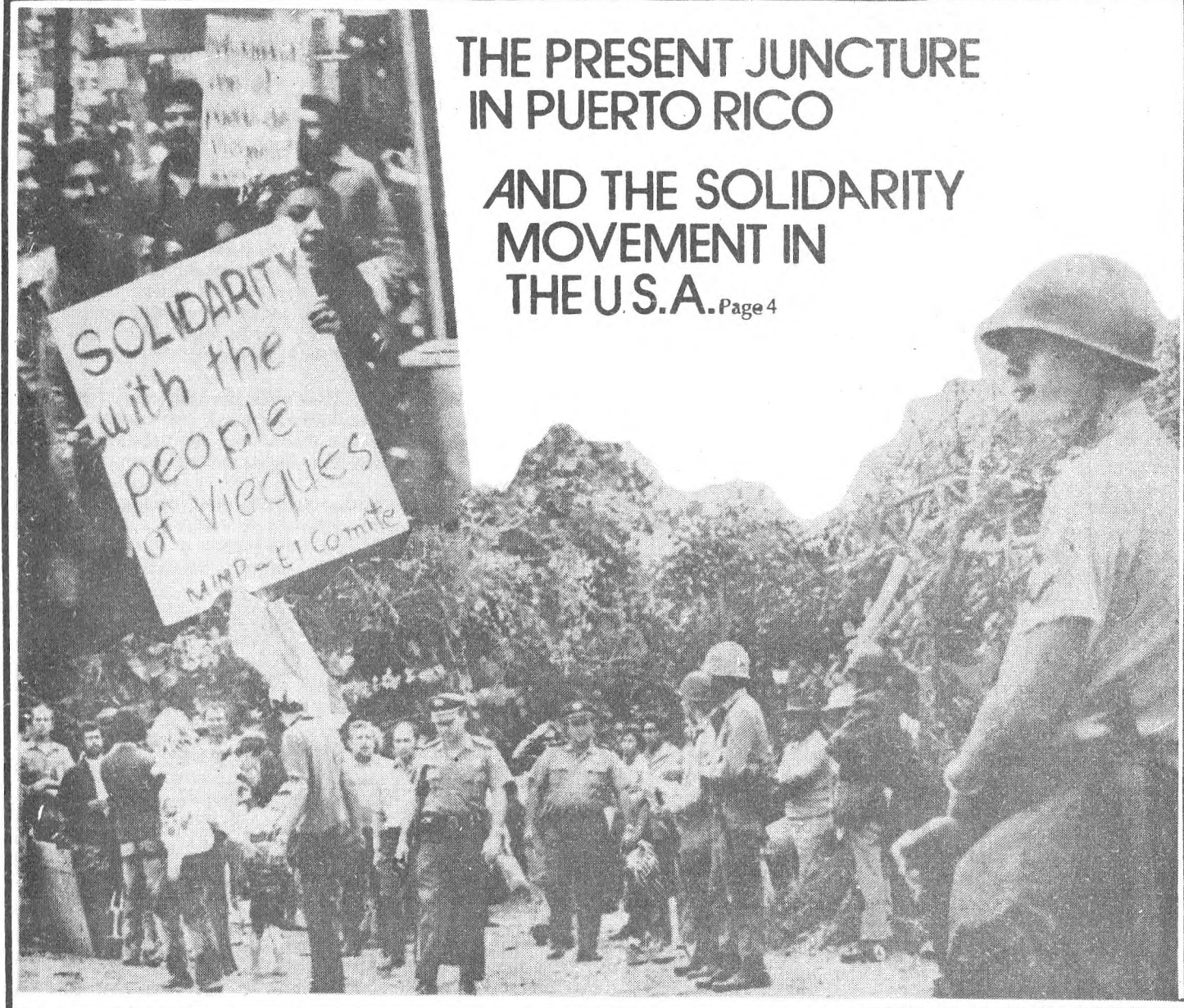


OBREROS EN MARCHA

August • 1979

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

vol. 4 No. 6



THE PRESENT JUNCTURE IN PUERTO RICO

AND THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT IN THE U.S.A. Page 4

IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL

"Planned Shrinkage": An Old Story for NYC 2

LOCAL

Tenants Continue Struggle Against
"Urban Removal" 3

FORUM

Present Juncture in Puerto Rico 4

PUERTO RICO INFORMA

Mass Support for the 4th of July March 6

NATIONAL

Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee Holds
Third National Conference 8

INTERNATIONAL

Nicaragua: Victory! But the Struggle Continues 10

U.S. Rank and File Delegation Visits Cuba 11

**"PLANNED SHRINKAGE":
AN OLD STORY FOR N.Y.C.**

Recently some changes in personnel were made at City Hall. Mayor Koch announced the departure of three deputy mayors by the end of the year, among them Herman Badillo, Deputy Mayor of Policy, and the only high-ranking Hispanic in Koch's administration. Other than a vague reference to a possible desire to run for elected office in the future, no concrete reason was given for Badillo's resignation. However, the commercial media in the Hispanic community as well as the *New York Times* and *Daily News* posed that his resignation was the result of a struggle going on within the city administration over Koch's budget cuts and his future plans for dealing with the city's fiscal crisis.

Although it is true that Badillo takes a more flexible and liberal approach to the fiscal crisis than Koch does (i.e., give some crumbs to poor people), fundamentally he too has accepted the myth created by New York's major banks and monopoly corporations that the fiscal crisis was caused by too much money being spent on social services and too high wages and costly benefits being awarded to municipal workers. Thus for the past two years, despite his liberal image, Badillo has been willing to serve as the front man for Koch's cutbacks, particularly as they have affected New York's Hispanic community.

Badillo has played this role before. During his tenure as Commissioner of Relocation in the early 1960's, he implemented the policy of urban renewal, directed at removing poor, mainly minority, people from rundown neighborhoods slated for transformation into middle income communities under the false promise that their move would be temporary. During this period as well as during his years as Bronx Borough President and later as Congressman from the South Bronx, Badillo used the Hispanic and Puerto Rican community as his power base, but bringing it few benefits other than bandaid changes.

Badillo's resignation from Koch's administration was based less on his opposition to the actual cutbacks and more on the growing ferment and mobilization within the Hispanic community against Koch's attacks. By associating himself with Koch, Badillo was beginning to undermine his support in the Puerto Rican and Hispanic community and expose his role as a "politiquero," whose main interest was his own political career, not the interests and needs of the Hispanic community.

Following Badillo's resignation, it was announced that Robert Wagner, Jr., Chairman of the City Planning Commission (CPC) would take over Badillo's position. Wagner is the main proponent in city government of a racist and anti-working class policy known as "planned shrinkage", which calls for the systematic withdrawal of services from poor neighborhoods in order to build up the city's business center and well-to-do communities. In its latest report to Koch, the CPC recommended that the city deny funds for building new public schools, colleges, hospitals and transit facilities as well as phase out 200 existing public schools and close enough hospitals to reduce the number of beds by 5000.

The idea of "planned shrinkage," however, was not developed by Wagner nor is it new to city politics. It has played a role in city policy-making at least since the beginning of the fiscal crisis in 1974. Roger Starr, the then-Commissioner of Housing recommended as a solution to the city's problems the step-by-step destruction of its slums. Felix Rohatyn—investment banker, architect of the city's plan to balance its budget through drastic cuts in social services, chairman of the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) and representative of finance capital—suggested in 1976 that poor neighborhoods such as the South Bronx be completely bulldozed, paved over and converted into industrial parks with lower business taxes as an incentive.

For 4 years now, the city's fiscal crisis has dealt blow after blow to the standard of living of New York's poor and working people. The decrease in both the quality and availability of essential services, coupled with the layoff of thousands of city workers, has meant a drastic decline in the quality of life in those communities most affected. These cuts have laid the basis for the implementation of planned shrinkage as the next stage in the attack on the working class. Those working class and poor neighborhoods that are composed of large numbers of unemployed people, people without job skills and people dependent on public services for their survival will undoubtedly suffer the brunt of planned shrinkage.

In the face of a "callous, ruthless mayor", Herman Badillo is now being portrayed as a great defender of the Puerto Rican community and of the working class in general. But, as we stated earlier, this is a distortion of reality, of Badillo's political history. The developing grassroots movement against the budget cuts in the Puerto Rican and Hispanic community should not be taken in by such a ploy. Badillo and all politicians must be held accountable for their past and present actions. In addition, it is important not to focus the struggle only against Koch, the individual, and neglect the institutions such as MAC and the Financial Control Board, that the bankers and business leaders have used to implement their policy of austerity for the poor and profits for the rich.

**OBREROS
EN MARCHA**

Obreros En Marcha is the central publication of El Comité-M.I.N.P. (Puerto Rican National Left Movement). El Comité-M.I.N.P. is a developing Marxist-Leninist organization which originated on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, New York. 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 get decent, low-rent housing, quality education and improved 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 get more actively involved in the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence. Our participation in these struggles ultimately led to our transformation into a new type of organization with more defined political objective. Thus in 1974 we began a slow and complex process of transition into a Marxist-Leninist organization: an organization guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism and integrated into the struggles of working people.

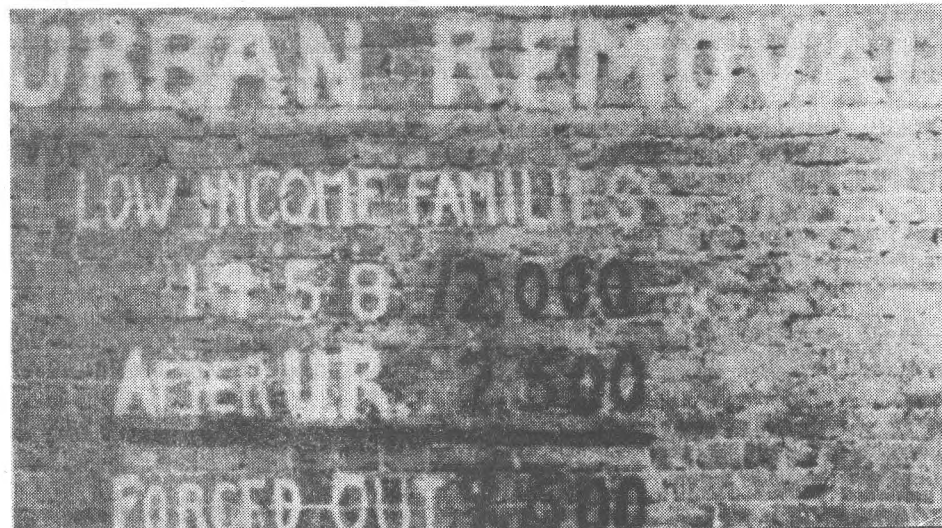
As such an organization, we understand that an essential aspect of our work is to raise the level of political consciousness of workers in this country. This is one of the conditions necessary to develop the revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing the present order and building on its ruins a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

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 developing progressive and revolutionary movements locally, nationally and internationally.

**El Comité-MINP
577 Columbus Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10024
(212) 874-9162**

I want to subscribe to your publication. Enclosed is \$6.00 for 12 issues of OEM.

Name _____
Address _____
City, State Zip _____



The community keeps score of urban renewal.

**HOUSING:
TENANTS CONTINUE STRUGGLE
AGAINST "URBAN REMOVAL"**

Since 1962 a 20-square block section of land in New York City has set the scene for a giant chess game. The players have been the city of New York and the real estate developers. The pawns in this game have been the poor and working class people living in what has come to be known as the West Side Urban Renewal Area.

Before this Urban Renewal Plan began to take shape, this area stretching south to north from 87th Street to 97th Street and east to west from Central Park West to Amsterdam Avenue was historically a working class community. When urban renewal first began in 1962, the neighborhood was largely composed of minorities, in particular Puerto Ricans; 67% of the families were of low-income.

Nearly 80% of the working class and minority families who lived in the area in the early 1960's are gone. The Upper West Side has slowly become one of the more fashionable areas to live in the city. Professional, middle and upper-income people flock to the area willing to pay exorbitant rents, eager to patronize expensive stores and elegant restaurants. Piece by piece, brick by brick, this former working class neighborhood is being transformed into an area that only the rich can afford to live in. All of this in the name of Urban Renewal.

**TRANSFORMATION OF
A NEIGHBORHOOD**

Urban renewal can mean different things for different neighborhoods. However, one thing it has meant for all neighborhoods is the removal of poor people from their homes, never to return to the area, in spite

of all the government's promises. What has it meant for the West Side of Manhattan? Basically the destruction of family housing. This area once had many apartments with three, four and five bedrooms. This was ideally suited for large, working class families and was one of its main attractions, despite the run-down condition of many of the buildings.

Then entered the dreaded symbol of urban renewal—the bulldozer. Whole blocks of sound housing that could have been rehabilitated were leveled by powerful steel jaws. As the area was slowly squeezed of its working class population, exiled to the ghettos of the city, other changes took place. The many small businesses that added to the fiber of a neighborhood were also caught in the web. The *bodegas* (grocery stores), pharmacies, tailors, discount stores, all the familiar faces also disappeared. Many would never have another business and ended up joining their friends at the factory or plant.

But what has the area become? Where sturdy, brick family buildings once stood, thirty-story "middle-income" (\$25,000 per year and up) structures have been constructed. Brownstones which housed smaller families now start at \$300,000 and up. Apartments were converted from six rooms to three small apartments charging "fair market" rents, the highest rent an owner could squeeze out of a tenant. A studio apartment rents at \$450.00/month.

As the small businesses were squeezed out and disappeared they were replaced by antique shops, singles bars, and expensive restaurants, all catering to the middle

management, administrators and professionals who have been flocking to the area. This is what urban renewal has meant for this West Side neighborhood.

WHAT IS URBAN RENEWAL?

In 1958, the New York City Planning Commission published its *Master Plan for the City of New York*. Master plans are a relatively new concept which many cities across the country have developed to chart their long range expansion plans. The purpose of these plans is to provide for the growing needs of the powerful business interests who are influential in these cities. New York City's plan proposed the creation of a "national center" to be developed in mid-town Manhattan. It was here that the executive offices of large national and multi-national corporations would be located (N.Y. Life Insurance Co., I.B.M., A.T.T., etc.). New York was projected to remain the business and financial center of the country.

As part of this plan, the roles of industry (primarily light and medium) and commerce were minimized, and so began the trend to change the economic character of the city. This catering to the finance and management sectors of the business community had a definite impact on the character of New York's working class. Unemployment in the non- and low-skilled jobs steadily increased and migrations out of the city became the trend, due to the disappearing industry. (Industry also left the city seeking lower rents and taxes, lower wages and non-unionized workers.)

Yet the City Planning Commission knew that the plan it was beginning would create needs for another part of the population—the increasing thousands of business professionals who would be attracted to the expanding "national center". This is where Urban Renewal comes in.

Under the guise of renewing the area for the benefit of all the residents, urban renewal expels the poor and working class from an area. The West Side Urban Renewal Plan was the first such experiment in the country and succeeded in removing almost 10,000 families from this area of the West Side. Through their own experience, these families understand the meaning of the phrase, "Urban Renewal Means *Urban Removal*."

HELL NO, WE WON'T GO!

In spite of the drastic changes forced on the neighborhood, the West Side Urban Renewal Plan has not always gone smoothly for the city planners. The struggle for the preservation of decent housing for the poor goes back 10 years with the first organized squatters taking over much-needed apartments which had been sealed-up by the city and slated for future demolition. With the development of Operation

Move-In (OMI) a few years later, this movement reached a peak of militancy and organization. The mid-70s saw a lull in the struggle for housing in the community as the urban renewal process was temporarily halted due primarily to federal cutbacks in construction money.

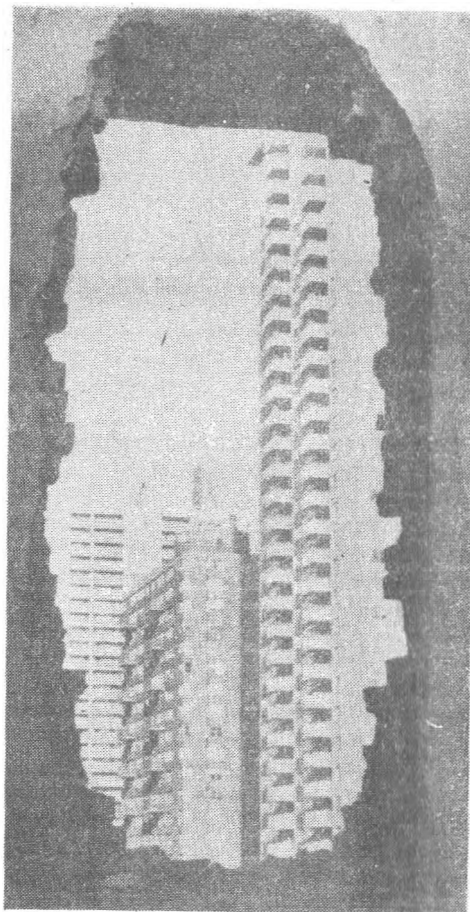
But the urban renewal machine began to gear up and gain momentum in 1977 as the third and final phase of the plan was put into effect. It was during that summer that the fate of the 200 families living on the remaining sites to undergo renovation would be decided.

It was then that the United Tenants Association (UTA) was born. Composed of the families living on the 9 remaining sites, the UTA continued the community's struggle for decent and low-rent housing. (Our organization, M.I.N.P., participates directly in the UTA since our own storefront is located in one of the buildings slated for renovation.) The Local Community Planning Board was ready to railroad through the plans of the private developers to build all types of luxury housing. This is where UTA's struggle began. In danger of losing their homes, the tenants submitted an alternate proposal to the planning board. They applied for the Community Management Program run by the city. Under this program the UTA would begin the process of managing and renovating their buildings. But the city would remain as the landlord. Within two years, however, the city would turn over ownership and full responsibility of the building to the tenants.

The danger in this program is that as the cost of living and inflation continue to rise, poor working people may find themselves priced out of their own homes. This takes the responsibility for providing for decent housing away from the city and puts the full burden on the tenants. Still, the tenants see entering this program as an immediate tactic in a long and hard struggle.

The task of organizing themselves into an organization that could struggle against the city's Master Plan and the Community Planning Board has been a true test for the UTA. In addition, it has had to combat the racist attacks of a local reactionary group representing the brownstone owners and high-income families, who don't like poor, particularly minority, people. Nonetheless, the UTA has had several important victories. It is now recognized, in spite of tremendous opposition, as the official sponsor for its own buildings. It has an agreement with the city, who is still the landlord, to allow the UTA to rent the vacant apartments in these buildings, and it has managed to wrest a storefront office out of the city.

By its very existence, the UTA has become the voice of the poor and working people of the urban renewal area in their struggle for decent low-rent housing. As such it has seen the role it must play to defend public housing against court-supported racist attacks (see OEM, Vol. 3, #12) and to insure that the city fulfills its responsibility to the poor and working people of the urban renewal area. ●



Exclusive high risers stand where working class people once lived.

PUERTO RICO INFORMA

FORUM:

PRESENT JUNCTURE IN PUERTO RICO



Close to 150 people attended the forum.

On July 20th, 1979 the Puerto Rican National Left Movement (M.I.N.P.-El Comité) held a forum on the present situation in Puerto Rico and the tasks facing the solidarity movement in the U.S.A. The speakers at the forum were Carlos Pabon from the Movimiento Socialista Popular and Federico Fernandez from the Partido Socialista Revolucionario (PSR, M-L). The following are excerpts from the presentations made by each of the speakers. Full copies are available at our office for 75¢.

Excerpts from the presentation of the MSP:

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The most important structural characteristic of the Puerto Rican economy is, without a doubt, its absolute dependency on the U.S. economy. Since 1898 Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States which implies that all the fundamental powers of the government rest in the Congress of the U.S. This condition expresses in political-juridical terms the domination of the U.S. industrial and commercial corporations over the Puerto Rican working class, as well as other important considerations of a political and military nature. The Yankee investments in Puerto Rico surpass the \$18,000 million mark. Annually these corporations obtain profits of up to \$3,000 million

from the exploitation of the Puerto Rican workers. These huge profits are the reason for the colonial situation in Puerto Rico and explain the importance of the island within Yankee interests in Latin America. The investments in Puerto Rico constitute almost 50% of all the U.S. investments in all Latin America. . . .

The economic annexation has been of such magnitude that even the means of controlling the crisis and welfare benefits depend on the transference of federal funds. The food stamps, the benefits for veterans, the social security and the taxes for the construction, education and government constitute mechanisms which contribute not only to the economic dependency but also creates its counterpart of ideological and psychological dependency within the Puerto Rican masses in respect to the government of the U.S.

Puerto Rico has in fact been annexed to the United States through the process of economic development principally in the last 38 years. This process has served as the basis for the growth of the statehood forces which have taken advantage of the precarious economic situation in which thousands of Puerto Ricans—whose only income comes from federal funds—live. This process has led to a structural crisis in the Puerto Rican economy which does not show any signs of recovery in the near future. . . .

Official repression was increased in the last few years with the activation of the Death Squad accused of murdering Juan Rafael Caballero; with the increase of illegal searches and harassment of the left with the imprisonment of Miguel Cabrera and Edgardo Alvelo. The maximum reflection of this increased repression was last year's massacre of Cerro Maravilla. Everything points to the fact that the government has moved gradually to create the material and the psychological conditions, preparing both the state and the consciousness of the masses for the implantation of a Police State. This state will combine bourgeois legality with the intensification of repression systematically aimed against the labor movement and the left. The objective: to avoid the development of a militant mass movement in response to the deepening economic and social crisis.

THE STATEHOOD OFFENSIVE

Ever since the New Progressive Party (PNP) came into the colonial government in 1976 they have submitted the Puerto Rican people to a constant ideological bombardment in putting forth the political formula that statehood is the most convenient solution for the fundamental problems of the country. Under the slogan of "statehood is for the poor" they have developed an ideological offensive on all levels directed toward identifying statehood as a guarantee of economic and social security for the working class.

Manipulating the difficult economic and social conditions in which the majority of Puerto Ricans live, particularly the sectors marginalized from the productive process, and capitalizing on the ignorance and low level of consciousness of the oppressed masses, the annexionists want the people to believe that statehood is the only alternative we have to change this situation.

The starting point for this offensive has been the increase of the popular support for statehood by important sectors of the masses, victims of extreme dependency of the economy and the government on the United States. We want to emphasize that the material base for this increase in popular support is the total dependency of the Puerto Rican economy on the U.S. economy. Barcelo's strategy has been based on food stamps and all types of federal funds since these have the effect of consolidating the economic and ideological and political dependency of the

masses. The fact that PNP is in the colonial administration gives it enormous economic and propagandistic resources with which to push their offensive. As a matter of fact up to now the statehood leadership has developed good relations with important sectors of the federal government.

Nevertheless this should not be confused with the statement that some sectors have made, that imperialism is presently proposing statehood as the strategy to resolve the Puerto Rican question. This has been the position of the pro-independence petty-bourgeois forces that, in desperation and with a lack of scientific analysis, have identified the PNP annexionist offensive with imperialist strategy elaborated for Puerto Rico. Imperialism may be studying different alternatives in order to reinforce its domain over Puerto Rico, but at the moment the Free Associated State (ELA), even in bankruptcy, serves their interests very well.

The pharmaceuticals, the petrochemicals and the bond holders are sectors that derive enormous benefits from the present political status of Puerto Rico and would be very much affected by a precipitated change in this status. As a result before pushing alternatives such as statehood or neo-colonial independence, they will first push for changes in ELA which will not affect their interests. Therefore, identifying the PNP annexionist offensive with the strategy designed and being argued by U.S. imperialism for Puerto Rico is an incorrect assessment of our present political situation. This assessment also implies incorrect forms of how to take up the political tasks and priorities at the present juncture.

EXCERPTS FROM THE PRESENTATION OF THE PSR-M.L.

There is no room for doubt that in Puerto Rico the most annexationist and assimilationist sectors of our bourgeoisie are attempting to go to impossible lengths to accelerate the process toward statehood. On the other hand, in the center of the imperialist U.S. bourgeoisie there exist serious contradictions regarding the political status which should be adopted for our country. Each sector is pushing in the direction which will best suit the defense of their class interests. Those that already have their grip in Puerto Rico and want to preserve it, of course, will push the status quo with some cosmetic changes for the colony. Those who wish to become co-partners in the colonial plot will be willing even to pay federal taxes and in that sense are not afraid of statehood. These latter forces are the ones that have made clear to Romero in his political trips that they see very good possibilities and opportunities being offered by the government for further investment in Puerto Rico.

This offensive on the part of the annexationists and assimilationists in Puerto Rico has brought on vacillation and the adoption of opportunist positions among sectors

“... in the center of the imperialist bourgeoisie there exist serious contradictions regarding the political status which should be adopted for our country. Each sector is pushing in the direction which will best suit the defense of their class interests.”

of the radicalized petty-bourgeoisie in the Puerto Rican independence movement. They speak of a "conspiracy" to "annex" Puerto Rico; of the necessity for a "re-alignment of forces" with ex-governor Roberto Sanchez Vilella at the head and other things of a similar nature.

In the first place, it is absurd to speak of conspiracies on the part of imperialism toward Puerto Rico when it has functioned openly, boldly and shamelessly in our country from the very moment of the North American invasion. In the second place, to speak of the "struggle against annexation" as being synonymous with the struggle against statehood is, simply, not to know the difference between both concepts and not to understand the real significance of annexation. . . .

Puerto Rico has not been able to be assimilated, but it has been annexed to the U.S. imperialist state. The Puerto Rican economy does not maintain a relation of mere dependency but of integration into the U.S. economy. The imperialists control 85% of the industry; 90% of all commerce; they extract billions in profits every year (in 1978 \$1,600 million in net profits); they have converted Puerto Rico into their fifth largest market in the world and the second in Latin America; Puerto Rico is dealt with in the Congress, for all intents and purposes, as if it were another province ("state"); federal programs have been extended to Puerto Rico which at times have budgets larger than many of the other "states," etc., etc., etc.

In other words, the imperialists have been able to achieve a reality of statehood on Puerto Rico for all practical purposes, with the agreement of the annexationists, colonialists and assimilationists. The "Free Associated State" (ELA) is ultimately statehood in deed without the 7 representatives and the 2 senators that Puerto Rico would have if it were a "state" and without having to pay federal taxes. In essence, what other important elements distinguish Puerto Rico from the rest of the "states"? That is why all the words and arguments of the annexationists and assimilationists from the bourgeoisie regarding the "rights" and "benefits" that according to them, Puerto Rico would have under statehood boil down to a myth.

Statehood would be the culmination of the process of annexation lived by Puerto Rico since 1898. To date, the

imperialists have come to agreement and have jointly promoted that process of annexation that we have just described briefly. In Puerto Rico, both the PPD (yesterday) as the PNP (today) formerly the Republican Party, have supported key measures that on an economic, political, and social level have straight-jacketed our country to the United States.

The major contradiction existing in Puerto Rico is among those who want to take the process of annexation to its ultimate conclusion, i.e. to statehood (the present statehooders) and those other sectors that are opposed to statehood even though they do not oppose other annexationist moves that will deepen annexation further. In recent years, we have had the clearest examples with the "aid" and federal programs at the economic level and with the internal primaries of the Democratic Party of the U.S. at the political level, that both PNP and PPD support and struggle to reap the benefits of federal aid. Both parties are willing to participate in the primaries, even when the PPD retreated opportunistically at the last minute because it knew that their candidates would not be guaranteed any place.

For this reason it is an opportunist position to speak of "re-alignment of forces" to combat "annexation" and conceiving that unity with colonialist and annexationist leadership of the PPD. This leads people to believe that the PPD is in actuality "anti-annexationist" when it does not go beyond opposition to statehood. To struggle against statehood and to struggle against annexation are two different issues. The first is a struggle that can be taken up, as we have seen, by annexationist sectors and pro-imperialists of the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie—a struggle of this type would lead, given the present situation in Puerto Rico, to the strengthening of the PPD and of colonialism; to the betrayal of the highest interests of the working class and the oppressed masses that objectively stand in contradiction to capitalism and the bourgeoisie, whether they are annexationist, colonialist or assimilationist. To what extent would the cause of the Puerto Rican workers be advanced by an alliance based on opportunism and without principles? In our view, to no other result than to take a step backwards. ●

Puerto Rico:

MASS SUPPORT FOR THE 4TH OF JULY MARCH



Freedom for the Nationalist Prisoners: one of the points of unity of the workers' and independence movements.

Contribution from the Popular Socialist Movement (MSP)

This last 4th of July a very successful march took place in Puerto Rico, sponsored by the Committee To Free The Nationalist Prisoners, the National Committee to Support Vieques, and the Soto-Rosado Committee Against Repression. The activity was co-sponsored by various unions, political and civic groups such as the Revolutionary Socialist Party (M-L), the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, the Popular Socialist Movement, the Puerto Rican Socialist League, the Legal Services Employees Union, the Rio Piedras Chapter of the UTIER, the Communication Employees Independent Union, the Feminist Alliance for Human Liberation, the Bar Association of Puerto Rico, and others.

THE OBJECTIVES AND IMPORTANCE OF THE MARCH

The objectives of the activity were to denounce and mobilize people around the three most pressing issues that have caught the consciousness of the Puerto Rican people in the last year. Without a doubt these issues repre-



The march succeeded by joining the most pressing issues facing the Puerto Rican Masses.

sent the feelings and outcry of the vast majority of our people, going beyond partisan sentiments:

1) **The struggle for the unconditional release of the Puerto Rican nationalist prisoners: Oscar Collazo, Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda, and Irvin Flores.**

2) **The struggle of the people of Vieques to throw out the U.S. Marines from their land.**

3) **To expose the assassination of Carlos Soto Arrivi and Arnaldo Dario Rosado carried out by the police and the Puerto Rican government on July 25th in 1978 in Cerro Maravilla (See OEM Vol. 3 #7).**

The march, involving more than three thousand people, passed through the streets of San Juan and ended in front of the Federal Court Building. A political rally was held there in which the president of the Puerto Rican Bar Association, Angel L. Tapia, gave the main speech of the demonstration.

The activity's success was very important for all those involved, as well as the revolutionary movement in general. First of all, the march was the only one of its kind to be held by the Puerto Rican independence movement during the recent Panamerican Games. Because of this, it was able to broadcast nationally and internationally—through the foreign press—our people's struggle as well as contribute to smash the distorted image of Puerto Rican reality that the present PNP government tried to present during the games. During the games the PNP tried to sell the world the image of Puerto Rico as "a tropical island," where everyone is happy and where there are no problems such as a socio-economic crisis or signs of social struggle. The 4th of July march took on the task of breaking nationally and internationally this PNP pre-fabricated image.

Secondly, the demonstration was a massive and militant challenge to the climate of terror, hysteria, and intimidation that the PNP created during the Panamerican games. (See OEM, Vol. IV, #5) It installed a *police state* where all 10,000 active policemen were mobilized along with 1,500 recruits of the National Guard, the F.B.I., U.S. Secret Service, and the C.I.A. In fact, these games had the most security of any games since the beginning of these events. The purpose of this repressive display was to intimidate and immobilize the revolutionary forces in Puerto Rico, but the will to struggle of our people was stronger than these measures.

Finally, in spite of a lull in the Puerto Rican struggle, the independence movement put on a firm and militant show in what is one of the largest mobilizations of recent times. This confirms our analysis that mass struggle in Puerto Rico is going through a period of revitalization, although overall it is still at a lull.

SECTARIANISM AND THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

The most important point about the success of the march is that it came about without the participation or endorsement of the two main organizations in the independence movement: the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), even including the active boycott of the latter organization.

The PIP, true to its sectarian and anti-communist position, did not participate—even though it was invited—because in general it believes that it would be against its electoral interest to unite with any organization, especially Marxist-Leninist ones. Therefore, it's been some years since the PIP participated in any activity that required unity with other independence and socialist organizations; nor has it participated in any mass front of a unitary character.

For its part, the PSP not only did not participate or endorse the activity but it also openly boycotted it. The PSP boycott could be seen in the following ways: First, they used their ideological influence on certain groups active in the Vieques struggle to get them to publicly deny any support for the activity. They pressured different people and a local Vieques support committee to withdraw from the demonstration. They also tried to convince the leadership of the National Committee to Free the Nationalist Prisoners to reconsider their decision and not participate in the activity. Finally the PSP directed their membership to respect the decision not to participate and therefore not go to the march.

When plans for the activity were being made, the PSP presented the sponsoring committees with two fundamental reasons for not participating. First they did not agree with holding an activity where the issues of the Nationalist prisoners, Vieques, and Cerro Maravilla were linked together, arguing that this would take away from the broadness of each issue separately.

We cannot understand the logic of this argument no matter how hard we try. How is it possible to argue that by putting together the three most pressing issues that have caught the consciousness of our people in the last year we are taking away from the broadness of each issue separately? Common sense tells us that by joining these issues we are doing the exact opposite: widening and increasing its broadness among the masses. PSP's argument is only understood if we start from the premise that they are interested in maintaining the beginning mass movement fragmented, separate, and divided so they can better control it. They are not interested in fighting for the unification of this movement and in showing the masses the relationship that these issues have with each other, and

contribute to the raising of their consciousness.

PSP's second argument was they did not recognize the Vieques Support Committee and the Soto-Rosado Committee as broad fronts of struggle. Therefore the activity should only be sponsored by the National Committee to Free the Nationalists, the only committee they recognize. What has been proposed here is not a debate about the different fronts in Puerto Rico, as PSP wishes everyone to believe. What we have here is a sectarian PSP position that is very damaging to these fronts. The real reason why PSP did not and does not recognize these fronts is that they are made up of organizations and non-affiliated individuals that do not bow to its politics and therefore the fronts could not be controlled or converted into PSP fronts.

The importance of this is that PSP's arguments were not accepted by the sponsoring committees even though the PSP threatened not to participate if the activity was carried out. This time things did not turn out as they planned and their threats were not accepted. The committees decided to go ahead with the activity without the PSP and it was a great success.

NATIONAL

PUERTO RICO SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE HOLDS THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE

On the week-end of July 27, 28, and 29, 1979, the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee (PRSC) held its third bi-annual conference in New York City. Preparations for this conference began in earnest in late June with discussion throughout the organization of several key political and organizational reports and position papers revolving around the major questions facing the PRSC.

The three days of discussion and debate were attended by more than 120 people representing the 10 local chapters of the PRSC across the country, members of the National Board and a host of observers and invited guests. Observers included representatives from the Venceremos Brigade and Non-Intervention in Chile (NICH), and from political organizations in the U.S. such as the U.S. Zone of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the National Network of Marxist Leninist Clubs, M.I.N.P.-El Comité and others. In addition, there were observers from political organizations in Puerto Rico, such as the Popular Socialist Movement (MSP) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR-ML). The closing session was addressed by Eneida Vazquez from the Puerto Rican Peace Council, Luis Lausell of the Electrical Workers union (UTIER) in Puerto Rico, and a representative of the Vieques Fishermen's Association. The warmest welcome and a standing ovation was extended to the Washington-based representative of the New Provisional Government of Nicaragua who spoke to express the solidarity of the Provisional Government, the FSLN, and the people of Nicaragua with the struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

The conference opened Friday night with the introduction of the reports and documents previously distributed and

The success of this activity, in spite of the absence of PIP and PSP, shows us that there is a significant sector of the independence movement that is not willing to be bullied by "the great pro-independence parties" with the hope that they participate in some activity. It also shows that these parties are not indispensable in order to have successful mass activities. Because of this the PIP and PSP have a decision to make: either they become involved in the process of unity based on principles or little by little they will be left aside in the mass struggle. The activity also showed that there are some issues in Puerto Rico around which the left can and should unite its efforts. It will be the responsibility of all of us in Puerto Rico to follow up on these tasks and attempts at unity if we really want to move the revolutionary process ahead.

In the United States the Puerto Rican solidarity movement should be aware of these developments so that it could implement an effective solidarity with the processes and struggles that will be taking place in Puerto Rico in the coming years.

discussed by the local chapters. The reports included two positions within the organization on the question of Puerto Rico's status, a political evaluation of the PRSC since its last national conference, a report evaluating the present structure of the PRSC and proposing certain changes, and finally, the proposed work plan for the next two years. The purpose of these papers was to give form and focus to the key areas of discussion and struggle which the organization had to take up in the course of the three-day conference. The political struggle and the resulting unity would help to place the PRSC on a firmer footing as a national anti-imperialist organization in solidarity with Puerto Rico, one better able to grapple with the tasks which lay ahead.

The final task of the conference was the election of a new national leadership body which would be responsible for implementing the agreements of the conference.

The National Board also had the responsibility to provide the political and organizational leadership until the next national conference in the spring of 1981.

PUERTO RICO TODAY— THE STRUGGLE AROUND STATUS

The main question debated at the conference was how to characterize the present political reality in Puerto Rico. As we stated in our last two editorials in *Obreros En Marcha*, this assessment was needed to provide the framework for the tasks necessary to be taken up in the coming period. In addition, an assessment of current U.S. reality was needed to determine which tasks of solidarity would be possible (see *OEM* Vol. IV June and July).

Discussion at the conference centered on the portion of the political report which addressed Puerto Rico's reality and the ques-

majority and minority position on this question was recognized. The Majority position was held by PWOC, PSP, and the coordinators of Boston and Philadelphia; the Minority position was held by MINP-El Comité, and the coordinators of Washington and New York.

The majority position held that U.S. imperialism had opted for statehood as the solution to Puerto Rico's present economic and political crisis, as evidenced by former President Ford's pro-statehood announcement when he left office in 1976 and by the '76 election and recent maneuvers by the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP) in Puerto Rico. The minority position held that within the U.S. ruling class there was at present no consensus, let alone policy, on the solution to Puerto Rico's problems. The drive toward statehood by Romero Barceló and the PNP merely showed that statehood was one of the options of U.S. imperialism for Puerto Rico, but not necessarily the chosen strategy. Fundamentally, the status question would be resolved by U.S. imperialism according to whichever option most benefitted its interests, whether statehood, commonwealth or neo-colonial independence.

The minority view did not oppose work around statehood, but it raised a critique of the "main danger" approach to the status question—especially in the absence of a clear option agreed upon by key U.S. ruling class sectors and in the face of the growing lack of credibility of the PNP. The minority position posed that the main task of the PRSC was to take up the struggle to expose and educate the North American people around the fundamental aspect of the status question: colonialism. In this regard, the options open to imperialism would be exposed as counter to the legitimate aspirations of the Puerto Rican working class and people as a whole for true independence and self-determination. The current examples resulting from the unfolding class struggle provided ample opportunities to take up this work, i.e. Vieques, Natural Resources, the freedom of the four nationalists, the repression of the workers, independence and revolutionary movements in Puerto Rico, etc.

After many hours of debate on the floor of the conference, the delegates voted to adopt the minority position on status as the basis for the PRSC's general perspective on Puerto Rico and in particular, U.S. strategy for Puerto Rico.

The adoption of the minority interim committee position was an important step forward for the PRSC. Its significance lay in the organization's recognition of the need to be more concrete and independent in terms of its analysis of Puerto Rico. This was further emphasized by the passage of a resolution to establish a work group whose purpose was to deepen the PRSC's understanding of Puerto Rico's national reality and U.S. imperialism's options in the coming period.

THE NATIONAL SITUATION OF PUERTO RICO AND STATUS

The conference recognized several key elements regarding the present situation in Puerto Rico:

(1) the deepening economic and social crisis confronting the workers and broad masses of people in Puerto Rico.

(2) the role of federal transfer payments, food stamps, and the continued tools of ideological and propagandistic control which undermine the level of mass struggle and objectively pose obstacles to the tasks of developing a higher level of struggle and consciousness in Puerto Rico.

(3) the serious attempts by the pro-statehood PNP to implement its program and the obstacles confronting it represented by the growing loss of credibility of the Barceló Administration.

(4) the fragmentation of the pro-independence forces and the increased level of repression directed against them and the workers' and revolutionary movements.

(5) the need to understand the dynamics involving the pro-commonwealth forces on the island (PPD) which in the recent period have begun to regain strength; the need to study these developments and in particular the implications of the "new" thesis of Rafael Hernandez Colon of the PPD. This thesis is essentially a modified form of the present "free associated state".

While these general points were agreed upon at the conference, there were many additional amendments presented that did not get resolved because of the extensive political debate and the lack of sufficient time. Thus the Political Report, as a whole, including aspects of the present situation in Puerto Rico was not ratified. Nor was the work plan specifying the tasks and campaigns for the next two years able to be discussed and voted on. Thus, as some of its first tasks the new National Board will have to take up these points and guarantee that the amendments and work plan get voted on.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COMING PERIOD

The Third National Conference was a very positive step forward for the PRSC. The discussion and debates revealed that the membership sought to deepen its knowledge and understanding of the current reality of Puerto Rico. In the past, the campaigns around Vieques, repression of the labor movement, etc., were seen as issues separate from the struggle for independence; they were not understood as integral components of an overall strategy of the PRSC to expose in as many ways as possible the colonial relationship and concrete moves on the part of U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico. The adoption of the minority status position meant a recognition of the need for concrete educational work, within the PRSC and among the North American people, about the role of U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico.

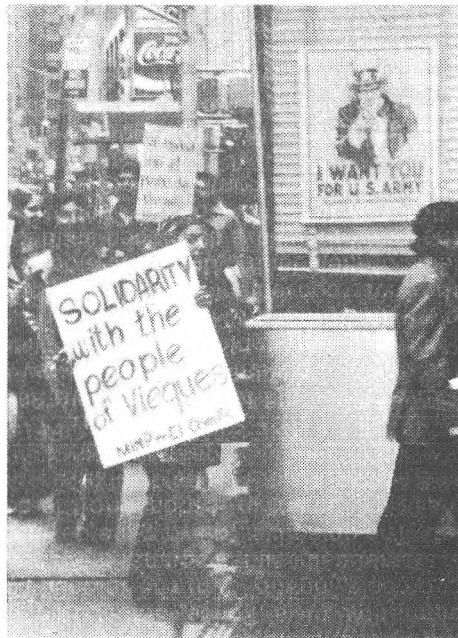
The desire of the PRSC to have a more consolidated and active national leadership was one of the most significant gains achieved by the conference. This was shown by the election of a new National Board that included a substantial number of individuals who have a proven and sustained practice in Puerto Rico work. The election to the Board of a representative from Non-Intervention in Chile (NICH)—an organization which has taken the initiative to present a proposal addressing the need for further coordination and communication among Latin American solidarity groups—speaks to the desire of the PRSC to place Puerto Rico solidarity work within the framework of other efforts in solidarity with struggles in Latin America. The election of the NICH representative is a recognition of the need to break with the isolation which has historically characterized the U.S. solidarity movement with Latin America in general and the work around Puerto Rico in particular.

For our organization, MINP-El Comité, the significance of completing the political evaluation of the PRSC during its past two years cannot be stressed enough. At the conference in 1977, many forces joined ranks to defeat the March 1st Bloc (see *OEM*, Vol. 2, #3), whose goal was either to take over the conference, superimposing its ultra-left political line, or destroy the organization. Thus, many of the political discussions which should have been held, were not. The conference closed without a clear definition of a program or strategy and tactics for the PRSC. The last two years have been a process of trying to consolidate the PRSC and develop this program, despite the missing full discussion throughout the membership.

This experience has yet to be fully summarized by the PRSC. Yet it is key to the future work of the PRSC in order for the organization to learn from its experiences—ideologically, politically, and organizationally—overcome its weaknesses and build on its strengths. This evaluation must be taken up by the new National Board as part of the discussion of the overall political evaluation.

The political evaluation and the efforts to correctly sum up lessons and central questions of this National Conference are tasks we look forward to taking up as part of the new leadership of the PRSC and along with the other comrades and members. Although the number of activists has decreased since the last conference, there remains a strong core of serious and highly committed individuals dedicated to moving the work of the PRSC forward in the next two years.

In addition to providing our readers with an understanding of the Third National Conference, we hope that this general evaluation in *Obreros En Marcha* will serve to generate discussion within the PRSC around the character and gains of the conference. ●



The main task of the solidarity movement in the U.S. is to educate around the fundamental aspect of the status question: colonialism.

tion of status. Preparatory documents and debates among the 7-member interim leadership of the PRSC (composed of individuals from the Philadelphia Workers' Organizing Committee [PWOC], the Puerto Rican Socialist Party [PSP], M.I.N.P.-El Comité, and the coordinators of the chapters in Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Washington, D.C.) had given rise to clear disagreement on the status issue and the analysis of present political conditions in Puerto Rico. In a 4 to 3 decision the interim committee voted that statehood was the main danger facing Puerto Rico; but a



Somoza's legacy of death and destruction opens a new chapter in the class struggle: National Reconstruction.

Nicaragua:

VICTORY! BUT THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The destruction of thousands of lives and a great part of the country's property is the legacy left by Somoza. To get the country on a healthy economic footing will require a concerted effort by the people of Nicaragua. For this task the Provisional Government has drafted a program of National Reconstruction which envisions many social benefits for the country's peasants and workers. This program and the strength of the FSLN are sure to meet with the steel opposition of U.S. imperialism and their ally, the national bourgeoisie. The class struggle will intensify as the bourgeoisie battles with the popular classes for control of the Provisional Government. For this reason our solidarity work with the Nicaraguan masses must continue. The emphasis must be, of course, to develop this work among this country's working class.

On the 21st of July, 1979 a red fire truck inched its way through a crowd of chanting and jubilant demonstrators in the newly renamed Plaza de la Revolucion in Managua. The truck carried the 5 members of the Provisional Government and represented the end of Somoza's 46 years of tyranny and hunger.

As the red fire engine neared the center of the Plaza the crowd's fever of liberation neared its peak. As one spectator said, "Never has the sun shone so brightly." Each leader and pronouncement was met with triumphant cheers. But as the day wore on and every speaker hammered at the enormity of the devastation left by Somoza and the innumerable tasks which lay ahead to restore the country's social and economic health, the crowd's mood grew serious. The struggle was not over.

NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

The 46 years of the Somoza dynasty and specially the dictator's lunatic destruction of population and property in the last months have left the country in ruins. 500,000 people or one-fifth of the population were forced to flee their homes and become refugees. 30,000 people were killed. 90% of the country's industry and commerce were destroyed. Reserves of foreign currency went from \$150 million at the beginning of 1978 to less than \$3.5 million at present. The country's foreign debt stands at \$1.5 billion. Export earnings will be seriously affected because agricultural planting has been delayed by the fighting. The provisional government has estimated that reconstruction could cost 4 to 5 billion dollars.

The Provisional Government, which is to lead the reconstruction efforts is composed of different political and social forces. Besides the 5-member junta (see OEM, Vol. IV, #5), the legislative power will be exercised by a 33-member Council of State: six members from the FSLN; 12 from the National Patriotic Front (FPN); 7 from the Broad Opposition Front (FAO); and 6 from the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP); one representative from the National University and one from the Catholic Church. Among its many tasks, the Council will have the special task of drafting a new constitution.

The following are the main elements of the Provisional government's political-economic program.

The economy will consist of three sectors—private, mixed and state. Somoza's wealth which represents roughly one-third of the country's wealth has been expropri-

ated and will serve as the state sector of the economy as well as provide the initial capital for reconstruction.

The state will control the development of all natural resources: mines, forests, fisheries, energy, etc. Agriculture will be the country's main economic activity. The state will support the development of national industries and defend them from takeovers by multinational corporations.

Other economic measures will be to carry out agrarian reform using Somoza's large landholdings (which make up about 30% of the country's arable land).

The country's economic policy will seek to guarantee the right to housing, health care, education, efficient transportation, sports and recreation, and to eliminate unemployment. Workers will have the right to form unions and to strike. New minimum salaries will be established. Shantytowns will be eliminated through an urban reform. The prices of basic consumer goods including medical care will be controlled.

Elementary and secondary education will be free and mandatory. A national campaign will be held to eradicate illiteracy.

Special attention will be given to guarantee the rights of women and children. And support will be given for the consolidation of a truly national culture.

The National Guard has been dissolved and will be replaced by an army made up of FSLN members and those National Guard officers and soldiers who "have demonstrated honesty and patriotism."

This program of National Reconstruction seeks far-reaching reforms the level of which has not been seen in Latin America with the exception of Cuba. Given the country's economic ruin and the extent of the reforms projected, it will be difficult, to say the least, for the various social sectors which make up the governing coalition to maintain a consensus.

NEW LEVEL OF STRUGGLE

The post-Somoza era signifies a new level of struggle for the popular masses. Although the FSLN currently holds military power, political power is held by the Provisional Government in which the FSLN and representatives of the masses of the people are outnumbered by representatives of the petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie. However, Sandinistas do hold the key positions of Labor, Social Affairs and the Interior. The question facing the Nicaraguan people is to what extent will the petit-bourgeois and bourgeois forces (FAO, COSEP, and sectors of the FPN) cooperate or even allow the carrying out of the Reconstruction program? Are these forces playing for time until they regain some of the political authority and influence that they lost to the FSLN during the last months of the anti-Somoza struggle? These are the forces that the U.S. State Department counts on to contain Nicaragua's process of self-determination. The next months

will see much political in-fighting as those forces who want to privately benefit from Somoza's departure struggle with those forces who seek to implement the plan for National Reconstruction.

These next months will also reveal to what level the anti-Somoza struggle contributed to raising the consciousness of the Nicaraguan masses and more importantly, the extent of the strength of the many popular organizations which developed to carry out the struggle and later to administer the liberated territories. These councils continue to exist in many parts of the country and make up the backbone of the United Popular Movement (MPU) and of the support for the FSLN. They represent the seeds of popular power and their strength will be a decisive factor in the new struggle.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Just as in the critical final days of the struggle against Somoza, our solidarity at this time with the people of Nicaragua and specifically with its vanguard, the FSLN, is of crucial importance. U.S. intervention has not stopped; it has merely taken different, more subtle forms. Nicaragua under the Somoza dynasty was the linchpin of U.S. geo-political interests in Central America and the Caribbean. It was a haven for all right-wing forces and a favorite of reactionary Cuban exiles. The invasions of Guatemala in 1954 and Cuba in 1961 were launched from Nicaraguan soil. The liberalization process which the Nicaraguan masses are carrying out will profoundly af-

fect the class struggle in neighboring Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. This will be particularly so in El Salvador and Guatemala where mass movements are on the rise. For these reasons the United States will continue to increase its efforts to halt the process of Nicaragua's self-determination.

The Coalition for a Free Nicaragua, made up of progressive and left forces including M.I.N.P.-El Comite, has been developing solidarity work for Nicaragua. It has attempted to build support for the struggle of the Nicaraguan masses among progressive and working class people in this country. This is important for it is this class which shares the same enemy as those who struggle in Nicaragua, the U.S. ruling class, and therefore has the potential to provide real and consistent support. Unfortunately not all those in the solidarity movement agree with this view. Forces such as those in the leadership of the National Network in Solidarity with Nicaragua have concentrated on developing work with liberal and sympathetic Congresspeople and church groups. The support of these groups is important, but limited. Their only concern is that U.S. imperialist domination take on a more liberal or "humanitarian" character.

We must continue to develop solidarity work among the working class. Any further attempts of U.S. intervention must be denounced. Our solidarity work must continue to reflect the real needs of the Nicaraguan masses and their vanguard, the FSLN. ●

Interview:

U.S. RANK AND FILE DELEGATION VISITS CUBA



This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Recently the first U.S. Rank & File Activists delegation returned from a visit to that country. The delegation was composed of rank and file activists from different unions throughout the U.S. This trip marks the beginning of what could potentially be a rich interchange of experiences and views between Cuban workers and their class brothers and sisters in this country.

The trip should be viewed within the framework of the need to continue solidarity work with the Cuban Revolution and advancing efforts to bring an end to the U.S. economic blockade of the island.

The following is an interview in which one of the members of the delegation, a construction worker from New York, presents his initial impressions.

OEM: Can you tell us a little about your work and your reasons for traveling to Cuba?

Rank and File Worker: I'm a construction laborer and a member of Local 20 of the Cement and Concrete Workers of New York. I've been in the local for about a year. I went to Cuba through an invitation made by the Center for Cuban Studies (CCS) to organize the first rank and file delegation to visit Cuba. Basically the trip was made so the people in the rank and file movement here could see the difference be-

tween the unions here in the states and in Cuba.

OEM: What places did you visit? Can you briefly describe conditions in the workplaces you visited?

R.F.W.: We visited the Girón Bus Factory in Havana and the Alamar Housing Complex also in Havana. At the Girón Bus Factory the working conditions are good. Speaking to workers there, we found out that whenever a dangerous or safety violation occurs, it is dealt with right away; it's not allowed to continue. The union, the CTC—Center of Cuban Workers—makes sure that things are taken care of right away and that the management of the plant takes care of it. Unlike management in plants here, in Cuba they don't wait until somebody gets hurt again or killed before something that is wrong is fixed. One of the things we saw at the bus factory was that there were a lot of fumes from the welding but they had a lot of windows opened and a system to take the fumes out and they are working on improving that system.

OEM: Did you get a chance to speak to any other workers, such as construction workers, in terms of how safety is dealt with at their sites?

R.F.W.: Yes. We visited the Alamar which is a huge housing complex in Havana and this question was brought up there also. And again, when a dangerous situation exists no time is wasted and it is dealt with before somebody gets hurt. Very seldom do accidents happen due to dangerous conditions. When accidents do occur it is because an individual has been careless. When an accident happens, if there is no doctor at the factory—there usually is a doctor or somebody that is able to deal with the hurt one—the person is rushed to the hospital or to the nearest health station.

OEM: What is the role of the union at the worksite and in general?

R.F.W.: Workers, through the union, participate in planning production and in establishing safety regulations for the workplace. Also when laws are to be passed they are discussed in the factories. The union makes sure that these laws are discussed so that the National leadership gets a sense of what the Cuban people think.

OEM: How are production goals made?

R.F.W.: If I remember correctly, first the management meets and talks about what they consider to be real goals—what they think can be produced based on the economic plan for the whole country. For example, let's say that the national plan, after studying the needs of the country, decides that they need 1,000 buses to be produced that year. Then all the factories that produce buses are given quotas according to the size of the factory and how many workers it has. The management of the factory discusses this quota and presents it to

the workers in the plant. The workers, through the union, will then meet and discuss the production plan and the quota and make their recommendations. Then these recommendations are taken into consideration by the people that make the national plan; the plan is adjusted and sent back to the factories. This is how an agreement is reached on how much is going to be produced. Most of the times the workers end up producing more than what they had agreed to in the plan.

OEM: What sort of benefits do workers have in Cuba?

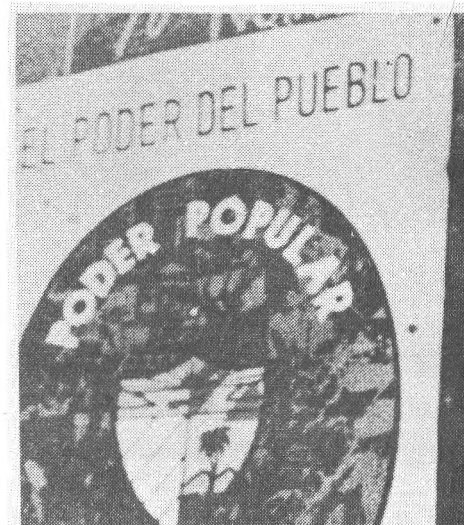
R.F.W.: Well, they have all the benefits you can imagine. They have free health care, free education from elementary school to the university and not only for themselves but for their children as well. They have the right to participate in everything that goes on in the workplace. Here, when we go to a hospital for some sickness, the first thing that you are asked is if you have any insurance. And to send your children to school you have to have a lot of money; education here is not guaranteed except for people that have money. These are two of the most basic rights that the Cubans have, and not only the Cubans that agree with the policies of the government but even people that do not agree with the government have the same rights to free health care and free education.

OEM: We've heard a great deal about volunteer work in Cuba. Can you explain what it is?

R.F.W.: Volunteer work is when people are needed in a certain sector of the economy and they volunteer the time to work, for example, in cane-cutting, construction, etc. Even to go overseas like doctors and technicians who volunteer to go and help in other countries like Angola and Ethiopia. Or sometimes they volunteer to do work in other provinces of the island. Let's say that there is a doctor in a hospital that has 8 doctors and one doctor volunteers to do voluntary work. Then the 7 doctors that are left distribute among themselves the number of patients that the doctor who left had; in that way they still service the same number of patients.

OEM: What salaries do workers get and how does it compare to the salary of a plant manager or professionals in general?

R.F.W.: The plant manager earns more but not that much more. He might make 350 pesos a month and the worker in the production line may make 275 pesos. So they keep salaries pretty much balanced out. The doctors, teachers and other professionals are considered workers like anybody else and they don't earn all this money like some of them do here. Some people here in the states would say: "How can you live on 275 or 350 pesos a month?" But when a quart of milk costs 25 cents, the newspaper is 5 or 10 cents, the bus is 5 cents, you pay a maximum of 4 pesos per



month for gas, and if you pay rent you pay 10% of what you earn, plus all health care and education is free—then you can see how it's possible to live on that amount of money and live well. Besides that, when a woman is pregnant, she is given 3 months off with pay before she is due and 2 months off after the baby is born, also with pay. So I think they make out good.

OEM: What role do women play at worksites?

R.F.W.: Well they work at the same places that men work at, like I saw women construction workers and I mean they were really working. There are women doctors, teachers, cane cutters, there are women in the army, in the militia, in the revolutionary national police. They could have any job a man holds in Cuba but there are some laws that protect them from having to take jobs that may damage their health, especially their capacity to bear children.

OEM: What opinions did the workers you spoke to express about their jobs, their unions and the revolution?

R.F.W.: Everyone that works belongs to a union and they know that the union is there to help them, not just to take their dues and forget about them. You know, the unions even participate in education through study groups in the different factories. As for what people think, this might sound surprising for some people here but everyone I talked to was in agreement with the policies of the party [Communist Party of Cuba, ed.], with what the Revolution has done for Cuba because these people now have the chance to go to school, to have a decent job and a decent home. Before the Revolution it was almost impossible for people to have a job and go to school. The Cubans understand that they have problems, they know that there is still a lot of work that has to be done, but as a whole the people are more political there, more aware of what is happening in their country and outside than we are here. ●