

Puerto Rico



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"For the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico"

For Immediate Release

MUNOZ SAYS U.S. AID MISUNDERSTOOD

BECAUSE OF OUR "SHAME" OVER GENEROSITY

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 10, 1958 Governor Luis Munoz Marin today stated that the United States is misunderstood throughout the world because Americans are ashamed to appear "generous". Speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Puerto Rico's Governor urged that we "cease to pretend that the American people are extraordinarily hard-headed in order to hide the altogether creditable fact that they are decently kind-hearted".

Governor Munoz urged that the United States develop a "vital policy" to narrow the tremendous gap between living standards of Latin America and the United States. Latin America's 180 million people live on 50 billion dollars a year, while the United States' 170 million people live on 400 billion dollars - - eight times as much, he noted. Munoz stressed that "the importance of Latin America is out of proportion to the comparative aid and attention it receives".

The Commonwealth Governor also urged that the U.S. give more encouragement to democratic governments in Latin America, without intervening in the internal affairs of any country. "When you give the same consideration to dictators and tyrants as to proven democrats, you cannot help but discourage democracy", he warned.

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The U.S. labors under a great handicap in competing with Russia to assist underdeveloped areas, Munoz observed. The Russians do not need to explain their reasons for extending aid, while a democracy like the United States -- in order to justify such aid to its own people -- frequently has to emphasize that it serves the selfish interests of the U.S.

Noting that many formerly colonial areas tended to associate capitalism with imperialism, the Puerto Rican Governor urged that the United States not appear to make its aid contingent on dogma. "It is of paramount importance", he said, "that the United States or the developed Western powers avoid seeming to try to ram a doctrine down the throats of those who wish to receive aid."

Munoz also pointed to the remarkable economic and social strides in recent years in Puerto Rico, which he described as a "kind of microcosm of the hemisphere itself". Referring to the political status of the Commonwealth, he said, "The political significance of Puerto Rico is not in its literal form but rather in the reminder that political creativeness was not exhausted when the now aging forms of sovereignty and of federalism were devised".