was now evident why the defense desired an intelligent, legally and technically minded jury. After hours of deliberation, the jury came back to the court with a split verdict.

A second trial was ordered. The Government was determined to put an end to the terror that had seized the Island. Maybe the cards were stacked a little. Maybe the judge's summary was not impartial. These things are claimed by the defense. The second jury brought in a verdict of guilty against all eight defendants.

Albizu Campos was sentenced to ten years in the Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta. Most of the other defendants were given four-year terms.

The United States Government had given Puerto Rico a real martyr. The struggle was not ended; it was only begun.

Men forgot the ludicrous figure in the dirty Spanish cape who peddled million-dollar bonds for a few dollars. Instead, they substituted in their minds a patriot, a strong man, a man big enough to stand up against the whole United States.

The repercussions still sound.

And two men became the spiritual heirs of Albizu. There is Gilberto Concepción de Gracia, who was a lawyer in defense of the Nationalists. He now is spokesman for the rabidly anti-American Pro-Independent Congress.

Then there was another young man who was in Washington at the time. He was a representative of the then powerful Federalist Party. All other Puerto Rican officials violently disavowed Albizu. This one man was silent. He was ejected from the Federalist group. He reaped the rewards of a martyrdom from which he scarcely suffered. When he returned to Puerto Rico, he became the idol of the now leaderless Nationalists, and drew to himself many other elements besides.

His name is Luis Muñoz Marin.