

Why Did The U.S. Keep Control of Puerto Rico?

1. Defense

Puerto Rico was strategically located. The island commanded the eastern passage to enter the Caribbean. By this means any enemy of the U.S. could enter the Gulf of Mexico- America's backyard. The island was close to the American mainland. If the U.S. controlled it they would be better able to prevent European countries from occupying it. The U.S. intended to build a canal in the Central American mainland. The island was a perfect place to build a naval base to protect the canal.

2. Investments

Millions of American dollars and capital were invested in agriculture, especially sugar and tobacco. They also invested in banking, manufacturing and public utilities.

3. Trade: Market Outlet

She would become one of the sure markets for American manufactured goods while at the same time providing her with raw materials to feed her industries.

4. Ideological

This would be another island where she could spread her superior ideology.

After the signing of the treaty Puerto Rico no longer belonged to Spain, she was now a protectorate (a state) of the U.S. The island was subjected to American military rule 1898 to 1900. Thereafter an American appointed governor and a council whose members were nominated by Americans formed the government. The island's political system and operations were however governed by the Foraker or First Organic Act.

Why did Puerto Rico accept U.S. rule?

1. The U.S. promised them political development such as democracy. This was viewed by many as a better alternative to the backward colonial rule that they had known.

2. Many hoped that the progressive labor laws of the U.S. would be applied to Puerto Rico.

3. The masses hoped to get jobs. The island soon became a reservoir of cheap labour.
4. The merchant class hoped to profit from an expansion in business, investments and free trade.
5. Many of them expected to become U.S. citizens. They felt that they could migrate freely to the U.S. where they hoped to achieve a better standard of living.
6. They expected to get much of the social services that the U.S. had already begun to introduce in those towns and areas where she had interests. Chief among these are: education, sanitation and health.

How did they benefit from being a U.S. state?

1. They gained religious freedom
2. Measures such as disinfecting slums and cleaning the streets were introduced.
3. Mass vaccinations were done
4. Old schools were improved while new ones were built and equipped.
5. Employment increased.
6. The legal system was simplified.
7. A forest conservation program was started.
8. Labor laws were passed introducing a eight hour workday.