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Puerto Rico: The Trials Of The Oldest Colony In The World



Synopsis

Jose Trias Monge first describes the Spanish rule over Puerto Rico and then traces the impact of American colonial policies there, comparing them with those in the Pacific and the British, French, and Dutch experiences in the Caribbean. He argues that the large amounts of money the United States has given to Puerto Rico have not been productive: not only has the island become frightfully dependent on United States munificence but more than 60 percent of Puerto Rican families still live below the poverty line. Politically, the situation is even worse. The United States has granted Puerto Rico limited self-government but has ignored the wishes of the Puerto Rican people - as expressed in two plebiscites - for greater autonomy, since it cannot make up its mind which decolonization option best serves American interests. Trias Monge discusses the various options of Puerto Rican independence, statehood, and an enhanced commonwealth status and urges the United States to end its present policy of inattention and inaction.

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Customer Reviews

This is a relative short (less than 200 pages), straightforward and direct book on the most important subject facing PR for 100 years. The author gives us a great background on the evolution of the status question (independence, statehood or commonwealth) for PR since Spain ceded it to the U.S. after the Spanish American War of 1898. Other lands that were ceded after the war (Philippines, Cuba) were granted more autonomy and even independence than PR was. But why? The author tries to answer that. The bigger issue is that the Commonwealth status that PR and the

US enacted in 1952, while a step forward, is not really the "true" associated free state that PR envisioned for itself. While PR generally makes its own laws and governs itself, in the things that it cannot do and the ability of Congress to abolish some laws, the island can be defined as a colony in the purest sense of the word. The author goes on to state many times that it is not an issue of dislike toward the Americans, something so fashionable these days. In fact, he clearly states that whether PR chooses to be independent or perfects the commonwealth status, a close association with the U.S. would be a very desirable thing. The U.S. has generally been a very positive influence in the economic development of the island. However, the island was told early on by the U.S. that when the day came and it was ready, the U.S. would allow it to choose its destiny in terms of self-government and would honor it...a "promise" that has not been kept. In my opinion, with 400 years of Spanish rule in the background, I don't think Puerto Ricans would ever assimilate culturally to being a state. They would never let that happen. An improved associated free state is the likeliest outcome.

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