

OBREROS EN MARCHA

POLITICAL ORGAN OF EL COMITE M.I.N.P.

Vol. 3, No. 8

September 1978

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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 objectives. 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 preconditions 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
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EDITORIAL

September Strike Looms

Postal Workers Reject Contract

On July 21st, a tentative contract agreement was worked out between the three major postal unions—the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), and the Laborers' International Union—and the United States Postal Service.

The workers had demanded a 14% wage increase over 2 years and cost of living adjustments (COLA) yearly. They got only a 10% wage increase and a 9½ % COLA increase over three years. The fact that inflation had driven prices 17% higher in the past year was obviously not considered by the union "leaders." The workers had demanded an end to speedups and to an increased work load, both resulting from the loss of 8,600 workers through attrition since 1971. But the contract did not include any such job provision. The workers had demanded an end to mandatory overtime, which was keeping some of them at their jobs 60 hours a week. This was also ignored in the contract.

Without waiting for a contract vote, postal workers in New Jersey and San Francisco struck at their offices, forcefully rejecting the contract that so clearly was not in their interests. The wildcat strikes only lasted a few days, but they had stirred up much rank and file support across the country. Two hundred workers were fired for participating in the wildcats; many rank and file groups demanded that amnesty for these workers be included in the contract agreement.

On August 24, the membership of the three postal unions overwhelmingly voted "NO" on the contract. However, in the days that followed, union officials worked hand in hand with Postmaster General William Bolger to undercut any push for a strike. On the 5th day after the vote, Bolger and the 9 union negotiators agreed to reopen negotiations. But only two issues were to be discussed: greater wage increases, which the workers wanted, and the no-layoff clause, which the Postal Service wanted eliminated. The other key issues of forced overtime and speedups were completely ignored. Worker solidarity went by the wayside when the union bureaucrats refused to take up the question of amnesty. Furthermore, in the event that a new agreement wasn't reached in 15 days, the contract would be submitted to binding arbitration. There was to be no new vote on the contract.

Objectively, postal workers face increasingly poor working conditions in their jobs. In the past ten years, the amount of labor each postal worker must perform has increased tremendously. This is to compensate for the decrease in the work force, both through attrition and also mechanization. To maintain and increase the level of productivity, each worker is now forced to work longer hours and at a faster pace. The unwillingness of the union leadership to fight these conditions has led to much of the present outrage.

The response of the postal workers to the latest development in the contract struggle is in question at this time. The disgust and anger of the workers, directed at their own leadership as much as at the federal government, is evident. The determination to strike against a sellout agreement is widespread throughout the postal unions. Yet the question remains whether the rank and file is organized and strong enough to pull off a nationwide strike.

In 1970, the New York City chapter of the APWU went out on a wildcat strike which, before it ended, spread to at least 6 other cities and involved over 200,000 workers. Since then, however, little rank and file activity or militancy has taken place, until the recent events. One extremely positive result of the local mobilizations against the contract has been the strengthening of ties between various rank and file formations that have been forming in different cities, as well as the emergence of leaders from the base.

The postal workers are joining the ranks of an increasing number of unions whose rank and file membership is beginning to challenge a bureaucratic, unresponsive, class-collaborationist leadership.

In this time of worsening economic conditions of high unemployment and higher inflation, when the standard of living of the working class is being attacked on all sides—in their jobs and in the communities where they live—the need for a strong, honest leadership that truly represents the interests of workers becomes even more important. But such a leadership can develop and maintain itself only if there is an organized vocal base that demands accountability. This base is beginning to develop among the postal workers.

IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH
IN THE WORKERS LIES THE POWER

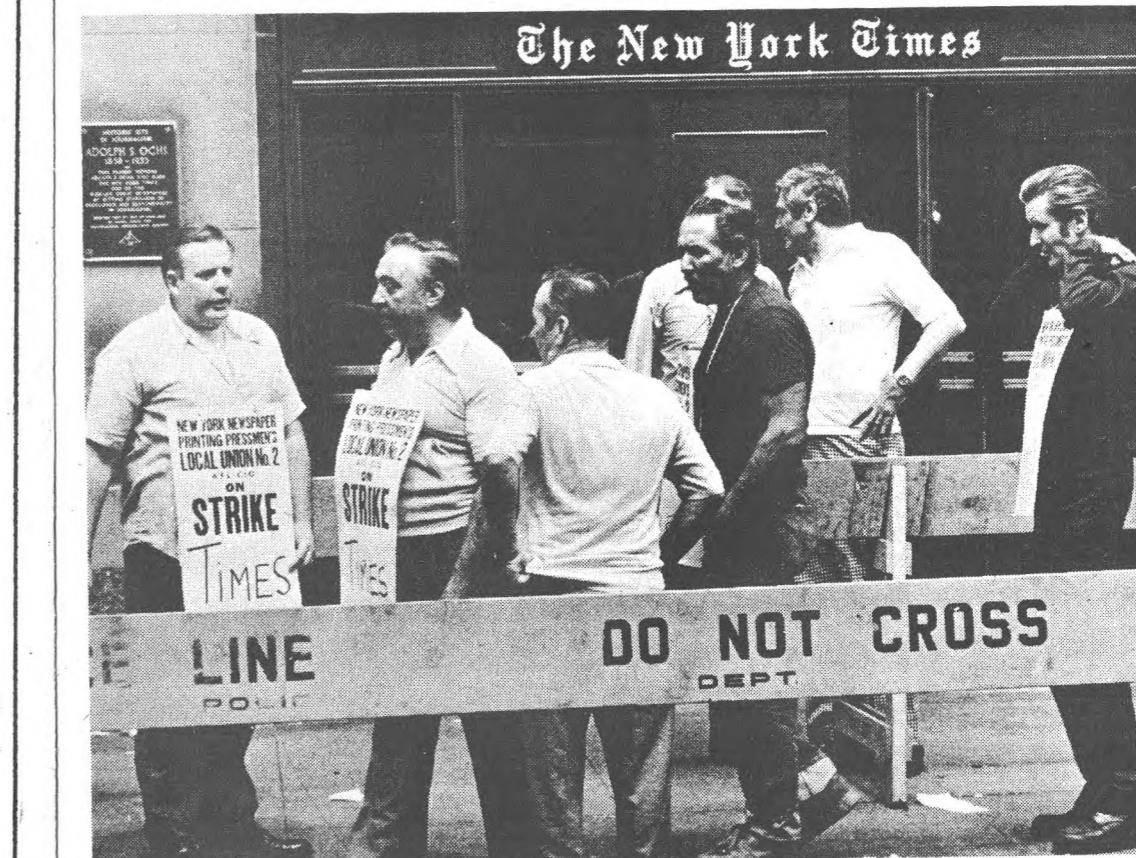
LOCAL

NEWSPAPER WORKERS ON STRIKE IN NYC

On August 9, press operators at New York City's major daily newspapers, the New York Times, New York Post, and the Daily News, were forced to go out on strike when the Times carried out its threat to post new work schedules. The publishers demanded a reduction in what they claimed was an overload of workers in the press rooms (where the papers were actually printed). The publishers wanted to establish a policy of flexibility in the number of men needed to run the huge printing presses. This so-called flexibility would then allow them to cut the number of press operators by 50%. The publishers want to layoff all those with less than 3 years of

in September, after Labor Day. Therefore, to force a strike during this period would minimize their loss of profits and at the same time, further their ability to hold out.

The pressmen (along with the 9 other unions representing more than 10,000 newspaper workers) had been without a contract since March 31st. Yet management had been willing to continue negotiations for 4 months, despite the fact they had no intention of meeting union demands. Once the summer lull hit, however, the publishers broke off the bargaining and immediately posted the new work rules. By forcing the workers into a strike at this particular time, the publishers in



Members of pressmen's union picketing at the New York Times. Picket lines also went up at the Daily News and the New York Times.

full-time employment. This would involve approximately 500 workers. The rest of the layoffs would take place through attrition.

The newspaper owners chose an opportune time to provoke the strike. During the late summer months, the income that newspapers receive from circulation and advertising falls by one-third; it returns to normal levels only

essence locked out their employees.

UNIONS UNDER ATTACK FROM PUBLISHERS

Over the past several years, newspaper owners have attempted to break the substantial power of New York City's newspaper

In New York City, two main tactics have been used by the publishers. One has been to train executives and non-union personnel in the use of automated printing equipment so they could print the paper in case of a strike. The second tactic—one historically used by the bosses in all industries to weaken the demands of workers—has been to divide the

workers and the unions, and fight them one by one. These tactics have been implemented most successfully at the New York Post by its new owner, Rupert Murdoch. Since he bought the paper, Murdoch has tried to break the power of the Newspaper Guild (the union representing clerks, reporters, and copyeditors) by laying off workers or forcing them to quit, and replacing them with non-union personnel.

At the Daily News, the management attempted to follow up on Murdoch's successful attack on the Guild by demanding an end to the closed shop (requiring that all workers belong to the union). Their offensive backfired, however. The Guild went out on strike and for five days in June kept the Daily News off the streets (see OEM, Vol 3, #6).

The Guild was able to maintain the closed shop. However, despite the determination and militancy of the rank and file and the support of other unions, the Guild ended up signing a contract in which it was barely able to hold onto job benefits won in the past.

The present period of rising inflation has had its effects upon the city's newspaper industry. Variable expenses in the industry have risen: the cost of ink, postage, electricity and newsprint have all gone up. This has tended to cut into newspaper profits. In addition, the circulation of the major dailies has been affected by increased competition from various smaller suburban newspapers, whose circulation is expanding. Despite these factors, however, profits have continued to rise. This is particularly true for the New York Times, whose stock has risen from \$18.76 to \$30.67 per share within the last year. In the first half of 1978, Times' profits reached \$10.7 million, more than it has earned in all of 1976.

TECHNOLOGY FOR THE BOSSES' BENEFIT

One major way owners have been able to increase their profits is by using the technological developments in the industry to advance their interests to the detriment of the workers. Jobs once performed by human labor have now become mechanized. Thus the publishers have been able to cut back on labor power while, at the same time, increasing the level of production. In most cases this has resulted in permanent unemployment for those workers laid off. Computers and the "cold type" process, for example, have almost totally transformed the composing stages (what each page will look like) and have made certain jobs extinct.

For press operators, however, the attacks have taken a different form. Within the last 50 years, technology has had a minimal effect on either the production process or the working conditions of the pressmen. Paper dust and chemical vapors still fill the air making it necessary for the workers to wear protective masks in the press room. Without these masks, they would be risking permanent damage to the liver, kidneys, blood-forming organs, nerves, eyes, and brain. At the Daily

News, scalding showers are necessary to remove the layers of inky grime that coat the pressmen's bodies at the end of each day. Additionally, as the presses roll into action, workers are subjected to noise levels of 110, far above the levels considered safe by federal government safety rules.

As for the actual production process itself, the giant printing presses still need human labor power to work them. Technology has not yet transformed the process. However, advances have been made in the area of production efficiency. Today, the presses run about twice as fast as they used to. By cutting down on labor costs, and increasing the work loads of the rest of the workers, the publishers will be able to increase their profits. This is why they want to reduce the number of pressmen in the room by 50%. Of course, in order to do this, they must smash the union and this is precisely what they are aiming to do.

UNIONS FORGE UNITY

On August 22, management assaulted the striking workers with another attack. The Times stated that for the duration of the strike it would discontinue or reduce payments to insurance programs benefitting union employees. After September 1st, the newspaper would no longer make any contributions to health programs. Contributions to disability plans would be reduced to the minimum state requirement. The company further stated that the workers could not count on retirement or investment payments during the time the paper was closed down.

As the attacks of management intensify, the need for unity among the various unions becomes increasingly crucial. From its inception, the pressmen's strike received support from 9 of the 10 newspaper unions. These

unions know that whatever contract is negotiated by the pressmen it will establish a precedent for their contract negotiations. The only union which did not give its support, was the typographers' union, which had been forced to accept a long-term no-strike contract.

Significantly, the deliverers' union also supported the strike from the beginning. Their pivotal role was made clear in the Guild strike at the Daily News in June when, directed by their leadership, 150 of 600 drivers crossed the picket lines and delivered papers produced by the management. It was only when the union heads responded to strong rank and file pressure and announced that their union would no longer cross the picket line, that the publishers were forced to return to the negotiating table.

Although the majority of the unions (with the exception of the drivers) belong to the loosely-grouped Allied Printing Trades Council, this council does not have a history of united struggle. It was precisely this lack of support from fellow workers that allowed the Washington Post to break the pressmen's union there. The owners will employ every scheme at their disposal to foment dissension among the unions, but what is fundamental to remember is that the publishers want to weaken the strength and bargaining power of all unions. To date, the unions have shown a high level of support in respecting the picket lines. In addition, four other unions have joined the strike: the paper handlers and the machinists against all three newspapers; the mechanists against the News; and the Newspaper Guild against the Post. If this trend should continue, then the workers have a good chance of protecting their interest in what promises to be a long hard-fought struggle.



PUERTO RICO INFORMA

Government Repression Targets M.S.P.

Contribution from MSP

The Popular Socialist Movement (MSP), as is the case with other pro-independence and socialist organizations in Puerto Rico, confronts in these moments a repressive offensive of significant proportions. The attempts by the government of Puerto Rico and its repressive apparatuses against the organization in recent days are clearly characterized by the efforts to weaken, cripple and immobilize the MSP.

Last Thursday, August 24th, at approximately 1:30 in the morning, a so-called Boricua Popular Army (Ejercito Popular Boricua-Macheteros) detained a police patrol in the outskirts of the town of Naguabo. Four men and a woman took part in the action, momentarily capturing one policeman and killing another who had refused to surrender, drawing his weapon and attempting to confront them. The alleged combatants, who according to their communiqué were intent on raiding the police patrol to secure uniforms and arms, withdrew following a shootout with agents of the Bureau of Criminal Investigations (NIC) who "coincidentally" happened to be in the area. Upon retreat the combatants supposedly left an abandoned car (1977 Dodge Colt), a pistol, various masks and other materials.

The Popular Socialist Movement has been able to ascertain through information available from the press and confidential statements from the ranks of the police that there are plans to link the MSP to these events. In fact, it has been learned that the police have discussed the arrest of 6 comrades who are member of or affiliated to the MSP in one way or another.

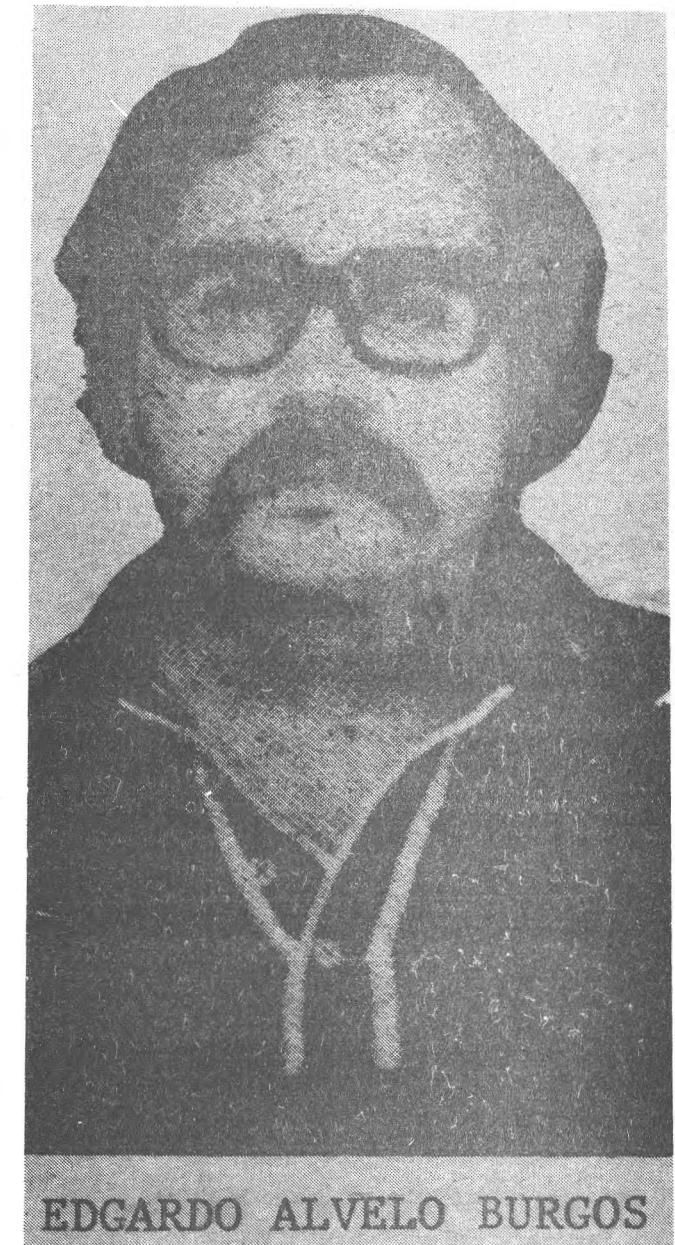
In this regard, there have already been some signs that this is the case. In the first place, the commercial press, upon the initiative of the police, have begun an open and barefaced campaign to link Edgardo Alvelo Burgos, a leading member of the MSP and trade union militant, with these and other illegal acts in Puerto Rico. They base this campaign on the charges that the compañero has pending in the courts.

Edgardo Alvelo Burgos was arrested by the Bureau of Criminal Investigations (NIC) on July 23rd. At that time, he was accused of possession of a sawed-off shotgun, two stolen vehicles and material supposedly intended for the production of explosives. The two vehicles allegedly seized in an area adjacent to the home of Alvelo Burgos were supposedly from a shipment of five cars stolen from the firm of Sunday Motors at the end of last year.

Based on these accusations, the police and the capitalist press have begun to establish links which are at best grossly irresponsible and only exist in the troglodyte minds of those guardians of this regime of exploitation. No sooner had the events at Naguabo transpired when information began to appear in the press indicating that the car abandoned by the alleged "Macheteros" was part of the same shipment of automobiles supposedly taken from Alvelo.

In addition, a recently published version of the incidents

at Naguabo stated that not only were there 6 suspects in the killing of the policeman but that compañero Humberto Pagan Hernandez was linked to the events. The "proof" against the compañero consists in that he allegedly participated in a march against repression supposedly using masks similar to those found in Naguabo. The police had



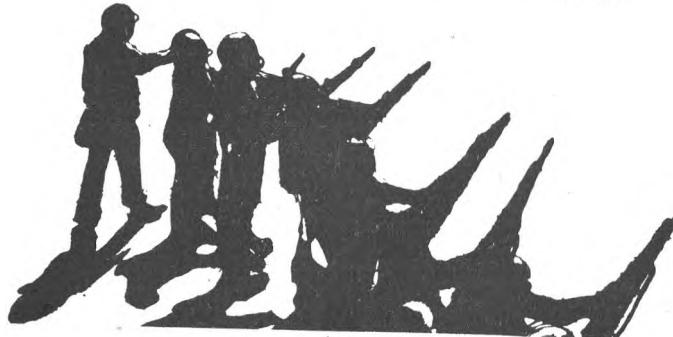
EDGARDO ALVELO BURGOS

only this "solid evidence" to offer.

The insinuations and accusations made against both comrades are nothing short of outright lies whipped up in order to place the blame for these illegal acts on them and make them the scape goats for events that evidently the police have not been able to solve.

Who Are Those Companeros?

Edgardo Alvelo Burgos is an outstanding fighter for independence and a militant of the trade union movement in Puerto Rico. Among the positions and responsibilities which he has taken up during the years he has dedicated to the workers' struggle, those which stand out among others are: the compañero was an organizer of the Puerto Rican Guild of Workers (Germio Puertorriqueno de Trabajadores) at which time he participated in this union's strikes against companies such as Westinghouse, various municipal administrations, agencies of the government, the Datsun Company, etc.; he was a member of the United Workers' Movement (M.O.U.), an organization which in the past brought together important unions in the country; he was Secretary of Workers' and Trade Union affairs of the MSP, in which he retains positions of leadership due to his militancy and political capability; he has always maintained himself involved in the more significant workers' struggles, having participated in the 1974 teachers' strike (in which he was hurt and arrested by the police), in the 1976 strike of the Puerto Rican Cement Company, in the strike of the Comandante race track (in which he was also arrested and brutally assaulted) and in the recent strike of the UTIER against the Water Resources Authority. At the time of his arrest, Edgardo had begun working as an organizer for the Teachers' Federation in Puerto Rico.



Humberto Pagan Hernandez is the compañero who in March 1971 was accused of the execution of Commander Birino Mercado, the chief of the infamous Shock forces, in the University of Puerto Rico. The intentions of the police in avenging the death of their commander were to assassinate our compañero, forcing Humberto to flee to Canada where he remained until 1975, at which time he returned to Puerto Rico and was absolved of the charges against him. He is a member of the MSP and the current accusations against him constitute an act of vengeance on the part of the police of Puerto Rico.

Neither the arrest of compañero Alvelo nor the accusations against Humberto Pagan and the MSP are isolated incidents. They occur within the framework of the campaign of persecution and repression being waged by the colonial government and its repressive agencies against the workers' movement in Puerto Rico and particularly against the fighters for independence and socialism in our homeland.

The assassinations of Arnaldo Dario Rosado and Carlos Soto Arrivi on July 25th in Cerro Maravilla in Jayuya, Puerto Rico; the repression against the workers during the re-

cent strikes at the Water Works Authority and the Metropolitan Bus Authority; the arrest and jailing of worker leader, Radames Acosta, accused of violating the infamous Taft Hartley Law; the case fabricated against Teamster organizer Miguel Cabrera, accused of killing the company lawyer Allan H. Randall; the bombing of the offices of the Teamsters Union perpetrated by elements linked to the the terrorists of the right; the brutal assassination of Teamster leader Juan Rafael Caballero at the hands of the Death Squad of the Puerto Rican Police; the technological bolstering and consolidation of the various repressive agencies (police, NIC, TPF, FBI, etc.) to deal with subversive activities in Puerto Rico; and the persecution of and fabrications against the MSP are all elements of the same scheme.

All of these are actions aimed at creating a basis for the establishment of a police state in Puerto Rico. They indicate a movement toward a form of government which, confronted with its inability to resolve the grave economic and social problems facing the colony, will be able—through generalized and daily repression—to maintain the conditions of exploitation and oppression from which the dominant classes in Puerto Rico benefit. It will be a regime where the violation of the rights of the people, terrorism and violence, assassinations and jailing of revolutionaries, will become the daily bread of the people.

For this reason, the Popular Socialist Movement will denounce at all levels this new offensive against it and in the process will utilize all the mechanisms (avenues) to which it has access. Already on the national level public denunciation of the case has been initiated through the channels of the organization and through the Soto-Rosado Committee Against Repression, an organization which emerged as a result of the crimes at Cerro Maravilla composed of the major progressive forces on the island. In the United States steps have already begun to expose the nature of these cases and to seek solidarity in the face of repression.

More importantly, and beyond many of these things, one thing must be made clear. The repressive goals of the government will not be achieved. Its harassment and persecution, such as the campaign of slanders directed at crippling and obstructing the work of the MSP, will only achieve the re-enforcement and strengthening of our will and commitment to double our efforts to develop the instrument that will serve the workers to overthrow the bourgeoisie and imperialist domination of our country and lead to the establishment of socialism.

Party Building and Its Relationship to the Masses

In this part of our party-building position we assess the present state of the party-building forces—particularly the "anti-revisionist and anti-dogmatist" forces and the contradictions which characterize the party-building process in this country.

This pamphlet is available for \$1.25 (which includes mailing cost) from:

EL COMITE-M.I.N.P.
577 Columbus Ave.
N.Y., N.Y. 10024



PUERTO RICO:

Revolutionary Unity and the Solidarity Movement

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

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

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

Companeros and Companeras:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Comrades:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let us say no to the reactionary forces of statehood!

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

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

Forward to a free and socialist Puerto Rico!

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

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

Date: WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 13, 1978

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

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Speakers: MIGUEL CABRERA
JEAN WEISMAN, Coordinator, U.S. TUCAR
Donation: \$2.50

INTERNATIONAL

NICARAGUA

Sandinista Front Launches Offensive

SOMOZA LOSES CONTROL

The action was two years in the planning. Then, on August 23rd, 1978, a green army truck arrived in front of the National Palace in Managua, capitol of Nicaragua. Twenty-five soldiers, men and women, disembarked and entered the Palace. Meeting little resistance from the palace guards, the 25 soldiers—commandos of the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN)—proceeded to take control of the palace complex, which contains both houses of Congress and two ministries. The commandos took everyone in the palace hostage. Congress was in session that day, so that the hostages numbered close to 1000, including the members of Congress plus several Cabinet members.

The commandos demanded that the military dictatorship of Anastacio Somoza free one hundred political prisoners, publish an FSLN message to the Nicaraguan people, and pay \$10 million in ransom. The suddenness of the highly-organized and boldly-executed action stunned the already weakened Somoza regime. It immediately began negotiations with the FSLN, with Archbishop Obando y Bravo acting as the mediator. After two days of national tension, Somoza gave in to the demands of the Frente Sandinista. The guerrillas flew to Panama, together with fifty-nine freed political prisoners. The message had been read over national television and radio. The amount of money the guerrillas received was over half a million dollars.

Before the commandos had left the country, the Somoza regime was confronted with the second general strike of the year. This one was called by the Frente Amplio de Oposicion (FAO), a broad coalition of bourgeois opposition groups, including business interests, political organizations, conservative labor unions, etc. The goal of the coalition is the overthrow of Somoza and the institution of a democratic government. A few days after the strike began, it had reached 90% effectiveness. With the action at the National Palace, mass activity in the street increased tremendously. Urban workers, some armed, confronted government troops; people erected barricades to block the movement of National Guard troops and to keep them from opening up closed businesses. FSLN leaflets urged citizens to protect and aid people fleeing from the National Guard.

On August 27th, Matagalpa, a town of 60,000 in the northern part of the country, was taken over by students and peasants who



Nicaraguan people show support for FSLN commando action, Aug. 23rd at the National Palace.

declared it an "independent territory." Numbering no more than 500, the students and peasants drove the National Guard from the center of the town, set up barricades and organized the administration of the town. They received support and cooperation from most of the town's people. Their repulsion of several attacks by the National Guard forced Somoza to bomb the town with his Air Force and to send in his best troops led by his son. Before Tachito (Somoza's son) could launch a final attack, the 500 students and peasants slipped quietly into the mountains under the cover of night, after holding the town for 5 days. The degree of political and military sophistication demonstrated by these young people exemplifies the more advanced level of struggle presently evolving in Nicaragua.

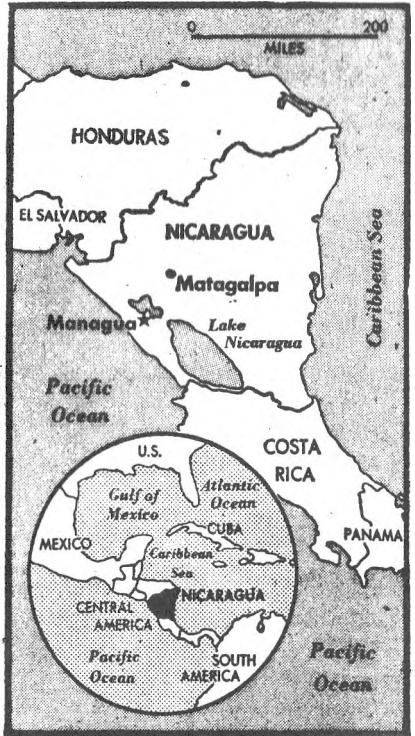
These three actions—the occupation of the National Palace, the general strike, and the liberation of Matagalpa—have been the high points of the intensifying popular agitation. Since last January's general strike (see OEM, Vol. 3, No. 2), there has been a marked increase in the activity of the Nicaraguan workers, students, and peasants against the Somoza regime. High school and college students have seized their schools, demanding the ouster of Somoza. Peasants have become bolder in land takeovers. Women have demonstrated with pots and pans protesting the rising cost of living and the in-

creasing repression. Health and construction workers have gone out on strike. Journalists and communications workers have held hunger strikes demanding freedom of the press. Explosions of homemade bombs have become a daily routine. The FSLN has increased its attacks on military posts, ammunition depots and banks. Calls for the resignation of Somoza have come in from all corners including the influential Catholic Church.

Somoza's inability to exercise authority over the country has become more evident every day. His recent, almost daily press conferences are punctuated by hysterical warnings that if he resigns, chaos will follow and the communists will triumph. The Congress recently gave him permission to leave the country if necessary, but Somoza declared he would not step down until 1981, when "democratic" elections are slated to be held. It is clear, however, that the growing popular movement, plus Somoza's alienation of his traditional allies (many of those now in the FAO) indicates that he will have to leave much sooner than 1981.

SOMOZA LOSES HIS FRIENDS

After the 1972 earthquake that destroyed Managua, Somoza's push for profits began to alienate sectors of the national



Somoza movements. It has declared that no solution to the country's crisis will be complete without the participation of the FSLN. Indeed, Ernesto Cardenal, a member of the Group of Twelve, is also a member of the FSLN. The FAO was formed due to the initiative of this group. However, within the FAO this group does not exert enough control over the most powerful business interests, who look for their own solution to Somoza. Recently there have been persistent rumors of secret negotiations between sectors of the bourgeois opposition and Somoza, or between the bourgeois opposition and elements of the National Guard. The abortive military coup, backed by business interests, that took place August 28th, is just one example of the bourgeoisie's attempts to resolve the national crisis with or without support from other sectors.

The vacillation of the bourgeois forces also characterizes the actions of Somoza's second traditional ally, the U.S. government. At times, the Carter administration has withheld economic aid from Nicaragua charging violation of human rights. At other times, it has praised Somoza for his progress in respecting human rights. Presently, the Carter administration wavers between increasing its support for the tottering Somoza regime and giving its support to another force, such as the FAO. The U.S. does not want to increase its support for Somoza for fear of further tarnishing its human rights posture, yet it does not criticize his inability to handle the national crisis for fear of what might happen if a popular-backed government takes over.

WHEN SOMOZA DEPARTS

Somoza's departure is no longer in doubt. The remaining questions are when and how.

The bourgeois forces may have a new leader in Ramon Sacasa Guerrero, a former minister of Somoza's, but now leader of the Movimiento Constitucionalists, a dissident faction of Somoza's Liberal Party. Sacasa

Guerrero has been the most visible spokesperson of the bourgeoisie. The best solution for both the bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism would be for Sacasa Guerrero to replace Somoza. Yet the necessary unity among the bourgeois opposition has not yet been reached.

Because of this, imperialism may have to opt for an armed intervention, either directly or indirectly through the Organization of American States (OAS). Although this would counter its assumed posture of "non-intervention in internal matters," U.S. imperialism would be forced to take this action because of the political importance of Nicaragua. Historically, Nicaragua has served as imperialism's spearhead in its attacks against the progressive forces of Central America. Both the 1954 invasion of Guatemala and the 1961 invasion of Cuba were launched from Nicaragua. Because of its long borders with Honduras and Costa Rica, Nicaragua is key to the area's stability.

The FSLN is the most advanced representative of the interests of the Nicaraguan people—the peasantry, and the urban and rural proletariat. After suffering a three-way division earlier, the FSLN has recently reunited itself and has apparently emerged stronger and more consolidated ideologically and politically. The response of the peasantry and proletariat to the FSLN action at the National Palace indicates that the organization has earned the support and respect of the Nicaraguan people, who under the leadership of the FSLN, are willing to take actions, including armed actions, against the Somoza regime.

Much of what happens in Nicaragua in the next few months depends on the ability of the FSLN to provide the ideological, political and organizational direction and leadership to the upsurge of the masses. It is also very important that all progressive and revolutionary forces in the United States provide concrete support to the Nicaraguan people, and its vanguard, the FSLN, in their struggle against the Somoza dynasty.

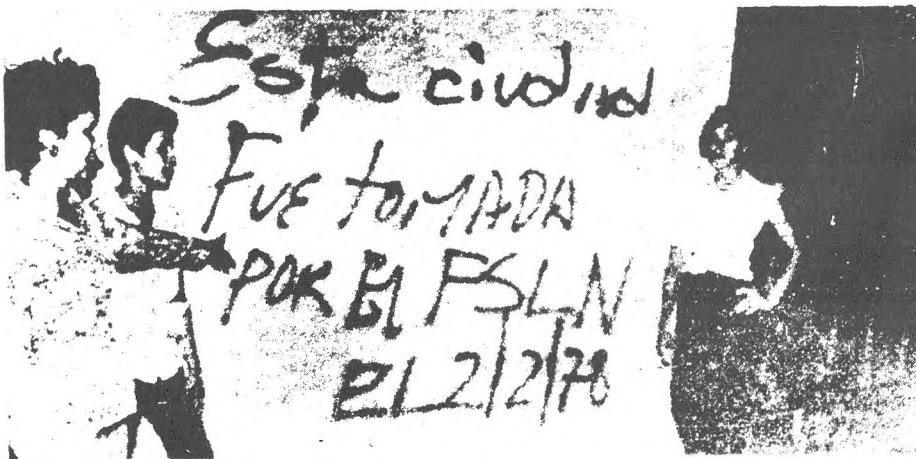
Angered by Somoza's total domination of the economy and the military as well as by his inability to control the actions of the FSLN and the general upsurge in mass activity, these bourgeois sectors now take the position that Somoza must go. However, they have been slow and ineffective in building a strong political challenge to Somoza. The FAO is increasingly intimidated by the growing popular movement and thus it has wavered between conciliation to Somoza and defiance. As a result it finds itself presently splintered into more than five factions. The support it has gained from among the people has resulted mainly from the direct FSLN attacks against Somoza.

The most progressive faction in the FAO is the "Group of Twelve," made up of priests, businessmen and intellectuals. The "12" have had a great deal of influence on the anti-

Las guerrillas estuvieron en Granada

ACCIONES QUE SE MULTIPLICAN

Writing on wall in Granada, a city of 50,000 people. This city was occupied by the FSLN on Feb. 2, 1978.



Chile

Widespread Resistance Defies Junta

This September 11th marks the 5th anniversary of the 1973 coup in Chile that overthrew the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende. Following, Obreros En Marcha presents an analysis of the current situation in Chile submitted by the companeros of NICH, Non-Intervention in Chile. The analysis focuses on 2 aspects of the current situation: the increasing exposure of contradictions within the ruling Chilean Junta, and the growing resistance activity among the masses of workers, students, and peasants.

HUNGER STRIKE GENERATES RESISTANCE

Last May, the Organization of Relatives of Disappeared Political Prisoners began a hunger strike in Chile which signaled a new stage in the resistance of the Chilean people against Augusto Pinochet's military regime. The relatives demanded to know what happened to their husbands, wives, children or parents after their arrest by the secret police.

The initial strikes took place in three Santiago churches. Within a week strikes had spread to include 27 churches and the Red Cross office in Santiago. Then the strike spread to other areas of the country, including Valparaiso, Chile's principal port, and Rancagua, a town near one of Chile's largest copper mines. A strike also began in the Santiago penitentiary where 31 political prisoners joined in the relatives' demands.

Striking was not the only way the Chilean people demonstrated their solidarity and resistance. More than 16 trade union leaders, representing over a million Chilean workers, issued a joint declaration of support. Similar declarations were signed by lawyers, students and artists. Groups of students and women staged demonstrations, leaving their placards in front of the Chilean Supreme Court.

As the strike movement in Chile grew, Chilean exiles and refugees all over the world called strikes in support of the Organization of Relatives of the Disappeared. This movement grew to 73 strikes in more than 20 countries. In the U.S. alone, strikes or vigils were held in 13 cities.

Though the Chilean Catholic Church had initially supported the strike, its role soon changed from support to mediation between the strikers and the Junta. After 18 days, when the number of strikers in Chile had risen to 300, Cardinal Raul Silva, perhaps fearing a movement he could no longer control, announced that he had resolved the situation. He called for the strikes to end because the Ministry of the Interior had agreed to investigate cases that it considered well-documented. This was, it seemed, a concession because the government had always claimed it had no knowledge of the cases at all.

The strikers had not been consulted during the negotiations, but they agreed to suspend their action for a month, emphasizing that it would begin again if such action was necessary.

JUNTA DENIES THERE ARE "DISAPPEARED"

Since the suspension of the strike, however, the Junta has denied reaching any agreements with the Church. In addition, the Junta unleashed a three-pronged campaign to put an end to "the problem of the disappeared", which stands in the way of institutionalizing the military dictatorship under the guise of "protected democracy." This process is based on legitimizing a permanent and active presence of the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship. The major thrusts of the campaign are the denial of any government information concerning the cases, the creation of propaganda deliberately aimed at confusing international opinion, and open threats and harassment of the Catholic Church and the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared Political Prisoners.

The Junta began direct attacks on the relatives themselves. Although the 617 cases of disappearances on the church's list (Amnesty International lists over 2000) all contain sworn and notarized statements by eyewitnesses, including the license plates of vehicles used in the arrests which have been traced to the secret police, the government began its "investigation" of the cases by interrogating and harassing the relatives of the disappeared. When the people complained publicly, the government and much of the Junta-controlled media responded by saying that their complaints proved they were much more interested in stirring up trouble than in knowing what had happened to the relatives.



Hunger strikers in Chile.

CONTRADICTIONS IN JUNTA EMERGE

Today, the situation is at a standoff. The relatives were unable to gain their immediate demands and the government was unable to crush the mass movement which supported them. Other events in Chile have taken over the news. On July 24, General Gustavo Leigh, Commander of the Air Forces and one of the four members of the ruling Junta, was removed from the government. This event, coupled with the forced resignation of nearly all the other Air Force generals, signalled an upsurge in the inter-bourgeois conflict which has long been plaguing the military junta.

In light of the long-standing differences of opinion within the Junta about how to return the country to "normalcy", Leigh's removal does not come as a complete surprise. While he and Pinochet both agreed on the need for crushing the workers' movement and institutionalizing a repressive system, they have historically disagreed about the timetable for this process and the extent of different sectors' participation in it. Leigh's removal signifies that Pinochet has decided to close ranks around support for his own, more drastic, plan.

Meanwhile, Pinochet faces more pressure from outside the country than at any time in the last 5 years. After almost two years of delays, the U.S. government has finally decided to prosecute the case of the assassination of Orlando Letelier, Chilean ambassador to the U.S. under Allende, and Ronnie Moffitt. General Manuel Contreras, head of the Chilean secret police at the time of the murders, and two other high-ranking army officers have been named in U.S. Justice Department indictments. The U.S. government is now requesting their extradition to this country. It is clear that Pinochet is going to have a difficult time denying that an assassination planned at the highest levels of the secret police could have been carried out without his express approval.

The developments in the Letelier case, as well as the removal of General Leigh, are the product of high-level contradictions between different sectors of U.S. imperialism and the Chilean ruling class, and also within the Chilean ruling class. At the same time that these contradictions sharpen, the working class and the left inside Chile are becoming increasingly active and are offering the beginnings of an alternative to both Pinochet's military regime and its bourgeois opposition. The hunger strikes and the mass support they generated throughout the country clearly demonstrate that the people are more organized and ready to enter the political arena in the anti-dictatorial struggle. As stated by one participant in the strike, "I know that the dictatorship will not give us an answer about the whereabouts of our loved ones. Because of this, our next response must

be more firm, less gentle. With the support of all popular sectors we will move towards bigger actions—work stoppages and similar things—and look back on the hunger strikes as minor mobilizations."

WORKERS' MOVEMENT PROTESTS JUNTA

While massive work stoppages have not yet occurred, the workers of Chile are engaging in various forms of struggle against the dictatorship and its anti-popular economic policies. On August 3, ten thousand workers in the Chiquicamata copper mine—the largest open-pit mine in the world—launched a "meal strike" where they refused to eat in the company lunchrooms. In a letter to the military junta, the miners denounced the high cost of living due to the rapid rise in the price of essential goods. They pointed to the almost 90% deterioration in their buying power and contrasted their current economic situation with the gains won under Allende's Popular Unity government. Furthermore, they sharply criticized the fact that the military has, in its five years in power, denied the workers their right to strike and engage in collective bargaining. The workers demanded the 50% salary hike they asked for one year ago.

The Chiquicamata workers gave the government a deadline of September 8th to respond to their demands. It is believed by many that the lunch strike might grow into a

much larger action if the salary increase is not granted.

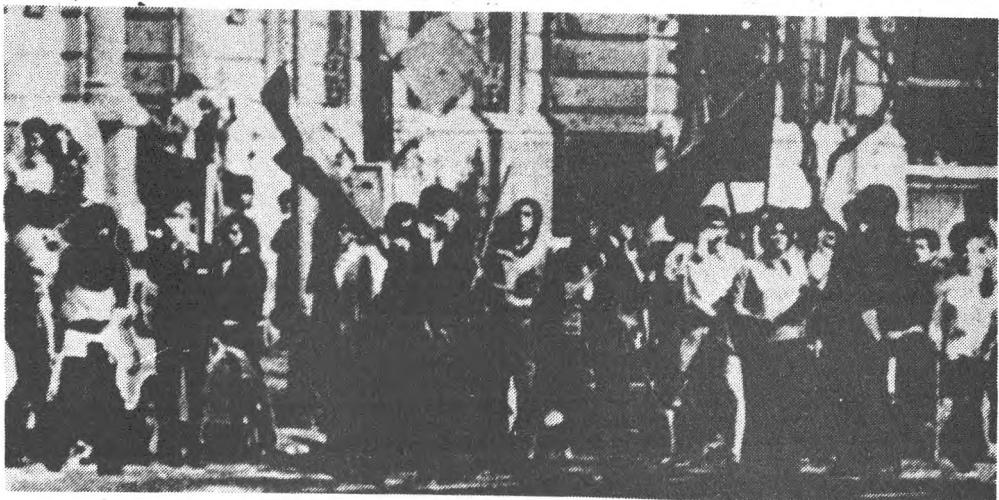
Expressions of solidarity for the Chiquicamata miners came from all over the country. Workers in El Salvador mine launched a similar meal strike and the El Teniente miners voted unanimously in an assembly to support their compañeros in Chiquicamata through massive absenteeism due to "poor nourishment caused by low salaries."

These events, while extremely important, are not the only actions taken by the Chilean people since the May hunger strike. On August 16, two days after the 13th anniversary of the founding of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), a high-power bomb went off in a branch of the Credit and

Investment Bank of Chile. The bank, located near the airport and the Air Force Installation, was badly damaged as were various neighboring buildings. This action, along with the miners' strike, exemplifies the courage and determination of the Chilean people to engage in various forms of struggle in the long fight to overthrow the dictatorship and create a popular alternative.

For more information about NICH and the work it does in expressing and building support for the Resistance movement in Chile, contact them at NICH

339 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10012
(212) 228-8272



SUPPORT UNDERGROUND PROPAGANDA IN CHILE

One of the ways in which the Resistance movement builds its strength and strikes blows against the Junta is through the use of propaganda—as an organizer and an educator—in many, varied forms. At this time in Chile, a period of open repression and military dictatorship, propaganda assume ever-greater importance in the struggle to overthrow the dictatorship and develop the revolutionary process. Here in the U.S., we can help the Resistance reach wider numbers of people by supporting the development of underground, clandestine propaganda. *Obreros En Marcha* reprints parts of a leaflet developed by Resistance Publications—an organization in the U.S. which translates and distributes documents of the Chilean MIR and other Latinamerican revolutionary organizations—to initiate this campaign in the U.S.

"The Chilean people, along with the rest of the peoples of Latin America, know that the development of their own forces in the prolonged Resistance struggle against the gorila dictatorships and imperialism will be the only road which will open the way to continental revolution and socialism.

Agitation and propaganda are fundamen-

tal tools in every revolutionary process. In the hands of a revolutionary party they are used to inform, educate, organize and lead the mass movement.

In a period of open dictatorship of the bourgeoisie through its armed forces, such as the one imposed on Chile today, the underground press (written propaganda) gains greater importance because the people's most basic rights of information and organization have been repressed. Public political discussion, even between people, is prohibited.

In spite of this, every legal, semi-legal and underground possibility of struggle is put to use by the left and popular resistance in Chile today. Each of the few organizations allowed to function by the Junta legally are centers where the Resistance grows. The struggle by the workers and miners for their most basic rights are accompanied by propaganda explaining the importance of these immediate demands in the perspective of gathering forces to overthrow the dictatorship. Distribution of propaganda and slogan-painting on walls with armed defense are a particularly important form of struggle in the present period of strengthening the mass movement: they strike small blows against the Junta, help build the presence of an independent alternative for the working class

and people against the ruling class's dictatorship, and strengthen the people's confidence in their own capacity for struggle. . . .

In this historic period of attempts by the Latin American bourgeoisies and U.S. imperialism to liquidate the rising mass movement in Latin America through the installation of military dictatorships, the people, the working class and its vanguards have almost no legal space to carry out the many tasks which the struggle demands. Some of these tasks can and must be carried out around the world by those of us who are able to concretize our internationalist spirit in support of that struggle. This is the reason for beginning this campaign in August, 1978, the 13th anniversary of the founding of the Chilean MIR, to support the underground propaganda in Chile. The campaign includes Postal propaganda, as a way to massively reinforce distribution of propaganda within Chile. Resistance Publications reproduces the postal bulletin *El Rebelde*, in order to have thousands of copies mailed to Chile several times a year."

Obreros En Marcha urges our readers to support the Resistance. For details about the campaign and how to participate in it, contact: Resistance Publications, P.O. Box 116, Oakland, California 94604.