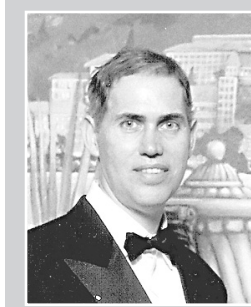




The importance of the first hundred days

Since 1933, the first year of Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, the idea that the incoming administration must rush to complete a huge amount of legislation in a very short time interval has become part of the American Folklore. Most presidents chose not to ignore addressing the expectation of their first 100 days in office. As Jonathan Alter wrote in "The Defining Moments," John F. Kennedy warned that the work of his presidency would not be finished in the first hundred days or in the first thousand; Lyndon B. Johnson boasted that his fifteen bills achieved more than anything done in 1933; and Ronald Reagan's landmark victories on the budget and taxes may have come closest to achieving FDR's success.

Roosevelt's Hundred Days were of utmost importance due to the economic upheaval which the U.S. economy found itself in. During the previous three years, national income was cut in half. According to Jean Edward Smith in "FDR," 15 million workers, one out of every three, had lost their jobs; gross farm income declined from \$12 billion in 1929 to \$5 billion in 1932; and children went hungry in every cor-



José Bolívar
Opinion

ner of the land. Five thousand bank failures had wiped out 9 million savings accounts. President Hoover's hands-off government policy, which included raising taxes to balance the budget, had clearly not worked. Roosevelt's answer to this crisis was for massive government involvement, particularly those investments which created jobs. The federal government would also have a greater oversight of the banking and finan-

cial system.

How will be first Hundred Days of the Obama and Fortuño administration impact our Island? All signs point towards a repeat of massive government involvement similar to what was experienced in 1933. Job creation and a revamping of the financial system are top on the agenda. However, one important item missing from the Roosevelt program was promoting economic growth through innovation. One of the strong points of the U.S. economy is innovation (Apple products and Steven Jobs' creativity come to mind). Puerto Rico needs to foster its local entrepreneurs and provide a business friendly environment in order to promote local sustained growth. Though massive government involvement will help in the short term, it is growth and innovation which will provide long term solutions.

José L. Bolívar holds a doctorate in history and is completing a book on the economic impact of the Second World War on Puerto Rico, which is scheduled to be published this year by the University of Florida.

Bitter medicine

Before the 2004 elections, while I was on a Sabbatical from The University of Puerto Rico at Cayey, I wrote a long essay, or perhaps a short book, pretentiously titled Puerto Rico, Nationalism, Federalism and Globalization which I used in my political, and social sciences courses. Its principal practical recommendation was that the Puerto Rican corporatist state, started during the Muñoz Marín era had to be dismantled, privatizing — such a bad word — as many government agencies as possible, and reducing the government's size by two thirds, if Puerto Rico were to survive the global competition. I realize that a two thirds reduction is quite draconian, perhaps bordering on insane, not to say inhumane, genocidal and quite flatly out of the question. It means cutting the bureaucracy from roughly 300,000 to 25,000. Now, if the reduction had begun eight years ago, the situation today would have been more manageable. But the reality is that the opposite of a bureaucratic contraction happened.

I revised my essay in 2006 after the federal court let stand the decision of the P.R. Supreme Court which allowed the counting of a vote for the Puerto Rican Independence Party simultaneously with a vote for Anibal Acevedo Vila, the candidate for governor of the Popular Democratic Party.

Needless to say, I felt that both courts failed to address the argument that counting a vote twice violated the principle of one man one vote, and ran counter to my interpretation of the Bush vs. Gore case. After this humiliating intellectual defeat, I decided, understandably, at least to myself, that I never wanted to teach my course on American Constitutional Law. Maybe the real reason was my gradual realization that students interested in taking the course, increasingly had great difficulty reading the textbook's cases in English.

Of course, now that the Secretary of Education, my old colleague in Cayey, an expert in Nietzsche, a nihilist philosopher, has explained it, I acknowledge that perhaps I did not realize that we all speak a dialect of Spanish in Puerto Rico, which not only interferes with learning other languages, but the language of mathematics as well.

But I digress. I never expected that the Federal Court would validate a vote for two parties, thus violating the one man one vote principle. Of course, I always understood that it was a political, not a judicial ruling, and in keeping with the maxim Divide et Imperas (divide and you shall rule.) Hence, it is in the interest of the hegemonic power to divide the contending colonial fac-



tions. In retrospect, now we know how well that has played out for the last 110 years.

Be it as it may, now that I have retired from the University of Puerto Rico, without a good bye, or a wrist watch, as a token of appreciation, perhaps I didn't deserve one — not that I care — and perhaps deservedly so, due to my own professorial hubris or pride, for so many years, or perhaps, because I did not belong to the correct political party, one of the byproducts of living in a corporatist state, I would like to share some of my insights written before 2004.

It gives me great intellectual pleasure to see my ideas corroborated by the unfolding of political events now after we know the reality of the debacle — a legacy of close to a three billion dollar deficit, not counting the long term debt, a bloated bureaucracy, which continued to increase after eight years of more corporatist and populist policies, and no idea how to tackle it.

I should say that I don't think, or rather, that I don't expect that the new governor, or any governor, will be willing or will be able—and survive politically — to make the tough decisions in the magnitude that need to be made to correct the present state of affairs. But I certainly wish and pray that the Obama administration will rise above the prevailing racist preconceptions that have held sway in Washington for over a century, that we Puerto Ricans cannot solve the mess we are in, or that because we can't we don't deserve help for the 110 years of American colonialism or its benign neglect. The fact of the matter is that we do not have two senators and close to seven representatives in the United States Congress, although we are American Citizens since 1917.

We cannot wage a war like the Civil War, which, by the way, was not waged by the slaves. So, in the twenty first century who is going to wage the war for the rights of Puerto Ricans? There are no historical parallels, and the ones I thought appropriate, like the Bantustans in South Africa, no longer apply. At this point, after having read the recommendations of the Economic Panel of the experts the governor elect named to deal with the Puerto Rican economic crisis, and the predictable reactions of the pro corporatist and populist economists, as well as those of the union leaders, if I

Action was an option

I read Mr. Berg's letter in the Daily Sun and while I am against police brutality as much as he is, I could not help but notice that he did not do anything in the situation he described.

I am a German-American and have lived on this island since the 1950s married to a Puerto Rican.

I have had minor clashes with police more than once including two with East German police, several in Puerto Rico and one with one of our border agents on the border between Canada and Alaska. I have never fought a police officer if I knew I was wrong, but when I felt I was right I always opened my mouth.

Berg had several options:

He could have talked to the officer.

If he feared language problems, he could have asked anyone there to translate.

He could have just come close to the officer and check the ID number which he can see on the shield.

He could have gone to the nearest police station and complain.

But actually he did nothing!

Thus I don't think he should complain and somehow indicate that we are not worthy to be Americans.

*Ursula Acosta
Hormigueros*

were the governor elect I would go to Mr. Obama and say: "Look Puerto Rico is bankrupt and it's the United States doing, you deal with it"

*Luis G. Rodríguez
Via email*