



PUERTO RICO:

Revolutionary Unity and the Solidarity Movement

On August 28, the United Nations Decolonization Committee began this year's hearing on the status of Puerto Rico. For a number of years now, this "Committee of 24" has held hearings on this question. In 1972, it declared Puerto Rico a colony of the United States and in subsequent years it reaffirmed Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and independence. But it has never specifically called for the U.S. to withdraw from the island. Only if there is a majority vote to do this, can the case of Puerto Rico be transferred to the U.N. General Assembly for discussion during its next meeting.

During the week of the hearings, organizations from Puerto Rico and those based in the U.S. organized a series of activities to show a unitary support for the call for independence. At a demonstration of 200 people at United Nations Plaza, speakers from U.S.-based organizations addressed the crowd. Included were speakers from El Comité-MINP; the Puerto Rican Socialist Party; National Liberation Movement (MLN); the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee; and the Committee in Support of Puerto Rican Independence, composed of activists from the May 19th Communist Organization.

Following is the speech presented by a member of our Political Commission. The presentation focused on the need to develop principled unity among the forces supporting Puerto Rican independence; yet at the same time, the ideological and political differences that exist among the groups could not be negated or ignored, for this would only create a false unity.

Companeros and Companeras:

Once again the question of Puerto Rico's status is being discussed in the chambers of the United Nations; and once again the bourgeois parties in Puerto Rico are uniting in defense of its colonial status and the exploitation of its natural and human resources by U.S. imperialism. But, as has happened before in major international forums, the lies and distortions of these reactionaries are being exposed and denounced by the progressive and revolutionary forces in Puerto Rico who are calling for an end to colonialism and for the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination.

But when we listen to the voices of the independence movement, as well as those who support the struggle for Puerto Rican independence here in the United States, it becomes very clear that there are differences as to how colonialism will be ended and how self-determination will be achieved. Indeed, there exist *serious* differences among the Puerto Rican Left that focus on the primary questions to be resolved in the revolutionary process, both in Puerto Rico and in this country. These are: the correct strategy, tactics, and program for Puerto Rico; the role of armed struggle; an analysis of imperialism's plans for the island (statehood or neo-colonialism?); how to build the revolutionary party of the working class; the role and tasks of Puerto Ricans in the U.S., the role and tasks of a solidarity movement, as well as other questions.

Despite the fact that we are divided over these various questions, the efforts made in the past few days—the mobilization of support at the United Nations—stand as proof that sectarianism, organizational chauvinism and arrogance can be overcome. These efforts reflect that we can take up not only those things which divide us, but also those which unite us against our common enemy—the enemy of the working class of Puerto Rico and the U.S., the main enemy of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America and of the broad masses of oppressed people throughout the world: U.S. imperialism.

In these times, when the colonial government of Romero Barcelo is engaged in a concerted and ruthless attack on the Puerto Rican labor movement and the independence movement, the unity of progressive and revolutionary forces is instrumental. Faced with a growing militancy in the trade union movement, Barcelo is out to destroy it, and in particular, its most conscious leaders. In addition, he is out to destroy the growing links between the trade union movement and the struggles for independence and socialism, which have the potential to direct and activate Puerto Rican workers in their real class interests. This is the reason why the independence and revolutionary movements are under fire. Under these conditions, unity assumes an even greater importance.

But we can only build real unity—i.e., a unity that strengthens the progressive movements—if it develops in a principled manner with areas of agreement clearly out-

lined. To forge unity in a principled manner, then, is not only a task before us, but it is essential if the struggle of the Puerto Rican working class is to be victorious. It is essential if we here in the United States are to involve workers, especially Puerto Rican workers, in the class struggle in this country. Principled struggle and the resulting unity which can be achieved is key if we are to build a strong movement in the U.S. in solidarity with the cause of Puerto Rican independence and socialism.

However, in the process of building unity, we should avoid false unity that clouds our differences over fundamental questions. False unity which negates the political and ideological differences that divide us, can only set back the revolutionary process, not push it forward. Therefore, whenever and wherever we unite, it must be on clearly defined principles. Furthermore, when we struggle over key differences, these struggles must take a comradesly form, through the appropriate channels agreed upon, and not through unprincipled back-biting attacks and slanders.

Comrades:

Since it came to power in 1975, the Barcelo administration has had as its strategic goal the conversion of Puerto Rico into the 51st state. Both the progressive trade union movement and the independence forces stand as clear obstacles to the realization of that objective. Therefore Barcelo and his party, the New Progressive Party (PNP), have unleashed a wave of repression intended to first neutralize and then destroy these sectors of opposition. The most recent victims of this terrorist campaign were the two independentista youths, Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi and Dario Rosado. Last month Soto and Rosado were ambushed and executed by the police. We have seen the continued harassment and persecution of members and leaders of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. Several weeks ago, the increased harassment by the police of the Popular Socialist Movement (MSP) came to a head with the arrest of companero Edgardo Alvelo Burgos. Last September, the police executed Teamster shop steward Juan Rafael Caballero Santana.

These developments, together with the frameup of Teamster organizer, Miguel Cabrera, clearly indicate that this repressive wave does not promise to subside; if anything, events point toward its intensification on a more brutal and widespread scale. The definition of Puerto Rico's status is at a crossroads today. But either of imperialism's alternatives, statehood or a neo-colonial solu-

tion, will confront one certainty: the militant opposition of the progressive labor movement and the revolutionary forces.

This is, in general terms, the reality which brings us to the United Nations today, August 30, 1978. At the level of this international forum, much work has been done toward advancing the cause of Puerto Rican independence and socialism.

Among those who have taken the lead in bringing the case of Puerto Rico to the nations of the world, is Cuba. Revolutionary Cuba stands as an example of principled unity, struggle, and commitment to the true liberation of the people of Puerto Rico. The Cuban people have remained firm in their determination; they do tireless work at the United Nations and among the non-aligned countries; they have continued to put the principles of Proletarian Internationalism into practice.

There is no doubt that the U.N. or any other international forum is an important area of struggle and that a victory in the U.N. this year will contribute to the difficult work ahead in the struggle for national liberation. However, we should not harbor illusions about any progressive stand that the U.N. should take, either in this particular period or in the future. The social liberation of the Puerto Rican people will be achieved only by the Puerto Rican people themselves, particularly the working class, the leading force in the liberation process.

On this day we raise once again the call for solidarity and support for the Puerto Rican national liberation struggle. Our movement here in the U.S. must become a tribunal of exposure and denouncement of the colonial situation in Puerto Rico. Our movement must also educate the North American people, the North American multi-national working class, to the ties of exploitation and oppression that bind them together with the Puerto Rican people, the ties of U.S. imperialism.

In particular, we must recognize our responsibility in raising support for the victims of repression of the labor and independence movements.

Finally, we must unite our voices in demanding the freedom of those who with their example, lives and sacrifice serve as source of inspiration and emulation to us: the four Nationalist prisoners.

Let us say no to the reactionary forces of statehood!

Let us say no to the plans for neo-colonialism!

Let us say no to the anti-communist and anti-worker repression!

Forward to a free and socialist Puerto Rico!

FORUM SPONSORED BY THE U.S. TRADE UNION COMMITTEE AGAINST REPRESSION IN PUERTO RICO

On: The Repression of the Labor Movement in Puerto Rico
and the Frame-Up of Teamster Organizer, Miguel Cabrera

Date: WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 13, 1978

Place: WASHINGTON IRVING HIGH SCHOOL
40 IRVING PLACE & 16TH ST.

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Speakers: MIGUEL CABRERA

JEAN WEISMAN, Coordinator, U.S. TUCAR

Donation: \$2.50