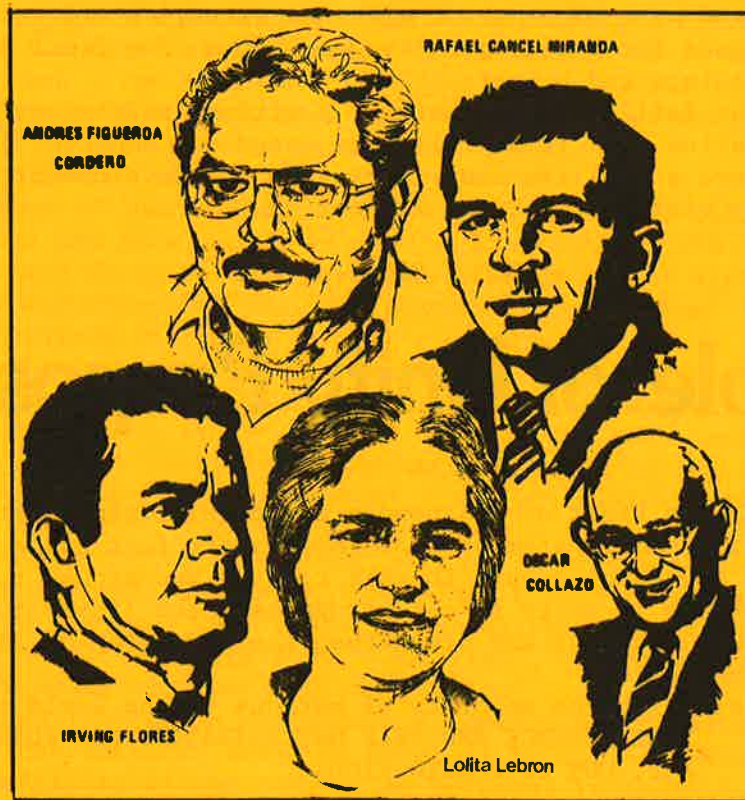


Arguments and Proposals for the PRSC conference



March 1 Bloc

INTRODUCTION

The enclosed set of documents were prepared in response to the political proposals submitted to this Conference by the PRSC staff and to the cumulative practice of the organization. We are including both criticisms of current and proposed PRSC approaches and alternatives to them.

This packet represents the positions and efforts of the March 1 Bloc, which has come together for this Conference on the basis of a shared perspective on the way the PRSC ought to function, but hasn't and isn't. The March 1 Bloc includes both Puerto Ricans and North Americans from the Midwest Free the Five Committee and the Chicago Committee to Stop the Grand Jury as well as members of the PRSC. Our positions were developed in consultation with some Puerto Rican and North American activists from other areas of the country and on the island.

The first entry is an alternative Principle of Unity for the PRSC. We include the official proposal to make the differences clear. Secondly, there is a short summary of points which we think must be covered in the PRSC's Political Statement and which are not correctly and adequately treated in the official drafts. This summary is followed by a paper which makes an extensive critique of the official draft and argues for our alternative positions. The final document is a set of programmatic points and priorities.

We apologize for our failure to present our positions sufficiently in advance of the Conference to allow them to be fully discussed and debated. Nevertheless, we believe that they are a positive contribution to the development of a mass movement in solidarity with Puerto Rican liberation.

MARCH 1 BLOC

Principle of Unity Proposals

OFFICIAL

The PRSC supports the right of independence and self determination for the Puerto Rican people. The same system of U.S. imperialism that holds Puerto Rico as a colony exploits and oppresses people in this country and around the world. The PRSC recognizes that there is unity in our struggles. The liberation of Puerto Rico from U.S. domination will advance and strengthen the struggles of all the peoples of the Americas and the world.

We in the U.S. join with the majority of nations in the world to demand:
INDEPENDENCE AND SELF DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICO;
U.S. OUT OF PUERTO RICO.

ALTERNATIVE

The PRSC stands for Puerto Rico's independence from U.S. imperialism - politically, economically, culturally, and militarily. The same system of U.S. imperialism that holds Puerto Rico as a colony exploits and oppresses people in this country and around the world. The liberation of Puerto Rico from U.S. domination will advance and strengthen the struggles of all of the peoples of the Americas and the world.

The work of the PRSC is to provide concrete and effective support to the Puerto Rican liberation movement. Primarily this involves building a mass base of solidarity with the struggles of Puerto Ricans on the island and in the Puerto Rican communities on the mainland.

The PRSC supports any and all means utilized by the Puerto Rican liberation movement to gain genuine independence, recognizing from the history of the international struggle against imperialism that armed force is both inevitable and essential.

Summary & Critique of Political Statement

The following five points raise political questions on which the proposed political statement is either in error or grossly inadequate. In our view a clear position on these questions must be the core of the PRSC's politics.

1. Imperialist domination of Puerto Rico is a central element in U.S. capitalism's economic and political power. While public opinion may pressure the U.S. into cosmetic changes in the forms through which this domination is exercised, only a revolutionary struggle for national liberation by the Puerto Rican people will defeat it. The basis for such a revolutionary struggle has been laid in the heroic history of Puerto Rican resistance to U.S. imperialism. Elements of revolutionary struggle are visible now and we expect their rapid development.
2. The cutting edge of Puerto Rican solidarity work in the U.S. is the development of support for armed and other forms of "illegal" struggle. U.S. imperialism has used, and will use, military force to maintain control over Puerto Rico. Consequently, it is both inevitable and essential that the movement for national liberation utilize armed struggle to achieve its goal.

So long as "self determination" is limited to legislation, plebiscites, and other legal forms securely controlled by the U.S. state, support for the right of self determination remains a staple of U.S. liberalism. Such sentiments may be useful at times, but they will be obstacles at others. In any case the task of the PRSC is to go beyond liberalism and win sections of the U.S. people to the understanding that Puerto Ricans have the right to use armed force to win their independence.

Armed struggle must be defended, not just as an abstract concept, but in the forms in which it is actually occurring, small and episodic actions rather than mass assaults. We must be prepared to counter the inevitable arguments of the imperialists which picture such forms of struggle as "terrorism", as the work of fanatics with no ties and no support among the Puerto Rican people.

The Puerto Rican liberation movement will determine the strategic context for armed struggle and the tactical forms in which it is applied, but this in no way reduces the responsibility of the solidarity movement in the U.S. to explain and defend this form of struggle to the U.S. people.

3. The U.S. does not only oppress Puerto Rico. It is the main oppressor nation in the imperialist world system. To some extent U.S. workers derive privileges from the hegemonic position of "their" imperialism which obscure their class interest in solidarity with the world-wide struggle for national liberation and socialism. White U.S. workers are particularly prone to define their interests in terms of maintaining and extending their racial and national privileges.

In order to determine its organizing priorities and do effective work, the PRSC must deal with this question. Appeals to workers based on the argument that Puerto Rican independence will be in their narrow economic self-interest must be rejected. In all likelihood it will not be. Any belief that there is a simple trade unionist basis for U.S. working class unity with the Puerto Rican struggle must be rejected. There is no such basis. There is no shortcut to the development of the political understanding among workers in the U.S. that their class interests lie in the success of the struggle for national liberation.

4. The PRSC must recognize that Black people, Mexican-Chicano people and Indian people experience oppression that has many parallels with that experienced by Puerto Ricans on the island and, particularly, on the mainland. The immediate mass potential for an anti-imperialist front in support of Puerto Rican liberation lies primarily in the development of ties among these peoples.

5 Forty percent of all Puerto Ricans live in the United States, driven here by U.S. destruction of Puerto Rican agriculture and the stunted nature of the island's economy - also a result of U.S. occupation. Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are at the bottom of the ladder in jobs, housing, and access to decent education - these conditions being the direct result of white supremacy.

So far the PRSC has concentrated almost exclusively on independence and on the struggles on the island. We have overlooked Puerto Ricans in struggle in New York, Philadelphia, Hartford and Chicago. Their struggles for bilingual programs, decent jobs, health care and housing are not just struggles for "democratic rights". They constitute a crucial part of the U.S. class struggle while, at the same time, they are part of the international movement against imperialism. Puerto Ricans are in this country because of the oppression of the island, but once they are here that oppression follows them. For them it is the same oppressor and it is the same struggle. The independence struggle on the island and the Puerto Rican class struggle in the U.S. feed each other. As one gains so will the other.

The PRSC's work will be strengthened by extending support to the Puerto Rican struggles in the U.S.

- a. support for Puerto Rican independence can become more concrete and understandable to people in the U.S. On the same day let us picket the Federal Building, but let us also picket a racist hospital that is urban-renewing Puerto Ricans out of their neighborhoods by torching their houses. This is solidarity, this is class struggle.
- b. Puerto Ricans in the U.S. would be like having a large number of Vietnamese living in the U.S. during the war. They can raise the case of Puerto Rico here, not as abstract support, but concretely and without liberalism, whether in heroic guerilla actions like the Five Nationalists, or as militant fighters in the day to day struggles of the U.S. working class.
- c. By supporting the struggles of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. we will also be strengthening the U.S. class struggle. Like Black people and Mexican-Chicanos, Puerto Ricans have gained the strength in their resistance to oppression to play a leading role in the class struggle in the U.S.

THE CRITIQUE: CONCRETE SOLIDARITY

The Second Draft Statement of the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee (first available in December 1976, printed on yellow paper) does not constitute an improvement over the First Draft Statement (dated October 1976). Instead of addressing important questions of concern to the solidarity movement, it seems to sell Puerto Rican independence as if it were breakfast food. While the first paper took more or less clear positions, the second reads more like Madison Avenue "hype." We protest that the members of the PRSC do not need to be sold a vague image of Puerto Rican independence. In place of honest evaluation of the Committee's first two years, the Second Draft offers over a full page of uncritical cheerleading. In short, the paper is heavy on sentiment and light on helpful and searching analysis.

In criticising the Political Statement we are not just quibbling over words or simply attacking a document that will probably be modified. We believe that the Draft Statement reflects many of the weaknesses of the Solidarity Committee's practical day-to-day work. For example, the cheerleading

tone of the document corresponds to the way issues are avoided in the Committee itself. There is a political rationale behind this uncritical approach on the part of the original organizers and the current national leadership of the PRSC.

Reasoning correctly that a broadbased movement in solidarity with Puerto Rican independence is necessary, these people mistakenly try to make the PRSC itself appear to be broadbased and not explicitly radical. This is a complete myth; fully 90% of the membership of the Committee are leftists of one stripe or another, people who will not be offended or surprised at discussions of how to organize the U.S. working class or the role of armed struggle in the liberation of Puerto Rico.

We agree that the job of the PRSC is to build a broadbased movement in solidarity with Puerto Rican independence (providing that organizing U.S. workers is a priority) but the Committee does not have to pretend to be that movement in order to create it. At this stage when analysis and debate are so important in devising a strategy for building the mass movement, it is a grave mistake to deliberately lower the level of our internal discussions to appeal to mythical liberals who have yet to come to the solidarity movement in significant numbers.

If this Second Draft Statement is supposed to define the goals and limits of the Committee's work and help people decide whether or not they should join the Committee, it does neither of these things adequately. It resembles an over-long and sentimentally abstract piece of mass propaganda. In criticizing the document, though, we are mainly interested in examining the actual work of the PRSC and in making suggestions for how that work and the theories behind it can be improved.

ANALYZING THE OPPRESSION OF PUERTO RICO

On page two of the Draft Statement, there begins a lengthy recital of the effects of U.S. domination of the island, noting with facts and statistics the economic, political and cultural oppression of Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, as is so often the case with the Committee's discussions, educational and written propaganda, the Draft Statement starts and ends with description. There is no analysis or interpretation of what colonial oppression has meant for the development of the island and the life of the Puerto Rican people; nor is there any attempt to lay out the different theories about what the U.S. will do with the island if independence is not won.

There are two important conclusions that must be drawn from the facts of U.S. domination of Puerto Rico. First, Puerto Rico is an oppressed nation, oppressed by the United States acting in the all-too-familiar role of oppressor nation. (We use the terms "oppressed nation" and "oppressor nation" as they are used by Lenin in his "Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions", Vol. XXXI, Collected Works.) This conclusion may seem obvious to most people but its implications seem to have escaped the authors of the Draft Statement. And worse, Lenin's understandings have not informed the work of the Solidarity Committee over the last two years.

According to Lenin, the oppressed nation/oppressor nation relationship is "the characteristic feature of imperialism..." From this he derived important conclusions about the responsibility of socialists and the proletariat of the oppressor nation to aid concretely in the liberation of those nations oppressed by their "own bourgeoisie." Lenin discusses only the tasks of the working class of the oppressor nation; he wastes no space on "broader forces", or the media, or the liberal wing of the ruling class. For Lenin strategy in the oppressor nation revolves around winning the proletariat of the oppressor nation to the position where it will take concrete actions of solidarity with the people of the oppressed nation. Finally we emphasize here Lenin's insistence

that solidarity be concrete, not based on sentiment or generalities.

The second conclusion that must be drawn from the fact of Puerto Rico's oppression by the U.S. is a conclusion that should infuse all of the Solidarity Committee's discussions and written propaganda about Puerto Rico. Since 1898 the Puerto Rican nation has been under attack and attempted destruction by the United States. From that date U.S. policy has been to manipulate the people and their island with no regard for their survival, much less their well-being or national development.

This fact is behind the deliberate destruction of the island's once balanced and adequate agriculture in favor of sugar and coffee production. (Puerto Rico once produced almost all of its own food; now even the famous Puerto Rican staple, platanos, is imported.) It was in order to destroy Puerto Rican culture that the Spanish language was forbidden in the schools on the island for much of the early period of U.S. rule. Now for similar reasons bilingual programs are being closed or transformed into programs that move the children rapidly to speaking English only. The mass sterilization of Puerto Rican women is not only an act of barbarism and contempt, it is also an attempt to destroy the Puerto Rican nation physically.

The most obvious case of the attempted destruction of the Puerto Rican nation is the forced migration of 40% of all Puerto Ricans to the United States, most of them in the scant 30 years following World War II. This migration, caused by the destruction of Puerto Rican agriculture, drove millions of people out of rural areas, first to the cities of Puerto Rico, and later to the ghettos of the U.S. because there was no work for them on the island. The personal dislocation and shock of this forced migration is not measurable; the effect on the Puerto Rican people as a whole can only have been crippling. This is a crime of genocide (meaning the destruction of nationhood--the United Nations definition) comparable to the destruction of the African peoples and their cultures by the slavemasters, or the mass murder and forced migration of the Native American peoples.

Many students of the Puerto Rican history and demography have been forced to conclude that the United States wants many fewer Puerto Ricans on the island to clear the way for Puerto Rico's transformation into a military base, super-port and petro-chemical processing center. There are other theories about what the United States has planned for the island, but we can be positive that none of these plans will treat the Puerto Rican people as anything but obstacles.

Once in the United States, Puerto Ricans are not in danger of being assimilated, if by that we mean being drawn into the white working class as were the Irish, the Germans, the Poles, etc., for, like the Black people, the Puerto Ricans face a color bar. But even though they are segregated and discriminated against they are not left alone; their language, culture and family life are attacked because these are sources of resistance to U.S. domination. If the U.S. has its way, the Puerto Ricans forced to the U.S. will face existence as a group of "non-white inner-city dwellers", denied their own culture yet never allowed to advance economically or politically. This will be described by the ruling class as the fault of the Puerto Ricans themselves because they are "backward" just as Black people's misery is blamed on Black people themselves.

The PRSC must emphasize that the Puerto Rican people are under attack and attempted destruction and they they cannot wait forever for their independence. Returning to the Draft Political Statement, we note that the idea that Puerto Ricans are "an endangered species" does not appear at all. Why? Instead the island and its people are described mainly as a source of super-profits. To be sure, Puerto Ricans on the island and in the U.S. are a source of super-profits. But to leave the analysis there and not refer to the plight of the Puerto Rican people is a very U.S.-centered view of colonial oppression. Shouldn't the ultimate effect of this policy of genocide against the Puerto Ricans be our main point of emphasis? (Here we re-state that according to

Lenin "...the characteristic feature of imperialism is that the whole world ...is now divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations..." Note that Lenin, although he was certainly aware of imperialist super-profits, does not name super-profits as "the characteristic feature of imperialism.") It is essential that the solidarity movement understand that Puerto Ricans are not just fighting against super-profits; they are fighting for their very survival as a national entity.

PUERTO RICAN RESISTANCE

The next section of the Draft Statement attempts to summarize the history of Puerto Rican resistance to Spanish and U.S. domination. There is nothing of merit in this section at all. In a few short paragraphs it manages to combine inadequate history, implicit pacifism and white chauvinism. There is no "Baby" in danger of being thrown out with this "bath water."

The Statement picks up the history of Puerto Rican resistance with the Grito de Lares in 1868. But resistance to Spain in Puerto Rico and in the Caribbean did not begin so late. It is white chauvinist to leave out the resistance of the indigenous peoples to the Spaniards; it is also white chauvinist to leave out the series of slave revolts taking place from the 1600's on in Puerto Rico and throughout the Caribbean. The slave revolts, especially, mark the beginnings of resistance to colonialism and the beginnings of the movement for social justice in the Caribbean.

In its section on Puerto Rican resistance the First Draft Political Statement (available in October 1976) at least mentioned Don Pedro Albizu Campos, president of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, sentimentally as "a symbol of the sacrifice required for national liberation." The Second Draft does not mention Don Pedro at all (this in a section on Puerto Rican resistance!) and only touches briefly on the Nationalist Party, avoiding any discussion of the political ideas of Don Pedro and the Nationalist Party.

We think it is important to review some of the most important contributions of Albizu and the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico. It was Don Pedro who defined Puerto Rico as a nation intervened by the U.S. in 1898. Since the U.S. had taken an already sovereign nation by force, Albizu reasoned that Puerto Rico is a nation at war with the United States. The situation of Puerto Rico is like that of occupied France during WW II, and the Puerto Rican resistance, like the French resistance, is justified in taking any action to liberate their country. This includes all forms of armed struggle and sabotage, just as it did for the French in their struggle against Nazi Germany.

Albizu was also central in raising the woman question in the Puerto Rican liberation movement. At his insistence women assumed positions of the highest leadership in the movement -- Blanca Canales was the Nationalist Party section leader who proclaimed the Second Republic of Puerto Rico in Jayuya in 1950 and Lolita Lebron was the New York section leader who led the attack on the U.S. Congress in 1954. It was also Don Pedro who demanded that the independence movement be a movement for complete racial equality. And finally, although this point is often overlooked because it is so basic, it was Don Pedro who first linked concretely the Puerto Rican workers' struggle to the independence movement when he rallied the Nationalist Party to support the island-wide sugar strikes of the 1930's.

This section of the Draft Statement closes (finally!) with an inadequate and pacifist discussion of the Five Nationalist Prisoners. It fails to point out that the Five are soldiers in a war of national liberation, acting under orders from the Nationalist Party. In effect the Draft Statement misrepresents the position of the Five when it refers to them only as "political prisoners". In a general sense this is true, but the Five refer to themselves as prisoners of war.

The primary aspect of their case is not that they are victims of repression, but that they carried out armed actions in a war of national liberation. The Five remain in prison because they refuse to apply for parole on the grounds that they are not criminals who are sorry for their crimes, but they are instead patriots and soldiers who have done nothing wrong.

In the Second Draft Statement we find this abstract and general conclusion about the Five, "The PRSC considers that the continuing struggle for the freedom of these five Puerto Rican patriots is a central aspect of building solidarity with the struggle for Puerto Rican Independence." But it never explains why this struggle is considered central. The statement mentions nothing about the tremendous growth of the support in Puerto Rico for the freedom of the Five, and the certainty that the Five could be freed if a strong and militant complement to the support in Puerto Rico is organized in the United States.

The Draft Statement is also silent about how the Free the Five campaign can and should build solidarity between the prison movement and the independence movement, as the Five have actually demonstrated themselves in their political work inside the prisons where they are held. We should understand that by linking the campaign to Free the Five to the prison struggle and to the struggles to free other political prisoners, critical working relationships can be built between the solidarity movement and the Black, Mexican/Chicano, and Native American movements.

We believe this lack of understanding of the struggle to free the five on the part of the Solidarity Committee as a whole is part of the Committee's more general failure to take up the issue of armed struggle. This unwillingness to explain and defend the right of Puerto Ricans to armed struggle is also behind the non-treatment of Albizu Campos in the Draft Statement. (In leaving out mention of Albizu the authors can hardly plead space limitations--all they need to do is cut by 90% the first two pages of cheerleading for the PRSC from their Draft.) If the political thought of Albizu is dealt with in any specific way, (e.g., the concept of a nation intervened and still at war) you are led inescapably to the conclusion that armed struggle is the right of the Puerto Rican people and that support for that right is one of the most important and unavoidable tasks of the solidarity movement.

Some may argue that the PRSC's oft-repeated phrase, "We will not dictate to the national liberation movement what its tactics should be...", or words to that effect, is a correct position on armed struggle. It is not. It is a sham position. It clothes pacifism in pseudo-militant rhetoric of respect for the right of the Puerto Rican liberation movement to choose its own tactics. Examined in a serious and logical way, this sham position exposes itself: It is pointlessly obvious to say that the North American solidarity movement does not dictate tactics to the Puerto Rican liberation struggle. They would not allow us if we tried. The right of the movement to choose tactics does not need to be defended -- it exists whether we defend it or not. What needs to be defended by the North American solidarity movement to the people of the oppressor nation, the U.S., is the right of armed resistance on the part of Puerto Ricans.

Let the PRSC in its Second Conference in February, 1977 repudiate this non-position on armed struggle and immediately take responsibility for reaching the U.S. working class and other sectors of the U.S. population with a reasoned defense of the right of Puerto Ricans to oppose the United States by force of arms. We must realize that North Americans in the solidarity movement are in the best position to explain the issue of armed struggle to other North Americans, trying as always to win people away from national chauvinism and identification with the U.S. ruling class. If, as Lenin argues, concreteness will be the test of our internationalism, there are three steps that we can take now:

1. We should gladly, not reluctantly, begin to explain to the people of the U.S. in all our propaganda that armed struggle is justified and inevitable

in the liberation of Puerto Rico.

2. The Committee should devote large resources in every city to the campaign to free the Five, using the campaign to clarify the role of armed struggle both in the 1950's and today.
3. We should begin now to devote resources to putting out pro-independence propaganda in the U.S. armed forces.

U.S. WORKERS AND PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE

The final section of the Second Draft Statement is a definite improvement over previous positions taken by the PRSC in that it recognizes the importance of winning U.S. workers to the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. Although we have some serious criticisms of the approach advocated for organizing U.S. workers, we are nonetheless very heartened that the PRSC seems about to make this area a priority.

The first error we note is that the Draft Statement pays only fleeting attention to the fact that within the (current) boundaries of the United States there are other oppressed peoples, the three largest being Black people, Mexicans/Chicanos and Native Americans. This is not just a historical fact; it implies a strategic approach for the solidarity movement. The Draft Statement only mentions these other oppressed peoples as also super-exploited. But more important than the super-exploitation they have experienced is the similar history they have survived: murder, usurpation, cultural attack, segregation and discrimination. When we are raising the issue of Puerto Rico among these groups or among white U.S. workers we should stress their similar history of oppression because this will likely be the main basis of support for Puerto Rico by the oppressed peoples themselves. This will also help white workers to understand the oppression of Puerto Rico in the larger context of U.S. treatment of these other oppressed peoples.

The second error of this section on the working class is to describe the basis of solidarity of white workers with Puerto Rico as one of narrow and immediate material self-interest. The First Draft Statement presented this position in a much clearer form, quoting extensively from an article which later appeared in the November 24, 1976 Guardian, written by Irwin Silber. In the full Guardian article Silber argues that workers can be won to the international position of solidarity with the struggle of the Puerto Ricans by showing them the ways that Puerto Rican independence will directly benefit them, sort of reaching the hearts and minds of the workers through their stomachs and pay envelopes.

This is an incorrect understanding of imperialism. Imperialism by definition means that surplus value (imprecisely "profit") is transferred from the oppressed nation to the oppressor nation. Unless we are prepared to believe that all of the surplus extracted from Puerto Rico is consumed personally by U.S. imperialists in the form of luxuries like Rolls Royces and mink coats, it is clear that a share of this surplus reaches U.S. workers generating increased jobs and income. More concretely, can anyone seriously maintain that if the United States loses Puerto Rico, the fifth largest consumer of U.S. goods, that the result will be higher wages and more jobs for U.S. workers? (It is important not to confuse the above argument about the nature of imperialism with the justifications for imperialism put forth by the ruling class, i.e., that a decent standard of living for U.S. workers is forever and unavoidably tied to the oppression of colonial peoples. There can be no doubt that the death of the imperialist system will be of enormous material benefit to all of humanity, including the U.S. workers.)

We are not opposed to the self-interest approach as a tactic, but we question whether it really works. Far from a magic road to internationalism, this approach is more often a path into a murky swamp of half-truths and opportunism that will not convince workers.

The Second Draft Statement, less precisely than Silber, mentions two ways in which U.S. workers suffer from the colonial domination of Puerto Rico: runaway shops and the use of Puerto Ricans as an industrial reserve army of labor that undermines the job security and income of the entire working class. (Draft page 8.)

Looking at the industrial reserve army argument first as stated by Silber: "The use of the Puerto Rican work force as an industrial reserve both in Puerto Rico itself and in the U.S. depress(es) the wages and standard of living of the working class as a whole." This implies that if Puerto Rico were free, suddenly everyone's wages would go up. But this isn't true. Here's why. In a narrow statistical sense, removing Puerto Ricans from the U.S. workforce would increase the per capita income of the remaining workers. That is, if you add up all workers' incomes including Puerto Ricans and divide by the total number of workers also including Puerto Ricans, your per capita income would be lower than the figure you get by making the same calculation leaving out Puerto Rico's income and the total of Puerto Ricans in the workforce (simulating independence.) This only proves something that everybody already knew, that Puerto Ricans are at the bottom of the ladder, making less than any other group.

Furthermore, most white workers know that under the present system somebody will always be stuck at the bottom (making up the industrial reserve army.) White workers also know that in the U.S. those in this reserve army are overwhelmingly Black, Brown and/or female. As long as U.S. capital stands, with or without Puerto Ricans in the workforce, there will be an industrial reserve.

Looking briefly at the runaway shop argument, it says that when Puerto Rico gains independence, runaway shops will no longer be able to flee there. But the puppet Commonwealth government is crying that not enough shops are running away to Puerto Rico. Recently, many more shops have run away to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea than to Puerto Rico. Viewed honestly, Puerto Rican independence by itself will not have a significant effect on the runaway shop problem at all.

Part of the difficulty with the "material self-interest" approach to white workers lies in the system of white supremacy itself. In the white supremacist U.S., the self-interest of white workers is deliberately twisted and manipulated by the ruling class and placed in opposition to the interests of Third World workers. This conception of white self-interest becomes a part of the world view of many white workers and is expressed as white racism. Against the backdrop of white supremacist and national chauvinist U.S. society, even the best-intended arguments are liable to be turned into their opposite. An incident that took place on a Chicago shop floor 2 years ago illustrates what we mean.

A well-known and nationally organized U.S. left group put out a leaflet to a number of Chicago plants on the anniversary of the Grito de Lares. The leaflet stressed that Puerto Ricans are only in the United States because they have been forced to leave their homeland in search of work. Puerto Rican independence, the leaflet argued, would allow eventually all Puerto Ricans to leave the U.S. and return to a soon-to-be-prosperous Puerto Rico. In addition, the leaflet implied that Puerto Ricans would no longer be present in the U.S. workforce to take low-paying jobs and depress the standard of living of the working class.

Response to the leaflet was overwhelmingly positive -- from white racist men. They exclaimed, among other things, "This is the first leaflet I've ever agreed with. They oughta send all of them fuckin' spics back where they came from. They have been living off our welfare long enough." Thus a well-intentioned piece of mass propaganda backfired, turned into a racist attack against the right of Puerto Ricans to find work in the U.S. The workers who responded like these men did would be more likely to ally with a ruling class plan to limit Puerto Rican migration than they would be to support Puerto Rican independence.

On page 8 there is a cowardly national chauvinist paragraph that must be torn from the document. It is the ultimate pacifist perversion of the self-

interest approach to U.S. workers. It reads in its entirety: "And when it comes to a fight*-- as it did in Vietnam -- who will be called upon to die for the greater glories of imperialism in Puerto Rico? The sons, husbands and fathers primarily of the American working class." In one short paragraph, the authors, members of the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, grant to the U.S. ruling class the option of massive, genocidal armed force against the people of Puerto Rico! By their reference to Vietnam, they consign the Puerto Rican people to a comparable protracted war, a war which might cost thousands or even millions of Puerto Rican lives AND "The sons, husbands and fathers...of the American working class." It is this kind of a genocidal war that the PRSC is organized to forestall by limiting the ability of the U.S. ruling class to respond in Puerto Rico as it did in Vietnam. Can there be any doubt that this stinking paragraph does not liquidate the role of Puerto Rican solidarity itself?

At times the Draft Statement suggests that the oppression of Puerto Rico was conceived and implemented by the U.S. ruling class as a clever plot to oppress U.S. workers, and that the plight of the island and its people is a secondary result of this clever plot. Again, on page 8, they write, "Today, U.S. imperialism uses its economic oppression of other countries as a means of holding down the workers at home." This is true, but if used as the basis of an approach to white workers it tends to reinforce national chauvinism, and render them of no assistance at all in providing international solidarity based on proletarian internationalism. It is true that white U.S. workers have much to gain in the liberation of all peoples oppressed by the United States, but these gains are gains in the class struggle, increasing their ability to overthrow their "own" bourgeoisie and not necessarily leading to immediate material advantage. From this it follows that the problem of Puerto Rican independence, for North Americans, is really a specific case of the more general problem of the U.S. class struggle itself: How can white U.S. workers be won away from their narrow white interests to join with the rest of humanity in the fight against capital?

*For Albizu Campos it had already "come to a fight", dating from U.S. intervention in 1898.

PUERTO RICAN SOLIDARITY IN THE OPPRESSOR NATION

We cannot answer the above question here; indeed, developing the answer is the overriding strategic job of the entire U.S. revolutionary movement. We can however offer the following conclusions and suggestions about how the work of the PRSC can be strengthened.

I. Given the political and military situation of Puerto Rico, and the fierce determination of the U.S. to hang on to its colony, the conscious and militant support of at least a sizable minority of the U.S. working class is essential. We recognize that much of this support will come from similarly oppressed peoples (Black, Mexican/Chicano, Native American),^{but} white North American workers must be reached. Within the white U.S. working class there are significant differences in levels of oppression which should dictate different approaches to the question of Puerto Rican solidarity. For example white working class women should be organized with a clear understanding of how their oppression as women can make them sensitive to the oppression of Puerto Ricans.

Since the PRSC has tended to ignore the question of organizing U.S. workers we have put much stress on this priority. However, we do realize that other sectors have already and will continue to provide support for the liberation struggle. We do not propose abandoning organizing students or religious people; rather we argue for placing the main priority on reaching U.S. workers.

II. In the U.S. the immediate allies of the Puerto Rican people are the other oppressed peoples (Black people, etc.) for although they live within the boundaries of the U.S., they share a history of oppression with the Puerto Ricans. The PRSC must appreciate that struggles of these peoples are in and of themselves

actions of indirect support and solidarity with Puerto Rico, and deserve our unconditional support.

III. The PRSC should shift its emphasis to include support for Puerto Ricans in the United States as they struggle in their communities, realizing that struggles against discrimination, bad housing, for jobs and for bilingual education are not merely struggles for "democratic rights." They are part of the struggle against colonialism and for revolutionary socialism in the United States, for the unity of the working class, for an anti-imperialist united front and for international solidarity. Puerto Rican struggles in the United States have a dual nature -- they are part of the independence and anti-colonial movement, and they are also part of the overall class struggle in the U.S. As in the case of our work of solidarity with the independence movement, it is understood that our role will be to support progressive Puerto Rican organizations in the struggle, not to initiate those struggles ourselves.

The reality of the Puerto Rican struggle is that the oppression of Puerto Ricans here is a direct consequence of the oppression of the island. This link already exists in the day-to-day class struggle; it is time that the PRSC recognize it. If it is true that the Puerto Rican people are under attack, then it is also true that that attack persists when they are driven to the U.S. We are involved in support of the Puerto Ricans, including those who live next to us and work beside us; we are not organized simply in support of the issue of independence. We also should understand that the Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. will play a crucial role in the winning of independence for the island.

When we support Puerto Rican struggles in the U.S., we must make it our job to organize white workers in this effort. Carried out in full view of U.S. workers, these struggles can help them to understand national oppression and their own role in attacking it. In the same way that Lenin connected his theory of the inequality of nations to the socialist view of bourgeois inequality, so can white U.S. workers make that link in understanding -- from witnessing discrimination against an oppressed people here to understanding the need to aid in the liberation of oppressed nations around the world.

IV. The PRSC should begin a campaign of direct propaganda concerning independence and the struggles of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. addressed to the U.S. (especially white) workers. In practice this will often mean by-passing the "imperial unions", many of which are instruments of national oppression themselves, reaching workers directly at the plant gates and in the neighborhoods. In any case our approach to U.S. workers should not be shaped by even the more liberal trade union leaders.

For those who cannot imagine what real solidarity would look like coming from U.S. workers we list the following examples. 1) In the 1970 Lordstown (Vega) wildcat when the management told the workers they would have to speed up to compete with the Japanese workers at Datsun and Toyota, the workers responded by trying to organize a workers' delegation to leave immediately for Japan and to persuade the Japanese workers to slow down too. The UAW tried to coopt this move by saying that a high-level trade union delegation would be going to Japan soon, but the workers were insistent, saying they wanted to go themselves. This delegation never happened, but this idea of the Lordstown workers should suggest that we try to set up more worker-to-worker contacts between U.S. workers and Puerto Rican workers on the island. And of course we should be urging U.S. workers to take a new look at the Puerto Ricans working with them, to understand their situation in the larger context of the liberation struggle. 2) More recently we point point to the boycott of Rhodesian chrome by Black longshoremen, and the boycott against Gulf Oil, initiated by Black students and subsequently taken up by broader sectors. 3) Reaching further back in history, in the first months of the Bolshevik Revolution, when the U.S. sought to send material aid to the reactionary forces in

Russia, U.S. workers on the West Coast prevented many of these ships from sailing at least temporarily.

V. Finally we call for a change in the PRSC's stated orientation and practice on the issue of armed struggle. As argued earlier, we should be spreading the analysis put forward by Don Pedro Albizu Campos as the historical justification for the use of armed struggle in the liberation of Puerto Rico. We should gladly, not reluctantly, take up this issue in all of our propaganda. In addition, two programs should be emphasized to make this position more concrete: 1) We should expand the struggle to Free the Five Puerto Rican Nationalists, and make it our responsibility to win North Americans to understand why their acts were justified. 2) We should begin a program of constant propaganda among the U.S. armed forces in support of Puerto Rican Independence.

Alternative Program Priorities

FREE THE FIVE

We are at a critical time in the Campaign to Free the Five. The support for their freedom in Puerto Rico has grown to its highest point, with broad support among all sectors of the island. It is the will of the Puerto Rican people that the Five be freed.

A militant and aggressive campaign in this country, particularly among North Americans, as a complement to the support on the island, can make the difference in forcing the new administration to release these five important leaders of the national liberation struggle. We must act quickly. The Solidarity Committee should devote large resources in every city to the Campaign to Free the Five, with a person on the national staff designated to co-ordinate the work of the chapters.

The campaign should educate North Americans about the Nationalist resistance movement and why the actions of the Five were legitimate and justified as part of a war of national liberation. The campaign should also focus on the Five as political prisoners and as part of the prison struggle. Working alliances should be built with prison support groups and the struggle of other political prisoners; e.g. AIM activist, Leonard Peltier, Black Liberation fighter, Assata Shakur, Attica Brother, Dacajeweah (John Hill).

We should also seek to educate people about the special politically motivated treatment of isolation of the Five at the hands of their jailers, and the case of Andres Figuero Cordero who is dying of cancer because of the criminally negligent medical care he has received.

A mass action should be planned in Washington this summer. We should also generate financial and propaganda support for the lawsuit on behalf of the Five, which demands Andres' immediate release and exposes their special political treatment. People should be mobilized to court when the prisoners are scheduled to appear. We must also develop other creative and direct actions which continue to raise the demand for the unconditional release of the Five publically.

Finally, the Solidarity Committee should explore what international forums are available for raising the demand for the Freedom of the Five on behalf of the American people.

PROGRAM POINTS

To effectively build a movement in solidarity with Puerto Rican independence, the PRSC must go beyond general propaganda and education on the colonial status of Puerto Rico. It must actively support and participate in the struggles of Puerto Rican people living in the U.S. These struggles over living and working conditions and

against cultural genocide are not merely struggles for "democratic rights." They are part of the struggle against colonialism and for revolutionary socialism in the United States - for the unity of the working class, for an anti-imperialist united front, and for international solidarity. Any mechanical separation of the struggle of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. from their struggles on the island will obscure the political context in which the PRSC can best work to develop a mass-based solidarity movement.

Such a movement must have deep roots among other oppressed people in the U.S., and the most immediate link between Puerto Rican people and Black, Mexican/Chicano and Native American people is the similarity of their experiences and struggles in the U.S. To the extent the PRSC can help to clarify this link, the understanding of other oppressed peoples of the question of Puerto Rico will be broadened and deepened.

A parallel argument applies to workers in general. Puerto Rican workers in this country often provide models of militance and solidarity which provide persuasive arguments to other workers that there is a real potential in the struggle for equality - a struggle which ultimately involves national liberation for Puerto Rico. This depends, of course, on the ability of groups such as the PRSC to popularize such models.

It is clear from these and other examples that so long as the PRSC remains essentially aloof from the mass struggles of Puerto Ricans in the U.S., it will drastically limit its ability to draw the lessons and develop the ties which would give real substance to solidarity with the Puerto Rican liberation movement.

PRIORITY ON REACHING WORKING PEOPLE

The PRSC should consider every potential source of support for Puerto Rican liberation, but organizational priority must be placed on the development of a movement among working people in solidarity with the struggle in Puerto Rico. This priority involves many complex questions which can only be answered fully in the course of struggle. Nevertheless, some initial premises and guidelines are necessary.

Different approaches are needed for Third World workers and white workers.

The overwhelming majority of Black, Mexican/Chicano and Native American people are workers - or would be if decent jobs were available. While this section of the working class may believe that in some minor way it benefits from U.S. oppression of Puerto Rico, and while competition for scarce jobs have definitely created a degree of hostility towards Puerto Rican workers, these factors are much less important among this section than they are among white workers. More significantly, other factors exist which expand the potential for solidarity in this section of the working class. To list some of these countervailing factors: there is the essential similarity in the form and substance of the oppression of Puerto Rican workers (particularly in the U.S.) with that of other Third World workers; Third World workers share a widespread appreciation of the right of peoples to self-determination; political consciousness among these workers is far advanced over that of white workers, particularly on the question of anti-imperialism.

For these and other similar reasons, militant mass support for Puerto Rican liberation will be more readily available in this section of the working class.

White workers, on the other hand, view Puerto Rico and the struggles of Puerto Ricans from the vantage point of institutionalized white supremacy. Their material stake in the dominant status of U.S. imperialism is greater and their perception of this stake is more likely to be exaggerated than is the case with Third World workers. Oppressor nation mentality is an important aspect of their political consciousness. Consequently, they are attracted by the most blatant forms of imperialism - e.g., white settler rule in Zimbabwe or South Africa - rather than being partisans of struggles for self-determination and national liberation.

Several conclusions for the organizing approach among white workers follow from these distinctions. Not all sections of the white workers will be allies in the struggle for Puerto Rican liberation. Some will be active opponents. The PRSC must make a realistic assessment of these potentials to insure that the thrust and tone of its organizing approach is not being determined, directly or indirectly, by the backward

sectors of the white working class. In the short run the distinctions and contradictions among white workers will be more relevant than their common exploitation. This entails an emphasis on special organizing approaches to more oppressed sectors of the white workers, specifically to white women workers. It entails, as well, an attempt to discover white workers with distinctive potentials flowing from such factors as an outstanding tradition of collective struggle and/or location in industries or occupations where Third World workers are substantially integrated.

The first steps in building a working class base for the solidarity movement consists largely of propaganda and education. This will involve exposure of conditions in Puerto Rico and among Puerto Ricans living in the U.S., as well as reports on the resistance movements of the Puerto Rican people. However, such reports and exposures, while essential, are not sufficient. They fit too readily into liberal appeals based on sentimental moralizing which will find hard going among working people.

The additional ingredient of PRSC propaganda and educational work must be a willingness to confront the hard questions openly and honestly. In the first place, this means the rejection of all attempts to hustle U.S. workers through appeals to their narrow self-interest. Puerto Rican independence will not necessarily mean higher wages and better working conditions for U.S. workers - it might well mean the opposite for a time. Most workers realize this fact and many can be won to a position of solidarity in spite of it. Class consciousness and internationalism are not beyond the capacity of U.S. workers.

In the second place, the issue of armed struggle must be dealt with. Certainly workers who are not convinced that Puerto Rico should be independent will not change their minds when they are told that real independence will require a fierce struggle in which some U.S. lives might be lost. Nevertheless, the explanation and justification of all forms of illegal struggle, including armed struggle, must be a central focus in propaganda for Puerto Rican liberation. The conditions of Puerto Rico, and the realities of the world struggle against imperialism, do not allow the PRSC the luxury of fudging or finessing this issue.

REPRESSION

The United States government has a general system of economic, political, and cultural repression of the Puerto Rican people as part of a metropole-colony relationship (these themes are dealt with elsewhere in a separate position statement). Since these repressions have led to continuous and rising resistance by the Puerto Rican people, the US government has turned to increasingly more sophisticated and specialized forms of political repression. The initiative for destroying the Puerto Rican independence movements is passing from the local Puerto Rican repressive apparatus to the far more powerful US repressive agencies headed by the FBI and the CIA.

During the 1930's, the US government depended upon the Puerto Rican National Guard as the principle agency of repression, with US Army units on almost continuous alert, to crush the militant demonstrations against economic oppression.

The militant Nationalist Party staged an armed uprising in 1950 which was put down by the Puerto Rican National Guard and elements of the US Air Force, after the Puerto Rican police were unable to do so. The political repression which followed the 1950 uprising was jail for 3,000 cadre, activists, and known supporters of the Nationalist Party. This was carried out by the Puerto Rican Police.

In 1954, four members of the Nationalist Party attacked the US Congress to focus the attention of the US people on the issue of Puerto Rican independence. The FBI conducted massive search and arrest operations, both in the US and Puerto Rico. In New York City 200 Nationalist Party leaders and cadres were arrested and in Chicago several dozen. An unknown but far greater number were arrested and jailed in Puerto Rico. Nationalist Party leaders and cadre who were not detained in US jails were put under heavy FBI surveillance.

The FBI has relentlessly pursued members of the Nationalist Party, and later members of the MPI, PIP, and PSP from the late 1950's to the present time. A systematic

FBI counterintelligence program to totally "neutralize" (destroy) all Puerto Rican independence movements was begun in 1960 under the official name of COINTELPRO. The COINTELPRO program was officially terminated in 1971 but the FBI counterintelligence program against the independence movement still operates under a different title. Proof of this is shown by recent (1975-6) FBI harrassment of the leaders of the MOU (the general confederation of labor unions in PR); the leaders of the cement and telephone workers strikes; and the extensive telephone wiretaps of the Independence movement leadership. Finally, the FBI is the driving force behind the series of repressive grand juries which are meant to harrass the leaders of the Puerto Rican (and Mexican) nationalist movements and their financial supporters (such as the Hispanic Affairs Commission of the Episcapal Church).

The CIA involvement in Puerto Rico is shown primarily in the use of reactionary Cuban exile groups to bomb Independista offices, homes and assassinate cadre and their family members. The CIA was also probably behind the internment of the Victoria 3 in the Dominican Republic.

Underlying the greatly increased activities of the US repressive intelligence agencies is the vast surge of resistance and struggle by the Puerto Rican people both in the US and Puerto Rico. Particularly worrisome to the agencies has been the upsurge of armed struggle by Independence groups operating in Puerto Rico and the United States. First the CAL and the MIRA in the 1960's and now the FALN in the 1970's have turned to urban guerilla warfare to enforce the demand for national liberation of Puerto Rico. In view of the tremendous successes of armed revolutionary national liberation groups in China, Cuba, Indochina, Mozambique, and Angola, we should not be surprised at a similar phenomenon in the struggle to liberate Puerto Rico.

We feel that as the Puerto Rican National liberation movements escalate the struggle, the US will increasingly respond with heavier and heavier repression, Our point of view is that we must defend the liberation movement against repression even if the actions of the movement violate laws of the government. We must defend everybodys civil liberties especially those invloved in the liberation movement, but we must also be prepared to defend the movement in situations where civil liberties do not apply.