puerto Rico

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INTRODUCTION

To

PUERTO RICO

A ten-story skyscraper modern and air conditioned, rises out of a jumble of centuries-old buildings which are entered from their winding, cobble stone streets through darkened passageways. Automobiles, careening over the rural roads, horns as wide open as their motors, squeal to a stop as a cart, drawn by oxen, moves from the center of the thoroughfare. A night club, placarded with beverage advertisements and dispensing its wares in the continental manner over a bar, leans against a magnificent church where sixteenth century worshippers came to pray. Of a Saturday evening, boys seated on stone benches, sponsored by an enterprising local merchant whose name and business appear, big and bold, on the backs of them, ogle at the girls, who like their mothers and theirs’ before them, parade around the plazas as old as the villages of which they are the social gathering places.

In Puerto Rico, the modern waits for the medieval.

In the beginning were the Arawaks, a gentle Indian tribe, who called their lush home, Boriquen, soon melodiously corrupted to the Spanish, Borinquen. Columbus called it San Juan Bautista, and Ponce de Leon exclaimed at its wealth, “Ay, que puerto rico!” But the name, Puerto Rico, adhered to the town for a time, and the island was known as San Juan. Years later the names were exchanged. The island of San Juan and the city of Puerto Rico; the “coke” sign and the cathedral.

While in 1620 a group of intrepid people at Plymouth Rock rowed ashore to found a nation in a wilderness, fifteen hundred miles or so to the south in the city of Puerto Rico on the island of San Juan Bautista, Governor Felipe de Beaumont was completing the first system of harbor defenses of the city. It was the culmination of the work of a century, a century in which the great fortress of El Morro had resisted the attacks of Sir Francis Drake, the scourge of the Spanish Main, and of Admiral Cumberland who invested the city, but failed to take the island. The work was done just in time, for soon the Dutchman, Henrick, sailed up with a mighty fleet and entered the harbor under the guns of the fort. Not until the end of the Spanish-American War, however, did a foreign power set foot on the island permanently.

Puerto Rico is old.

The sugar cane grows straight and tall and dense in the fields, and in late January the “arrows” appear at the top of the cane. In the middle of the fields, the huge centrals—sugar mills—begin to hum and their overwhelmingly tall chimneys begin to belch smoke. Down the roads come the jibaros, the farmers, for the most part shoeless and dressed in scraps of clothing. They come armed with machetes and they attack the fields and cut them down. For when the fuzzy arrows appear at the tops of the cane, the sugar season has begun and there are six months of work to be done.
Inside the central the cane is crushed and extracted, chemically treated and filtered, purified and clarified, separated and crystallized. Modern machinery does it all under the most sanitary conditions.

Outside a whistle blows, and the workers, machetes still in hand, for these are their badges of labor, trudge their long way home. Inside the home, it is dirty and dingy, the bare walls relieved only by an ever-present crucifix and perhaps a few pictures torn from a magazine. Perhaps the house is lighted by electricity; if not, then a candle will do.

Puerto Rico is a land of contrasts.

Along the roads the flamboyant tree flames. Some unknown traveler in bloodier, more romantic times than these, describes Puerto Rico as being “completely covered with tropical forests” but whereas, with the exception of the national forest, these have long since disappeared, the island is the home of more than three thousand species of plant life, some five hundred of which bear food. But the food is not sufficient to support the rapidly growing population, and more than fifty percent is imported. Some two hundred million pounds of rice reach the island each year and form the staple diet, a flimsy diet for a man who works as hard as the jibaro. But in the La Plata valley, under the guidance of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, farmers on five hundred farms are learning to grow tobacco and vegetables the modern way. The hills are terraced to prevent soil erosion and the crops rotated to give the soil a chance to live. More than forty thousand acres throughout the island are under the rural rehabilitation program, and perhaps in time the rural slums will disappear and the jibaro will sit down to more than rice and beans and fish.

The land is important in Puerto Rico.

The people, like flowers and trees, teem. If the United States were as over-populated as the island of Puerto Rico, it would contain more than one and a half billion persons; for in Puerto Rico there are almost six hundred people per square mile. Over-population and the seasonal character of the agriculture have forced many people into the towns and cities. Work here is scarce also, and many of the people live in slum districts, such as La Perla in San Juan, directly beneath the rugged mass of El Morro which once symbolized the might of empire and withstood the attacks of Spain’s enemies, seeking the treasure of the island. In the rural towns, many live in the ugly rural-urban areas, the barrios, which jumbled together, crawl up some nearby hill. In some sections of the island the people live in much the same way their ancestors lived four centuries ago, in grass shacks, eating from gourds. And in the cities, the modern homes built after the American functional manner, with every facility in the way of plumbing, indirect lighting and inset bathtubs at hand, stand in the same neighborhood with garishly-painted, clapboard dwellings of four and five “rooms” separated by wooden partitions or lace drapes; and the windows which open out directly upon the streets, divulge the contents of the room and its occupants to the people who pass outside. And the ever-present radio blares away.

As in the country, so in the cities are the appalling housing conditions being attacked. Modern apartment housing units and single-unit communities have been established to get the people out of the slums.

The gleaming white skyscraper stands towering above the dingy dwelling places of centuries. But before it was opened for business, modern American business, in the kind of ceremony that prepared many a centuries-old building in Puerto Rico for honest use, the Bishop of San Juan consecrated it.

For Puerto Rico is old before it is new.
From ages of blood

- Puerto Rico, discovered by Christopher Columbus on his second westward voyage, endured four centuries of Spanish domination filled with bloody assaults from the British, French and Dutch, and punctuated with hurricanes, fire and famine. Two hundred years drifted by in smoke and gore before the capital of San Juan reached a population of two thousand.

A member of Columbus' crew, Ponce de Leon, founded the colony and became the first governor of the island. Across the harbor from San Juan, he established an experimental farm at Caparra which was soon abandoned to build the permanent capital. Native Indians, pressed into slave labor, were slaughtered after a revolt and were replaced by African slaves.

The first hundred years of the colony saw invasions by pirates and buccaneers who flew the flags of nations hostile to Spain. The capital was enclosed with a massive wall and fortresses that the vital, defensive position of Spain in the New World might survive.

While other Spanish colonies in the Western hemisphere revolted and secured independence, Puerto Rico remained "the ever loyal isle," and continued to suffer abuse and privation. Slavery was only abolished—nine years after the emancipation in the United States—during a republic in Spain which was of short duration.

The first liberal concessions made to the island came a few days before the opening of the Spanish-American War. Following the invasion of Puerto Rico by 1,500 American troops, an armistice was declared and a military government established. Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States in the subsequent Treaty of Paris.

Just before our entry into World War I, Congress passed the Jones, or Organic Act, which liberalized the former Foraker Act that had established a civil government. The Organic Act granted American citizenship to Puerto Ricans and provided for universal manhood suffrage. It was not until much later, however, in the early nineteen-thirties, that women could cast their first ballots.

Romance and mystery are to be found in the legends of the early settlers in Puerto Rico. They came for gold but stayed to build a colony.
Many a Spanish gun crew ran down these steps at El Morro to service the cannon that poked its snub nose through the embrasure below. They had reason to run as English and Dutch fleets sailed up to try to force an entrance to San Juan harbor, prime prize of the Caribbean.

The famed sentry boxes of El Morro, four hundred years the heart of the defenses of Puerto Rico. From these posts, sentries on duty first saw Drake's fleet appear, Cumberland's, then Hendrick and finally, Admiral Sampson's American fleet stand off and bombard the harbor.
La Fortaleza, the official residence of the island's governors, once was the harbor's only defense until El Morro was built at the harbor's entrance.

Casa Blanca, residence of the American military commander, is the oldest continuously-inhabited home here.

San Jose Church in San Juan, more than four centuries old, is the oldest church in the New World to be in constant use.
Once the great fortifications of El Morro, which extended around the tight little island that is San Juan, stood guard over the approaches of Spain’s western empire. Although the harbor was not a port of call for the great convoys which passed between Spain and its colonies in the New World, the massive fortress kept the whole island of Puerto Rico and its fine harbor out of the hands of Spain’s many enemies. It served as a refuge for ships attacked by the numerous corsairs who prowled the seas looking for Spain’s treasure, and also as a fitting-out station for expeditions against Indians and the pirates. A king of Spain once referred to Puerto Rico as “being the front and vanguard of all my West Indies... the most important of them all and the most coveted by my enemies.” And behind the great walls and intricate system of minor forts, the city of San Juan grew up and today is one of the historic remnants of Spain’s colonies in the vast and rich New World.
San German church is known as Porta Coeli, and here the earliest worshippers came to pray, for it is purported to be the oldest Christian edifice in the New World. Standing high upon a knoll, the church has seen more than four centuries of history unfold, and here where crowds of worshippers once thronged up the steps to celebrate the Mass within its walls, there is silence, for it is now unused. It is one of the many churches in Puerto Rico.
The burial vaults of the old San Juan cemetery lie almost beneath the thick and rugged walls of the great fortress of El Morro, and in them lie the remains of many of the fort's defenders, who fell in the various bloody battles with the enemies of Spain who sailed up to attempt its capture. Near these vaults lies the cemetery of Fort Brooke and its many ornate statues standing on a small plain which commands a view of the nearby ocean. A similar vault lies under the famous San Francisco Church in San Juan.

The statue of Aguada signalizes the landing of Columbus in Puerto Rico during his second voyage. Aguadilla claims a landing.

Christo Chapel in San Juan, its altar of silver, commemorates the miraculous escape of a youth who fell from his horse over a nearby cliff.

The Victory monument in San Juan honors the Puerto Ricans who fought in the first World War. Island played an active part in the second.
Weary travelers, disembarking in San Juan from their perilous, months-long sea journey from Spain, passed through the San Juan Gate, on their way to give thanks for a safe journey at the San Juan Cathedral on the hill almost directly above. This gate bears the date, 1749, but a plaque placed above indicates that it was completed "about 1639." It is but one of the gates which pierced the great walls of El Morro and its fortifications. The others included the San Justo Gate, the "Puerta de España," the Gate of Spain, or as it was commonly called, the water gate, and the Santiago Gate, otherwise known as "La Puerta de Tierra," or land gate. Doors are brass-studded.
On an isle of hills

"It looks just like this, your Majesty"

So saying, Columbus crumpled a piece of parchment and cast it down upon the table before the Queen who had inquired of him what the island of Puerto Rico looked like. And although the Admiral utilized the same time-saving trick in describing most of the other islands in this area, it is particularly apt in the case of Puerto Rico. For Puerto Rico is composed of scattered peaks and summits of some four thousand feet elevation, which rise out of a land mass cut by lateral ridges and gorges.

And to add to its ruggedness, the swiftly growing vegetation, fed by fifty-one rivers and twelve hundred streams, covers its mountainsides, and teems on the foothills and over the narrow coastal plain. Aeons ago the rains began to transform the volcanic rock, of which the central mountain range is composed, into a tough and sticky red clay. Here on the steep mountains, the tobacco grows, and coffee is carefully nurtured. The numerous torrential streams, rising high in the four-thousand foot mountain backbone which extends from the eastern to the western extremity of the island, carry with them heavy deposits of alluvium soil and spread it on the narrow coastal plain. Here grow the sugar cane, the citrus fruits and the pineapple. Near the coast, the rivers flow down to the sea in valleys, divided by high and narrow ridges.

Five hundred food plants are grown in Puerto Rico; none, however, is so mundane in appearance and flavor as the staple commodity, rice. There are, for example, the many-shaped mango, the musky-flavored papaya, the quanabana, and the jobo, not a choice fruit but enjoyed by school boys. In fact, school boys do not play hookey in Puerto Rico; they are "eating jobo."

All of these fruits grow in a climate as lush as the vegetation, in a climate with an average temperature range of but six degrees between the coldest and warmest times of the year, which provides an average of two hundred and fourteen days a year of rain, and in which there are five days when the sun does not appear throughout a year.

• Fertile valleys of Puerto Rico are spread with agricultural villages. On the mountain slopes are sugar cane fields, bordered with royal palms.
Streams twist their way through fertile little valleys which lie between the jumble of ridges and hills, extending almost to the ocean shore. The ridges run laterally to the main, central, mountain backbone and sometimes reach altitudes of from one thousand to fifteen hundred feet. Often the streams disappear from view and run underground to appear farther down. The valleys are usually intensively cultivated, and the farms lie at their heads.
The island's many sugar centrals, standing amidst sugar fields on the coastal lowlands, use complex modern machinery to process cane, which is laboriously cut. The land stretches away and in the valleys, dotted with their sugar-loaf humps, every acre is tilled and the farms shove their way up the sides of the distant hills.
The main diet of most Puerto Ricans is fish and rice and beans, and each day the fishermen bring in catches of mullet, red snapper, sardines and sea bat.

Most of Puerto Rico's people live in the country; and towns such as Comerica are a focal point for the countrymen. Here they bring their produce to market.
Little points of land jut out from the southern coast of Puerto Rico to form little coves and harbors. Sprawling coconut plantations extend almost down to the water. The beaches are often short and many times over-hung with leaning palms. White sand is streaked with the wash of dead marine life and littered with fallen coconuts and withered fronds. Thatched huts are interspersed among the palms and the natives move to and fro along the beaches to launch their boats. Or they may haul small nets through the shallow surf to catch minnows which can be used for bait. Water is crystal clear at comparatively great depths and fishes can be seen swimming in the calm Caribbean sea. The aborigines selected such spots along the coast.
Across the Condado Lagoon stands a modern power plant which furnishes the electric power for homes and industry in the cities of San Juan and Santurce. Electricity was first installed on the island with the erection of a hydroelectric plant in 1882 at Ajuntas. Both municipal and privately owned power plants offer public lighting throughout the island. Hydroelectric plants have reduced the cost of irrigation.

Five hundred model farms in the La Plata valley produce tobacco, truck garden products the new way.

Coconut plantations are located in lowlands near the sea. Coconuts were imported from the Verdes.
- Some towns appear inaccessible, but fifteen hundred miles of roads link them with the "outside."

- The strange sugar-loaf hills dot the countryside near the coastline, where the land is relatively flat.
Many of Puerto Rico's teeming people live in the cities and larger towns, but the majority of them live in the country and rely on it for their livelihood. They live in such typical country dwelling places as this, and down most of the island's roads, or tucked away indiscriminately among the fields, are found the sprawling clapboard homes. They look incongruous amidst the palm trees and the rich countryside. Outbuildings and sheds, placed haphazardly around the dwelling, sometimes house the oldest of farm machinery with which they cultivate their land. The land is not cultivated scientifically.
As varied and diffused as the cultural traits that abound in Puerto Rico are the ethnic groups and nationalities which have been welded. The present inhabitants stem from the white, red and black races, and combinations of all three.

The aborigines of the island were the Arawak Indians from whom a small portion of the population descend. The Arawaks were a peaceful and industrious tribe who fished, made pottery and farmed with skill. They were clean, healthy and honest people with a well-developed culture. When the Spaniards first arrived on their island, the natives considered them immortal and were easily led into slavery.

Many of the Arawak maidens were taken as wives by the early Spanish settlers before the tribe was completely annihilated. The trace of the red race in Puerto Rico is a result of these marriages in the first years of the colony. The influence of the Arawaks has spread beyond the island with much of their vocabulary adopted first by the Spanish language and then into English as, hammock, canoe and tobacco.

Hundreds of slaves from the Guinea coast of Africa added to the fusion of races. Intermarriage has blended the black race with the white and red to produce individuals of many shades of skin and ethnic characteristics. At least three-quarters of the island’s population are considered by census to be white.

The Spaniard was the basic stock of the island, but a mixture of other Europeans influenced the development of the present day Puerto Rican. Soldiers who were sent out by the king of Spain to garrison the fortresses on the island were not only Spanish but French, Alsatian, Italian, Portuguese and Flemish. Many of these remained to settle in the new colony.

Also to be considered in the racial development are those Americans who arrived with the occupation forces during the Spanish-American War. Some remained and took wives from among the Puerto Ricans. These Americans, plus those who have wed on the island during World War II, are adding to the existing complex race picture.

Side by side can be seen people bearing the characteristics of many races which have been blended by intermarriage during four centuries.
Among the Puerto Rican artists who have achieved international fame is the pianist, Jesús María Sanroma, one of the world's outstanding interpreters of George Gershwin's music. The island has produced historians, poets and musicians of great merit, but lack of printing facilities has handicapped them. In Spanish days jibaro orchestras wandered about the island, playing and singing the old Spanish airs fused with the native aborigine rhythm.
Wherever two or more Puerto Ricans get together, there you will find a "forum"—on the street corners, in the stores, in the guaguas; and the barber shop, like its continental counterpart, is no exception. Here the customers and the loungers discuss the topic of the day with great fervor and with much gesticulation on the part of the man with the razor and the scissors, except, of course, when he sticks strictly to the cutting of hair as in this picture.
The beaches afford popular playgrounds for many of the island's children who take advantage of the wide stretches of gleaming white sand. Thirty-nine per cent of the total population, more than three-quarters of a million persons, are less than fourteen years of age, for since the Spanish-American War at the close of the last century, the population has doubled. The children swarm in cities and towns and country; their elders leave them to their own devices; seemingly paying no attention to their many recreational activities.
In many parts of the island, children learn early to use the machete in the cane fields, to pick the coffee beans on the mountain sides and to pile into "tumbas" the coconuts in the lowlands near the sea. Many of them are enterprising salesmen, pushing their carts filled with oranges to the markets, or dispensing their products on street corners. They help to earn the family's living, and if they go to school, it is sometimes only for half-day periods, for they must work to help feed the family and the work is hard.

Poverty falls hard on the children. There are no playgrounds in such slums as El Fangito in San Juan, in the barrios near most of the villages and towns, or in the dingy, ancient blocks of tenements entered only through a maze of passageways. Many of the children, too, come from families in which the father works his eight hours a day, six days a week, for ten or eleven cents an hour. The family diet is meager and poor, and the children's recreation must be found on the dingy streets.
As in other lands, the schoolboys trudge their weary way to school, their books in hand and eagerly await the time school lets out. These boys go to a rural school which offers eight years of instruction, divided into two units of four years each. But only about one-third of the children of school age attend school, and many of these for only half-day periods. They must work.
The lot of the aged in Puerto Rico is a hard one, and many an old man, like this one, is forced still to work in the fields alongside the younger men, cutting sugar cane or piling the coconuts. In the cities, many are forced to turn to beggary, and here, beggars are a common sight. Modern health department measures have cut down mortality rates; people live longer.
Many of Puerto Rico’s children work, and they may be seen engaged in all manner of activity, from working on farms to begging. Most familiar of all in the cities, however, is the newsboy. Dressed in all manner of rags, shrill-voiced and sharp-eyed, they scamper through the streets eagerly searching out their customers, who once they are found, are almost forced to buy a paper to keep their vendors’ from under foot. They range far and wide throughout the city’s streets on the lookout for customers.

An emotional, demonstrative people, the Puerto Ricans use their hands and eyes to punctuate their speech. To an American eye it appears as though they are acting out each part of their conversation, and their speech is not the mellifluous, flowing speech of books, but staccato and shrill. The news of the surrender of Japan was received, as in other Allied countries, with great jubilation as people gathered in groups to discuss the momentous event.
Care lines the faces of those who live in the city's tenement houses. Life is far from gay along narrow, cobble-stone streets of the island's cities.
The first negroes were slaves brought from Africa to the island by the Spaniards in the early days of its history, to take the place of the Indians who had been the first slaves. The slaves' first task was to build El Morro and its sprawling fortifications. For three hundred years they remained in bondage, but in the latter part of the nineteenth century, they were freed when slavery was abolished. Now as citizens, they are found in all walks of endeavor, from the back-breaking work in the fields and on the docks, to work in offices, mills.

One of the important tasks of the island's doctors is to cut down the high infant mortality rate.

In the larger centers there is usually a tropical park, a favorite playground for the children.
At the bottom of Puerto Rico's vast population scale are the jibaros, the farm laborers, who for the most part are poverty-stricken. At the top are the very rich, the absentee landlords, the owners of the huge sugar centrals and the rum distillers. Somewhere in the middle of the scale are the professional men and the foremen of the centrals, such as this man. His job is to keep the modern machinery inside the sugar plant humming during the five-month season, and to direct the work of the jibaros, who toil in the extensive field outside the mills.

The slum children live in board shacks, of flimsy construction and built closely jumbled. The aged are a common sight on Puerto Rico's city streets; they wander about, going nowhere.
Many of Puerto Rico's women are noted for their beauty, which is distinctly Latin in type, although here and there among the olive-skinned, black haired señoritas a blonde appears. They are American in their tastes in clothes, however, and the mantilla will only appear on Sunday at the church.
In varied dwellings

- Homes in Puerto Rico present the greatest contrast of centuries, architectures, national influences and wealth. The two million islanders live in everything from weather blackened, packing-case shacks to great concrete mansions or apartment houses.

The huts of the Indians which were found by Columbus' landing party have their design and construction copied in many huts existing today. The original dwellings found on the island were thatched, round huts which lined the two streets of Indian villages. The main hut of the chief faced the plaza or center of each village. Today in the cities, the old homes of most of the early Spanish settlers are crowded with many families who are often constantly in want of the bare necessities of life. A cursory glance into the squalid flats give evidence of the abject poverty of these people.

Heaped along the beaches of the island, thousands of tiny shacks are packed so tightly together that one must squeeze between them in walking from one shack to another. Puerto Rican law has set sixty feet of beach from the water line around the entire island as belonging to the Insular Government. Those living in the congested hovels take advantage of the rent-free beaches upon which to throw their shanties together.

Among the upper-middle class and wealthy, homes are being modeled on continental lines with concrete replacing the tamped earth construction of the early Spaniards. Some well-constructed old Spanish homes both in the cities and rural areas, are occupied by wealthy families who have added modern facilities to the aged but sturdy buildings.

Housing projects to reduce slum areas and provide for wholesome living conditions among the poor have been launched at several places on the island. Apartment buildings of concrete have been erected at costs of hundreds of thousands of dollars. One building accommodates a thousand people and offers the latest modern conveniences, including nurseries and playgrounds.

- Short distances separate the luxurious rich dwellings and the cluster of unpainted, scrap-wood shacks of the poor. The contrast is at first startling.
Modern lines and architectural designs are found in new suburban homes. These concrete structures are capable of withstanding tropical hurricanes which grow in the Caribbean.

Polluted water covers littered streets in the slum area of El Fangito. Frayed and dirty hammocks serve as beds in most of these filth-infested hovels. Disease thrives in these areas.

Farm houses frequently are on stilts which provide a shelter between the floor and the ground for pigs and chickens. Large wooden shutters swing from the windows.
Housing projects have converted slum areas into large apartment houses. Five-room apartments offer electricity, modern plumbing and kitchens with gas cooking ranges.

Fancy grilled balconies identify the colonial Spanish homes in close-set rows in the cities. The floors are often set in tile blocks used as ballast in the Spanish galleons.

The congested shacks of La Perla crowd the beach before El Morro. The single or double-room shanties house many people with no plumbing or sanitation facilities.
The luxurious home of a doctor presents a combination of many styles of architecture. The house is near Caparra where Ponce built his first farm. Corrugated tin is the popular roofing for the lower-middle class homes. Even in suburban areas, the homes are not set far from the well-traveled roads.
A large, new apartment building in the Condado section of San Juan contrasts sharply with the tiny shack dwellings of the poor. The apartments are equipped with all the modern conveniences. The interior of the apartments, however, are not as ornate as the exterior of the building. From the building there is a picturesque view across the Condado Lagoon which joins with the harbor to make San Juan an island. Rentals are higher than in similar apartment buildings in the United States. There are comparatively few of these modern apartment houses and all are in the same area.

Children play upon the wide-stepped walk, known as the Street of the Nuns, in an old quarter of San Juan. Poverty dwells in the ancient homes that line it.

Through a usually dark passageway is the patio of a colonial built home which is occupied by poor families. The patio now serves as a place to wash laundry.
Automobiles, along a cobble-stone street which was built centuries ago, stand before what were once the elegant homes of the wealthy, ruling Spaniards in the new colony. Above the present day shops, the homes usually overcrowded, are often scantily furnished and lacking in sanitary facilities.
Colorful is the word for Puerto Rico, from the brilliantly-hued marine life which abounds in its coastal waters to the flamboyant trees flaming along its winding country roads. Puerto Rico is as colorful as the map which pictorializes its life and land and produce.

Land is important to the island. There is so little of it, only thirty-five hundred square miles; and there are so many people on it, more than two million. Puerto Rico is a rugged island, and on its mountain backbone grow the coffee and tobacco. A coastal strip runs around the entire island, and the fishermen dry and mend their nets outside their thatched huts; the coconuts grow here and the sugar, too, surrounding the huge sugar factories.

Most important and largest city on the island is San Juan on the northern coast. The capitol building is here and the biggest port, as important to the island now as it was when the Spaniards first settled and built the mighty fortress of El Morro. The mountains make the island towns look almost inaccessible, but a chain of roads connects the cities and villages with one another; and down them daily come the islanders, their produce on their heads, or in push carts and trucks, or on the backs of meager nags, to barter and haggle over prices in the town markets.

The people are as colorful as their little island. Excitable, musical, rhythmic, they speak a chatterbox Spanish, which amazes an ear expecting a soft-flowing language.

Standing in the midst of the chain of islands running from the tip of Florida to the northern coast of Venezuela, the island has played a vital strategic role in guarding the Atlantic approaches of the Panama Canal and as an important link in a world-wide air supply chain. The headquarters of the Antilles Department and the Naval Air Station are located in San Juan, and on the eastern coast of the island is Roosevelt Roads, a huge naval anchorage. Other military establishments are located throughout the island, of which Borinquen Field, at the extreme northwest tip of the island, was particularly vital as an air supply link and a base for anti-submarine attacks, B-29 training and the Green Project.
THE FISHERMEN
Puerto Rico depends almost entirely upon agriculture for its prosperity, but employment in the great industries such as sugar, tobacco and coffee is seasonal in character and many of the people are unemployed all or part of the year. This, coupled with the added burden of overpopulation, makes the lot of the average Puerto Rican a hard one indeed.

And all but barren of such industrial works which, in other countries, make for many jobs, Puerto Rico must support its population of more than two million on less than seven-tenths of an acre per person. Under such an economy, even in the most prosperous of times the employment could not keep pace with the population, which between the last census and mid-1944 had increased by more than one hundred and sixty thousand.

Only six of twenty-eight industries in Puerto Rico work full time. Sugar, for example, employs the majority of its workers for only half the year; the coffee season is shorter still—from November to February. The workers must supplement his meager income, and to do this he and his children work at whatever jobs they can find during the off-season. Peddling is an art in Puerto Rico and hardly a street can be found where somebody has not set up a push cart and is plying his trade. The shoe-shine business flourishes. The government employs most of the island’s three-quarters of a million workers, more than twice as many people as the domestic services, the next highest “industry” in point of numbers.

Wages are low in Puerto Rico; the present wage is approximately three hundred and fifty dollars a year. As late as the mid nineteen-thirties more than half of the island’s employed received less than ten cents an hour. Among the trades, dock yard workers and printers are the highest paid.

Constructive programs have been organized to help solve the problem of marketing, soil conservation, subsistence crops to tide the worker over during the slack seasons, and to develop new industries and agricultural products. The Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration has set up model farms, where farmers are being taught the basic principles of modern farming; the insular agriculture experimental stations are developing new crops for the island, with the co-operation of the Federal Station at Mayaguez and the Puerto Rico Development Company is charged with setting up new industries, utilizing the natural resources at hand.

During the sugar season, along every country road a jibaro can be seen bending to the task of cutting the tall ripe cane along the countryside.
Fuzzy arrows stand tall on the ripened sugar cane that will soon be felled with the swish of a machete. All the sugar cane on the island is cut by machete-swinging jibaros who earn little from this highly seasonal occupation. Although sugar is the island's number one industry, it still employs only about seven percent of the total labor force of the island. Most of the slave labor in the colonial days was used in the production of sugar which was then not the first industry but the third, with coffee first and tobacco second. It was not until American occupation that the island turned to sugar as its main export crop. All of the land given over to the growing of ginger in the colonial days are now cane fields. Ginger and other spices were once an incentive for exploration. Columbus was looking for a route to India where he could get oriental spices, when he discovered the islands.

Insular Government revenue from the manufacture of rum is greater than all other incomes combined.

Little manpower is needed in a sugar mill which processes the cane with electrically driven machinery.
With their ox carts moving along at a crawling pace, jibaros cut and load cane in the same manner it has been done since Columbus first introduced sugar cane into the island. Cane fields once were grazing lands for cattle, raising of which was a lucrative industry before demand for sugar made cane planting more profitable for the early colonizers. Sugar cane is a simple crop to grow on the island and resists most insects which plague other plants.

Oxen, the island's principal beast of burden, are directed by a long pole used as a goad.
Domestic household industry, like weaving mats and baskets, provides the meager and only incomes to many families who dwell in the thatched bohios. Delicately fine needle work is also done by Puerto Rican women who have established a large market for their products in New York. New York importers supply the needle workers with materials and patterns and pay them for their labor. An expert needle worker earns little under this system. At one time the needle work industry, centered around Mayaguez, was the island's second largest. A large portion of needle work for sale in island shops has been sent back from New York as the Continental importers control the sale of the workers' products.

Modern shops have sprung up along old city streets. Featuring American made products, the shops attempt to duplicate displays, styles and merchandising found on the continent. Prices are similar.

A country shopkeeper has a veritable storehouse of assorted wares stacked tightly along the
Stemming from the days when the Spanish grandeers were the best educated and the law makers, the study of law in Puerto Rico is considered the natural step from cultural education. Hence, there are a great many attorneys at law. The bilingual condition on the island adds a little complexity to the practice of law. The Insular court proceedings are conducted in Spanish while the Federal court conducts its sessions in English. In the Insular Legislature proceedings are theoretically bilingual although in practice the Spanish language is employed. An attorney, therefore must be an accomplished linguist to practice law proficiently on the island. Some continental attorneys practice law here, too.

Shelves. Everything from rum to rice can be purchased. Many small stores in the hills are shacks with a few rough shelves.

Piragua, scraped ice doped with a water-thin syrup of the customer's choosing, is sold along city streets throughout the island. The more enterprising vendors have dozens of assorted syrup flavors.
From November to February, coffee pickers clamber about the winding trails on the coffee plantations nestled in the valleys and on the rugged mountain sides that spread through the central Puerto Rican district. They pick an average of thirty pounds of coffee per day and are paid five cents per pound for their arduous labor. The coffee grows on slender, tenuous trees, hidden by the guama and guava trees planted there to protect the delicate beans from heavy winds, heavy rains or scorching sunlight. The pickers pluck the berries singly, careful not to strip the branches, for only ripe red berries can produce arábigo, the highest grade of Puerto Rican coffee.

The pickers take their coffee to the plantation house where it is weighed. The coffee is then shovelled into a machine which strips the outer pod from the beans and sifts them into a washing system. Then follows the most important step of the process of producing rich coffee—drying. The plantation workers spread the beans out on the cement yard of the plantation and constantly turn them over to enable them to dry thoroughly. At the slightest hint of rain they are removed indoors. During the final stages of the drying process they are placed on burlap which can easily be rolled into sacks when rain threatens. Rain turns the coffee into black, shrivelled beans.
The constant turning of the beans is a hard, monotonous task, for they must be turned so that they will dry evenly; and whenever the sun appears, workers plod over the coffee and work it over with a large wooden rake. The coffee beans are dried for an average of six hours a day for six days, and each day they must be laboriously gathered up and spread on the floor of the storage rooms. When they have been thoroughly dried, the workmen shovel them into one hundred pound sacks. At this time they are tasteless, but roasting and grinding at the coffee centrals brings out the flavor and aroma of the rich coffee. Last year approximately thirty thousand persons were engaged in the coffee industry. At one time, coffee was the prime product of Puerto Rico, being introduced from Cuba in the eighteenth century. It has had a hard time since the ruinous San Ciriaco hurricane at the end of the last century which destroyed the island's entire coffee crop.
Fruits and vegetables are sold in the market places or along the streets from pushcarts. Most of the produce has been picked by the vendor who sells it. Prices for fruits are reasonable in that they are grown on the island.

In the morning, country people crowd into the towns to do their shopping. Markets are centers of activity.

Barber shop customers gaze intently at the mirror to see what is going on behind them outside the shop.
Mangoes, a favorite island fruit, come in many varieties of tastes and colors; they may be purchased from the street vendors.

Only a small quantity of Puerto Rico's sixteen million dollar yearly tobacco crop is fully processed and retained for domestic use.

Most of the shoes sold on the island are imported but many village shops make both sandals and shoes.
The fruit vendor, who stands beside his cart peeling oranges by the hour, is found in every town. Peeled oranges are sold as a confection and just as cheaply, for even when they are peeled, they sell for one or two for a penny.
Fishing, a sport for some, is the only means of a livelihood for many and the waters surrounding the island offer bountiful catches throughout the year. All fishing is done with nets of sundry sizes and shapes from row boats or small, crude sailboats. The fish that is caught is marketed locally by the fishermen. Each morning as the sun comes up, the beaches are lined with fishermen arranging and repairing their nets. As the tide starts out, they push their boats into the surf and prepare for the day's catch. They throw their nets with rare skill and sense the change of the tides. Although fish is a large part of the Puerto Rico diet, most of it is imported in the form of dried food.
• Barefoot natives must start out early in the morning to bring a ripe bunch of bananas to the village market.

• Lottery ticket peddlers take a brief respite from their selling of chances for the big prizes to be drawn.
Bags of potatoes are unloaded from a transport at a wharf in San Juan. Potatoes are one of the numerous food items imported in large quantities.

The non-mechanized street cleaner makes little progress in keeping the streets clean in that they are littered soon after he has removed the trash and dirt.

Children work in the coconut groves to pick the tropical fruit and remove the fibrous husks. The boy's beast of burden is typical of the work horses on the island, which are usually spindly, knotty-legged animals whose ribs protrude along their thin sides. They are overworked and underfed and receive little care. A horse laden with heavy packs and carrying a man is a common sight along any road. The sad-eyed animals carry surprisingly heavy weights.
A pushcart vendor of piragua takes up his place on MacArthur Street, which, unlike its name, is hundreds of years old. The money such vendors make from the sales of scraped ice often is the only income they have for support of families of many children. The crude carts are made of scrap lumber and old wheels, held together with bits of rusted wire.
As with many another factor in Puerto Rican life, the island's recreational picture is a blend of Spanish and American.

The plazas still form the center of attraction for many of the people, and here each night, and particularly during the week-end, the crowds gather and parade about. And around them all are the "clubs," which do a brisk trade over a bar in the American manner. Most children's games have Spanish origins, although some seem to have international beginnings, as for example, la gallina ciega, or blind man's bluff, and la cuica, skipping rope. They fly kites, too, but Spanish children make a contest of it in which "paper eagles" with a piece of glass tied to their tails attack the smaller, unarmed kites.

Oldest and most typical of the Puerto Rican sports is cock fighting and, during the season, every gallería is jampacked with a seething mob of screaming followers, who bet and counter-bet to cover possible loss on the part of their favorite. The cocks are skillfully trained and highly bred and many a jibaro will feed his bird on fresh eggs, while he himself goes without. Horse racing stems from the first races ever held on the island, Las Carreras de San Juan, which took place in the early eighteenth century on Cristo Street in what is now downtown San Juan. Then as now, seemingly, the sport of kings attracted a wide and almost hysterical following, for the sport caused such a frenzy among the people in the middle of the last century that the governor was forced to abolish it.

Since the American occupation, however, continental sports have come to the fore. Boxing got its biggest boost when a native Puerto Rican, Sixto Escobar, won the bantamweight championship of the world and defended his crown in a bout refereed by Jack Dempsey. For his part in bringing international sports fame to the island, a modern baseball stadium was named after him in San Juan, and here teams from the larger cities compete in a winter league. Several Puerto Rican players, among them, Luis Olmo and Hiram Bithorn, have made good in the major leagues. Basketball crowds resemble their counterparts in the States in their enthusiasm, and several teams have made excursions to the States to play top college teams there.

Although American types of entertainment and sport have taken strong hold in the island, the Spanish influence still remains, especially in the dance.
Each city, large and small, in Puerto Rico has its plaza, which serves as
a playground for children, a promenade for the girls and a gossip exchange
for men and women of all ages. In smaller towns it is the focal point of the
community's social activities. This plaza in San Juan is known as the Plaza
de Colon, or as it was originally called, the Plaza de Santiago. It was built
to commemorate Christopher Columbus' discovery of the island during his
second voyage in 1493, and the statue of the intrepid Admiral of the Ocean
Seas surmounts the whole plaza. It was dedicated in 1893 on the four hun-
dredth anniversary of his discovery of the island. Around the monument
are bronze tablets which depict different episodes in the Admiral's life. The
plaza serves, in a way, to show the contrasts in Puerto Rican life, for in
addition to serving as a social gathering place, one side of it has a taxi stand,
and around it the many buses (at first glance it seems everyone in San Juan
owns a "guagua") swirl about it, unloading and loading their passengers.
And the shoe-shine boys, the beggars and the peddlers swarm through it.
Bars, nightclubs and restaurants abound in Puerto Rico, from the dingy hole in the wall or roadside rum shack to the more ornate, Americanized type.

Not all plazas in Puerto Rican cities and towns are as beautiful as the shaded, landscaped plaza in Ponce.

Many nightclubs feature orchestras, playing both Latin American music—the rhumba, samba or bolero—as well as the products of Tin Pan Alley.

The larger and more modern nightclubs feature entertainment, often by imported entertainers from Cuba.
Yachting has become a most popular sport in Puerto Rico, particularly among the Americans, and in San Juan a yacht club has been built and is patronized widely among the boating enthusiasts. It is located off the Condado Lagoon, at the entrance of the Guillermo Esteves Bridge over the San Antonio Channel, and here the boats tie up within sight of Isla Grande, the location of the Naval Air Station. Fishing is also prime sport in Puerto Rico and its nearby waters abound in sporting fish, such as man-killing sharks and ferocious barracuda. Three hundred other species are found in these waters.
The island is noted for its beaches and one of the most popular is the Escambron beach in San Juan.

Beaches patronized by the public are located behind protective reefs which keep out sharks and barracuda.
The handlers place the birds down in the center of the ring. They dart toward each other, necks outstretched. Suddenly, one of them leaps in the air and rakes downward, drawing blood from his opponent’s breast. The gallery becomes a bedlam, as the betting starts like a chant that becomes a roar as one bird gains the upper hand over the other. Spectators, their fingers outstretched indicating the odds, bet with people across the ring.
• Indicative of American influence on the island are the many movie houses, which feature Hollywood productions with Spanish titles, or a dubbed-in Spanish sound track. Mexican-made Spanish films are popular among the natives.

• Oldest theater on the island is the Teatro Tapia, built in the early part of the last century as a cultural center. It served as an auditorium, concert hall and theater. It now houses municipal offices but features all-Spanish stage productions.
Cockfighting is Puerto Rico's most popular sport and the islanders follow their favorites with an enthusiasm bordering on hysteria. The birds fight until one of them is dead or both so disabled as to be unable to continue. When a time limit has been reached or when the birds are both blinded, the umpire places a white flag between the cocks to signify the beginning of another cario, or "round," as we know it.

Baseball is the most widely-followed American sports importation and sandlot games are in progress at most any time of the day.

Steel spurs are not permitted in Puerto Rican cockfighting, but the birds do plenty of damage as they leap up and rake their toe.
Munez Rivera park is the center of sports activities in San Juan and here sports of all kinds may be seen in progress at all times.

Cocks are handled and cared for as though they were champion boxers. During the intermissions between rounds, the battered birds are refreshed with a blast of cold water; sometimes the handler will blow into its mouth to rid it of blood and feathers. Cock-fighting was banned by the Americans upon their occupation of the island. The ban was removed, however, about twelve years ago and now most communities of any size have their galleria, which, during the season, becomes a hot-bed of betting enthusiasm. Bets are made upon favorites and the odds change as the fight progresses and one bird gets the upper hand of the other. If the opponent makes a comeback, however, many of the bettors will change over and bet against their favorite battler to cover a possible loss.
The "caterpillar" at Munez Rivera park evokes as much enthusiasm on the part of the customers as it does at any fair in the States. Traveling carnivals set up at most of the larger island centers. The concessions at the San Juan park, however, are permanent and run on a seven-day schedule.

The crowds come daily to the park in San Juan and ride the ferris wheels and carousels and try their luck at penny-ante betting games. Carnivals are popular centers of amusements wherever they set up.

The horses generally seen down country roads and along the streets are thin creatures, but the island is a paradise for riding enthusiasts. Horse racing is widely followed during a season that centers around the picturesque capital city of San Juan.
Some communities maintain playgrounds for children, and in San Juan the Munez Rivera park serves this purpose. The well-equipped playground of swings and slides is most popular among the smaller children. The park is filled with tropical flowers, plants and trees and maintains a museum of natural history in the old Polverin, a building constructed during the sixteenth century. The park provides basketball courts and baseball and softball diamonds for the Puerto Ricans, who are avid sports enthusiasts.
The most popular sports importation from the United States is baseball and it is followed avidly by fans and players alike. Aside from a winter professional league, there are many municipal leagues, and sandlot games are as numerous in many communities as they are on the Continent.
And social activities

- Spanish and American influences are interwoven into the tapestry of Puerto Rican customs and practices. From the beginning, as in all Catholic colonies, the church played a dominant role, and Puerto Rico might well be called the cradle of Christianity in the New World, for the first church was established shortly after Ponce de León arrived to colonize the island, less than twenty years after Columbus' first voyage to the Western Hemisphere.

For the first two hundred years, education consisted in the teaching of Christian doctrine, grammar and the arts, and classes were held only in San Juan, San Germán, Coamo and Arecibo. It is estimated that not more than fifteen percent of the population were literate at the time of the American occupation. Following the occupation, free education for all Puerto Ricans between the ages of six and eighteen years of age was established; but even by the late nineteen-thirties, although great strides had been made, fewer than two hundred and fifty thousand of the total school population of more than six hundred thousand pupils attended schools, and many of these for only half-day periods. The situation is clouded by the language problem. At present, in the grade schools, the percentage of instruction given in English and Spanish is about equal; in the secondary and higher education systems, English is treated as the sole medium of instruction, with Spanish taught as a special subject.

The focal point of higher education is at the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras, where there is a college of arts and sciences and colleges of law and pharmacy. The college of agriculture and mechanical arts is located at Mayaguez.

The Roman Catholic church, until the American occupation, was the sole church established on the island, with the exception of an Anglican church at Ponce, allowed under a Spanish republican government. Many other denominations were established, however, after the Americans took over.

For almost four hundred years, Spain ruled Puerto Rico as a colony and the people had had no voice in their government, but shortly before the American occupation, Puerto Rico was granted an autonomous government. At present, the government of Puerto Rico is made up of a Legislature, composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives, whose laws are subject to the veto of the Governor, appointed by the President of the United States.

- The future generations in Puerto Rico have the foundations, the institutions of school and church, upon which to better island's condition.
The Capitol of Puerto Rico has housed the Legislature and the Supreme Court for twenty years. Architecturally, the building was partially based on the Library of Columbia University. The Capitol faces the Atlantic and can be seen for many miles at sea by passengers on approaching ships.

The School of Tropical Medicine which operates as a semi-autonomous unit of the University of Puerto Rico studies the cause and prevention of diseases peculiar to tropical climates and experiments on the influence of the tropics on all diseases. Great strides are being made along this line.
A crystal pool is formed by the damming of a mountain brook in the Caribbean National Forest at the foot of El Yunque peak, an anvil-shaped mountain that was once considered the tallest on the island. The forest lands in Puerto Rico, which abound in hundreds of varieties of tropical foliage, once belonged to the Spanish crown. They were ceded to the United States as part of the terms of the treaty which ended the Spanish-American War. The forest regions are areas of heavy rainfall which is absorbed by the forest floor. The hardwood forest helps prevent floods which could easily become disastrous were there no way for control of heavy rains.
Pupils in a school at San Juan are much like school children anywhere in the United States. The amount of English to be taught in the schools has been and remains a problem for each new school administration.

Students at the University of Puerto Rico study courses in both the Spanish and English languages. For more than forty years the university has maintained the position as center of culture on the island.

The Federal Agricultural Experiment Station at Mayaguez is purported to have the largest collection of tropical plants in the Western Hemisphere. The experiments with these tropical plants are carried out for the U. S. Department of Agriculture. By maintaining an experimental station in Puerto Rico, the botanists can take advantage of the twelve-month growing season. Besides fruits and vegetables, experiments are now being conducted with drug plants on the island.
The clock tower on the Administration Building is a landmark which identifies the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras. The building is of Spanish Renaissance design and is in the center of the University campus.
Two boys from the Insular Orphan Asylum call out the winning numbers in Puerto Rico's legalized lottery which provides a considerable revenue to the Insular Government each year. The net income from the lottery is divided among agencies that provide for the destitute and for hospitalization. More than half of the lottery receipts is paid out in cash prizes to the holders of the lucky combinations.

The modern ten-story building of Banco Popular in San Juan has a banking room of marble and bronze.
Normandie Hotel, one of Puerto Rico's most modern hotels and in the capital city, was designed after the French luxury liner of similar name. In the hotel, what would be the outer sides of the luxury liner, make up the one hundred and sixty rooms. The center of the boat-shaped building is open to the sky with a patio in the middle. The rooms overlook the patio in which is an outdoor, tile swimming pool. Atop the building's seven floors is a terrace. The ten-year-old hotel is part of the answer to the need for modern hotel facilities for the island's tourists. Adequate lodging facilities have been the greatest problem in attracting tourists to the island which is the only soil of United States visited by Columbus.

The fire station at the plaza in Ponce is over 60 years old and still maintains its rainbow colors.

The Casino of Puerto Rico, once a fashionable social center, was taken over by the USO for servicemen.
The Cathedral of San Juan Bautista had a humble beginning in a palm-thatched hut more than four centuries ago. The remains of Ponce de Leon are in a tomb in the south transept of the Cathedral, having been removed from their original resting place, San Jose Church, on the four hundredth anniversary of the Spanish explorer's coming to the island of Puerto Rico.
Youths kneel before the altar of Our Lady of Divine Providence in the Cathedral at San Juan. The golden altar and figure, in the north transept, were attended by solemn ceremonies at their erection. The main altar of the Cathedral is of white marble and has figures of Saint Paul, Saint Peter and The Blessed Virgin. Inhabitants of Puerto Rico are predominantly Catholic.
CREDITS

Planning a book between VE and VJ days and seeing it through production after the surrender of Japan, when everyone's thoughts are of the States and home, do not make ideal situations for publishing a book, particularly when copy and photographic materials are prepared in Puerto Rico and the printing is accomplished in Miami, Fla., a thousand miles away.

We feel, however, that we have accomplished our purpose successfully: presenting in words and pictures the island of Puerto Rico as it has impressed continental soldiers stationed here during the past few years. In doing so, we have presented the good with the bad, and, at the same time, refused to become involved in factions nor publish a "chamber of commerce" tourist booklet. Because of a limited amount of time, with personnel departing practically every week, many desired pictures are not included. We feel that the material contained, however, presents a frank and just picture of Puerto Rico, its history, people, customs and occupations.

With the exception of the three full color plates, in the physical, people and map sections, by S/Sgt. Ray J. Koski of Headquarters Antilles Department, San Juan, the entire book—cover, pictures, copy and layouts—was designed, planned and produced exclusively by personnel of the Public Relations and Base Photo sections of Borinquen Field. S/Sgt. John Pitman, non-commissioned officer in charge in Public Relations, and Cpl. Allen R. Letwin handled the copy and cutlines and other written material, while S/Sgt. William J. Pecau planned the layouts and designed the cover, as well as preparing other art material. In preparation of the layouts he was assisted by S/Sgt. James A. Taylor, S/Sgt. George Kirwin, Sgt. Dan H. Vance and Cpl. Virgil Kennedy.


S/Sgt. William H. Holst, whose full color paintings appear in the occupations and recreation sections, also contributed numerous smaller sketches appearing throughout the book. He also gave valuable advice and assistance in planning the general theme and appearance of the book.

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