

**INTERVIEW WITH ALFONSO BEAL**  
**Leader of Comandos Armados**  
**de Liberación (CAL)**

Tricontinental (1968)

*Interview by Gaspar Cuneo Elizondo for Tricontinental (Havana) reproduced by Liberation News Service, No. 117, November 9, 1968. The interview, writes Cuneo, "took place in the cocktail lounge of one of Condado's modern hotels on the outskirts of San Juan, Puerto Rico. The fact that this bar is patronized by the bourgeoisie and U.S. agents made it an ideal spot to meet secretly."*

The Armed Liberation Commandos have been in the process of formation during the past few years, but we started operations in September 1967 by simultaneously burning down Bargain Town, Carolina, and three other stores owned by Yankees in the Santa Rosa, Bayamón, shopping center. Our actions are aimed at undermining the colonial stability and peace of the imperialist invaders; we are in the first stage of operations, and in this phase we intend to cause 100 million dollars' worth of damages to U.S. concerns. Our idea is to inflict such heavy losses on these enterprises that the insurance companies will have to pay out more money in indemnity than they have received in payments, thus upsetting the economy.

*Question: Have you achieved any practical results?*

*Answer:* Let me explain. When the losses amounted to 14 million dollars the first crisis of the insurance companies was precipitated; they started to cancel policies taken out on fire losses by U.S. enterprises. Furthermore, the attitude of the insurance companies forced the colonial legislature to enact a special law whereby the government of Puerto Rico subsidizes insurance companies. It was necessary to set up a special fund for policies on liabilities that are financially burdensome to the companies. By escalating this action, as we propose to do, the time will come when the government will be unable to continue to subsidize these companies. So far, it has only tried to patch up the situation.

*Question: What is the basis of your actions against U.S. interests?*

*Answer:* In our actions we have kept in mind the experiences of the revolutionary struggles in other countries—for instance, the Algerian experience—regarding this stage of urban struggle, but we apply this experience to the Puerto Rican reality, which has its own special—though not exceptional—characteristics; we apply in Puerto Rico whatever we can from the struggles all over the world. Puerto Rico is a U.S. military and economic bulwark in the Carib-

bean; in this appraisal we coincide with other Puerto Rican fighters for independence; it's just that they wage their struggle on a political plane, while we are waging an armed struggle. We are not the armed branch of any particular organization; we are the armed branch of the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico, although that doesn't mean that there is any formal agreement between us and the various independence organizations. In the Commandos, we have some people who don't belong to any organization other than ours.

*Question: What method do you use for getting in touch with the people and spreading armed struggle?*

*Answer:* We begin by linking our actions with the specific problems of the working class and the people in general, affected by the presence of imperialism here. For instance, when the telephone workers' strike broke out last April we got ready to sabotage the telephone company, which is a branch of the ITT monopoly, in solidarity with the workers on strike. Our actions against the telephone company prompted its running full-page ads in the local newspapers offering a substantial reward for any information leading to our arrest. In our first bulletin we showed the people how to take an active part in the war against the telephone company.

*Question: What were CAL's fundamental tasks during its first year of struggle?*

*Answer:* First, to organize, discipline, and train the members of our organization. We have worked not only in the formation of cadres, the organization of cells, and the training of Commandos but also in getting the necessary resources to carry on our revolutionary struggle. We took up, organized, and disciplined a spontaneous armed struggle that has been going on in Puerto Rico for the past ten years. Naturally this year we began to put into practice our plans for armed struggle, consisting of sabotaging the imperialist enterprises that have gradually taken over the economic life of our country. As part of our armed struggle, we have carried out—and will continue to carry out—operations against this Condado zone, the lair of the U.S. gangsters and mafia and Cuban counter-revolutionaries who control the casinos of the big hotels in this area and who have outdone—as far as prostitution and drug peddling are concerned—the Havana of prerevolutionary days. All these night clubs practice discrimination against Puerto Rican artists. We have declared Condado a war zone and have warned Puerto Ricans not to go through it, especially at night. Moreover, we are preparing to engage in more important operations.

*Question: What about the arrests that have been made?*

*Answer:* That's because the pressure brought to bear by U.S. investors and the reactionary press forced them to produce scapegoats; they look for these scapegoats among the more active independence organizations. That explains the arrest of members and even leaders of the Pro-Independence Movement (MPI).

The government offers big rewards and twenty-four-hour-a-day police protection to all those who will testify as witnesses against these scapegoats. They also want to hit the MPI because it is the organization that gets the most people out in the streets in the struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico and especially because the MPI has refused to condemn the actions of CAL.

*Question: Have you been able to ascertain the effects of your actions on investors?*

*Answer:* We know that our actions are beginning to be felt, as we have seen their effects in various sectors that support big investment. *Time* magazine, *U.S. News & World Report*, and the *Wall Street Journal* have expressed their concern. In addition to this, we know that the head of the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Office in the United States, Danilo Ondina, resigned his post after failing to attract a number of companies that had already made tentative contacts with the government to set up business in Puerto Rico.

*Question: The divergences in the socialist camp have had a negative effect on the revolutionary forces of the world. Was there any such effect in Puerto Rico?*

*Answer:* These divergences have not affected us, because we are quite clear on the specific objectives of our struggle here. Such futile discussion is limited to debating circles in our country. One of the healthy effects of the creation of CAL has been the unmasking of pseudorevolutionary idle talk. Now, anyone who is not engaged in a task in the mass organization or is not a member of CAL is simply running off at the mouth. We are aware that there is room for other kinds of work; let no one think that we attack those who participate in demonstrations, picketing, and denunciations or who struggle against the draft imposed on our youth by the U.S. imperialists. We know that it is all part of the struggle.

*Question: I don't want to hold you here any longer, but I would like to ask you one last question. What moved you to create CAL?*

*Answer:* On September 23, 1963, on the occasion of the commemoration of the Cry of Lares, all the patriotic forces signed the so-called Declaration of Lares; in it they pledged themselves to do their best to attain our independence before the Centennial—which is this year. Perhaps that was the biggest stimulus that led us to organize the Armed Liberation Commandos last year, since we considered it our duty to try to make good the Lares pledge, so that the year of the Centennial would find us already engaged in armed struggle for independence under CAL's slogan: Independence or Death!