

Puerto Rican Maoists Stabbed in the Back by China's UN Vote

Last year Chinese premier Chou En-lai coined a new epigram. "Countries want independence, nations want liberation and people want revolution," he said, and Maoists throughout the world immediately took up this inanity. But anyone naive enough to believe that such a statement has any relevance to the actual policies of the Peking bureaucracy was in for a rude awakening on August 20. On that day China abstained in the United Nations Decolonization Committee on a resolution calling on the U.S. to refrain from any measure that would hinder "the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination" (see "China Withholds Support for Puerto Rican Independence," *Young Spartacus* No. 37, November 1975, for more details).

Naturally, Mao's Puerto Rican apologists were quick to make excuses for this stab in the back, the product of U.S.-Chinese "détente" and Chou's policy that "Soviet social-imperialism" is the "number one enemy" (the resolution was introduced by Cuba and backed by the Soviet bloc). But this Chinese action will certainly raise questions in many minds concerning the revolutionary credentials of those who back a government that *abstains* on Puerto Rico's right to independence.

Maoists Squeeze Left

There has never been a strong ostensibly socialist movement in Puerto Rico. The Socialist Party enjoyed a brief period of popularity in the 1930's but soon lost all credibility after entering the colonial government and actively helping to break the militant 1934 sugar workers strike. The Puerto Rican Communist Party first capitalized on the SP's demise, then lost its working-class support after uncritically supporting the bourgeois autonomist (i.e., anti-independence) Popular Party of Muñoz Marín in 1938 and subsequently liquidating itself into the Populares in 1943 when Stalin scuttled the Comintern.

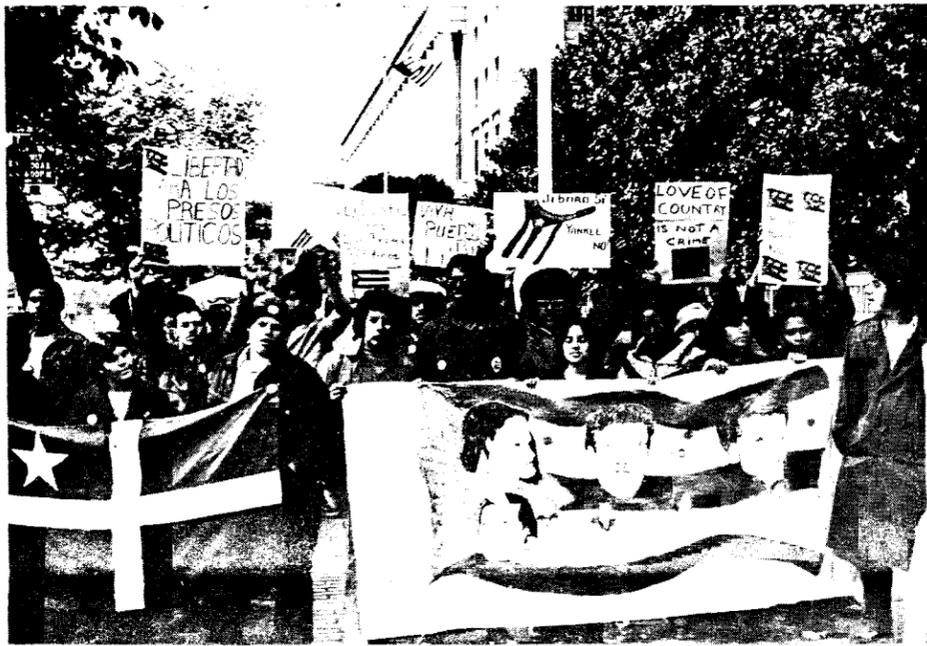
From the 1940's to the 1960's the Puerto Rican left was dominated by bourgeois nationalist organizations. After the virtual disappearance of the Nationalist Party following the 1950 Jayuya uprising, the largest groups were the Pro-Independence Movement (MPI) and the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), both of which had their strongest support in the university. However, after a decade of largely fruitless student agitation and a brief flirtation with guerrillaism, the MPI in 1968 began a process of transformation into the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), a party which combines Menshevik theories of "two-stage revolution" with virulent nationalism. It calls for an "independentista united front" in the elections, which binds the workers to the class enemy (in the form of the bourgeois PIP).

The PSP enjoyed rapid growth since 1969, now having a daily newspaper and several thousand supporters both on the island and within the Puerto Rican community on the mainland. By virtually sewing up the slot of reformist misleader of the working class, the PSP has effectively forced its opponents on the Puerto Rican left to adopt a stance of apparent opposition to its grossly class-collaborationist policies. For the several Maoist groups this has meant rejection of the "two-stage revolution" schema and the nationalist "divided nation" theory. But this has been done on a purely empirical basis leading to total confusion rather than a revolutionary Marxist program.

Thus Resistencia Puertorriqueña

(Puerto Rican Resistance, a New York-centered group sympathetic to the Communist Labor Party) rejects the perspective of capitalist independence for Puerto Rico, denouncing "the ideology of the petty bourgeoisie that desperately tries... to drag the Puerto Rican working class on its tail and to make the Puerto Rican national minority in the U.S. into a mere appendix of the reformist struggle for the banana republic of Puerto Rico" ("Analysis of the Political Declaration of the PSP in the USA," October 1973). Another group, El Comité, which also goes by the name of Movimiento de Izquierda Nacional Puertorriqueño (Movement of the Puerto Rican National Left), adds specific arguments:

"...the non-existence of a significant



Demonstrators in Washington, D.C., October 1973, demand freedom for Puerto Rican political prisoners. WV Photo

peasantry; the objective alliance of the local ruling class to U.S. Imperialism as its very existence, its very dependence on the continued imperialist domination of Puerto Rico and the existence of a petty bourgeoisie whose interests become closely bound to U.S. capitalists' interests. These aspects of Puerto Rican society coupled with the existence of a numerically large working class determine that strategically the struggle for Puerto Rican independence is fundamentally and predominantly a struggle for socialism."

—*Obreros en Marcha*, 24 July 1975

The Spectre of Trotskyism

While leftist posturing toward the PSP is to be expected, the danger in arguing for proletarian revolution in a colonial country is clear to every Stalinist: behind the perspective of socialist revolution lies the spectre of Trotskyism. Such charges are already being thrown around the Maoist milieu. At a debate last July the Movimiento Socialista Puertorriqueño (MSP—Puerto Rican Socialist Movement), a group based on the island and uncritically supported by El Comité, was accused of "assuming a 'Trotskyist' position in opposition to the 'two-stage revolution'." The MSP reportedly answered by denouncing "mechanical applications of other revolutionary experiences" (*ibid.*).

The "other" experiences alluded to, of course, are Mao's "theories" of "New Democracy" and a "bloc of four classes." In contrast to the Mao Stalin call for a "first stage" of "democratic" bourgeois revolution, the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution holds that during the epoch of imperialist decay the weak bourgeoisies of the backward capitalist countries are inextricably tied to domestic reactionaries and the imperialist powers. Fearful of mobilizing the exploit-

ed masses, the native capitalists are incapable of carrying out even the most basic tasks of the bourgeois revolution, such as national independence. It is up to the proletariat, by establishing its own class rule with the support of the oppressed urban and peasant masses, to fulfill these democratic tasks. And with the workers in power there can be no "Chinese Wall," no barrier between a first and second stage, as the revolution must quickly pass on to socialist measures in an uninterrupted process.

Rather than coming to grips with Trotskyism, the Puerto Rican Maoists seek refuge in a vulgar empiricism which denies the validity of the historical lessons of the world communist movement. The MSP restricts itself to talk of "concrete

analysis of concrete conditions." Resistencia Puertorriqueña and El Comité go slightly further, speaking of special conditions in an "industrial colony." The Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Movement (PRRWO) talks of a "capitalist colony," but quickly adds that there "may or may not" be a "one-stage revolution, depending on certain concrete conditions." Having had somewhat more experience in Mao-Thought than the other groups, the PRRWO is careful to state that "a certain degree of capitalist development" was correct in China, and that the Mao Stalin Menshevik program of "two-stage revolution" is valid for "normal" colonies ("In the U.S. Pregnant with Revisionism: The Struggle for Proletarian Revolution Moves Ahead," November 1974).

Formula for Betrayal

The history of the workers movement is unfortunately filled with bloody defeats resulting from class-collaborationist alliances with "progressive" capitalists that lie at the heart of the reformist "two-stage" hoax. The Shanghai massacre of 1927 was the direct result of Stalin's political bloc with "anti-imperialist" General Chiang Kai-shek. The Great Organizer of Defeats allowed Franco to drown the Spanish workers in blood rather than upset his "democratic" imperialist "allies" by permitting a revolutionary assault on capitalist rule. In 1965 a similar deadly blow was administered to the Indonesian workers and peasants with the massacre of half a million leftist militants. Resistencia Puertorriqueña chalks this defeat up to the "strategic line of Moscow," completely ignoring the responsibility of Mao & Co. in encouraging the Indonesian Commun-

ist Party to restrain the revolutionary movement and support the bourgeois nationalist Sukarno.

From last October's Madison Square Garden extravaganza organized by the PSP on the liberal theme of a "Bicentennial Without Colonies" to this fall's Havana Conference of Solidarity with the Independence of Puerto Rico, the Maoists have vigorously denounced "Soviet social-imperialism" and the Russians' sacrifice of national liberation struggles on the altar of "peaceful coexistence" with U.S. imperialism. They are fond of citing Chile as a case where the pro-Moscow CP's reformism led to a bloody debacle. Yet they are silent about China's role. How could they justify the refusal to accept a single political refuge? (In fact, the head of the Chilean Maoists was able to reach Peking following the 1973 rightist coup only by way of the USSR!) And what excuse do the Maoists give for the fact that China was among the first to accord diplomatic recognition and negotiate trade agreements with the butcher Pinochet?

The treacherous implications of Maoist Stalinist strategy can be clearly seen right next door to Puerto Rico, in the Dominican Republic. The Movimiento Popular Dominicano (MPD—Dominican People's Movement), the largest pro-Peking organization in Latin America, in 1972 signed the Agreement of Santiago with not only the bourgeois-nationalist PRD of Juan Bosch (the Dominican equivalent of Muñoz Marín's Populares) but also with the executioner of the 1965 Santo Domingo uprising, General Wessin y Wessin! Naturally the Agreement provided for the maintenance of the capitalist army and failed to expropriate the agrarian bourgeoisie.

Puerto Ricans in the U.S.

The Maoists have rejected the PSP's theory of the "divided nation," which holds that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are part of a spiritual nation united by Eastern Airlines' "air bridge" between New York City and San Juan. Although erroneously viewing Puerto Ricans in the U.S. as a "nationality" or "national minority" (they are immigrants), the Maoists have correctly concluded that "the majority of Puerto Rican people in the U.S. are objectively an integral part of the proletariat in this country" (El Comité, "The Process of Puerto Rican Migration and the U.S. Working Class," January 1975).

Yet Puerto Rican Maoists in the U.S. remain trapped in a nationalist framework, to which Maoism provides no alternative. Their independent organizational existence flowed from earlier "Third World" poly-vanguardist politics, when they accepted "divided nation" theories and the rest of the nationalist baggage. With a turn toward workerist Maoism and away from the glorification of ghetto rebellions, the rationale for a separate political grouping of Puerto Ricans disappeared. The barrios of the South Bronx and East Harlem are no longer the limits of their world.

For the last several years, the PRRWO, El Comité and Resistencia Puertorriqueña have flailed around unable to find an organizational anchor in the splintered U.S. Maoist milieu. The PRRWO, together with the Black Workers Congress, careened from the Revolutionary Union to the October League to the Communist League and is now drifting aimlessly in the hazy mists of Mao-Thought, searching for a "multi-national vanguard party." While the former

Independence for Puerto Rico!

Young Lords Party now denounces the reformism of the RU and OL, and the "Trotskyism" of the CL, it is evident from the polemics that bureaucratic appetites (namely fear of being swallowed up in a national organization) have been a major reason for its inability to find a home.

But the problem goes far beyond organization. Both the national Maoist organizations and those based in the Puerto Rican ghettos of New York City are unclear on the relation of Puerto Ricans to a U.S.-wide party for the same reasons they have wandered all over the map on the black question (a "Negro nation" in the South, black nation "of a new type," "self-determination for the Black Belt," etc.): there is no Maoist strategy for the advanced capitalist countries, nor does the Peking bureaucracy give any concrete political direction to its acolytes outside China.

Neither is there a Maoist International, as this would only hinder Chinese foreign policy maneuvers. Puerto Rican Maoists are reduced to placing their faith in an elusive "proletarian style that joins communists around the world" ("In the U.S. Pregnant with Revisionism..."). For Stalinism and its Maoist variant, the doctrine of "socialism in one country" is the reflection of a nationally insular bureaucratic ruling caste seeking to protect its privileges by working out a deal with imperialism. For them world revolution is a threat, and an International thus unnecessary.

The Trotskyist movement is armed with a Marxist program uniting the struggle of proletarian revolutionaries in the semi-colonial countries, the advanced capitalist states and the deformed workers states. Rather than resorting to limp "Puerto Rican exceptionalist" arguments, the theory of permanent revolution explains why no significant section of the colonial bourgeoisie is willing to fight for independence from imperialism, a fact which is just as true in Indonesia or the Dominican Republic as in Puerto Rico. And despite the destruction of the Fourth International by the advocates of Pabloist revisionism those renegades who abandoned the struggle for an independent Trotskyist party in order to tail after the pro-Moscow Stalinists, Maoists and Guevarists—authentic Trotskyists continue to struggle today for the rebirth of the world party of socialist revolution. —Immediate Independence for Puerto Rico!

For a Puerto Rican Workers Republic in a Soviet Federation of the Caribbean! ■

PDC Telegram

29 October 1975

Committee for the Freedom of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners
Box 164, 161 East Houston St.
New York, New York 10002

The Partisan Defense Committee solidarizes with the demand for unconditional release of the five Puerto Rican Nationalist prisoners. Their imprisonment is an outrage against all who struggle in the interest of the oppressed! Free Collazo, Lebrón, Cordero, Flores and Miranda!

Partisan Defense Committee

FALN Bombs Symbols of Colonial Rule

NEW YORK, October 27—In what seems destined to become an annual event, a chain of bombings early this morning hit four New York City banks, the U.S. mission to the United Nations, three Chicago office buildings and the State Department in Washington D.C. No injuries have been reported. As in the bombing of five New York banks a year ago yesterday, credit was claimed by the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) of Puerto Rico. An FALN message discovered in a New York phone booth said the "simultaneously coordinated attack against Yanki government and monopoly capitalist institutions" marked the first anniversary of the organization and commemorated the Puerto Rican nationalist uprising of 1950. The communiqué demanded the immediate independence of Puerto Rico and the freeing of Puerto Rican political prisoners, including the five nationalists imprisoned in the early 1950's for attacks on Blair House and Congress.

The bourgeoisie's response to the

bombings is completely predictable. They will scream about "radicals and terrorism" while at the same time stepping up repressive police measures. But the ineffectual bombings of the FALN cannot be measured on the same scale as the terrorism of the bourgeoisie against the working masses. The capitalist statesmen who now profess pious indignation are servants of the ruling class which has for decades sucked the blood of the Puerto Rican people. These are the statesmen who advise, applaud and bankroll the torturers and jailers of the Chilean working masses. These are the gentlemen who have murdered millions in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

The Spartacist League stands opposed to the strategy of terrorism carried out by the FALN—not out of some moral abhorrence of "violence" but because the historical experience of the working-class movement shows the futility of such individualistic terrorist acts.

We unambiguously side with the outrage of the oppressed against the oppressors. We uncompromisingly support Puerto Rican independence and liberty for the nationalist prisoners. In this context we defend the FALN against the bourgeois state.

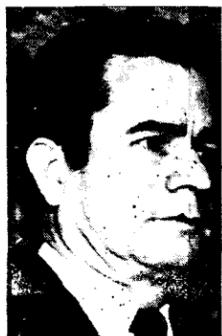
But we also know that the terrorism of the FALN is a dead end, a pointless detour from the fight to free the working masses of Puerto Rico from imperialist bondage. The minor damage inflicted by the FALN this year and last does no real harm to U.S. imperialism; its resources are not drained by replacing some plaster and a few window panes. The power of the bourgeoisie derives from its ownership of the means of production, backed up by its army and police. Blowing up a few buildings or assassinating this or that official enrages the bourgeoisie but does not even momentarily weaken the grip of the colonialist fist.

While we understand the legitimate rage of those who daily feel the boot of U.S. imperialism upon their necks, we cannot defend the FALN in those instances when frustration leads it to acts of indiscriminate terrorism such as last year's bombing of the Fraunces Tavern in Manhattan.

That bombing was utterly despicable and indefensible. The bomb was knowingly placed so as to kill and maim as many people as possible who happened to be passing by the restaurant at lunch hour. Among the four killed and 44 wounded were many working people who were in the area because they worked there. The revolutionary vanguard must distinguish such truly criminal acts from misguided attempts to attack the real oppressors of the Puerto Rican people and symbols of their authority such as banks, government offices, etc.

The powerless acts of isolated terrorists, of no consequence to capitalist rule, can only boomerang against their initiators and, more generally, against the radical and labor movements. As the FBI entered the case immediately in all three cities bombed today, a crackdown on Puerto Rican communities, and left and nationalist militants in particular, is threatened. This must not be tolerated!

Those who are committed to ending imperialist rule in Puerto Rico must not permit themselves to be sidetracked into the dead end of impotent terrorist acts, which are a diversion from and substitute for organizing the revolutionary vanguard party of the working class. Only the massed power of the conscious working class of Puerto Rico and the U.S., led by Leninist parties, can break the fetters of colonial enslavement through the revolutionary overturn of international capitalism. ■



Irving Flores



Lolita Lebrón



Rafael Cancel Miranda



Andrés Figueroa Cordero



Oscar Collazo

Free the Five Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners!

Twenty-five years ago this October 30 the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party staged an armed uprising in the town of Jayuya, proclaiming a "Second Republic of Puerto Rico" (the first being the short-lived 1868 "Grito de Lares" revolt against Spanish colonial rule). The 1950 uprising was brutally repressed by U.S. forces. Hated mercenary police held searches at gunpoint, the National Guard fired on homes of independence fighters and entire towns were bombed by Air Force planes. Hundreds on the island were arrested, including Nationalist Party leader Pedro Albizu Campos. The Jayuya revolt was an expression of despair, a heroic gesture, rather than a powerful proletarian uprising.

Shortly afterward, on November 1, two Nationalist Party members who were unable to leave the U.S. in order to take part in the revolt shot their way into Blair House—residence of U.S. president Harry Truman—in an attempt to assassinate the commander-in-chief of American imperialism. Both Nationalists were seriously wounded, Torresola fatally. Collazo received the death penalty. As a result of mass protest Collazo's sentence was later commuted to life in prison. He

has already sat in jail longer than any other political prisoner in the U.S.

Later, in 1954, four other Nationalists carried out a gun attack on the U.S. House of Representatives, wounding five congressmen, to dramatize the cause of Puerto Rican independence. Still in jail, they are: Lolita Lebrón at Alderson, West Virginia (with a sentence of 16 years 8 months to 50 years), Rafael Cancel Miranda at the federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois (25 to 75 years), Andrés Figueroa Cordero and Irving Flores (25 to 75 years each) at Leavenworth, Kansas, where Collazo is also being held.

Although they were directed at bourgeois politicians responsible for the perpetuation of colonial oppression and capitalist exploitation, the attacks on Congress and Truman did not advance the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. Nevertheless, it is the duty of all socialists and class-conscious workers to defend those who lash out against the bourgeoisie in the interest of the oppressed. We demand: Unconditional independence for Puerto Rico! Immediate freedom for Oscar Collazo, Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Andrés Figueroa Cordero and Irving Flores! ■