

official language of our country.''

This despotism over Puerto Rico's cultural life reached into all educational spheres. In the very year of the Ponce Massacre, this tyrannical order was delivered by the President of the United States, and General Winship imported one hundred Americans to teach English in the Puerto Rican grade schools.

PERSECUTION

Early in 1932, the usual government "observation" of the pro-independence groups began to be transformed into provocation and persecution. The first of these provocations of really great magnitude was made through the colonial legislature where Gompers' associate, Santiago Iglesias, on petition of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., introduced a bill to convert the Puerto Rican national flag to a colonial banner. *A people's mass attack on the colonial capitol building left one killed, dozens wounded.*

The registration period (it was an election year) was marked by violence everywhere. Provocation against the Independentistas (Nationalists and Liberals) was the order of the day.

With the intensification of the Independentista movement came new persecutions. The credit for initiating modern, streamlined methods of political persecution in Puerto Rico belongs to Mr. Ernest Gruening.*

In March, 1936, Gruening sent off a series of letters to influential Americans on the Island, requesting confidential information concerning any anti-American activity in general and specifically within the National Guard and at the University. One of the most "documented" informers of Mr. Gruening was Atherton Lee, Director of the Federal Experimental station in Mayaguez. At Mr. Gruening's request, two special agents from the Division of Investigation of the Department of the Interior were sent to Puerto Rico and, on his request also, the FBI extended its activities to our country.

The Department of the Interior men were to investigate Independentista infiltration of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRAA). Under Governor Winship's instructions, the Legislature named a special investigating commission with the same task. Under Gruening's orders, a "test on independence" was established.

When this question hit the press (El Mundo in San Juan and through this, the New York Times), Gruening double-talked that "The PRAA

* Ernest Gruening--Was Director of Division of Territories and Island Possessions. Famous liberal. Now US Senator from Alaska.

does not propose to intervene in the beliefs of its employees even though those beliefs may occasionally appear to be in conflict with a minimum of common sense."

So it was Gruening also who inaugurated the theory of the intellectual emptiness of patriotism. In his anti-independence campaign, as in every other one of his activities in Puerto Rico, Gruening was (as Secretary Ickes declared) responsible only to the President of the United States. And it is revealing that in his mistrust of everything and everybody in Puerto Rico, the only exception he made was General Blanton Winship, the great assassin at the Ponce Massacre, who was also responsible only and directly to the president of the United States. His appointment to the Division of Territories and Island Possessions, which was so much acclaimed by American liberals, led Albizu Campos to remark, "Puerto Rico is the graveyard of American liberalism." (This is just as true of Franklin Roosevelt as it is of Gruening.)

Not happy with such lackeys of American policy as Dr. Jose Padin, the Commissioner of Education appointed by President Roosevelt, a similar secret investigation of the Department of Education was taking place. The situation forced Padin's resignation in November, 1936. It was Dr. Gruening who presented the resignation letter to President Roosevelt and who secured immediate acceptance from him.

A similar "cleaning up" operation against suspected Independentistas was being carried on throughout the whole colonial government apparatus.

All this tends to show that the independence movement was strong and growing. Let us turn now to the general political development of the 30's. The protagonist of this development was the Nationalist Party which became the center that attracted the main weight of the repression.

THE NATIONALIST PARTY

The Nationalist Party had been organized for several years without becoming a significant group. It did become just that in May, 1930, when Pedro Albizu Campos, backed by the Party's youth (he was 39 years of age) was elected president.

Under Albizu's leadership it rapidly developed into a real revolutionary vanguard attempting to show the way out of the reigning misery and chaos. Thanks mainly to imperialist maneuvering, intimidation, and bribery, but also to clear-cut class and sectional differentiations, it always remained small in numbers. But its influence reached far beyond its organized force. It was, in reality, a powerful mass movement.