

will eliminate the softening effect of the Good Neighbor Policy and of its last obstacles, just removed, with Ambassador Caffery out of Havana...If Puerto Rico wants independence our answer should be to grant it. To answer her demand with machine guns is dishonorable for a people who love the memory of its own seditious nationalists of 1776."

Congressman Vito Marcantonio, sincerely on our side, wanted such an investigation. Senator Borah indicated some interest. Nothing came from Congress. In Puerto Rico itself, the American residents, some 1500, with the exception of half a dozen, were solidly behind Winship and joyful for the massacre. It is good to keep this in mind, because there are 65,000 U.S. residents in Puerto Rico today, who are here only as exploiters and agents of exploiters. In a similar event, one can venture to say that the half dozen of 1937 would not be much bigger now. A portent of this was given ten years ago when Americans at the Teatro Tapia fanatically cheered the police during the presentation of Rene Marques' PALM SUNDAY, a drama on the Ponce Massacre.

But the American Civil Liberties Union, of which Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes was an officer, did make a thorough investigation, on request of its Puerto Rican representative Don Miguel Mondragon. It was presided over by Mr. Arthur Garfield Hays, whom we have quoted.

Because of Puerto Rico's plight, the deprivation of outside justice, and the high tension of the moment, the ACLU report has been generally taken as sympathetic. But it is not. There is some justice in it, but no sympathy. We know the ACLU officials have no sympathy for us, not a single bit of interest in what really counts, that is Puerto Rico's independence, which is the first and greatest of all civil rights for Puerto Rico, and the source of all others. We know that Roger Baldwin, the Committee's chairman, had wanted the Nationalist leadership indicted for murder and incitement to commit murder, so that imperialism could be whitewashed of all accusation of political persecution.

But there is justice in it because Hays saw the truth. He was shown the truth by his associates in the investigating committee. Because, yes, there is always something that is overlooked when quoting the Report: the ACLU Report is the consequence of an investigation carried on, not only by Dr. Hays, but by other members of the Committee as well -- Antonio Ayuso Valdivieso, Emilio S. Belaval, Fulgencio Pinero, Francisco M. Zeno, Jose Davila Ricci

and Mariano Acosta Velarde. Behind this group of distinguished Puerto Ricans was the whole people of Puerto Rico, to the very District Attorney of Ponce, R. V. Perez Marchand, who resigned his post rather than carry out Winship's wish to indict for murder the innocent survivors of the Massacre.

The assassin general was left alone in his palace, with his pretorian guard, his little bunch of killers and sycophants, his resident countrymen. Washington was the center of world accusations.

So appeasement became the order of the day. And appeasement came to Puerto Rico. The ACLU Report places the blame for the Massacre squarely on the shoulders of General Winship. That did not embarrass Washington. Had the President of the United States wanted to remove his assassin-appointee he had only to do so, as he did two years afterward for other reasons. But Franklin Roosevelt did not want to do this at the time. Unmoved by the ACLU Report, he was equally unmoved by the coinciding McCaleb Report, the result of a secret investigation made by the Department of the Interior. General Winship, backed by Gruening, had found secure protection in the White House.

To do justice to Hays, it must be said that he grasped the inner meaning of the situation which the Nationalists faced in Ponce. On May 23, 1937, he wrote to a Miss Mason:

"Now I will tell you something about Ponce, which I did not even suggest for our report since perhaps it is my individual view. If I were a Nationalist and had been notified a few days in advance that a parade was prohibited, I would have called it off. Nobody but a people with a martyr complex of a lunatic would lead a crowd to face machine guns. But if I had arranged a parade and there was an attempt to stop it at the last minute, my self-respect would make me see it through. It may be just as crazy, but that is the way we human beings are. When the issue is drawn, we refuse to be intimidated. If I had been the leader, I too would have said, 'Forward march!' At least I hope I would."

But appeasement succeeded. Because Mr. Hays was an American, because the ACLU is an American institution, because Secretary Ickes was one of its officials, and because of the Tydings Independence Bill, the Report was generally interpreted as a signal of approval by the Administration.