

# Church Popular Offensive Continues, Grows Strong

By A. W. MALDONADO

The bewildering silence of Gov. Muñoz on the raging conflict between the Popular Party and the Catholic Church of Puerto Rico enters its second week today.

The Governor has made no public comment on the growing breach between the Church and his party since his last political speech on the eve of the general election, Nov. 7.

more strange when it is contrasted with the vigorous, intensive campaign he conducted against the pastoral letters—a battle that Muñoz sparked moments after the first pastoral letter was made public and which he continued until moments before the Nov. 8 election.

### Offensive Continues

Whereas the enormous offensive of the Governor and his party against what they called the "error" of the bishops ended abruptly and completely on Election Day, the offensive of the Church against the Popular Party has continued and is steadily

growing in strength and in far-reaching implications.

While the Governor's silence continues, the issue which he described during the political campaign as "the most important in the history of Puerto Rico" has grown in importance and in intensity.

In one announcement, Catholic worshippers were warned that only those who had truly repented voting for the Popular Party could receive the sacraments of the Church. In another announcement, the Church advised that the Church could excommunicate those who

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The Governor's silence is the

publicly disobeyed the bishops and have not repented.

Caught in the battle are the Catholics who believed Muñoz when he hammered away day after day during the political campaign that it was not a sin but an "honor" to vote for the Popular Party, when he repeatedly repudiated the "error" of the bishops in prohibiting Catholics from voting for the Popular Party.

### Caught In Center

Caught dramatically and publicly in the center of this conflict is one of the island's leading Catholics and Populists, San Juan Mayor Felisa Rincon de Gautier. The Church has made it clear that since she has stated publicly that she did not repent voting for the Popular Party she is, according to Church canon, "a public sinner" who cannot be administered the sacraments of the Church and who can be excommunicated.

The Church has also made it clear that in order for her to free herself from this situation, she must publicly state that she repents having voted for her party.

Visibly distressed, the mayor did not go up to the altar to receive communion two Sundays ago. Last Sunday she did not go to Mass.

After his overwhelming victory at the polls Nov. 8, nothing seemed more natural than that the Governor call a news conference. Day after day, La Fortaleza announced that a press conference was in the making.

It has been speculated that perhaps Muñoz does not want to place himself in a position where he would be asked to comment on the Church-Popular Party conflict. Muñoz has not called a press conference since the elections.

### Remain Unanswered

Meanwhile, questions looming each day more and more important remain unanswered. Has or will the Governor report to the Vatican the situation in Puerto Rico resulting from the pastoral letters, as the Governor promised he would do "imme-

diately after the elections" in a statement of Oct. 22? Will the Governor reconsider his position that the section of the Popular Party platform dealing with religion and politics need not be amended or changed in any way?

Since he advised all Puerto Ricans, in his role as leader and educator of the Puerto Rican people; not to obey the "political orders" of the clergy, what advice does the Governor have now for these same Puerto Ricans who are denied the Church sacraments and are treated with excommunication?

As the Governor of all Puerto Ricans, chosen as such by 58 per cent of all Puerto Rican voters, what does Muñoz think is the solution to the deep, grave, and tragic crisis in Puerto Rico today?