

## THE SUMMER OF '37

Eugene V. Mohr

Eugene V. Mohr came to the University of Pennsylvania in 1937 with a BA and an MA from Columbia University. In 1934 he completed a PhD in English from 1934 to 1937 as Director of English and Literature. He established the undergraduate and graduate programs in English at later American University's new metropolitan campus in 1970. He returned to UPR as first English Department Coordinator and later served as Acting Director of the department. Since 1962 he has served as consultant to the College Board. He worked from 1958 to 1964 and is now Chair Emeritus for the American Studies Program. His publications include *From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (1962) and *From the Renaissance to the Modern World* (1964). He is also the author of *The English Language in America* (1968) and *The English Language in America: A History* (1970). He is currently working on a book on the history of the English language in America.

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### Introductory Note

The English Department seminar-library bears the official name Lewis C. Richardson Seminar Room. The name-giver smiles from a portrait on the wall over the catalogue drawers, the university tower in the photo background. A stone plaque under it reads, "Lewis C. Richardson, 1902-1967; Professor of English, 1928-1967."

I have heard much about Professor Richardson but joined the department too late to have met him, even though at this point in history I figure among the senior professors in it. For younger members of the department he is just a portrait and a plaque on the wall and a name for the seminar room. At some time in the not so distant future, Professor Richardson would become nothing more than a name, a photo, a vital statistic.

As director of the seminar room, I asked Dr. Eugene Mohr to write up a brief account of Richardson's life, of the founding of the seminar room, and why it was named after him. Dr. Mohr retired a few years ago after thirty years in the English Department; he was a friend as well as colleague of Richardson and a participant in the institution of the departmental MA program and the seminar room. I thought to have a couple of copies of Dr. Mohr's account bound and shelved in the seminar room in order to fix Professor Richardson in departmental history and to satisfy future curiosities.

Dr. Mohr took on the task with alacrity, aware even more than I of time passing and history vanishing. He decided to interview retired professors who knew and worked with Richardson from the 1920's on. Dr. Mohr came up with a mine of anecdotes, letters, diaries, documents, and articles, many of which bear on the history of Puerto Rico and the

University as well as on Professor Richardson and his colleagues.

The Richardson Seminar Room will maintain on file copies of all these materials and will endeavor to have some of them published. They will be useful to graduate students interested in editing or researching original sources, and they offer good reading to anyone who might want to know something about the backgrounds of the English Department.

Dr. Mohr used his collection to put together the following article on a series of events which took place fifty years ago and remain as meaningful today as they were then.

Following the article, Dr. Mohr has written biographical sketches of the four professors involved in the historical incident.

Thomas Noel

The atmosphere of social and political repression which came to a head in the Ponce Massacre of Palm Sunday, 1937, was also manifested, less dramatically, at the University of Puerto Rico. A few months after the Massacre, the Board of Trustees (Junta de Síndicos -the University's governing body at the time) refused, just three weeks before classes were scheduled to begin, to confirm the appointments of four members of the Río Piedras faculty to teach in the Summer School, which then operated under its own administration. The refusal was completely unexpected, since the appointments had been recommended by department chairmen, by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, by the Director of the Summer School, and by the Chancellor. The four faculty members affected sent the Board a letter requesting a reconsideration and cautiously expressing doubt as to the ostensible reason for the Board's decision:

Visitamos al Sr. Canciller esta mañana para solicitar una explicación de lo sucedido. Aunque nos dijo que no se sentía en libertad de comunicarnos cuanto había ocurrido en la Junta de Síndicos en torno a nuestros nombramientos, nos indicó que en la reunión de referencia se había discutido la conveniencia de cambiar la política establecida tocante a los nombramientos de verano. Agregó que dentro de la nueva política esbozada se alternaría a los diversos catedráticos del curso regular de suerte que todos tuviesen igual oportunidad en el trabajo adicional que implican las clases de verano. Indicó que posiblemente esta nueva política

habría influido en vuestro ánimo al tomar el acuerdo mencionado.<sup>1</sup>

The letter goes on to question, tactfully, the fairness of changing the established policy after all the recommendations for appointment had been made and after plans for the summer and the following year had been drawn up on the assumption that the recommendations would be approved, as they always had been in the past and as they were in 1937, with the exception of the four cases under consideration. The writers then return to the question of the Board's motivation:

Ignoramos si alguna otra razón que aquella indicada por el Dr. Soto [el Canciller] y que ya hemos discutido ha pesado en vosotros al tomar este acuerdo. Si existen otros fundamentos, o si nuestra argumentación ante el fundamento indicado no os satisface, respetuosamente solicitamos que se nos llame, que se nos interroge y que se nos oiga antes de dar por terminado este caso.

The letter is dated 10 June 1937 and signed by George R. Warrek, Frederic N. Sackett, Lewis C. Richardson, and Jaime Benítez, the first three being members of the English Department. On the same date Richardson, Sackett, and Warrek drafted a formal request for an investigation into certain rumors that were circulating about them and which the Chancellor had mentioned in their interview with him, without admitting that such rumors might have influenced the Board's decision:

Deseamos hacer constar que el Sr. Canciller durante nuestra entrevista con él manifestó que circulaban rumores perjudiciales acerca del Sr. Richardson, aunque hizo la salvedad de que no debería creerse que el o esa Honorable Junta diera fé a tales rumores. Conocemos la fuente de donde provienen esos rumores y sabemos

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, copies of documents cited in this study are part of the Lewis C. Richardson Seminar Room Project, a collection of material relating to the English Department between 1928 and 1967. Some of the documents are written in a second language, and some were produced on typewriters that lacked Spanish accents; under these circumstances minor irregularities of orthography and grammar are to be expected and will not be noted.

Most of the undocumented information was obtained from interviews with Angelita Richardson, Frederic and Helen Sackett, George and Florence Warrek, and William Sinz, who were generous with their time and their memories.

que ella vincula conjuntamente con el Sr. Richardson a los otros dos subscriptores de esta carta.<sup>2</sup>

The source of the rumors was, in fact, a colleague from the English department, which explains why Benítez did not sign the investigation request; the rumors, spread among colleagues and students, ranged from denial of professional competence to the assertion that "members of the Eng. Dept. were receiving Moscow gold payment for propaganda both inside and outside the classroom."<sup>3</sup> Richardson, Sackett, and Warrek had made repeated efforts during the previous semester to have this defamation campaign investigated, but the University Administration refused their petition on the ground that "you have suffered no tangible damage to your academic reputations from the alleged remarks."<sup>4</sup> This inadequate, almost irrelevant response suggests that an Administration bias against the three men may well have antedated the intradepartmental situation they were complaining about. And given the temper of the time, the publicly expressed social and political views of the group could not fail to arouse antagonism in high places. These views are indicated in the June 12 letter that Richardson wrote to Arthur Garfield Hays, head of the Commission of Inquiry of the American Civil Liberties Union which had earlier been in Puerto Rico to hold hearings on the Ponce Massacre and other alleged abuses of civil rights on the island:

All the teachers concerned were members of Frente Unido de Acción Social, formed slightly before the announcement of the Tydings Bill. All of us also were members of Frente Unido Puertorriqueño, formed for the purpose of independence propaganda shortly after the Tydings Bill was announced. Sackett spoke once over the radio in favor of independence, and his speech was printed in *La Palabra*.... Warrek spoke once over the radio in favor of independence, but his address was not reprinted. Richardson spoke over the radio, and his speech was printed in *La Palabra*. He

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<sup>2</sup> The document is titled "Solicitud de Investigación" and is apparently addressed to "las autoridades universitarias correspondientes" referred to in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Richardson to Arthur Garfield Hays, 12 June 1937.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Frederick O. Bissel, Chairman of English, to Richardson, Warrek, and Sackett, as quoted in the letter identified in note 3.

also made a number of public speeches in open air meetings in San Juan and other parts of the island....

Benítez spoke over the radio, in public meetings, and wrote in the press.

Since the Board of Trustees issued the ruling forbidding University professors to take part in political activities, none of the men concerned has come out in any public manifestation of his political views.

The ruling just referred to is a resolution of the Board of Trustees dated 26 September 1936, which reads in part as follows:

Art. 1. Every professor of the University of Puerto Rico will enjoy absolute academic freedom; but no Faculty member or employee of this University will be allowed to use the advantages of their positions, to carry on political or religious propaganda.

Art. 2. The use of this position for political propaganda will be understood:

.....  
c- Any faculty member of the University of Puerto Rico who orally or by writing made propaganda in favor of any determined political party.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most objectionable section of the resolution is the highly elastic Article 4, which reads, "Any professor, employee or administrative authority of the University of Puerto Rico cannot engage in any work or activity which may endanger his university work, or which may be incompatible with his duties."<sup>6</sup> The Hays Commission condemned the Board of Trustees' resolution in its *Report* of 22 May 1937: "The Regulation of the University of Puerto Rico, passed September 26, 1936, is designed to curb academic freedom and should be cancelled."<sup>7</sup>

Richardson, Sackett, Warrek, and Benítez were all members of the Puerto Rico Civil Liberties Union and took an active

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Arthur Garfield Hays, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Civil Rights in Puerto Rico*. (n.p.: American Civil Liberties Union, 22 May 1937), pp. 55-56.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Hays Commission *Report*, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Hays Commission *Report*, p. 62.

part in the Commission's hearings on academic freedom at the University, a participation which must have done little to ingratiate them with the Board of Trustees. Richardson was also present at the hearings to report what he considered a violation of his civil rights at the Department of Education where, because of his recognized competence in his profession, he had been invited to serve as consultant for the English program. The Hays Commission *Report* mentions the incident as a danger signal and a portent:

There was little evidence that the Commissioner of Education of the Government, or the University, has discriminated against teachers to the point of actually penalizing them because of their views. Yet Professor Lewis C. Richardson was advised to take a transfer from the Department of Education to the University as his views on Puerto Rican independence might, according to the Commissioner, prejudice him in the former Department. Professor Richardson, when he went to the University, was then faced with the above regulation [of 26 September 1936] which implies that his political views and activities may result in penalization.<sup>8</sup>

In point of fact, however, the regulation was never referred to when Richardson and his three colleagues were denied Summer School contracts less than a month after the Hays Commission *Report* was issued. Nor were their political and social views directly spoken of, even though they had long been controversial both on campus and off.

In view of the political structures and social powers operating within Puerto Rico at the time, it can hardly have been a coincidence that three of the four teachers singled out for wrist-slapping that summer were continentals. Puerto Ricans advocating independence and/or more equitable distribution of property might be thought objectionable, but they could hardly have been considered unnatural or subject to the sort of anger and epithet-slinging that Warrek, Sackett, and Richardson served as targets for, particularly among continentals who felt quite comfortable with the status quo. The colleague who spread the rumors mentioned above felt that "R[ichardson] deserved the contempt of all continental Americans for his disloyalty towards the United States in making a common

<sup>8</sup> Hays Commission *Report*, p. 58.

cause with those who were working for the independence of P.R.<sup>9</sup> Another continental, Robert A. Hall, Jr., taught in the Foreign Language Department from 1937 to 1939 and recorded in a diary he kept with his wife attitudes which have a familiar ring. Warrek is described as "a stick-in-the-mud Communist, with his mind so made up about class-struggle and the like that he spouts it on any occasion without the least regard to its applicability to his own circumstances of life and action."<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere a social group including the Warreks, the Richardsons, and the Sacketts are dismissed as "the communist gang."<sup>11</sup> Years later Hall wrote an autobiography which repeats these perceptions of the English Department:

On the one side were the arch-conservatives, including a rather twerpy character named Lewis A. ("Non-Communist") Richardson. On the other were the various men whom I had met on the first day or so, as described earlier: Sackett, Segall and Lewis C. ("Communist") Richardson. This clique, of rather parlor-pink persuasion, included also Bill Sinz and a chap of Hungarian origin, George Warrek.... Lewis C. Richardson, like a number of other Puerto Rican leftists, was strongly sympathetic to the Nationalists, who were then raging violently.<sup>12</sup>

There is no evidence that Richardson, Sackett, or Warrek belonged to any political groups except those named in Richardson's June 12 letter to Arthur Garfield Hays. They did believe in socialism and independence as possible cures for the desperate social and political ills plaguing Puerto Rico in the middle of the Depression. Highly principled young men, they had identified themselves with the island and its people to a degree that is perhaps no longer possible. They suffered in the presence of a poverty more crippling than they had ever witnessed, product of a system which sacrificed the welfare of the great majority to the greed of an economic oligarchy that included local entrepreneurs and stateside investors. Raised in the strong New England traditions of self-government, they

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Richardson to Hays, 12 June 1937.

<sup>10</sup> Frances Adkins Hall and Robert A. Hall, Jr., *Puerto Rican Journal* (1937-1939), TS, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Hall and Hall, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Hall, Jr., *It's Fun to Be Human—Or Is It?*, TS, p. 215.

found themselves governed not by their elected officials, but ultimately by the Department of Interior in Washington.<sup>13</sup> And they saw that the colonial government and the exploitative economic system worked hand in hand to deprive their fellow citizens of material needs and spiritual dignity. Under such circumstances socialism and independence constituted, within the political options then available, the only liberal position open to them. Not until Luis Muñoz Marín founded the Popular Party in 1938 did an alternative position become feasible for them.

Continentalists were certainly not the only ones angered by the ideas and activities of Benítez, Warrek, Sackett, and Richardson. Independence and socialism were dirty words to anyone in the establishment, including University officials. Moreover, there is some evidence that the feeling against the four men in June of 1937 was fueled not only by their ideologies but also by their participation in the Hays Commission hearings on academic freedom some months earlier. A week after their summer contracts were denied, a young woman of a prominent island family wrote a letter of protest to Hays; it is an interesting document because it shows that the University community understood, even though the University refused to admit, the reasons behind the Board of Trustees' decision.

Altho I am not in complete agreement with the ideas of these gentlemen, who, since their participation in your committee, have been labeled as Communists and Nationalists (they couldn't quite label the three Americans Nationalists, so chose the next worse, I imagine), I decided to help them if I could, both because the injustice of the thing in itself was appalling and because from firsthand knowledge I knew the absurdity of these charges.

As part of her efforts to help out, the writer got in touch with Acting Governor Menéndez Ramos by phone and explained why she felt that the Board of Trustees' decision should be reversed.

<sup>13</sup> At that time the President appointed the Governor, the Secretary of Education, and other key officials on the island. The locally elected legislature could override a veto from La Fortaleza, but the legislature could be overruled by a decision from Washington.

He, however, was quite definite in his opinion, definite enough to shock both myself and Mr. Ellis, who was listening in, since the voice of Menendez Ramos is quite loud and clear over the phone. In substance, he stated that the ability of the men had nothing to do with the case, that these men and especially Richardson were dangerous reds; that he didn't care if they were as "brilliant as Confucius"; he was out to eliminate every Nationalist and Communist on the island; that he was now only making his plans, but that as soon as he was ready, he would strike and tell the whole world why—investigation or no investigation. When I expressed surprise at his self-asserted right to fire professors for political opinions, he reasserted that it was all quite legal, and, as a matter of fact, quite the custom in state universities on the continent.

Although not immediately relevant to the present study, the following quotation from the same letter gives an extraordinarily good feeling of the social repressions that governed Puerto Rican society at the time:

I was and am willing, as is Mr. Ellis, to sign affidavits attesting to the telephone conversation. However, I should like to explain my situation to you and allow you to decide whether the risk entailed for me is greater or not than the possible help that it would afford those men. I think that my position here would become untenable if such affidavits or even this letter were made public. These gentlemen, as I have stated, are of my own social group, all closely associated with my family. They could easily cause me not only social embarrassment but serious financial difficulties. Moreover, if the news were to reach my ex-husband,... I am sure from what I know of his ideas, that he might very likely start court proceedings to deprive me of the custody of my two children.

The courage of that young woman in writing as she did under those circumstances compels esteem and admiration. The anonymity she desired, though unimportant at this distance in time, will here be respected.

Also raised in the Hays Commission *Report* was the question of which should be the language of instruction in the public schools. Today it seems so obvious that Spanish should be the language of instruction in all classes except English in both secondary and elementary schools that it is surprising to learn that this policy goes back only to 1949. Before that a variety of language combinations had been tried, including

perverse imposition of English as the language of instruction at all levels for all subjects except Spanish. Illogically but perhaps inevitably, the language of instruction issue was seen to reflect status positions; language was political statement, and education grew strident with political passion.

Richardson was one of the earliest and most effective spokesmen for the use of the vernacular in teaching all subjects except English. A letter of his that appeared in *El Mundo* on 14 September 1934 states the position he was to defend for the next fifteen years and reveals his characteristic insistence on evaluating the language issue in an educational rather than political framework:

La eliminación del inglés como *medio de enseñanza* en las escuelas elementales representa un paso de avance en nuestro sistema escolar. Pero no estoy de acuerdo ni con los que favorecen ni con los que se oponen a este cambio a base de la vieja fórmula *inglés vs. español*. Para mí el problema envuelve dos alternativas: eficiencia o ineficiencia en la enseñanza del español, del inglés y de las otras asignaturas.

Richardson and his colleagues, supported by a group of public school teachers, defended this position at the Hays Commission hearings mentioned earlier, and the position was endorsed in the Commission's *Report*. If the endorsement was a victory, it was won at great cost: three of the public school teachers who testified at the hearings were subsequently dismissed.<sup>14</sup> Inés M. de Muñoz Marín recalls the period in a letter of condolence written to Mrs. Richardson shortly after her husband's untimely death in 1967.

No sabes con cuanta pena supe, al regresar hace unos días de Estados Unidos, de la muerte de mi viejo amigo y maestro y compañero de luchas en las causas liberales, tu esposo, Lewis. Me unían a él, como tu bien sabes, aquellas primeras protestas sobre la imposición del idioma inglés en las escuelas por lo que me separaron de mi puesto de maestra. El fué para mí, junto a un grupo inolvidable de amigos, sostén e inspiración en aquellos años sombríos antes del cuarenta.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Richardson to Hays, 12 June 1937.

<sup>15</sup> Dated 2 February 1967.

Whether or to what extent the Hays Commission hearings influenced the Board of Trustees' decision not to approve the Summer School appointments of Richardson, Sackett, Warrek, and Benítez is not answerable from the documents at hand. Nor is it known why, shortly before the Summer School began, the Board partially reversed itself by approving the appointments of Sackett, Warrek, and Benítez. An interview of 3 July 1937 between Sackett and Chancellor Juan B. Soto,<sup>16</sup> who served as a channel of communication between the trustees and the faculty, indicates that the motivation was political. At first Soto, obviously under constraint not to divulge what was actually said at the Board meetings, attributed the original decision to "rumors" which the University had earlier refused to investigate:

Sackett: ....You yourself have said that the Board acted on rumor and that *after* they had acted, they made some kind of an investigation and found that there was no basis for the rumor. Don't you think that was an injustice?

Soto: Well, I can't commit myself on that point. I naturally am in no position to criticize the Board of Trustees. I know that there were rumors about you people; everywhere I went I heard things about you. The Board heard them too, and they thought that it was in the best interests of the Univ. not to give you contracts for the summer. Of course, after that they changed their opinion of you and decided that there was no basis for those rumors.

As the interview progressed, however, Soto became more specific and stated with unusual frankness the structural tension between academic freedom and financial support for state universities:

Soto: Well, Mr. Sackett, you see, the Board feels that any member of the faculty who is antagonistic to the governor or the government and makes any kind of statements to that effect in public is working against the best interests of the Univ. You must remember that this is a State Univ. and that we get our money from the government. Now, that government is made up of men, not angels, and they are very likely to resent the fact that a member of

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<sup>16</sup> Shortly after the interview Sackett made the transcript from which the following quotations are taken.

the faculty is criticizing them. And that would make it hard for us to get money.<sup>17</sup>

Sackett: In that case, what you are going to have here very soon is not a University but just a place that gets money, a bunch of buildings, that's all. The trouble is, Dr. Soto, that you want to fill up the faculty with men who don't think, or if they do think, they have to think the same way the Board of Trustees and the government do.

Soto: No, not exactly that. It isn't that the members of the faculty shouldn't think; it's just that they shouldn't think about certain things....

.....  
Sackett: ....I want to warn you, Dr. Soto, and the Board of Trustees, that if this policy of repression is kept up here, you will ruin the institution. You won't have any Univ. left; nothing that you will be able to call a Univ.

Soto: Now, Mr. Sackett, you're an intelligent man. You have come down here and...

Sackett: ...taken an interest in the people of P.R. and done what I could to see that they get justice and don't starve to death....

Soto: Yes. What you should do is interest yourself in your field. Do research work. Leave conditions of this country to people outside the Univ.

This interview had been called by Soto to inform Sackett that he had been given a contract for 1937-38 and would probably get one for the following year as well, "unless you do something else to antagonize the Board."

The same option was not extended to Richardson. He had applied for a leave with pay to begin studies for a doctorate at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The leave was granted, but in a letter from the Secretary of the Board of Trustees dated 7 August 1937 he was informed that upon "recommendation of the University administration, the leave of absence was granted to you, provided that at the expiration of the academic year 1937-38 you will be definitely released of

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<sup>17</sup> The Hays Commission *Report* says of Soto, "The Commission feels that it does not exaggerate the situation in stating that the Chancellor feels that academic freedom may be inconsistent with financial support" (p. 57).



any and all obligations with the University of Puerto Rico, which will also be definitely released of any and all obligations with you."<sup>18</sup> The terms of the leave were highly irregular, since a leave with pay normally binds the recipient to a period of University service equivalent to the length of the leave. This terminal leave with pay was, in effect, a sentence of permanent exile. Soto made this perfectly clear the following spring when he answered an inquiry Richardson had sent about the possibility of teaching in the summer of 1938 and academic year 1938-39:

Under the circumstances, I am sorry to say that it seems to me evident that you have no chance of teaching at this University either this summer or during any of the succeeding academic years. I hope that you have already been able to secure a position somewhere else, inasmuch as one of the purposes in granting you the said leave of absence was to afford you an opportunity to secure work in the States while receiving a salary from this University.<sup>19</sup>

What Soto could not know while sitting thus complacently in judgment was that an idea had already been born which would, over the next three years, tear apart the tight order in which his authority flourished. Luis Muñoz Marín was already beginning to talk about his vision of a new party, liberal and compassionate in principle, which would concern itself with poverty rather than status, with freedom rather than power. And among those who listened were Inés Mendoza, Jaime Benítez, Frederic and Helen Sackett, George Warrek, William Sinz, and others who had been penalized for the expression of their ideas, for their exercise of academic freedom. For them Richardson had already become a symbol and a cause, as Soto might have realized if he read the editorial in Muñoz Marín's *La Democracia* on 23 July 1938:

El nombramiento extendido a favor del profesor Richardson, como instructor de la Universidad de John Hopkins, cierra con broche de oro nuestra semana noticiaria. Lewis Richardson vino a Puerto Rico como uno de tantos profesores.... Su defensa de la li-

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in a "Dear gang" letter Richardson wrote from Baltimore on 8 April 1938.

<sup>19</sup> See note 18.

bertad de cátedra le costó virtualmente su puesto en la Universidad.

En uso de un año de licencia con sueldo, el profesor Richardson se trasladó a Baltimore con el propósito de cursar estudios avanzados con miras al doctorado. La decisión de John Hopkins llega en momentos en que sus colegas de la Universidad, seriamente preocupados por este caso concreto de falta de libertad académica, gestionaban su reposición cerca de la junta de síndicos.

But reinstatement was not even a remote possibility as long as the same Board of Trustees held sway at the University and the same government controlled the island. For the next few years Richardson continued studying and teaching at Johns Hopkins and worked as assistant director of the *Maryland State Guide*, a federal writers' project administered by the Work Projects Administration. By Depression standards he was not doing badly, but his letters from this period echo the spiritual pain of exile: "I feel much more isolated from the world here than I ever was in Puerto Rico."<sup>20</sup> "I think you are right about my desire to get back to the island. Somehow I don't feel quite at home anywhere else."<sup>21</sup> "I feel like an animal caught in a trap."<sup>22</sup> "I feel as though I were frittering my time away playing marbles when there is man's work to be done."<sup>23</sup>

Muñoz Marín, meanwhile, was organizing the Popular Party and campaigning for the 1940 elections. At a general faculty meeting held at the University shortly before the elections, Benítez made a proposal petitioning that Richardson be recalled, and the proposal passed easily. This and the subsequent victory of the Popular Party raised the first real hope for Richardson's reinstatement. The hope would not be put to a vote, however, before the following June, and even then the outcome was uncertain, because the *Populares*, although they won the election, did not have a majority on the Board of Trustees. Despite the uncertainty, Richardson decided to turn down a job in Panama and return to Puerto Rico, come what

<sup>20</sup> "Bulletin" from Richardson for circulation among friends, 13 November 1937.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Richardson to Warrek, 15 February 1938.

<sup>22</sup> Undated letter from Richardson to Warrek.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Richardson to Warrek, 26 February 1939.

might; he made arrangements to be back before Summer School began on 23 June 1941.<sup>24</sup>

April and May were crucial months. Muñoz had appointed Vicente Géigel Polanco, Senate representative on the Board of Trustees,<sup>25</sup> to coordinate efforts to win a vote for Richardson's reinstatement. Support flowed in from the Teachers Association as well as the University faculty, for the issue was considered a matter of first importance for all members of the teaching profession. Géigel Polanco worked diligently at this commitment, which he regarded as "not his alone, but a duty and obligation of the party—the only promise the party had made to the people that was as yet unfulfilled."<sup>26</sup> When, on June 2, he made the motion—his first as a member of the Board—for reinstatement, the vote in favor was nearly unanimous; the lone dissenter was "an old-time American here" who "could never forgive you for what you did."<sup>27</sup>

The following year Benítez, after having taught at the rank of instructor for eleven years, was named Chancellor.

During the decades that followed, Jaime Benítez, George Warrek, Frederic Sackett, and Lewis C. Richardson never wavered in their commitment to Puerto Rico and the University. As citizens and educators they helped shape generations of Puerto Ricans through their example and their achievements. Not the least of these was their defense, at known risk to their livelihoods, of their right to express unpopular opinions "en aquellos años sombríos antes del cuarenta".

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Richardson to Warrek, 15 February 1941.

<sup>25</sup> The Senate and the House of Representative each had a member on the Board of Trustees.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Helen Sackett to Angelita Richardson, 1 May 1941.

<sup>27</sup> "Victory" letter from the Sacketts to the Richardsons, 3 June 1941.

## APPENDIX

The violation of academic freedom described in this article becomes more striking if one knows something about the teachers involved and their subsequent contributions to Puerto Rico and the University.

Jaime Benítez, of course, is known to all in his roles as Chancellor of the Río Piedras campus, President of the University, Resident Commissioner under the first Hernández Colón administration, and dean of Puerto Rican intellectuals for over half a century.

Lewis C. Richardson came to Puerto Rico in 1924, shortly after graduating from what is now the University of Connecticut at Storrs. For two years he taught high school English in Utuado, then was named Supervisor of Schools in Yabucoa, where he met and married Angelita Sepúlveda, a young schoolteacher who, years later, joined the University's education faculty, from which she retired some years ago.

In 1928 Richardson came to the University, where he remained for the rest of his life, serving as Director of English on three different occasions. He received an M.A. from Columbia in 1937 and completed all course work and required examinations for the Ph.D. in the four years (1937-41) he studied and taught at Johns Hopkins, where he also served as Assistant Editor of the Maryland State Guidebook under the auspices of the Work Projects Administration. When he returned to the University in 1941, he organized the Pygmalion Club for students with a special interest in English and American literature, by all reports the most successful group of its kind ever organized by the English Department. In 1943 he was named Director of the Instituto de Inglés, whose purpose was to develop programs and materials for teaching English in the public schools; he held that position until 1949, when the Instituto was transferred from the University to the Department of Education. From January to June of 1942 he wrote a very popular column for the Puerto Rico *World Journal* titled "I Like Puerto Rico," whose purpose was to give resident continentals a greater understanding and appreciation of Puerto Rico; the same purpose informed the text he wrote years later

for *Puerto Rico: Caribbean Crossroads*, published in 1947 with photographs by Charles E. Rotkin.

Among his contemporaries Richardson was best known, perhaps, for his long, vigorous campaign for the use of the vernacular in the public schools; he strongly defended this position before the 1943 congressional committee chaired by Dennis Chavez, which insisted that instruction be in English even in the elementary schools. Richardson was also active in campus politics and won the admiration of his colleagues for his insistence on greater faculty participation in the university reform proceedings of 1963. He was also active in the Teachers Association.

His interests never ceased developing. He founded the Lewis C. Richardson Recorder Society, the Puerto Rican chapter of the American Recorder Society, and made a valuable collection of copies of historical musical instruments. He also enjoyed recognition as a Biblical scholar and taught a course on the Bible as literature. At the time of his early death in 1967 he was Acting Director of the English Graduate Program, which he had worked hard to see established. The English Department's graduate seminar room, opened in 1968, bears his name.

Richardson fell so much in love with Puerto Rico that he persuaded his college friend George Warrek to join him in Utuado in 1925. The following year Warrek returned to Connecticut to be married, but was called back to the Island immediately and made principal of Cayey High School, a position he held for two years. In 1928 he was named Supervisor of Schools for Vieques, and in 1929 he joined the English Department at the University in Río Piedras.

In 1934 Warrek moved his family to New York for two years while he completed an M.A. at Columbia with a specialty in comparative drama and took courses at Columbia's prestigious Little Theater. The leave time devoted to drama did not sit well with the University administration, since the University did not have a theater department at the time. In 1940, however, Warrek started the University Little Theater Workshop, which at first put on plays in English; later it was taken over by Leopoldo Santiago Lavandero ("Poldín") and developed into what is now the Drama Department. Warrek also

served as director for the fledgling Little Theater of San Juan during this period, which later became The Civic Theater.

Later in the 1940s the presence on campus of Spanish artist Cristóbal Ruiz reawakened Warrek's earlier interest in art, which had manifested itself in drawing and sketching while he was in high school and college. Now he began to paint and soon realized that art, not literature, was his primary vocation. With the encouragement of Dean Sebastián González García he spent his next sabbatical in New York studying under masters like Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Jan de Creeft. The latter's influence determined that sculpture was to become his dominant form of artistic expression.

From the 1950s onward Warrek has been recognized as one of Puerto Rico's most original and accomplished sculptors. Though he has worked in bronze, aluminum, and stone, he is best known for his use of native woods to recreate the forms and movements of local flora, particularly that of the El Yunque rain forest. His works have been exhibited and won prizes both here and on the mainland. He eventually left the English Department—where his wife, Florence, directed the Speech Laboratory for many years—and taught sculpture full time. After his retirement he was named Sculptor in Residence, and the Puerto Rican Sculptors Association honored him as one of the three originators of modern sculpture in Puerto Rico.

Frederic N. Sackett came to the University in 1933 to study for an M.A. in Spanish. Characterized by a strong sense of human sympathy and social justice, he was deeply moved by sufferings of the warm, dignified people caught in Puerto Rico's terrible depression of the 30s; at the same time he was drawn by the natural beauty and hispanic culture of the island. When offered a chance to teach in the English Department in 1934, he immediately accepted what he hoped would be a means of remaining in a country and at a university to both of which he had already developed binding commitments. His wife, Helen, whom he married in 1935, fully shared those commitments.

Sackett was named Director of the English Department in 1952 and held the position for ten years. During that period it was necessary to build up a faculty with the skills and

credentials required to launch and maintain a program of graduate studies already in the planning stage. Sackett was very successful both in bringing those plans to completion and in recruiting a faculty whose qualifications for offering high quality graduate work were unchallengeable. When the graduate program began in 1964, Sackett was already Associate Dean of Humanities, but the success of the program was to a large extent due to his efforts. He served as Associate Dean from 1962 to 1971, when failing eyesight and other health problems forced his retirement.

Helen Sackett taught in the island's elementary and secondary schools for seven years before joining the Humanities Faculty in 1945, teaching half time in the English Department and serving the other half as costume designer in the then established Drama Department until she joined her husband in retirement.

The Sacketts were strong supporters of the Popular Party since its inception in 1938 and continued, even after retirement, to work for the Party as fund-raisers, canvassers, poll representatives, and so forth. They became close personal friends of the Muñoz Marins, a friendship which, for the two widows, began when they taught together at Central High School in 1935-36, and which endures.