

# From Rebel to Revolutionary

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## I. The New Left.

We are passing through a period of an upsurge in Puerto Rican radicalism. We can see this in the formation and combination of new organizations, in the rapid evolution of ideas within them, in a renewed interest in revolutionary politics among the youth, and the new levels of worry on the part of the government and of the press, calling for its suppression.

There is no doubt that the new left has elements of continuity with movements of the past. Some of its members have passed through the Nationalist Party or the Communist Party, and inherit from them certain customs, ways of thinking and terminology. But the majority of the new left is new to politics, and its general tendencies are not a product of the old organized radicalism. Its appearance at this time is the result of the interplay of three conditions:

1. The bankruptcy of the present regime. For the new generation, the positive accomplishments of the Popular Party<sup>1</sup> already belong to the past; its failures – the stagnation of the ELA<sup>2</sup>, the new invasion of North American monopolies into all branches of business, the verbose self praise of official agencies, the

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<sup>1</sup> The Popular Party ...

<sup>2</sup> ELA is the Estado Libre Asociado, or the colonial Commonwealth status of Puerto Rico, established in 1952.

demoralization of the Popular leadership, its intellectual sterility and moral timidity, are all quite evident.

2. Changes in the international panorama. The constitutional development of the British Antilles<sup>3</sup> and other colonial areas has left us behind. Many recently liberated countries have taken at least partially socialist paths. It is no longer possible to judge the present by comparing it only with the past. We must compare our path of development with other alternatives. Even more important, with the resurgence of the Latin American left and the impact of the Cuban Revolution, the Puerto Rican radical is, like it or not, part of a worldwide anti-imperialist struggle. The movement for legal independence, like it or not, tends to merge with the struggle for social transformation, and become a movement of national liberation.
3. The obvious inability of traditional opposition movements, both radical and “moderate” to assimilate new experience, has forced the new generation to seek new theories, strategies and organizations.

The new left seeks to transcend the limitations of movements of the past, freeing itself from sterile dogmatism, the tendency to fight among themselves over trivialities, and organizational rigidity. It is in a state of fluid transition, experimenting, changing its ideas and methods, studying. It is in the process of changing itself from the kind of rebellious gesturing which we call the “31<sup>st</sup> of February movement,”<sup>4</sup> into a serious revolutionary current.

This process – the transformation from rebel to revolutionary – takes place within both organizations and individuals. As a result we see around us a very heterogeneous landscape: elements of romantic rebellion next to serious work, revolutionary slogans and obsolete sentiments, unassimilated ideas and

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<sup>3</sup> During the 1960s four former British colonies in the Caribbean gained their independence, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, Guyana the same month that this article appeared in 1966, and Barbados later that same year.

<sup>4</sup> It is a Latin American tradition to name revolutionary movements after significant dates, such as the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement in Cuba, named for the 1953 revolutionary assault on the Moncada barracks.

contradictory programs. Seen superficially, it has many ridiculous aspects that lend themselves easily to mockery; a mockery with which some justify their political inactivity. Nevertheless, it has more of a future than does frozen conformity or contemptuous cynicism.

The dynamics of the movement demand that these new left organizations be judged, not by their current slogans or official declarations, but by their capacity to change their own thinking and actions during their evolution from rebel to revolutionary.

## II. The Waking of Consciousness.

Sooner or later, all conscious people realize that injustice permeates our lives. The first waking of consciousness can be related to any aspect of life, depending on what part of society the person in question belongs to, and what values surround them.

For the young worker, injustice first shows itself as bad luck or personal tragedy – unemployment, growing debt, the need to leave school too young, or emigrate in order to earn a living. Others first become aware of the colonial condition of their country, foreign monopolies, forced military service, or contempt for their culture.

Students are especially sensitive to the contradictions between words and deeds. Their elders speak to them of freedom, but advise conformity. They speak to them of the miracle of Puerto Rico, while a fourth of the population lives on welfare. They speak to them of freedom of the press, but what they see is the freedom of two or three publishers to control the news. They say to them that public employees are at the service of the people, but they see that the people are the last thing that concerns the bureaucrat. The young agronomists, technicians or economists who train to serve their country, quickly face the cynicism and apathy of their colleagues, and soon see their best ideas frustrated.

Consciousness is a fragile thing and it can break when faced with apparently invincible injustices. A person who notices injustice may decide “that’s life,” and

decide to take as much advantage of it as possible. The young idealist of yesterday becomes the comfortable commission agent of tomorrow, who tells his children: “when I was young I also... that’s how the world is... it’s all very well when one is a student, but... one must be realistic...”

The worker, with less ability to flee his<sup>5</sup> situation, becomes “clever,” and tries to resolve his problems at the expense of others, or becomes a drunkard in order to forget.

But there is another path. One can become indignant about injustice and suffering in terms of moral condemnation: “They shouldn’t treat people this way; bureaucrats should not be so indifferent; there should be a law that does this or that; this waste of our resources and talents is intolerable.”

One may then denounce hypocrisy, apathy, the bad faith of a boss or governor. And looking upon the spectacle of a rotten society, one passes from criticism to rebellion, proclaiming oneself perhaps, a revolutionary.

Calling oneself a revolutionary is very fashionable these days, and it is admirable in the sense that it represents dedication to goals that go beyond the commercial egotism that dominates our lives. But even boxes of detergent announce themselves as revolutionary! To be a real revolutionary takes more than asking for blood and offering one’s life for La Patria<sup>6</sup>... as long as there is a big enough audience.

This stage of rebellion is characterized by an attitude of subjective and moral condemnation of injustice, by a moral program of courage and sacrifice against cowardice and selfishness, of honor against bad faith and hypocrisy. It is also characterized by an over-simplified vision of the world: by denouncing what deserves to be denounced, but without any plan for a constructive alternative; by an

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<sup>5</sup> At the time that this article was written, masculine pronouns were used to describe revolutionaries, workers and students throughout. Although altering the original toward greater gender equity makes this a less accurate translation, it makes it a more accurate representation of our political history.

<sup>6</sup> Patria means homeland, but with patriotic implications.

erratic attitude in which enthusiasm and the hope of imminent victory alternates with discouragement and lamentations over one or another failing of the people. The actions of the rebel seemed aimed at maintaining a pure soul and an unstained flag more than accomplishing the transformation of society.

Rebellion is a stage in the process of political maturing. But one must transcend it in order to pass from rebel to revolutionary. For this it is essential to:

1. Move from a subjective and moral attitude to an objective evaluation of society. This requires recognizing that the source of injustice is the structure of society.
2. Move from an oversimplified idea of the world to one that recognizes reality as complex and contradictory.
3. Move from negative condemnation to a program that is also constructive; that not only rejects the current society but also holds out the possibility of a better one.
4. Maintain revolutionary integrity.
5. Move from an erratic attitude and sporadic efforts to a realistic attitude with no need to energize oneself with illusions, and with a long-term plan of work.

Let's comment on each of these stages.

III. The structure of society is the source of injustice.

The revolutionary must look behind bad faith and hypocrisy, apathy and personal egotism, to see the origin of these ills of society. She must decide which of these injustices can be corrected within the current society and which are fundamental to capitalist – colonial society. For this reason, a revolutionary career does not begin with sharpening machetes, but with studying political economy.

This does not mean that the revolutionary abandons the moral realm; a passionate reaction against injustice will always be the driving force that motivates us.

Nevertheless we insist on distinguishing between what is, and what should be, with

a scientific clarity that is always in dynamic tension with the passion of the struggler.

It is a fundamental belief of revolutionaries that the majority of the injustices from which we suffer have their origin in the structure of our country as a capitalist colonial society, and that we share these with many other countries with different cultural heritages from our own. I want to note in passing, that when I speak of capitalism, or of the colony, I don't use these terms as the empty words of abuse they have been made into, but rather as economic categories. I say capitalist because production is in private hands – of individuals or corporations – that hire labor power, and because the only purpose of production is to make a profit. I say colonial, because the capitalists that control our economy are North American, because Puerto Rican capitalists are subordinate to them through a thousand ties, because the government of the island responds in general terms to the interests of North American capitalism.

I support this proposition with three illustrations that show that it's not a matter of isolated social problems, but different manifestations of one social system.

A. Why has the interior of Puerto Rico stagnated?

In spite of all the efforts of Fomento<sup>7</sup> everyone knows that the small towns of the interior are in economic crisis, and that a high proportion of the population lives on welfare. It is also widely known that labor shortages and unemployment coexist in the coffee zone, and migration to the coast continues.

The reason is that the most that Fomento can do is point North American capitalists to where they can make big profits. But since there is no reason for a company from the north to establish itself in Ciales instead of Bayamon, since that area will not

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<sup>7</sup> Banco Gubernamental de Fomento, or Puerto Rico Economic Development Administration, was founded in \_\_\_ and was the main fiscal agent and administrator of the industrialization of Puerto Rico ...

<sup>8</sup> Ciales is a small town in the central mountain range of Puerto Rico, while Bayamon is part of the greater metropolitan area of the capital, San Juan.

bring greater profits, the task of Fomento is very difficult, and the entire zone remains a desert for capitalism.

If this is the case, why doesn't the government establish its own factories in the mountains? First of all, because even under government administration, it would have to compete with the monopolies without any protection, and secondly, because such a program would be branded as socialist, would provoke opposition in Washington, and would scare away potential investors.

There are those who insist that the decay of the highlands is due to the characteristics of businessmen who won't risk industrial investments because they prefer commerce and speculation, etc. But this is a characteristic of colonial bourgeoisies everywhere. When we notice that the same pattern of commercial, speculative and light industry in some zones combined with stagnation in the rest of the country also occurs in Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Malaya, etc. the belief that we're dealing with a general aspect of colonial economics and not the idiosyncrasies of Puerto Ricans becomes entirely plausible.

#### B. Why can't the problem of traffic jams be solved?

This is not a particularly colonial problem, since it is found in all the capitalist centers, but it is a problem of capitalism. First, the land-use patterns surrounding our cities are the result of real estate speculation. The inflation of land prices forces urban centers to dedicate themselves to commerce, and places the homes of the middle class in the suburbs. Furthermore, the central role of the automobile industry in the capitalist economy means that most of the movement between the suburbs and the centers of employment takes place in private vehicles.

Governments therefore invest much more in roads than in the development of an efficient public transportation system, and the placement of shopping centers, schools, etc., makes it almost essential to have a car in the housing developments.

#### C. Why is the level of academic work in our university so low?

The low level of the students is not due to a lack of intelligence, but rather a lack of motivation. In a society as commercialized as ours, the university is just a path to getting a lucrative job. Because of this, many students drop out after two years, moving into positions in business. For them, what matters is not to study, but that their record shows they have met so-and-so many requirements and accumulated so-and-so many credits. Very few can give themselves the luxury of studying something only because they like it, and almost no one does it because this something would be useful to their country in the future.

Historical experience has shown that the most creative environment for universities is one in which social responsibility is combined with interest in a field of study, resulting in solid motivation to make an effort at one's studies. This is the environment found in some of the new countries, but it would be very difficult for that to serve as a stimulus here, except for groups like independentist students who are socially motivated toward their country.

The study of the sources of social problems leads us to conclude that it's not a matter of different issues to be separately and empirically resolved, but rather a syndrome that must be addressed as a whole. For example it was a very important advance for the independence movement to realize that national and social problems are inseparable, that understanding the economic structure of imperialism is essential for an independentist struggle, and that social problems cannot be resolved without the kind of social reorganization that would never be permitted in a colony.

At the same time, an in-depth analysis helps us to separate fundamental questions from trivial ones. For example, among some rebel independentists, the way that tourists dress sometimes provokes an attitude of resentment among students just as strong as that caused by military bases, or the economic monopoly. But the truth is that even if they cover themselves up to their eyes, as in some Muslim countries, or walk around naked in San Juan, this will have no effect at all on the colonial status of Puerto Rico.

In other words, the transition from rebel to revolutionary includes the transition from anti-American to anti-imperialist.

#### IV. The world is complex and contradictory.

Once we stop conceiving of history as the struggle of the brave against the defeated, of the honorable against the sellouts; once we start to study the world as it is, we encounter many complexities and contradictions. Faced with these complicated situations, the revolutionary cannot extract only what is convenient, in order to have a uniform and simplified view of life. Neither can the revolutionary opt for the position that everything is too complicated to understand, that all the alternatives are shades of gray, and therefore we cannot act.

It is the duty of the revolutionary to study these complexities and trace their interrelatedness. The revolutionary analyzes in order to act, but realizes that all decisions are made with incomplete information, and is therefore always attentive to new information in order to change her ideas.

One of the most damaging oversimplifications is that of taking a pair of opposite words and holding them up as mutually exclusive alternatives: Reform versus revolution, sincerity versus hypocrisy, victory versus defeat, ally versus enemy.

Let's consider the first pair. In general terms, reform refers to a measure taken to correct a defect in society, without touching its basic structures, while revolution is the fundamental restructuring of society. For this reason, the goals of the reformist and the revolutionary conflict, and generally take them in different directions.

Revolution and reform can become linked in various ways: for example, reform may prepare the ground for revolution. A people that achieves partial reforms may, as a result, strengthen its consciousness, gain experience, raise its aspirations, and find out which ills can be remedied within the current structure and which cannot. It is also very common that the existence of a revolutionary movement forces the right to

make concessions to reformists, and this gives reformists a bargaining tool, and changes the political center of gravity toward more radical positions, strengthening the reformists, and bringing about reform. While political reform is the art of the possible, revolutionary politics creates the possibilities.

On the other hand, a revolutionary wave can provoke reactionaries into total suppression, into a rigidity that refuses concessions and reforms. Or reform can be a counterrevolutionary weapon, small concessions and promises of further change without the necessity for fundamental change. Reform and revolution interpenetrate each other, stimulate each other, and sometimes clash.

Let's consider a complex situation from the present: who is Jaime Benitez?<sup>9</sup>

The struggle for university reform has revolved around the person of the rector in a way that has distorted the real problems involved. Reformists denounce him as a schemer, arrogant, egotistical, a hypocrite, etc. The left also denounces him as a reactionary who uses liberalism as a disguise. The right denounces him as a leftist, citing the case of Lima<sup>10</sup>, his support for Juan Bosch<sup>11</sup>, and his opposition to McCarthyism in the United States. The puzzle is, who is he? What is his ideology? How can his actions be explained?

We're not interested in the personal qualities of our president. If he is arrogant, on what subjects? If he is a hypocrite, what end is he pursuing with his hypocrisy? If he schemes, on whose behalf? If he's egotistical and ambitious, what are his ambitions? In other words, what is his political philosophy?

First of all, Benitez is a liberal with all the good and bad of that position. Liberal philosophy works to maintain the current system in power using a minimum of

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<sup>9</sup> Jaime Benitez was Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico's main campus in Río Piedras from 1942 to 1966, and its first President from 1966 to 1971, after which he served four years as Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico, the island's non-voting representative in the US Congress.

<sup>10</sup> Lima

<sup>11</sup> The democratically elected President of the Dominican Republic, overthrown in 1965 ...

force and repression. It defends the broadest margin of free expression within the system, and even opposition to the system as long as it's ineffective.

Benitez, as a man of broad vision, defines the system in broad terms. He doesn't limit it to the party in power, but includes all the pro-imperialist parties and sectors. And when he decides it's appropriate to suppress free discussion, to suppress the rights of both students and faculty, he does it because he considers it necessary in order to defend his system, and not out of malice as is the case with some sectors of the press.

With regard to the university, Benitez' liberalism is expressed in two directions, the political and the academic. He wants a technically competent university, with a high level of professional preparation, that can train skilled servants for government and business: servants who accept the current reality as necessary and easily support the interests of imperialism. Benitez also wants a university that distinguishes itself among the universities of Latin America, as the showcase of the showcase, as a center to attract other countries toward the liberal colonial capitalist road, and as a center for advising Washington on how to better manage its dominion.

But within our commercial colonial society Benitez' two goals are in conflict. The faculty includes hundreds of people for whom their academic position is the only way to "rise" in the world; these individuals have little interest in intellectual life in general and in their own field in particular, and will resist to the last any effort to improve the quality of academic work and thus raise its level.

These members of the faculty, members of a more or less comfortable class, will fully support the efforts of the administration to stifle serious political dissent, the intellectual ferment that characterizes a serious university.

To retain the support of this element in the larger political arena, Benitez must practically surrender to them with regard to the micro-politics of the University. He must tolerate inefficiency, apathy, personality issues, and intellectual mediocrity.

He must tolerate racial discrimination in the fraternities, not because he's a racist, but because he's a liberal!

On the other hand, the necessity of maintaining a certain standard of quality and intellectual boldness within various fields of study forces the University to include people who are nonconformist in their political beliefs. The administration wants to be in good standing with the Middle States Association<sup>12</sup> and the American Association of University Professors. Therefore it cannot suppress radicals for being radicals.

But on this issue, his necessary and natural allies on the right begin to exert pressure through the "free press." This results in little administrative intrigues, small hypocrisies and general insincerity.

The University situation can be accurately described without even mentioning don Jaime. It reflects the clash between three forces: the mediocrities of the commercial status quo who want no change at all, an administration that seeks a certain level of academic excellence combined with political docility in a commercial colonial society, and a political academic opposition.

In this way we can locate the hypocrisy within the sincerity; the petty schemer within the man of liberal vision. What's more, we can define our attitude toward the president and his administration as one of cooperation within conflict: conflict because they want a state college and we want the national university: cooperation because we both want to raise the academic level, Benitez for the purpose of creating a showcase and we in order to prepare leaders for the Republic.

#### V. The Destructive and Constructive in Our Program

A revolutionary movement must maintain a permanent tension between the negative and positive aspects of its programs, between denouncing and proposing,

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<sup>12</sup> One of the primary college accreditation organizations in the United States

between condemnation of an unjust and irrational society, and our vision of a better order. It's essential that this be so because:

1. At the same time that we struggle for the radical reconstruction of society, we cannot remain indifferent to the possibility of relieving suffering within the system. Since it does not have its hands tied by loyalty to the party in power or the system, a revolutionary movement is free to propose remedies even while pointing out their limitations.
2. There are very few among the masses today who would say that all is well with the government. If they do not support us, it's because they believe the current injustices have no solution, or that they are being resolved in the best way, or because they doubt the possibility of a viable and just independence.
3. We recognize that if by some miracle we found ourselves in power tomorrow, it would be a disaster. We would create a formidable constitution, since we have many skilled lawyers, and without doubt we would establish the National Museum Of Art... but, how will we change the pattern of agriculture? What steps will we take toward industrial development?

At a time when liberation movements not only demand independence but sometimes achieve it, it would be irresponsible not to prepare ourselves for the reconstruction of society that revolution requires.

This doesn't mean that we need a detailed plan for what the government of the republic should do. This will fall to others. But we must study all the problems of the country from a perspective that does not accept the limitations imposed by the colony, that does not take as given that which exists in the moment. We must demonstrate that independence is an opportunity to take advantage of everyone's experience to rationally solve problems that are currently turned over to special interests, responded to spontaneously, or just done the way it is in the North.

For example, our legal system follows the pattern of the United States in all essentials. When judicial reform is discussed here, it only means the creation of two or three judgeships, or methods for speeding up the court calendar. Meanwhile, the

judicial process is still more of a competition between lawyers than a search for the truth. I understand that the Mexican legal system is different in this respect. With fewer formal restrictions in the laws of evidence, and with more direct participation by judges, trials tend to do a better job of establishing the facts. This is not to say that I would advocate adopting the Mexican legal system here. But it does imply that it's an alternative that has not even been considered in Puerto Rico; one of the many alternatives we must study.

What's important is that once we break the restrictions imposed by colonial capitalism, our technicians, agronomists, economists, and teachers face the task of social reconstruction in an environment where their ideas will be taken seriously, their efforts will be useful for society, and their work will have meaning beyond the salary they receive.

Preparation for the future cannot be limited to pointing out the possibilities that national liberation will open up. Worldwide experience of socialist and national revolutions has taught us that the taking of power by revolutionaries does not guarantee a just society. Once foreign pillage ends, our rescued wealth opens up possibilities for theft and corruption by some of the liberated people, including sectors of the revolutionary leadership. In many countries, achieving independence has led to an aborting of revolution, which easily reverts to neocolonial domination.

And if the revolution is consolidated, it will need to confront three fundamental problems that have not yet been satisfactorily resolved:

1. Methods of planning;
2. ways to guarantee revolutionary democracy against the tendency toward abuses of power;
3. standards for international relations between revolutionary countries.

The more we prepare now, the better our chances of weathering the upheavals of revolutionary transformation.

## VI. Perspectives.

The revolutionary has no need to sustain herself with illusions. He knows the struggle is long and arduous. The fact that we live in revolutionary times does not guarantee a date of victory or signal a series of defeats and partial victories leading to a “final” victory.

There is no final victory. The establishment of the republic, even the development of a socialist society, only closes one chapter of history and opens another. In spite of what the so-called free press mockingly refers to as “revolutionary paradise” – as if anyone had made such a claim – the revolutionary knows that paradise is lost, and the struggle for freedom is our permanent condition.

Even the very concepts of victory and defeat must be seen in relative terms, and we can recognize victories within defeats, or defeats within victories. Let us consider, for example, the approval of the Estado Libre Asociado. Was it a victory or a defeat? There is no doubt that in the short run it was a defeat. Given that Munoz<sup>13</sup> once again won the endorsement of the people, the vote appeared to be an acceptance of colonialism, and it spread illusions about the nature of imperialism.

In the long run though, we can see the ELA not as the preference of Washington, but rather as its response to Puerto Rican nationalism. Munoz reaped what Albizu<sup>14</sup> sowed.

We can see it that the ELA did not achieve its principle goal, that of resolving, once and for all, the “status question.” It gave Puerto Rico more autonomy, and has supported the growth of a national consciousness. For this reason, the constitutional history of Puerto Rico is in some ways a victory outlined by defeats.

On the other hand the electoral reorganization represents the opposite. The fact is that the electoral laws, the structure of the parties, voting customs, all combine to

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<sup>13</sup> Luis Muñoz Marín, first elected governor of Puerto Rico, and leader of the Popular Party.

<sup>14</sup> Pedro Albizu Campos, leader of the Nationalist Party.

prevent the constructive use of elections on the part of the revolutionary left. Furthermore, the impact of the electoral experience on the consciousness of militants is such that many could never participate in electoral campaigns with any enthusiasm. In this sense it's a defeat. But: the recognition of this fact, the call to boycott elections, the use of the campaign for political education rather than losing ourselves in empty procedures, represents a counter offensive – a victory within defeat.

Almost all skirmishes are like this. They have elements of victory and elements of defeat, because neither we nor our enemies are omnipotent. The revolutionary movement must evaluate the experience of each battle in all its complexity.

It is customary for members of the “31<sup>st</sup> of February movement” to applaud every little gesture as a great victory, proclaim each debate to be a triumph and to imagine they hear the empire trembling each time they step onto the platform. But the pride of a revolutionary isn't in always winning or always being right. The pride of a revolutionary, like that of a scientist, is that we learn from our experience, that we recognize our errors and failings in time, and communicate the truth to all the others.

The revolutionary does not turn to excuses to explain the current situation. Puerto Rico is not a colony because the North Americans have so-and-so many troops here, or because they keep repressive forces working night and day. These forces exist as a reserve, in case they are needed. But the current regime is in power today because the people accept it, with or without criticisms, with or without potential reserves of national feeling, with or without enthusiasm.

And we, who believe it is an unjust, unnecessary, predatory, and rotten regime, recognize that our basic task is convincing the people that a leftist republic is desirable, necessary and achievable.

The process of convincing, of political education, is not one of passive teaching. All political struggle—the defense of our natural resources, the insistence on civil

rights, defiance of unjust laws—all have the long-term purpose of educating, of convincing through experience.

And while the rebels of the “31<sup>st</sup> of February movement” flip back and forth between the illusion that the people are on our side (so we should all go to the Sierra!<sup>15</sup>) and the desperate feeling that the people have sold out or are lost or stupid (so we should all go to the Sierra!), revolutionaries continue organizing, educating, debating, and resisting.

When members of the “31<sup>st</sup> of February movement” evaluate their work, they’re more concerned with efforts than results. They report on how many leaflets they’ve handed out, but not on how many were read. They report on how many meetings have been held, but not on how many people changed their opinions because of them. They tell us which assaults they condemned but not how many they stopped. They act with pride, as if their fundamental purpose was to be able to say to their grandchildren in some future happy time “even before the revolution, I used to...”

But whatever the task of the moment, whether to put up a picket line or study history, discuss or act, in the classroom or in the street, the revolutionary does what is necessary without need of false rewards. She is energized by her rejection of injustice, by her understanding of reality, by his vision of the future. The life of a revolutionary requires sustained effort and, sometimes, large sacrifices. But it also offers a way to apply one’s abilities to something beyond pocketbook or position. As an old revolutionary summarized it: “The most precious gift to humanity is life, and it is only given to us to live it once. We should live in such a way that we feel no remorse or anguish over purposeless years; so we are not consumed with shame about a trivial or cowardly past; so that we can say at the moment of our death, I gave all the effort of my life to the most noble cause in the world – the struggle for human liberation.”

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<sup>15</sup> Refers to the Sierra Maestra, the mountainous base of operations for the rural part of Cuba’s revolutionary guerrilla movement leading up to its triumph in 1959.