

OBREROS EN MARCHA

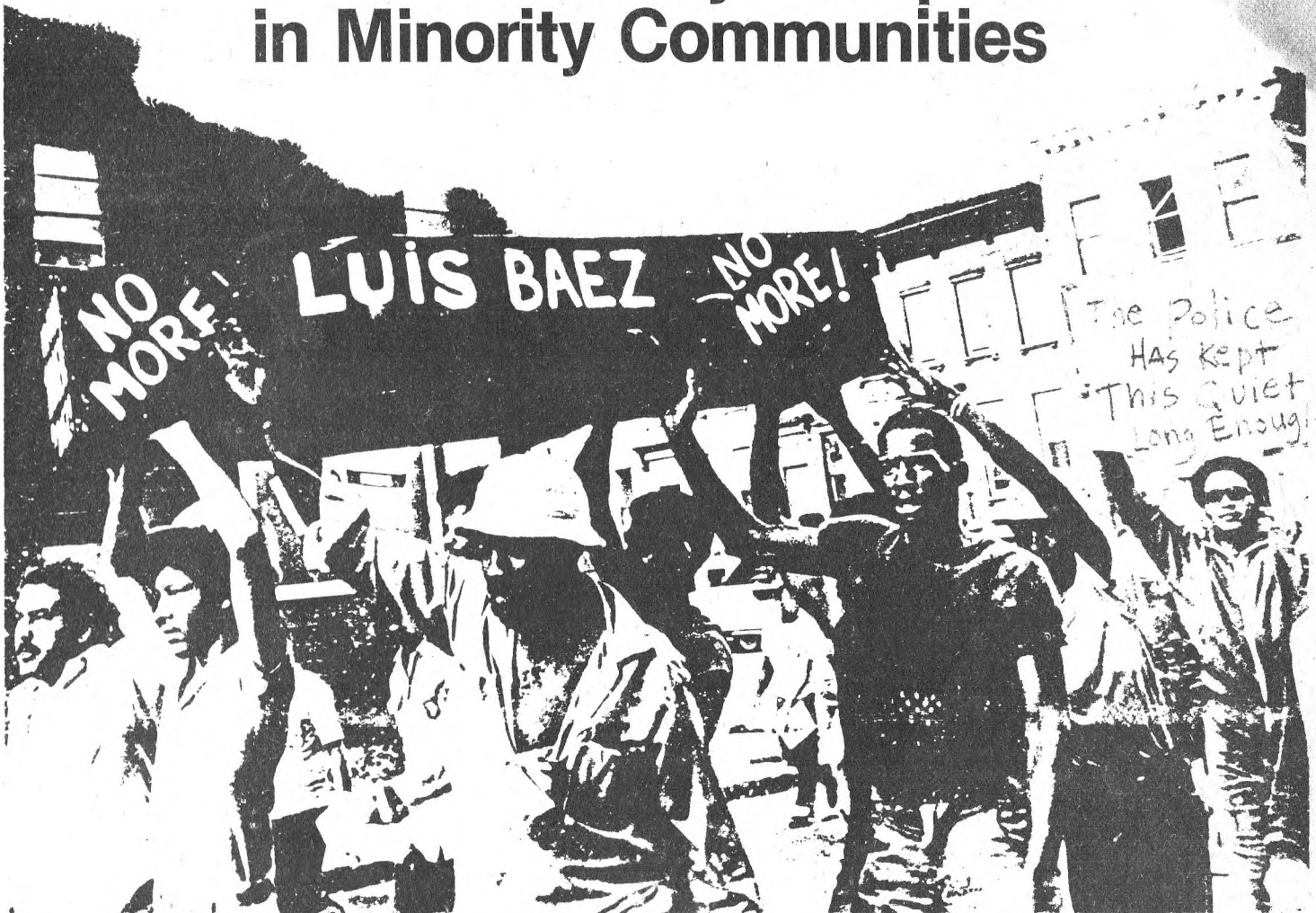
Vol. 4 No. 9

Political Organ of the Puerto Rican National Left Movement (M.I.N.P.-El Comité)

Dec. 1979-Jan. 1980

Puerto Ricans in the U.S.:

Police Brutality Rampant in Minority Communities



Editorial

Iranian Crisis: Carter Manipulates National Sentiments

Page 2

Editorial

Iranian Crisis: Carter Manipulates National Sentiments... 2

Puerto Ricans in the U.S.

Police Brutality Rampant in Minority Communities... 3

Puerto Rico Informa

Assassination Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal... 4

International Conference Solidarity P.R..... 6

National

National Accord with Labor: Workers Lose... 7

International

Zimbabwe: Facing Diplomatic Hurdle... 9

Panama Faces Economic Crisis... 10

Iranian Crisis:

Carter Manipulates National Sentiments

Since November 4th, the commercial media has bombarded the people of the U.S. with minute to minute coverage of the Iranian crisis. The Carter administration has blamed the crisis on the Iranian government for its support of the students who seized the U.S. embassy demanding that Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi be returned to his country and stand trial for his crimes. However, the seizing of the hostages was not the cause of the crisis. The cause is traceable to President Carter's decision to allow the Shah to come to the U.S. to receive medical treatment, treatment the Shah should have received in Mexico where he was residing.

With few exceptions, however, the media has uncritically accepted the Carter administration's explanation for the crisis. It has fallen into step with government policy. This has created a climate in which anyone who questions the administration's policies is characterized as undermining the nation's interests. (This was manifested by the barrage of criticism hurled against Senator Edward Kennedy, himself a bourgeois politician, when he declared his opposition to granting the Shah asylum in the U.S.) This climate is reminiscent of the uncritical attitude toward U.S. foreign policy which was prevalent prior to the Vietnam war and up until the rise of the anti-war movement.

The Vietnam war—and the anti-war movement that it generated—nurtured a skeptical attitude on the part of the American people toward U.S. government policy makers. They no longer accepted without question the involvement of the country in international conflicts (e.g., Angola) and other countries' internal politics. The government's justification for the Vietnam war—that it was fought to defend national security—was debunked both by the anti-war movement and the irrationality of the war itself. In addition, disclosure of internal government documents, such as the Pentagon Papers, exposed the cover-ups and lies of U.S. policy makers in the Vietnam escapade. This educated a significant portion of the American people to the understanding that the Vietnam war was not in their interest and that our government could and would lie to obtain support for its foreign policy adventures. As Watergate was also to make clear, this was true for other areas of government activity.

However, during the Iranian crisis, President Carter has effec-

tively wrapped the American flag around himself and his policies. In an attempt to transform his image as a weak and indecisive leader, Carter has capitalized on the Iran crisis to portray himself as strong, decisive and capable of defending the national interest of the U.S. from any "two-bit world power." The cornerstone of Carter's performance and policies has been to focus attention on the hostages in order to strengthen his own aspirations for reelection to the presidency in 1980. Before the crisis, Carter was trailing his chief Democratic rival, Senator Kennedy, very badly; he is now leading him.

If we trace the process that led to the crisis, it is clear that it could have been avoided if Carter had refused admittance to the Shah. This is apparent from a *N.Y. Times* report on the communications that took place between the Carter administration and the Barzagan regime in Iran which was the government then in power.

According to the *Times* account, on October 20th, the U.S. Charges d'Affairs in Iran spoke to Prime Minister Barzagan and the Foreign Minister to inform them that the U.S. was considering letting the Shah into the U.S. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister told the American Charge d'Affairs that such an action on the part of the U.S. would be met with very hostile reaction on the part of the Iranian people. This response was communicated to Washington.

Nevertheless, the decision was made to allow the Shah to enter the U.S.

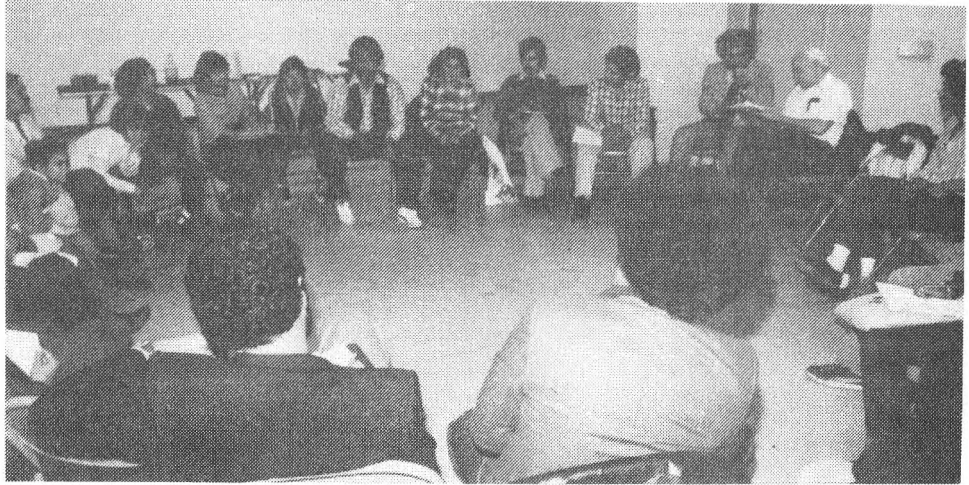
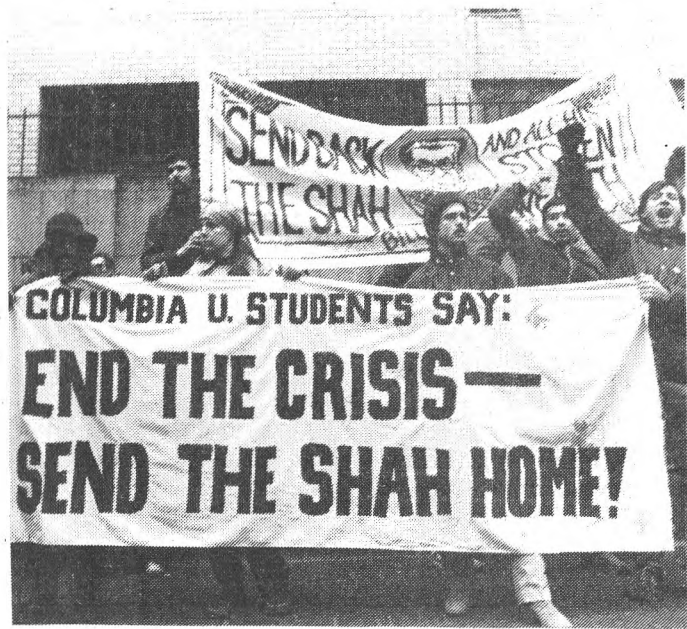
The Carter administration chose to admit the Shah—despite the risks—in order to protect President Carter's presidential reelection efforts in 1980. Carter's aspirations would have been threatened if he got into a public debate with Henry Kissinger and a non-public squabble with David Rockefeller, both who wanted the Shah admitted.

David Rockefeller is one of the Shah's prime bankers. It is speculated that of the billions of dollars that the Shah stole from the Iranian people, some 15 billion are deposited in David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank. Kissinger, on the other hand, was the primary agent for defending U.S. interests in the Middle East. Moreover, Kissinger has a historical relationship with the Rockefeller brothers as one of their leading intellectuals at the Rockefeller Foundation, the Council of Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission. These factors in great part explain Kissinger's and Rockefeller's efforts for the Shah.

It is important to note that the Ayatollah Khomeini's actions are, like Carter's, also motivated by his own political goals. The ouster of the Shah was achieved by a united movement, led by the Ayatollah Khomeini. With the passage of time, the serious divisions that existed within that movement began to emerge. Khomeini was faced with this deterioration of unity as well as an economy in stagnation, sections of the country pursuing autonomy and a host of other problems. Carter's decision to admit the Shah provided Khomeini with an opportunity to regroup the movement around the issue on which they were all united—the Shah.

But after this crisis is over, Carter and Khomeini will once again be confronted by the difficult domestic problems—economic, social, etc.—of their countries that will test their "leadership."

In the U.S., Carter's policies have led to the fanning of the most backward manifestation of nationalism, racism, and jingoism of a sort not seen or heard in this country since the early 60's. This has been exemplified by war sloganeering and attacks against Iranians in this country. However, it is too early to determine if the ruling class wants to promote this jingoism as an ongoing policy. This we need to examine as events develop. ■



Victims of police brutality discuss their experiences at a community meeting.

New York City: Police Brutality Rampant in Minority Communities

Police brutality. This crime, committed by the city's "peace officers", does not get mentioned when the commercial media publishes its latest crime statistics. But police brutality is a widespread occurrence, particularly in NYC's minority communities. The incidents we read about in the newspapers are usually the most flagrant examples of police brutality and murder that the press just can't ignore. Occasionally these events reach the public because a community has protested against the outrage, raising its voices loudly and in large numbers.

In the past few years in NYC, several police killings have made the papers. In 1976, Randolph Evans, a 15-year old black teenager was shot in the head by police in full view of his friends and neighbors. In 1978, Arthur Miller, a black businessman from Brooklyn was killed by a police choke hold in an argument. Earlier this year, Luis Baez, a mentally retarded Puerto Rican youth was murdered by 16 police shots. The police said Baez was threatening them with a pair of scissors. Most recently, there is the murder of Arturo Reyes, a 17-year old Puerto Rican youth from the Bronx. Reyes was shot in the back by a policeman, who accused him of stealing 2 containers of orange juice.

There are many more incidents that never get reported by the media. Police brutality and abuse happens everyday in minority communities, which has affected a growing number of families in one way or another. The following interview was conducted with the Diaz family (not their real name) who live in El Barrio (East Harlem). The interview vividly portrays how, with no provocation, three members of this family were brutalized and abused by members of the Housing Authority police force.

OEM: Jose, could you please tell us what happened to you and your mother on the afternoon of October 13th?

Jose Diaz, a high-school student: It was Saturday. My mother asked me to wait downstairs in front of the building for my sister to get home. Earlier that day, when my mother had come home, a man had followed her into the building. My mother wanted to make sure my sister got home all right. I went downstairs and was waiting. The Housing Police approached me and asked me what I was doing. I told them that I lived upstairs and that I was waiting for my sister. The police began to harass me, saying that I couldn't be there. They asked

me for my I.D. I didn't have any with me, but I told the police my mother would identify me. They took me upstairs to my apartment and my mother told them why I was waiting in front of the building. The police said that if they caught me there again, they would give me a ticket for loitering, take me to Central booking and lock me up. When they left, my mother came downstairs with me, thinking that in this way, the police would leave me alone.
OEM: Did they?
Jose: No. They came back and started to harass both of us. They told us to go to the park and wait for my sister. My mother told them in Spanish that we were decent people

and were not looking for any trouble and to please leave us alone. I translated what she said. Suddenly the police started to hit me on the head with their clubs. I started bleeding heavily and my mother put her hand over the wound trying to stop the blood. Then they took their clubs and started to hit her in the stomach. They hit me about five times in the testicles and yelled insults at me and my mother. They said I wanted to start a riot. My little brother heard my mother screaming and came down to see what was happening. The cops beat on him too. Some other cops came and took me to the Housing Police headquarters. On the way there, they cursed us out and said they should have killed me.

OEM: What happened when you got to the station?
Jose: When we got there I was bleeding real bad. The officer wanted to put me down as John Doe (which meant the police could keep him there for lack of identification, ed.), but the Desk Officer told him he couldn't do that. He also told the cop that he had to take me to Metropolitan Hospital and get my head fixed up before I could go to Central Booking.

OEM: Did they treat you at the hospital?
Jose: When we got out of the car, the officer let me fall flat on my face. I was handcuffed all this time so I couldn't help myself. The nurse that examined me asked the officer to take the handcuffs off; the cop told her to examine me with them on, because I was very dangerous. The doctor on duty also demanded that my cuffs be taken off and that if the cop refused, he would have to call the authorities on duty and the officer would get in trouble. The cop then took the cuffs off, but he took out his gun and kept it to my head the whole time.

OEM: What happened when you arrived at Central Booking?

Jose: I got there about 4:00 A.M. Sunday morning. At 9:00 A.M. I was taken to the Criminal Court building and put in a cell on the third floor. I didn't get out until Monday afternoon. When I went before the judge, the lawyer that my family got presented evidence that I was not hanging out alone in front of my building. The judge said that I had a right to feel that an injustice had been committed against me and that a thorough investigation should be made. My case is coming up soon; my lawyer says that I have a good case against the cops that abused me and my mother.

OEM: Doña Maria, how did you feel after this incident? How has it affected you?

Doña Maria, Jose's mother: I have been very sick since this happened. I had recently been operated on when those police officers hit me in the stomach. I've had to go to Metropolitan three times for medical treatment. My children can't sleep at night thinking that the police will barge in and start hitting them. I thought that the police

were here to help us, but they are abusing people a lot. Instead of trying to understand what is going on, they immediately start to harass and beat up on people.

OEM: Do you know of other cases like yours in El Barrio?

Doña Maria: Yes, there have been a few. A young boy on 116th St. was beaten up in his own house by some cops that barged in. But this is not a problem of El Barrio only. I know of those boys who've been killed in Brooklyn and the Bronx, but I never thought that it could happen to my son or myself. We are decent people. We were not looking for trouble. We are a peaceful family.

The Diaz family will never forget this painful incident which has deeply affected their lives. Soon after the attack, they read an article in *El Diario-La Prensa*, the local Spanish-language newspaper, about the Coalition in Defense of Puerto Rican and Hispanic Rights (CDPR). The article talked about the work the CDPR was doing around the murder of Arturo Reyes, the Bronx youth recently shot by the police. The Diaz family decided to contact the CDPR to see if it could help them with their case. The Coalition put them in touch with

a lawyer and got *El Diario* to give their case publicity.

Since then, Jose and his younger sister, also a high school student, have worked closely with the El Barrio chapter of the CDPR and have participated in various block meetings to discuss police brutality and related problems affecting the people in El Barrio.

History and our own experience show us that the problem is not having a few "bad policemen" on the force, or that the main problem is racism, although this definitely is a factor. A report published last year by the Justice Dept. indicates that 45% of all people killed by police are black. In cities like Chicago and Philadelphia—with high minority populations—over 70% of the people killed are minorities.

Despite these statistics, however, policemen, whether they are white or minority, are ingrained with the consciousness that they are above the community, and even above the law. This is reinforced by the fact that for the hundreds and thousands of cases of brutality committed by policemen, not one is prosecuted to the full extent of the law. This unofficial sanction by the government—and by the ruling class—gives

the police a free hand to continue their brutal operations.

From its beginnings, the police system in this country has resorted to acts of violence to control and discipline the people. Countless strikes and peaceful demonstrations were violently disrupted by the police during the late 19th and 20th centuries. In ghettos at the turn of the century, immigrants from Eastern Europe and Asia were subjected to the same harassment and abuse as minorities receive in the ghettos of today.

From its inception, the primary purpose of the police has been to protect the economic interests of the ruling class by "maintaining order", enforcing their laws and punishing those acts which the ruling class defines as "crime", i.e., any act which threatens their class rule, property and profits. Along with the prison system, the judicial system and the military, the police force is an integral part of the repressive apparatus of the government.

"... the real strength to combat police brutality and the other problems that plague our community lies in an educated and organized community that will not tolerate these or any other types of abuses."
Hector Soto, lawyer to the CDPR ■

Puerto Rico Informa

Response to the Assassination of Angel Rodriguez Cristobal

Vieques, an island-municipality of Puerto Rico, is used by the U.S. Navy for target practice. The Navy has occupied 75% of the island's land destroying its agriculture; disrupted the island's main source of livelihood—fishing; and forced Viequesens to live with the torture of daily bomb explosions.

The people of Vieques have militantly resisted these blatant acts of colonialism. On May 19, 1979 21 people were arrested and beaten for holding a peaceful protest in Vieques. They were charged with invasion of U.S. property and obstruction of Navy maneuvers. One of the people arrested was Angel Rodriguez Cristobal, member of the Puerto Rican Socialist League's central committee.

Angel Rodriguez Cristobal refused to present any defense in court, arguing that the court did not have jurisdiction because Puerto Rico is a nation forcibly occupied by U.S. military forces. He was sentenced to 6 months in jail and a \$500 fine. Several days later he was transferred to a Florida prison. There he was physically and mentally abused: forced to take tranquilizers, denied meals, denied medical attention and placed in isolation. Several lawyers visited him to insure his safety. The last person to see him, Juan Antonio Corretjer, Secretary General of the Puerto Rican Socialist League, affirmed that Angel Rodriguez Cristobal was holding up under the harassment. He was still "the same militant comrade as always, with a steeled and serene attitude."

One day after Corretjer's visit Angel Rodriguez Cristobal was "found" dead by his jailers. They claimed that he hung himself with a bedsheet. Friends and lawyers noticed bruises around the head, a large cut in the face and blood in the jail cell.



"The struggle to oust the U.S. Navy from Vieques will grow stronger and will be strengthened by the warmth, example and memory of Angel Rodriguez Cristobal."

Recently, three armed clandestine groups—the Volunteers for the Puerto Rican Revolution, The Popular Boricua Army (Macheteros), and the Armed Forces for Popular

Resistance—attacked a group of U.S. Navy personnel near a base outside of San Juan. Two people were killed and ten wounded. The joint communique issued by the 3 groups declared that the attack was a response to the murder of Angel Rodriguez, the general situation in Vieques, and also the police killings of the two independentistas last year at Cerro Maravilla.

This event raises before us once again the question of the role of armed action in a revolutionary struggle, particularly during a period when the activity of the masses and of the left is at a low level of development, as is presently the case in Puerto Rico.

In order to evaluate this action, it is not enough to look only at the attack itself and then state either support or opposition to it. The action has to be examined within the context in which it happened. What was the purpose of the action? Was it merely a spontaneous reaction of anger or was it a response with a particular goal based on a scientific understanding of how it relates to the present struggle in Puerto Rico? Does the action advance or hold back the development of these struggles, whether among the masses or within left? Was the action understandable to the Puerto Rican people? Does the action further the unity of the left or divide it more? What has been the response of the government to the action? Has the repression been so great as to weaken the left, or is the left strong enough to withstand increased repression?

We have posed many questions for the analysis of one limited action, but understanding the role of armed actions/armed struggle in the revolutionary process is key. While armed struggle is the fundamental method of struggle, its use by revolutionary forces has to directly respond to the level of struggle and consciousness among the masses. To separate it from this concrete reality can cause serious setbacks and defeat to the development of the revolutionary process. Therefore, questions like the ones we have posed are important to answer. At this time, however, we do not have the necessary information to answer these questions and present an objective analysis.

However, we do want to point out that in the past year in Puerto Rico, there have been several struggles that the general population has been discussing and to some extent has been involved in. Many protests have taken place around the murders at Cerro Maravilla and the U.S. Naval occupation of Vieques, in particular, the bombings of the island. These are struggles that many Puerto Rican people are actively aware of. The attack on the Navy personnel then takes place within this context of struggles.

The people of Puerto Rico and progressive elements in the U.S. have denounced the murder of Angel Rodriguez, the latest in a series of political assassinations of Puerto Rican revolutionaries. The following is a statement signed by over 100 organizations in Puerto Rico and the United States.

TO THE PEOPLE OF OUR HOMELAND PUERTO RICO

Companero ANGEL RODRIGUEZ CRISTOBAL was assassinated on Sunday, November 11th in the Federal Penitentiary at Tallahassee, Florida. Angel Rodriguez Cristobal was a member of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau of the Puerto Rican Socialist League, a farmer, married and the father of two children.

Angel was forced to appear before the Federal Court of the United States in San Juan, Puerto Rico on September 26th to answer charges of having trespassed on the lands which the yanqui navy occupies by armed force in Vieques. He denounced this foreign tribunal with such impunity that even the journalists present were moved. He was sentenced to the maximum penalty of six (6) months in jail and a \$500.00 fine. Three days after being jailed, he was extradicted to the im-

perialist penitentiary where he was assassinated.

The government of the United States is responsible for the assassination of ANGEL RODRIGUEZ CRISTOBAL, patriot, revolutionary, defender of Vieques, and leader of the P.R. Socialist League. The direct instruments of the assassination are the U.S. Navy who perpetrated his arrest, Federal Judge Juan Torruella who sent him to the place of his execution, and the yanqui intelligence apparatus that killed him.

The struggle of the people of Vieques to oust the war navy of the United States is the struggle of all Puerto Rico for its survival as a nation. U.S. imperialism is well aware of this. They view with dread how the challenge and repudiation of its military presence grows. They see how our people gain consciousness of the justness of the struggle of the people of Vieques and how new support committees are arising in the various towns throughout the island.

The assassination of Angel is yet another act within the wave of terrorism which the government of the United States has unleashed against the people of Vieques, its defenders and all the people of Puerto Rico. It leaves barefaced the real nature of the policy of human rights of the government of the United States when the defense of its interests is concerned. This assassination is yet further proof of the policy of repression that has been sustained in Puerto Rico for decades and that has increased in recent years.

The people of Vieques know well the terrorism unleashed by the military—from the expropriation of their lands to the rape of their women. All the people of Puerto Rico, its various sectors and classes, have been touched by the crimes of an intervening power which does not allow anything to stand in its way: young people are sent to die in foreign wars, workers are persecuted, people are arrested and assassinated for defending their rights, workers' organizations are destroyed and pro-independence supporters are persecuted and killed.

Once again, we have reason to recall the victims of the massacres in Rio Piedras and Ponce; the assassinations of Elias Beauchamp and Hiram Rosado at the police headquarters in San Juan; the disappearance of the body of Angel Esteban Antongiorgi; the unrelenting frameups of organizations and pro-independence militants; the assassination of Julito Roldan in a cell of the "tombs" in New York; the assassination of student Antonia Martinez; the bomb placed in Mayaguez by one of the organized terrorist groups of the CIA and FBI that took the lives of Angel Charbonier and Eddie Ramos; the assassination of Santiago Mari Pesquera; the kidnapping, torture, and assassination of Juan Rafael Caballero; and the ambush at Monte Maravilla where imperialism assassinated Arnaldo Dario Rosado and Carlos Soto Arrivi.

The arrest of the Vieques 21, their trials, their incarcerations and now the assassination of ANGEL RODRIGUEZ CRISTOBAL, are all an integral part of the repressive policy of the government of the United States. Our people are conscious of this but they are not intimidated nor subdued. The people will resist the repression and will deepen their struggle. It will never be said that it was today when we took a step back!

On the contrary, before the eyes of our people the tasks ahead have become clearer. The struggle to oust the U.S. navy from Vieques will grow stronger and will be strengthened by the warmth, example, and memory of ANGEL RODRIGUEZ CRISTOBAL.

We call upon our people to mobilize in denunciation of the assassination of Angel, in support of Vieques, in solidarity with the compañeros awaiting the trial before the federal court and we demand the return of RAMON ANTONIO ALICEA, DIEGO LEDEE BAZAN, PEDRO BAIGES CHAPEL, ISMAEL GUADALUPE, NYDIA CUEVAS Y PABLO MARCANO. Faced with the murder of Angel, let us rise to the tasks which the moment demands of us! ■

International Conference in Solidarity with Puerto Rico

This past November 30th through December 2nd, the Second International Conference in Solidarity with the Independence of Puerto Rico was held in Mexico City, Mexico. The conference was attended by delegates and observers from 53 countries; the delegations represented Communist parties and social democratic forces from the capitalist world, various socialist and progressive governments, and solidarity formations such as the U.S. Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee (PRSC). The purpose of the meeting was to continue the work of the First International Conference held in 1975 in Havana, Cuba.

The 3-day conference resulted in the approval of a number of resolutions. Chief among them were the demand that the U.S. Navy halt its bombardment of the island of Vieques; the denunciation of the repression against the Puerto Rican labor and independence movements; and a call for an end to the assassination of labor and political leaders, with particular mention made of the Cerro Maravilla killings and the recent murder of Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal. Resolutions were also passed calling for the creation of an international solidarity network with Puerto Rico, to be based in New York. The main function of this group would be to disseminate at the international level information about the situation in Puerto Rico. Also resolved was that in February of 1980, the conference organizers would meet to discuss implementation of the resolutions and concrete proposals for action and the next international conference.

Among the countries represented at the conference were delegations from Nicaragua, Cuba, Mozambique, Angola, Laos, Vietnam, Iraq, Cyprus and the Philippines. Delegations from the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Sweden and Ireland also attended. The majority of the delegates present were from Latin American countries, including Central America and the Caribbean countries of Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The Puerto Rican delegation at the conference numbered 28 individuals representing the following organizations: the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), the Nationalist Party, the Communist Party of Puerto Rico, and also other organizations such as the Federation of University Students for Independence (FUPI) and the Puerto Rican Peace Council. These forces represented the sectors of the independence movement which remained in the Preparatory Committee for the conference after a split early in the organizing efforts. In



Nearly 700 people from 52 countries attended the conference.

addition, pro-independence activists such as Helen Rodríguez from the U.S. Committee to End Sterilization Abuse and poet Clemente Soto Vélez also formed part of the delegation.

The independent left journal in Puerto Rico, *Pensamiento Crítico*, while not officially a part of the delegation, also attended the conference.

Absent from the Puerto Rican delegation were left organizations such as the Popular Socialist Movement (MSP), the Revolutionary Socialist Party-ML (PSR-ML), the Socialist League, and some individuals. These forces together, numbering close to 60 people, left the Preparatory Committee because of political differences with the PSP around the 1978 UN resolution and the PSP interpretation of the "transfer of powers" clause in the 1979 UN resolution. These forces tried to convince the PSP to accept a compromise wording which neither overtly supported nor condemned the '78 resolution; however, they failed in their efforts. The PSP maintained that support for the '78 UN resolution and for their interpretation of the "transfer of powers" clause were necessary principles of unity. Raising charges of PSP bureaucratic and sectarian control of the debate, the left forces withdrew from the Preparatory Committee. They stated that they still had general support for the conference, but that to remain in the Preparatory Committee would compromise their organizational integrity and political credibility as independent organizations.

The Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), consistent with its move to the right and its policy of no unity with left and progressive forces, boycotted the conference, reaffirming its resolve to win independence through strictly electoral means.

The U.S. delegation to the conference numbered over 50; it included representation from the U.S. Peace Council, the Communist Party USA, the Workers World Party, organizations such as the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the Black United Front, American Indian Movement (AIM), etc. Trade union activists from the Steelworkers, the Garment Workers Union and longshore workers were also among the delegation members. Several representatives from the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee also formed part of the U.S. delegation.

Overall the conference succeeded in drawing the attention and participation of many forces internationally, in particular, the Social Democratic parties of Europe and the various Latin American Communist Parties, which recently have demonstrated interest in taking up the question of Puerto Rico's status. What this will mean in terms of concrete support for the liberation movement in Puerto Rico in the future still remains unclear.

The next month will afford us the opportunity to analyze the concrete significance of the conference and its implications for the key question of unity among progressive and revolutionary forces on the island. When we see the final documents of the conference, the actual resolutions, and the projected plans of work, we will then be able to make this analysis. In this way, we can assess whether the Second International conference and the resulting work represents either a quantitative or qualitative movement forward for the revolutionary process in Puerto Rico. This discussion will be the theme of a follow-up article in the next issue of *Obreros En Marcha*. ■

National Accord with Labor:

Big Labor Compromises with Carter: Workers Lose



Agreements like the National Accord with Labor can only lead to one result: the betrayal of the interests of the working class.

An unexpected offshoot of the recent events in Iran has been the sudden disappearance of the severe economic problems which have been plaguing the United States.

Until November, not a single day went by without the commercial press reporting on the problems of inflation, unemployment, a stagnant economy and the declining value of the U.S. dollar. But one day, fifty foreign service and military personnel were taken hostage in Iran and the economic crisis vanished off the pages of America's newspapers—almost as if the problems no longer existed. The economic crisis—and in particular its impact on American workers and their families—was no longer news to report on. Empty purses, the dollars in them used up before a week's worth of groceries had been purchased; families on the unemployment line; apartments and houses without heat because of the sky-

rocketing cost of fuel.

But even though the government and the bourgeois press is more concerned these days about "human rights" for the murderous Shah of Iran than the people's shrinking paychecks, the economic crisis in the U.S. has not ended. This crisis has had a different impact on the various classes and sectors which make up U.S. society. In some business circles—such as in the auto and steel industries—low productivity and output has led to a decrease in the rate of profit. In other areas, particularly in the oil industry, the corporations have earned record-breaking profits. But whether the profit-margins of the corporations have been low or high, the impact of the economic crisis on the working class has been the same: a devastating decline in its standard of living, hitting oppressed minority groups the hardest. Inflation has risen more rapidly than wages; health, education,

housing and sanitation services have been slashed; food prices are soaring; most jobs are affected by speedups; and dangerous working conditions have increased in plants and factories.

Even among the strongest and most organized sectors of the working class—those sectors organized into unions—the impact of the attacks on their standard of living has been very harsh. For the most part, unions have done little to resist the attacks. Angry voices of protest have been raised, and union leaders have attempted to negotiate better settlements for their membership; but there has been no determination to fight, to go beyond negotiations and confront the bosses. When union officials talk with management before they talk to the rank and file in order to represent their demands and interests, the result is the sellout of the workers.

Many factors come into play to explain the present weakness of the U.S. working class and its inability to fight back against the attacks on its standard of living. Chief among these factors is the lack of organization among the workers. Even at the height of unionization in the early 1950s, no more than 35% of the working class was ever organized. Today, less than 1 out of every 5 workers is in a union, approximately 19%.

During the late 60s, the bosses began a push for greater worker productivity. The resulting speedups worsened the working conditions at the plants, inevitably increasing the rate of job-related accidents. In implementing these policies in order to guarantee their profits, the bosses often moved entire plants to non-unionized areas of the country, particularly the South and Southwest. In many instances, plants were moved to countries in Latin American and Asia where there was access to a cheaper labor force, insuring even higher profits. Millions of dollars went into campaigns against unions and workers' demands. Thus, it is not coincidental that the number of organized workers has declined consistently since the 1960s. Furthermore, the standard of living of workers has decreased. As of April, 1979, the average worker could buy less with his/her salary than in 1965.

However, the main condition that has allowed the successful attacks by the ruling class is the lack of a strong and militant leadership, willing to defend the interests of its membership and to challenge the power of the corporations.

For the most part, union leadership has done very little to guarantee the interests of the working class. As a matter of fact, many of these "leaders"—through the dif-

ferent government administrations—have collaborated with the U.S. ruling circles by implementing measures that have further worsened the living conditions of workers. Promoting the idea that the interests of working people can be reconciled with those of the capitalists—the owners of the big corporations, banks and businesses—this labor bureaucracy has often compromised the interests of the workers it claims to represent and defend. The presence of this leadership is a key factor in the present position of weakness of the U.S. working class.

A recent example of this class collaboration was the so-called National Accord with Labor (NAL).

CARTER FIGHTS INFLATION WITH WORKERS' SALARIES

The NAL was a pact negotiated between the Carter Administration and the 14-million member American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). According to its newly-elected President, Lane Kirkland, this pact would give organized labor a more visible and powerful role regarding decisions on wage and price policy. In exchange, labor, or rather the AFL-CIO leadership, would support Carter's second year of wage and price guidelines.

Back in October 1978, Carter had laid out his plan to deal with inflation, "the nation's No. 1 problem", through a "tight monetary policy" and through wage and price guidelines (see OEM, Vol. 3, No. 11). The Carter Administration "instructed" business and corporate owners in two areas: 1) to limit their price increases to 6.5% yearly and 2) to limit workers' wage and benefit increases to a maximum of 7%. These were not wage and price controls, but instead were "voluntary guidelines." And the owners volunteered to control wages, but not prices.

Carter's guidelines were implemented in December, 1978. By then, companies had already increased their prices 8%. By June, 1979, prices had risen 13%. For this same period of time, the salaries and benefits of workers had increased only 7.8%, which meant that real wages had decreased. What had happened? By not restricting the prices of their products, but restricting the salaries and benefits of the workers, the owners had implemented Carter's "voluntary guidelines" as they pleased. The president's fight against inflation meant little more than more profits for the corporations and more sacrifices and losses for the working class.

NAL: CONCESSIONS, CONCILIATION AND COMPROMISE

Initially, Carter's guidelines were rejected by most of the unions which make up the AFL-CIO. But this situation changed as Carter made the second year of his anti-inflation program more palatable to the AFL-CIO leadership.

After months of secret talks between Kirkland, Vice President Mondale, Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall, and Secretary of the Treasury G. William Miller, the news of an agreement finally came to light. This September, Carter and Kirkland jointly announced the birth of the "national accord with labor" (NAL). And it was right on time, since October 1st began the second year of Carter's "voluntary" restraints on wages and prices.

Throughout the negotiations Kirkland maintained that his federation of unions wanted more power to make decisions about wage and price policy. He discussed the need for a more flexible limit on wages. As a concession to labor, Carter lifted the wage limit to 8% three days before the announcement of the NAL was made. But nothing was said about tighter restrictions on big business.

But the main point Kirkland emphasized in his negotiations was the "lack of power and visibility" that the 1978 guidelines had given to the AFL-CIO leadership. This was dealt with through the creation of a Pay Advisory Committee (PAC), made up of representatives from business, organized labor, and the "public interest." This PAC was to make recommendations to the government about wage and price policies and oversee the implementation of Carter's guidelines in the year 1979-80. The AFL-CIO was allotted 5 out of the 15 seats in the committee.

It was a trade-off. Kirkland was given the visibility he requested together with a slight increase in the limit on wages. In return, the Carter administration and the ruling class gained organized labor's blessing for its second year of attack on the workers' standard of living as well as the possibility of labor's support for Carter's re-election.

The NAL was clear in its intentions. It stated that: "The war against inflation must be the top priority of the government and of private individuals and institutions. . . . To deal effectively with inflation requires discipline and restraint. This will mean a period of austerity for Americans, individual and collective sacrifices for a time so that we enjoy the greater bounty of our land in the years to come."

NAL IS NOT SOMETHING NEW

What has yet to be seen is the actual power that the Pay Advisory Committee gives to Kirkland and the other union representatives. This is not the first time that the U.S. ruling class and the labor bureaucracy have entered into such pacts in order to insure their interests.

In the early 1970s, during Nixon's years, the ruling circles implemented mandatory wage and price controls to deal with inflation. An economist named John Dunlop headed the agency that administered the controls. Attempting to gain the collaboration of organized labor, Nixon created in 1972 a tripartite Pay Board, composed of

representatives of labor, management and "the public." At this time, George Meany, still head of the AFL-CIO, and 3 other union bureaucrats participated on the Board. But after 5 months of fruitless negotiations, they had to quit.

During the Ford Administration, Dunlop, who then was serving as Secretary of Labor, created the Labor-Management Group. Here Meany, Kirkland and other labor mis-leaders came together with the heads of eight of the country's largest corporations. The goal was to resolve "mutual problems within a particular enterprise of industry and to collaborate in such economy-wide fields as trade, taxes, and energy" (*our emphasis, ed.*). The AFL-CIO pulled out of this group after last year's defeat in Congress of the labor reform bill. Large and small companies formed a united front to lobby against this measure which would have made it easier for unions to organize. The AFL-CIO called the bill's defeat a sellout, but the real sellout has occurred each time the AFL-CIO has joined hands with the government and with the ruling class to resolve the country's economic problems.

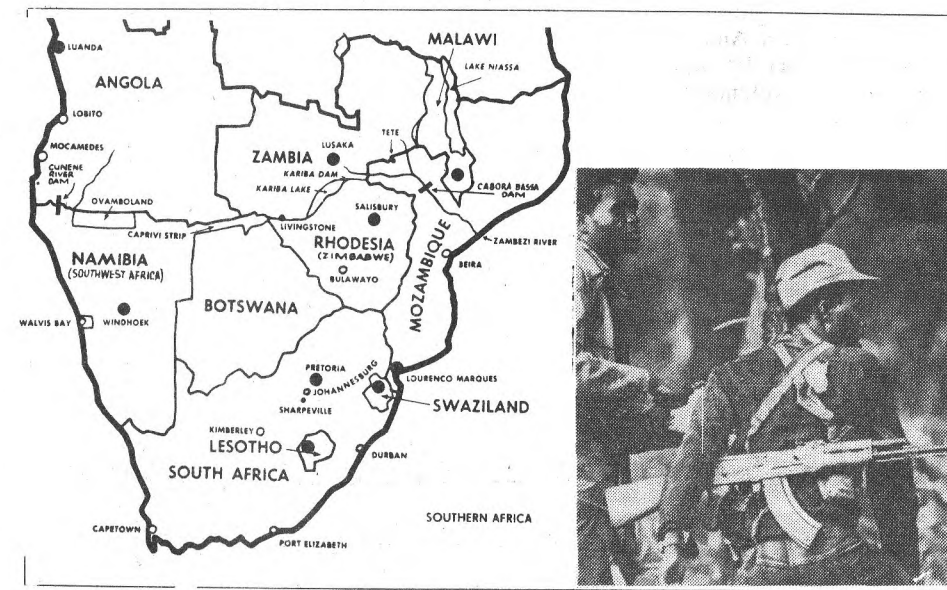
Today, the tripartite pact is the NAL and the instrument to implement it is the PAC. Its chairman is none other than John T. Dunlop, representing the "public interest." For the NAL to run smoothly only one thing is required: that its members make no recommendation that would go against the interests of Carter and the ruling circles he represents.

In the name of "visibility and power", Kirkland and other labor bureaucrats are helping the U.S. ruling class to maintain its dominant position over the working class and oppressed minorities.

History has shown us that there is nothing for the workers to look for or expect from boards and committees that are in the hands of the ruling class and/or their collaborators in the labor movement. This is because the interests of the working people are completely opposed to those of the bourgeoisie, the ruling class. Good working and living conditions, decent health and education services are basic democratic rights in the interests of the working class. But most importantly, it is in the interests of the workers to participate fully in the fair distribution of the wealth, the material goods, that the workers themselves produce. For it is only with this distribution that the working class will be able to achieve in full their democratic rights.

It is the U.S. bourgeoisie—the class which owns and controls the land, its natural resources, the factories, the banks and corporations—that prevents the workers from enjoying the fruits of their labor. Trying to reconcile these opposing interests through the creation of agreements like the National Accord with Labor can only lead to one result: the betrayal of the interests of the working class. ■

Zimbabwe Facing the Diplomatic Hurdle



The frontline states—Angola, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique—serve as the vital rearguard in Zimbabwe's national liberation war.

"Imperialism has two operational detachments in Zimbabwe: Smith and his lackeys, and Great Britain and its partners. (Its) strategy is always to have ready two solutions: an internal solution and an international one.

"When the internal solution is difficult for the regime, a proposal is made which tries to show that the international solution is the speediest way towards liberation.

Samora Machel, President of Mozambique
September, 1978

Last spring, an electoral farce took place in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia for a new government which supposedly would represent not just the white minority that ruled the country and controlled its land and wealth, but also the black majority. However, despite the election of black leader Bishop Abel Muzorewa as Rhodesia's Prime Minister, the economic, political and military power still remained in the hands of the whites. The inclusion of Ian Smith in the new government symbolized the continuation of white domination. As former Prime Minister, Smith had sworn that black majority rule would come to Rhodesia over his dead body.

Because there is still no government in Zimbabwe that represents the legitimate interests of the Zimbabwean people, the war of national liberation still rages. Leading this war is the Patriotic Front, composed of the two guerilla groups, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), led by Joseph Nkomo, and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), led by Robert

Mugabe. In September, the Patriotic Front agreed to participate in negotiation talks with the Muzorewa regime, with Great Britain acting as the mediator.

The image of a small man, dressed in a wide traditional white robe, smiling triumphantly at the election crowds, is still fresh in people's minds. Bishop Abel Muzorewa was the man picked by the white-led regime to serve as a cover for the continuation of white privilege in Zimbabwe. Last April, almost a million and a half blacks turned out to vote for the bishop. Although coercion was a factor in the large turnout, many Zimbabweans were lured by the Bishop's promises of peace and an end to the economic misery heightened by the war. However, the Muzorewa regime was not able to live up to its promises.

THE FAILURE OF THE "INTERNAL SOLUTION"

The war for national liberation has continued unabated in Zimbabwe. In fact, the economic and military deterioration of the country has accelerated since April. Three years ago the government was spending half a million dollars daily on the war. Today it has to spend a million and a half dollars daily. To maintain this rate of spending it has had to resort to more and more borrowing. South Africa, the bastion of apartheid, has had to pour in \$50 million each month to support Muzorewa's feeble regime. Even with this money, the economy of Rhodesia is near a total collapse. The economic sanctions imposed by the international community against the racist regime were not

lifted despite Muzorewa's election.

Since April, repression has been harsher in Zimbabwe. The promised release of political prisoners never happened and the number of new prisoners has actually increased. The few who are released find that their homes, cattle and other property have been confiscated and their families dispersed. People can be arrested without charge for 30 days. Young prisoners are forced to work on the farms of whites. Hangings take place every Monday at the central prison in Salisbury, Rhodesia's capital.

One thousand people die each month in the war. The regime's 100,000 troops are not enough to hold off the Patriotic Front forces. Thus the conscription of blacks has been increased. The regime has relied heavily on its air force in its military strategy against the Patriotic Front forces. However its air force is overtaxed and has relied more and more on the South African air force for covert support. Nevertheless, liberated zones in Zimbabwe are growing larger as the Patriotic Front's strategy of encirclement of the cities bears fruit.

Politically the Muzorewa regime is also in trouble. Bickering among Muzorewa and other sellout black leaders has continued. Recently, seven deputies from Muzorewa's party split off to form a new party. Muzorewa's 51 seats in the Parliament was reduced to 44, leaving him not even a simple majority. Reverend Sithole, originally a member of Muzorewa's government has continued to denounce it as illegitimate. Sithole's 13 deputies never took their seats in the Parliament.

THE "INTERNATIONAL SOLUTION": THATCHER TO THE RESCUE

But the problems of Muzorewa's regime have not passed unheeded in the centers of imperialism.

Last May, a conservative government headed by Margaret Thatcher was elected in Great Britain. During its campaign, it pledged to grant diplomatic recognition to Rhodesia's new regime and to lift economic sanctions. Similarly, in the U.S., conservative forces used Rhodesia's April elections as a wedge to push for the lifting of sanctions. However, the firm stand of black African states against this, in particular, the role of Nigeria which had nationalized Britain's share of Muzorewa's regime would be severely condemned by these countries; a more subtle approach had to be devised.

At a meeting of the British Commonwealth (a group of 49 of England's former colonies) in July, Thatcher's government presented a peace plan drafted

with the help of Tanzania and Zambia, two of the five Front-line states. The plan called for a ceasefire in Zimbabwe, a new constitution, and elections to be supervised by the British. With this plan, England was reasserting its former role as colonial administrator, which it had lost when Rhodesia's white minority had declared the country independent in 1965.

DIPLOMATIC OUTMANEUVERING

Within two weeks after the British peace proposal was made public, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, co-leaders of the Patriotic Front announced their intention to attend. At the same time they rejected a British proposal for a ceasefire during the negotiations. Spokespersons for the Front stated that the diplomatic efforts were seen as another front in the war and not as a substitute for armed struggle.

From that moment on, the leaders of the Patriotic Front have deftly maneuvered, pressuring the British for concessions on its proposals and demonstrating flexibility at crucial moments.

The Muzorewa regime set the tone of the conference by carrying out the most massive raid on Patriotic Front bases in Mozambique to date. The invasion, carried out on the eve of the negotiations, lasted three days and caused the death of 400 people and severe damage to crops. The hope, of course, was that the Patriotic Front would walk out. The leaders of the Front resisted this tactic and forced important concessions from the British on the agenda of the conference. Britain had to accept as a point on the agenda detailed discussions on military arrangements during the transition period; it also had to accept the idea that agreement on the constitution was contingent on agreement on the structure and function of the transitional government and the ceasefire.

The Patriotic Front had to accept some temporary privileges for the white minority in the constitution. However, it wrested from Britain a concession on the expropriation of land from whites (who own more than 80% of arable land in the country). Originally Britain demanded no expropriation of land without compensation, but it finally conceded that the government of Zimbabwe would not be responsible for these payments. Rather, it committed itself, other Western European countries, and the U.S., to pay \$2 billion to this end.

As the conference entered its third month, discussions reached one of the most crucial points in the agenda: the ceasefire and the transition period until election. The length of the transition period is to be 11 weeks, much shorter than the 6 months that Patriotic Front had wanted, but longer than the 8 weeks proposed by Britain. During this period the guerilla forces will be equally responsible for policing the country. A British governor will rule during the transition period and supervise the elections. The

British have also agreed to house and feed the guerillas and to resettle the quarter of a million refugees now living in the Front-line states.

ZIMBABWE'S NATIONAL LIBERATION

The struggle for Zimbabwe's national liberation is far from over. A ceasefire agreement has yet to be reached. If this happened and fair elections are held, the Patriotic Front is a sure winner. Even Ian

Smith concedes this to be true. But this immediately raises some questions. Will the white-minority adhere to the terms of the peace agreement? Will the regime's armed forces play a neutral role? South Africa has already stated that it will not accept a government headed by Nkomo and Mugabe. These are the questions that confront the Patriotic Front if a ceasefire is reached. But in the meantime, the struggle continues. ■

U.S. Reaffirms Control Over Canal:

PANAMA FACES ECONOMIC CRISIS



The Panamanian people have a long and heroic history of struggle for control of their national territory.

The value of Panama for the territorial consolidation of the United States was incalculable. Between 1850 and 1855, U.S. companies built one of the first railroads in the world across the Panamanian isthmus. Built as a result of the discovery of gold in California, the railroad greatly reduced the distance between the large metropolitan centers in the U.S.'s eastern coast and the western frontier. Thus the exploitation of the gold mines, the colonization of California and Oregon were greatly facilitated.

At that time, Panama was not an independent country but a province of Colombia. For 50 years, 1850 until 1903, the U.S. helped the weak Colombian government maintain control over its northwestern province by smashing all attempts at independence by the Panamanian people. Yet in 1903, when the Colombian government refused to grant the U.S. rights to build a canal across Panama, the U.S. switched sides and helped to rush Panama into independence.

Crippled by decades of struggle against the combined forces of Colombia and the U.S., Panama's ruling class was forced into signing a treaty which gave the U.S. the right to build the canal and control it forever—"in perpetuity."

Panama's history in the 20th century has been the history of its struggles to regain control of the canal. In 1925, 1947, 1959 and 1964, Panamanians confronted U.S. troops in the struggle for sovereignty over their own territory. This year saw the signing of treaties between the U.S. and Panama which finally gave Panama control over its canal, but with limitations.

The following is an article by Nueva Alternativa Popular Panamena (NAPP), a political organization based in New York. The article analyzes the new treaties as well as details the current level of the class struggle in Panama.

On October 1, 1979 the government of Panama held a huge ceremony. A 70-foot long flag was raised on top of a hill so that it would be visible from anywhere in Panama City. Foreign delegations from all over the world were invited to attend. It was a dual celebration: on that day Panama finally gained jurisdiction over the Canal Zone, and the governmental process begun by General Omar Torrijos 11 years ago was being institutionalized. But in spite of all the official fanfare, the patriotic furor, the countless receptions, the parade and the national holiday, the people of Panama were well aware that there was little for them to celebrate. The Torrijos government was also well aware of this. To avoid any embarrassment at the ceremony, the government deployed its elite troops along the parade route and arrested dozens of political activists.

MORTGAGING THE COUNTRY'S SOVEREIGNTY

In 1977, a treaty was signed between the U.S. and Panama establishing the terms under which Panama would gain control over the canal itself as well as the area surrounding it (the Canal Zone). The U.S. Senate didn't approve the treaty until 1979 and in the process attached more restrictions limiting Panama's control. Both the treaty and the Senate amendments were humiliating terms to most Panamanians. Although the new treaty ended the 1903 treaty which had given the U.S. permanent jurisdiction over the canal, at the same time it gave the U.S. exclusive rights to building a new canal.

Other than setting a time limit on the treaty and establishing October 1st as the date it would be turned over to Panama, the treaty was characterized by vagueness. The U.S. had to reduce its military bases in the Canal Zone from 41 to 3, but there was no specific mention of a reduction in the number of troops. A general statement was made about the School of the Americas in the Canal Zone which would be used to train high-level officers. But of course, the treaty did not mention that this school has been the center of counter-revolutionary training for Latin American armies. The treaty also envisioned a "new" relationship between the armies of the U.S. and Panama. Whereas before, the U.S. was responsible for policing the Canal, now the Panamanian army would be. But U.S. imperialism would continue to make the decisions. The Panamanian army would function in a subordinate role.

In order to "facilitate" the transfer of jurisdiction, the U.S. provided Panama with \$345 million in aid. This brought the country's foreign debt closer to the \$2 billion mark. To obtain nominal jurisdiction over the Canal Zone Torrijos's government mortgaged the country's wealth and once again, its sovereignty.

In 1968 General Torrijos overthrew the then-recently elected President Arias. Torrijos set about the task of governing by



Carter and Torrijos embrace while Panama sinks deeper into an economic crisis.

creating a populist alliance representing the interests of the peasants, workers, petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie. The dominant role in the alliance was played by those sectors of the bourgeoisie which were linked to foreign capital. Backed by this cross-section of social classes, the government carried out plans which developed agriculture and industry and expanded the services that the country could offer to foreign companies. For example, through a liberalization of finance laws, Panama became a haven for multinational banks operating in Latin America. At the same time, the government implemented social reforms which brought some relief to the misery of the Panamanian people. Through these changes, together with the collaboration of important organizations of the masses (chief among these the Communist Party/Partido del Pueblo), the Torrijos government was successful in achieving a decade of "social peace" for the Panamanian bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism.

THE "REFORMS" OF TORRIJOS

The world capitalist crisis of the '70s exhausted the possibilities of further reforms for the people. To deflect the growing social discontent, Torrijos stepped out of the Presidency but retained most of his powers by staying on as head of the National Guard, the country's armed forces.

To guarantee the continuation of his policies, Torrijos created a new political party, the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). The party of the current President, Dr. Aristedes Arroyo, is the PRD. The ruling power of the PRD represents the institutionalization of the process initiated by Torrijos. It was this institutionalization of the process initiated by Torrijos which served as the second cause for national celebration on October 1st. But the policies of the PRD were no longer bringing relief

to the Panamanian people. The decade of "social peace" had come to an end. Mass ferment against the government was again on the rise. Thus the discomfort and uneasy smiles of government officials and members of the bourgeoisie were evident during the October 1st celebrations.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

The government's predicament is rooted in the chronic economic crisis the national has suffered from since 1975. Over these years unemployment has swollen monstrously, reaching 28%. At the same time, underemployment is also running rampant. Inflation, caused largely by increases in the costs of imports such as beef, has eroded wages. Thus many families now go without meat and milk. Malnutrition is on the rise again. Even the middle sectors have not been spared. Many of the commodities they are accustomed to, such as cars and appliances, have been priced beyond their reach.

So far, the bourgeoisie has managed to survive the crisis unharmed. Cattle ranchers were allowed to raise the price of beef on the domestic market and thus divert a greater share of their products overseas. Manufacturing and construction which were initially hurt by a severe slump in demand, have managed to recuperate by reducing real wages and implementing speed-ups in production. Multinational banks which have billions deposited in Panama but lend little of it there, have increased returns by channeling funds to other parts of the world.

This protracted slowdown of the economy is the result of Panama's dependent capitalist structure. Panama lacks an internal market oriented to its own production. It has no monetary policy, as its own currency is purely nominal; in reality, the dollar is used as the country's currency.

International

Panama has no internal sources of finance, except taxes or loans from branches of foreign banks, and even now after the treaty, its principal natural resource—the Panama Canal—is under the control of the U.S. Its economy is deformed. There is virtually no industry; agriculture is weak and oriented primarily to the needs of export market. Almost all the growing economic sectors are controlled by international finance. Panama has one of the highest per capita foreign debts in the hemisphere, which consumes 40% of its national budget. The government has admitted that the canal will not bring in significant revenues. The only hope which it and the bourgeoisie have left is the development of a huge copper mining project and the attraction of intermediate industries such as auto assembly plants.

SHATTERING REFORMISM

Since January of this year, Panama has been rocked by a succession of strikes and demonstrations demanding higher wages, changes in economic policies and government legislation. The strikes have involved workers from many economic sectors and almost every region of the country. The labor upsurge is growing in scope and militance, drawing in more workers with each succeeding strike. Many of the strikes have managed to mobilize broad popular support, expressed in tumultuous street demonstrations and solidarity actions. Last June a strike by bus and taxi drivers against increases in the price of gas paralyzed all traffic in the cities of Panama and Colon. Government reprisal sparked a month of violent disturbances. More recently, a na-

tionwide teacher's strike for higher wages succeeded in mobilizing thousands of other workers and students in solidarity actions which paralyzed services through much of the country.

Those sectors within the bourgeoisie which are opposed to the Torrijos government have moved to exploit the government's weaknesses. A year ago, the various parties representing these groups organized themselves into the National Opposition Front (FRENO). These sectors—which are to the right of the Torrijos regime—aim to unseat it and replace it with a government which will deal more harshly with the growing popular discontent. They have used the growing mass movement for their own ends, giving support to some of the popular demands (such as in the recent teacher's strike) in exchange for labor's support of attacks on some of the government's progressive reforms. Thus the bourgeois opposition has managed to divide the budding people's movement.

REFORMISM ON THE DEFENSIVE

As the opposition closes in from different sides, Torrijos's party, the PRD, is losing its room to maneuver. The country's balance of payment deficit and crushing foreign debt limit its ability to grant wage increases or provide a fiscal stimulus to the economy. Nor can the PRD do anything to curb increases in the price of oil. If it chooses to increase the tax on business it will face an all out assault from all sectors of the bourgeoisie. If it decides to increase repression against the workers' movement it could spark enough unrest so as to be toppled.

The purpose of the Torrijos popular

alliance was to achieve the stability desired by business without undue recourse to violence. Much of Torrijos's strength, aside from the National Guard, came from popular sectors. However, the last four years have witnessed the erosion of this support. Furthermore, despite the fact that the Canal was finally returned to Panama, the terms of the treaty favoring U.S. imperialism unleashed a wave of nationalism in Panama, increasing the people's anger. Thus, the masses are dissatisfied with the Torrijos government and the FRENO is seeking to displace it.

WHAT NEXT?

As the mass movement recovers its independence, vitality flows through its ranks. Unfortunately the movement is still dangerously fragmented, disoriented, torn by the conflicting currents of reformism on one hand, and opportunism on the other. There is a third force: workers who understand the fallacy of the alternatives presented by the bourgeoisie, and who are conscious of their interests and the need for struggle. But this tendency is still far from exerting a hegemony within the mass movement. Likewise, the revolutionary left has yet to root itself in the mass struggles for immediate economic and political demands.

In the months to come, the inter-bourgeois conflict, represented by the FRENO and PRD will intensify; so will the class struggle. It will be a period full of opportunities and just as many dangers. As it unfolds advanced sectors of the mass movement and the revolutionary left must strive to create a popular political alternative. ■

What is Obreros En Marcha?

Obreros En Marcha is the central publication of MINP-El Comite (Puerto Rican National Left Movement). MINP-El Comite is a developing Marxist-Leninist organization which originated on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, New York City. We formed in the summer of 1970 as a Latin community organization committed to the struggle to improve the living conditions of the poor, mainly minority, families who lived in that area. Our goal was to win decent, low-rent housing, quality education and health services for these families.

Two years after our formation we began to respond to the needs of Latin workers in the factories. We also started to organize students at the university level and to become more actively involved in the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence. Our participation in these struggles ultimately led to our transformation into a different type of organization with more defined political objectives. In 1974 we began the slow and complex process of transformation into a Marxist-Leninist organization, an organization guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism and integrated into the class struggle in the United States.

As such an organization, we understand that an essential aspect of our work is to raise the level of political consciousness of workers in this country. This is one of the conditions necessary to develop the revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing the present order and building on its ruins a new socialist society. We join with other revolutionary forces in taking up this task.

Our political organ, *Obreros En Marcha*, has as its goal the development of revolutionary consciousness among our ranks, the advanced elements of the people and among the masses in general. We attempt to accomplish this task by the examination and analysis of the conditions confronting the working class locally, nationally and internationally. We also examine the progressive and revolutionary movements which develop as a response to those conditions.

Subscribe to *Obreros En Marcha*

M.I.N.P.-El Comite
577 Columbus Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10024
(212) 874-9162

I would like to subscribe to your publication.
I am including \$6.00 for 12 issues of OEM.

Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code