

AN ANALYSIS OF THE END OF PUERTO RICO'S REVOLUTIONARY
ERA: THE DEFEAT OF THE PARTIDO POPULAR DEMOCRATICO

Dissertation Prospectus

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The Problem

November 5, 1968 marks a watershed in Puerto Rican politics, as the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), lost its first election since its founding in 1938. This dominance had come under the personalist, charismatic leadership of the party's founder and four-term governor of the island, Luis Muñoz Marín. In August, 1964, Muñoz in announcing his decision not to be a candidate for re-election, proposed a number of organizational changes in the party, changes which he declared as essential for the PPD to become an institutionalized party.

The purpose of this dissertation will be to explain why the PPD was defeated in 1968, focusing on the 1964-68 administration of Muñoz' hand-picked successor, Roberto Sanchez Vilella. This focus rests on the assumption that much of the immediate cause for the party's defeat is explainable by analysis of this time period. For it was after the 1964 decision of Muñoz that internal party strife and division appeared openly and uncontrolled. Thus this study will be concerned with the political developments both within the party and the government during this time period.

Beyond the Puerto Rican scene this study can have significance for the understanding of Latin American political parties in general, particularly those of the so-called "national revolutionary" type, such as Acción Democrática (AD) in Venezuela. This important group of parties has a similar programmatic and ideological stance on land reform, social and labor reforms and change through democratic elections. Noted Latin American scholars have repeatedly classified the PPD as one of the national revolutionary type parties. For examples one can cite Robert J. Alexander, The Prophets of the Revolution; John D. Martz, Acción Democrática: The Evolution of a Modern Political Party in Venezuela, or the works of Kalman Silvert, Federico Gil or others.

Despite Puerto Rico's "semiautonomous" political system and legal association with the U.S., many scholars believe it can be justifiably analyzed as a type of Latin American political system, especially as regards political parties. A very recent Ph.D. dissertation on Puerto Rican politics by F.P. LeVeness concludes that Puerto Rico is an area of Latin America, with sufficient similarities to offer examples for comparison with its Latin neighbors.

With still wider implications, this dissertation can probe the validity or usefulness of some of the models of political development currently in vogue, such as those of Samuel P. Huntington and Gabriel

Almond. An important question to be answered here is whether the defeat of the PPD has meant "political decay" in the party organization or the overall political system; or whether the party's defeat has been a contribution to overall political "development" of the system.

What is Known About the Problem

An excellent study of the PPD from 1940-1964 is contained in Robert W. Anderson, Party Politics in Puerto Rico. There is also one lengthy historical-descriptive account of the PPD until 1956, in Bolivar Pagán, Historia de los Partidos Políticos Puertorriqueños. One of the better article-length studies of the PPD, but outdated also, is Gordon K. Lewis', "1940 y Después: La Asunción de los Populares."

Other useful studies have dealt more directly with Muñoz Marín's charisma and personal dominance of the PPD. These include Henry Wells, "Ideology and Leadership in Puerto Rican Politics;" Rexford G. Tugwell, The Art of Politics; and Robert J. Alexander, The Prophets of the Revolution. But neither these nor the previously cited works systematically treat the period under study in the proposal here outlined.

Methodology

One of the major premises of this research will be that the 1968 election defeat of the PPD is a direct result of the failure of Muñoz to institutionalize his personal leadership of the party during the critical transition administration of Sanchez Vilella. One method to be used to confront this question is the use of Huntington's framework for measuring institutional development; in terms of adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence. For example, one measure he suggests for adaptability is generational age of the institution. If a party's first generation leaders still control, then it has not yet met the test of institutionalization, on this indicator.

To illustrate the role played by the internal strife in the PPD during the 1964-68 period, in the 1968 election defeat, three case studies will be made (see below). These will entail interviewing of the key people involved, consulting the party and government records, and surveying the newspaper accounts.

As for the 1968 campaign and election itself, much accurate statistical information is available, especially from two sources: Puerto

Rico Election Factbook and the Official Election Returns. Elections in Puerto Rico have been shown to be free and honest (cf. LeVeness), making electoral statistics both valid and useful in analysis.

Treatment of the Subject

Research findings will be categorized and analyzed as follows:

Introduction--Here the conceptual framework will be laid out, with a detailed statement of objectives, methodology and definition of terms.

Chapter I--Background to the current problem of the PPD. The nature of the PPD dominance of the political system since the 1940's, Muñoz' personalist leadership, and the attempts at institutionalizing the party beginning as early as 1960 will be dealt with here.

Chapter II--Case studies of the sources of party disunity that shook the PPD during the Sanchez Administration, culminating in the ouster of Sanchez from the party and his becoming a candidate for governor under the banner of the People's Party. The case studies would be:

1) The University Reform Law of 1965, 2) Status Plebiscite of July, 1967, and 3) ~~Sanchez' marital problems, involving his divorce and remarriage.~~ *SUBSTITUTE HERE ANOTHER CASE STUDY - PERHAPS PPD PRIMARIES*

Chapter III--The 1968 PPD nominating convention, where an open split occurred in the PPD, followed by a vicious campaign.

Chapter IV--Analysis of the 1968 election results. Several factors will be analyzed as to their part in the PPD's defeat. These include the role of the followers of Sanchez, the strategy of the victorious New Progressive Party, the effect of the lacklustre PPD candidate, and the simple desire of the voters for a change after 28 years of the PPD.

Chapter V--Election Postmortem. Changes in the structure and organization of the PPD brought on by its defeat will be covered here, as well as the behavior of the PPD as an opposition party after 1968.

Chapter VI--Significance of this study for the field of comparative politics. Looking at the PPD as a Latin American national revolutionary party we can make a fruitful comparison with AD in Venezuela. Beyond their similar origins and programs, both parties had charismatic leaders, followed by hand-picked successors, electoral defeat in 1968 and lack of electoral success notably in their capital cities. This final chapter will also seek to answer the question if the PPD defeat has meant political development or decay, by applying both Huntington and Almond.

I ALSO PLAN TO CONSIDER P.R. POLITICAL SETTING AS COMPARABLE TO OTHER DEPENDENT CARIBBEAN SOCIETIES