

# Repression Spurs

# Debate in PRSC

by JIM GRIFFIN

The second national conference of the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee earlier this year marked a major step forward for the solidarity movement. A broad majority of the delegates rejected an ultra-left analysis of the movement's character and tasks and united around a generally sound anti-imperialist perspective.

The ultra-left line was reflected in a denial of the leading strategic role of the working class and in the notion that the mass of white workers were bribed by imperialism, a conception of imperialism that sees only its superstructure and ignores its economic essence, and finally, an uncritical endorsement of armed struggle that would commit the solidarity movement to supporting adventurism and small group terrorism.

The rejection of this line by a two to one majority at the conference, however, did not end the influence of ultra-leftism within the PRSC. Centered in the San Francisco and Brooklyn chapters, where the remnants of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PEOC) continue to have influence, and in Chicago in the form of the March 1st Bloc, an alliance of the Sojourner Truth Organization with some nationalist elements, the ultra-leftists continue to impede the development of the PRSC.

## ULTRA-LEFT INFLUENCE AFFECTS PRSC WORK

The struggle between the majority line and ultra-leftism has surfaced most sharply around the approach to take to the grand juries which, in the name of investigating the FALN and terrorism, are harassing the whole independence movement and the Puerto Rican community. It has also been a factor in the campaign to free the five nationalist prisoners and in the efforts of the PRSC to consolidate internally around a common perspective and program.

In the case of the campaign around the grand juries, coalitions have formed both in New York and Chicago with slogans and demands that differ in significant respects from the program of the PRSC. The Chicago and Brooklyn PRSC chapters have been active participants in these coalitions.

The PRSC interim committee sees *stopping the grand jury and its harassment of the independence movement and the Puerto Rican community as the basis of building the campaign.* The Chicago group goes well beyond this calling for "Independence for Puerto Rico, Self-determination for the Puerto Rican Movement, and Freedom for the Five Nationalist Prisoners." The New York Coalition goes even one better raising the slogan of "The right of the Puerto Rican people to Bear Arms."

## ULTRA-LEFT ISOLATES SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

The argument of the PRSC majority is that a broad based movement capable of checking the grand jury is not served by requiring unity around these additional demands. Such an approach effectively narrows the base of the anti-repression movement to those who are already fully committed to the independence struggle.

It closes off the ability of the movement to mobilize those who, while they may not agree with all the objectives of the in-



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**FREE THE FIVE!**  
A PRSC campaign has spurred debate in the group. These five have been in prison since their 1954 attack on Congress to protest the colonial status of Puerto Rico.

dependence movement, are ready to defend its democratic rights. In so doing, it limits the ability of the solidarity movement to educate these forces and in the process of struggle around partial demands, win sections of them over to support for the full goals of the PRSC.

The critics of this position argue that the PRSC, by not advancing the slogans for independence and armed struggle, is turning its back on their own program and failing to build the solidarity movement in an anti-imperialist direction. The second argument of the proponents of this line is that the PRSC should take up these slogans because they are supported by the Puerto Ricans who have been subpoenaed and are most directly under attack.

This corresponds to the line taken by these same forces in the National Coordinating Committee to Free the Five, which argues that the campaign to free the five must simultaneously "not compromise their principles. . . ." In other words, the solidarity movement must not only defend the Independence Movement, but it must also endorse the politics of whatever section of the movement is under attack in the given situation.

## USING A PROGRAM

The first argument rests on the silly assumption that to fail to make the PRSC's maximum program the basis for all coalition or united front work is to in practice abandon that program. Within coalitions like the ones around the grand jury, the PRSC must work to win people to support for independence. Simply because independence is not a point of unity of the coalition, it does not follow that the PRSC cannot put forward its perspective.

The situation parallels that of the anti-war movement where ultra-leftists argued that anti-imperialists could only participate in coalitions that made full support for the National Liberation Front a point of unity. This policy retarded the ability to win ever broader sections of the peace movement to an anti-imperialist understanding.

The second argument rests on a mechanical view of the relationship between the solidarity movement and the Puerto Rican people. The ultra-leftists argue "the Puerto Rican people in particular, and other third world forces within this country, play the primary role in providing political leadership and direction. . . ."

## ROLE OF SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

Obviously, the independence movement's needs are of the greatest concern

to the solidarity movement. The solidarity movement is in no position to dictate to the independence forces what those needs are. It also recognizes that the sphere of determining the strategy, tactics and program for national liberation is that of the Independentistas alone.

On the other hand, the solidarity movement is in the best position to determine how to actively win over and mobilize the North American people. As a part of a broader movement aimed at building opposition to U. S. imperialism in all its manifestations, it has its own set of needs. The independence movement is not going to tell North Americans how to build our movement any more than we are going to tell the Puerto Rican people how to gain independence.

The solidarity movement, to succeed, must balance both these sets of concerns.

In practice, the principle that we must simply and uncritically "take leadership" from "oppressed peoples" can only lead

to chauvinism and paternalism. For one thing, take leadership from exactly whom? The independence movement is not of one mind on every question. If we simply endorse the politics of whoever happens to be under attack, our politics rapidly lose any coherence or credibility since we end up espousing contradictory positions.

It also means that in the name of taking leadership from the independence movement, we end up interfering in the internal affairs of that movement, endorsing the policies of one group and thus alienating those who oppose these same policies. To take an extreme example, the March 1st Bloc argues that we must defend "armed struggle. . . in the forms in which it is actually occurring, small and episodic actions rather than mass assaults." In the context of the grand jury campaign, this means defending the politics of the FALN, a group whose politics have been repudiated by the broad independence movement, which does not even recognize its formal existence.

The only compass that can guide us in building the solidarity movement is our own analysis of its tasks, collectively determined by all anti-imperialists, regardless of their nationality. Respect for the independence movement and recognition of the leading role that oppressed people within the U. S. are playing in support of national liberation are in no way inconsistent with this, but neither are they a substitute for it. Political lines must be judged on their merits, not on the basis of who is putting them forward.



## Six months negotiations at Budd Hunting Park

# TOO LITTLE,

# TOO LATE

by DUANE CALHOUN

On July 19th the bargaining committee of UAW Local 813 wrapped up local contract negotiations with the management of Budd's Hunting Park Plant. Unlike most union contracts, this one was signed over six months *before* agreement was reached.

At the contract ratification meeting on January 30th, Chairman Palumbo explained that while most of the new items the union wanted hadn't been agreed to by the company, Budd management had promised to discuss these items with the union. Chairman Palumbo and President Henry Gryn then recommended that the members ratify the promise of a contract, sight unseen.

UAW area Director Joe Ferrara chimed in to help sell this blank paper, mainly by telling the Local 813 membership they'd better take what Budd offered or the

company would close the plant. At nearly every union meeting since then, both Palumbo and Gryn told the membership how hard-nosed the company was being, how they refused to budge in the negotiations.

March, April, May, and June went by, with only one minor point (the challenge bumping procedure for machinists on lay-off) being settled. Finally, on July 1st, the Local union executive board passed a resolution that if the contract was not settled by the 15th, some form of "pressure" would be used on the company. Management, tired of playing cat and mouse, and possibly worried about an overtime refusal, settled the remaining minor points on the 19th.

## SIX MONTHS TOO LATE

If the union leadership was really serious