

# OBREROS EN MARCHA

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# EDITORIAL ON THE NATIONALIST PRISONERS

On October 6th, the Puerto Rican Nationalist political prisoner, Andres Figueroa Cordero was released from the Federal Penitentiary in Springfield, Missouri, after serving 23 years in prison. Cordero, who is suffering from terminal cancer, was given a presidential pardon by Jimmy Carter.

On March 1st, 1954 Cordero, along with three other Nationalist patriots, entered the Chamber of the House of Representatives of the U.S. and sprayed the chamber with bullets. The other patriots that participated with him in that attack were Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda and Irving Flores, who continue to languish in U.S. jails today. The objective of these patriots was to call the attention of the world community to the colonial situation in Puerto Rico and demonstrate militant opposition to a bill before the House which furthered U.S. economic and political penetration and domination of the island. In their own words, "... those bullets will carry the message of liberation throughout the world."

Carter's pardon of Andres Cordero was given to avoid the political protest and criticisms that would have flowed not only from Puerto Rico and the U.S. but from all corners of the world if Andres Cordero were to have died in prison. More immediately, it was intended to avoid fueling the conditions of discontent that are building and smoldering among the Puerto Rican people particularly at a time when another government spokesperson, Mrs. Rosalyn Carter, was to address the 18th annual United Press International Conference held in P.R. on October 11. It was clear to the Carter administration that if it failed to release Cordero the contradiction between its rhetoric and practice around human rights would have been more crystalized. However despite this move, a massive protest demonstration was held in Puerto Rico denouncing the Carter administration's hypocritical policy. One of the participants at the demonstration was Andrés Figueroa Cordero.

Carter's pardon of Andres Cordero was given not because he is committed to the struggle for human rights, but because it was a clear act of political expediency. Although he has attempted to make "human rights" a corner stone of his foreign and domestic policy, Carter is the agent of those forces (the major multinational corporations and banks), both at home and abroad, whose whole definition of human rights begins and ends with the dollar sign and with profit figures. The whole Carter campaign has been geared toward rebuilding the image of U.S. imperialism as a good and humane system after that image was significantly exposed to be a fraud by the prolonged U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, the subversion of the Allende Regime in Chile, the U.S. role in Angola, and the Watergate scandal.

In addition to Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda and Irving Flores, another nationalist prisoner remains in jail, Oscar Collazo. On November 1, 1950 he, along with Griselio Torresola, attacked Blair House, the then-residence of President Truman. In the attack, Torresola was killed by police bullets and one policeman was killed. Collazo was gravely wounded and on April 6, 1951 was sentenced to the electric chair. However as a result of the wave of protest and pressure which arose, his sentence was later commuted to life in

prison.

During their many years of imprisonment, the 5 nationalists never wavered in their commitment to Puerto Rico's National Liberation. They have been offered "freedom" on the condition that they denounce and abandon their struggle for Puerto Rico's independence but have always firmly refused it. Their resolute commitment to struggle continues to be a clear example for all those fighters for independence and self-determination and a heroic beacon in the Puerto Rican people's path to national liberation.

While heartened by and cognizant of the importance of the release of Andres Figueroa Cordero's release, it must be understood within the context of the urgent need to redouble our efforts to obtain the freedom of the remaining Nationalist prisoners. In this regard, this need and the demand for the unconditional release of the Nationalists must be translated in the practice—and on a consistent basis—into a mass movement in this country. This movement must gain the active involvement of broad sectors in this society (workers, students, intellectuals, church sectors, etc.) through mass and militant protests and actions and broad campaigns of education. In this way we can move the struggle for the freedom of the remaining Nationalist prisoners forward and begin to expose the real nature and basis of the demands for their release being made by imperialism's colonial spokesmen in Puerto Rico. These colonial puppets seek to gain political capital for imperialism and themselves by separating the question of the Nationalists from the conditions which gave rise to their reality: the exploitation and dominance by U.S. capital of the Puerto Rican People. They attempt to cloud and diffuse the political struggle that is an integral part of what the Nationalists represent and that a movement for their unconditional release would begin to articulate.

This year, the 27th anniversary of the Jayuya (see Vol. I, No. II) rebellion, it is appropriate that we again commemorate and rearticulate the historical significance of that event in the history of the Puerto Rican People and in conjunction raise the demand for the freedom of the Nationalist Prisoners. These tasks lie with the entire Left. They are not only tasks for Puerto Rican workers or Puerto Rican revolutionaries. For too long the left in this country has failed to meet its responsibility in respect to Puerto Rico to both the Puerto Rican and North American working class in a meaningful and consistent manner. In the process, international solidarity and proletarian internationalism have been abandoned. What is needed is not rhetorical solidarity with the Puerto Rican struggle but concrete and scientifically studied actions with the Puerto Rican National Liberation Movement reflected in the education and mobilization of the working and oppressed masses in this country.

In this regard and in line with our understanding of the need for a broad based campaign of agitation and education around the demand for the release of the Nationalists, we join with the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee in making a call to all revolutionary and progressive organizations and individuals to mobilize and rally in front of the White House on October 30 in Washington, D.C.

Everyone out to Washington!

## The GROWTH IN BLACK UNEMPLOYMENT



In the August issue, *Obreros en Marcha* commented on the "looting" following the blackout in New York City: "... it is the nature of bourgeois legality and morality to consistently portray the oppressed and exploited as lawless, immoral, senseless and animalistic whenever they disrupt the 'peace' that clouds and protects private property, inequality, national chauvinism, sexism and class exploitation."

Since that time, the Mayor's office released data from a survey of those arrested during the blackout. These officials claimed that since the data showed that over half of the people arrested were "gainfully employed" at the time, this proved wrong those who argued that the looting was a response to unemployment, poverty, exploitation and discrimination.

In their desperate attempt to mask over the brutal truth about capitalist society, and basing their conclusions on the false premise that those arrested represented an unbiased sample of those involved in the looting, these spokesmen for capitalism want to confuse individual cases and situations with conditions of social classes and sectors and their just response to those conditions.

But the deeper reality—of social forces and the material conditions behind them—is becoming more apparent even to bourgeois theorists. Faced with the explosive anger of the oppressed nationalities and of workers in general, the mass media from *Time* magazine ("The New Underclass") to the *New York Times* ("Historical Tinder for Black Jobless Rate") try to analyze and interpret from their perspective those class forces which threaten the interests they defend.

Speaking of Black people in particular, their conclusion is that conditions are worse, and that the social and economic problems of Black people cannot be resolved by current methods and programs.

It is worth examining their arguments in greater detail. For we will see that the oppression of Black people can never be truly transformed as long as the capitalist system continues to exist. Black oppression is an historical product of this system, and indispensable to its functioning. Only with socialism will black liberation be possible.

In the *New York Times* article, published on the financial page for the educational benefit of corporate executives, bankers and investors, a prominent Black economist argues that "black workers are more vulnerable than any other group in the labor force to cycles in the economy because institutional patterns of job discrimination remain intact..." Further, their situation is not due "to random acts of bigotry, but to an institutionalized dual system of job allocation that has existed for genera-

tions..."

The article points out that the general Black unemployment rate had reached 14.5% in August, more than double that of whites, and for young Black people, the rate had risen to 40.1%. According to the National Urban League's "The State of Black America 1977", 27% of all Black families were officially defined as poor in 1975, compared to 8% of all white families. And, over half of "all black families fell below the lowest Bureau of Labor Statistics budget level of \$9,588... compared to one-third of white families."

Beyond saying that "these problems are structural and deep," the *New York Times* article cannot answer the question "Why do things happen this way?" Black people face a dual labor system designed to maintain them as a dependent, dominated labor reserve, with limited social and economic mobility. Excluded from better paid jobs, paid less for the same work, and facing higher unemployment rates, conditions of black oppression change with the development of capitalism, but not the condition of being an oppressed nationality for the benefit of the capitalist class.

When Black people were first forcibly brought to this country from Africa, there was little difference in practice between their status and that of white indentured servants. Both groups were sought as part of a dependent workforce—needed to overcome the great demand for labor. In the search for a large workforce for the profitable tobacco fields, and because of the need for a *controllable* workforce, the fledgling plantation owner/colonial ruling class began to impose a color division on their laboring classes. Slavery—permanent servitude—was branded on those of black skin and Africa descent.

For this division to remain and reproduce itself, the plantation owners started to build a vast ideological and juridical superstructure. They created a system of ideas of racial superiority, buttressed by the channelling of poor whites into more "desirable" jobs and by creating the illusion of superiority. All of this was backed by a system of laws and the organized violence of the State.

The cotton grown by Black slaves later provided the capital for the expansion of industry and trade in the North, and led to a conflict over time between this embryonic capitalist class and the plantation aristocracy, dependent on bound labor, who controlled the government in the pre-Civil War years.

The Northern industrialists fought the Civil War primarily to establish their hegemony as a class and a prevent the expansion of the slave system to the new states. They wanted a system of "free" labor, people "free" to sell their labor to the capitalist class for slave wages.

Mainly because of the strategic role of Black slaves in stopping production in Southern fields, spying behind enemy lines, and fighting as Union troops, the Emancipation Declaration of Lincoln became an inevitable recognition of a reality already being realized.

But the newly won freedom of Black people was violently crushed when, following the Civil War, an alliance of ex-slaves and poor whites threatened the ruling classes. This Reconstruction alliance had a revolutionary program, including land distribution, free public education (non-existent at that time), and full voting rights. Coming at a time of rising workers' and farmers' struggles in the North and West and a contracting frontier, this massive movement was too dangerous to the Northern industrialists.

Although they had established their hegemony by

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destroying the old planter class, they now approached the remnants of that class, and agreed to withdraw the Union troops and leave "law and order" in the old rulers' hands, as long as they accepted the dominant role of Northern capital. They did.

With the assistance of the recently organized brutal, white-supremacist Ku Klux Klan as shock troops, these retrograde landholders re-established their rule, setting up a semi-feudal enclave of share-cropping tenants on vast cotton estates. The tenants were totally dependent for tools, food and shelter on the landholders, who also enlisted the help of poor whites, who they recruited with racist appeals and offers of "over-seeing" positions.

The Union Army was withdrawn and sent to suppress workers' strikes in the North and carry out the last genocidal campaigns against Native Americans.

After the crushing of the revolutionary Black-poor white alliance in the South, Jim Crow laws were passed which embodied the continued refining of racist institutions to support, reproduce and control the new system of inequality. Black schools, strictly segregated, did not educate. Black people faced a special kind of "justice"—frame-ups and lynchings.

Cotton continued to fuel the country's growth. Ninety percent of Black people lived in the South in this post-Civil War, pre-World War I period, and nearly three quarters of all Blacks worked in agriculture.

The growing capitalist class preferred to import cheap labor from Europe, while perpetuating a system of exploited "free" industrial labor in the North and semi-enslaved tenant farmers in the South. Those Blacks who did get jobs in industry were restricted to certain areas of work (rail, mines and lumber), and many who were skilled workers were forced out of their jobs by newly-arrived immigrants from Europe. Racial violence was widespread—reflecting the failure of the workers' movement to see the struggle of Black people as their own, and to value the unity of the whole working class and working masses—Black and white—as the only source of strength against the capitalists.

World War I brought a demand for labor, with European immigration cut off and a labor shortage in U.S. industries. Black people began what would become a massive migration, comparable in many ways to the forced migration of Puerto Ricans from the countryside in the island to San Juan to the U.S. mainland in search for jobs. Black people were transformed from a status of agricultural peonage to super-exploited industrial proletariat in a matter of three decades.

Blacks were channelled into the lowest-paid, low-skill jobs with the worst work conditions. Real estate interests, city governments and banks conspired to promote the formation of ghettos and to reproduce the segregation of the South with unwritten laws—a separate and unequal system of education and legal processes. A dual labor structure was maintained in a different form, strengthened in the industrial sphere, with certain jobs for whites and others for Blacks. And the trade union movement continued in its refusal to fight against these divisions within the working class, up until the tumultuous days of the CIO organizing drives in basic industries in the 1930's.

The demise and geographical shifting of cotton production, combined with the effects of the Great Depression, forced further migration North. This migration was also, like the earlier one, promoted and advertised by Northern business interests, recruiting a cheap labor force.

From 1940 to 1975, Black people moved from the South to all major regions in the United States. In 1940, over 75% lived in the South, now there are an equal number of Black people in the North, West and South. In 1940, over 50% of all Blacks were involved in farming, today only 4% work in agriculture. Black people make up 20-25% of the

population in most cities over 500,000. They are found in regions of high industrial concentration, and are a critical sector of the proletariat.

The struggles of Black people in the 1960's for civil and human rights—to be able to vote; for an end to segregation; for the right to decent schooling; against racist vigilante and police terror in their communities—shook the country. These struggles have not yet been fully won. And now, many of the battles fought by Black people for their rights are being overturned. It is no accident that we see today a massive offensive by the capitalist class, government agencies, the court system and labor bureaucrats to push back the gains that were won through the sweat and blood of the people's struggles of the 1960's. We see:

—the ending of Open Admissions and the Bakke decision (calling affirmative action "reverse racism" and questioning quotas for Black, Third World people and women in university admissions)

—the Supreme Court decision making a mockery even of the Civil Rights Act by saying that unless "intent" could be shown, seniority procedures that perpetuate discriminatory job practices in operation before 1965 cannot be challenged.

—the backing by the AFL-CIO hierarchy of these discriminatory seniority systems in their contract negotiations, and their backing of the Bakke decision.

All of these actions show that the capitalist class and its allies allow the drive for profit to determine social reality. The capitalists must enlarge the reserve army of unemployed to guarantee the continued reproduction of the superexploited sectors of the working class.

Even with the great productive capacity of this economy, the capitalist class looks to export its business (run-away shops) to sources of cheaper labor abroad. It imports laborers from countries so exploited by the U.S. imperialists that the working people of these lands are driven to U.S. borders to look for work at any wage to be able to survive. And it turns to massive lay-offs (such as the Youngstown Sheet and Tubing Works, laying off 5,000 workers at one blow).

Their only guideline is profit. Within this context, they try to wrench from oppressed peoples and workers in general all of the gains won in the workplace, community or school, in order to have greater margin for super-exploitation.

This is why those who want to berate the collaborationist trade unionists for going along with discriminatory seniority systems, or to rap the knuckles of government agencies who fail to enforce affirmative action laws and policies will never find a resolution to the problem. For the problem lies in the power behind government and the collaborationist trade union leaders—the capitalist class itself.

Our response must be to build a mass movement capable of wresting back our past victories and winning more—the enforcement of affirmative action, seniority adjustments with the company footing the bill, free and open admissions, etc. And we must demand a shorter work week with the aim of jobs for all.

This movement must be built among the grass-roots; it must be built in the shops, in the trade unions and in the communities and neighborhoods and it must include minorities and non-minorities, young and old, men and women and organized and unorganized.

Of course, the only true solution to these questions will come when we build enough strength through winning these battles to overthrow the capitalist class and establish socialism. This is the only road to the liberation of Black people and all oppressed nationalities and for the working class of this country.

## Puerto Rico Informa

# LABOR MOVEMENT UNDER HARASSMENT

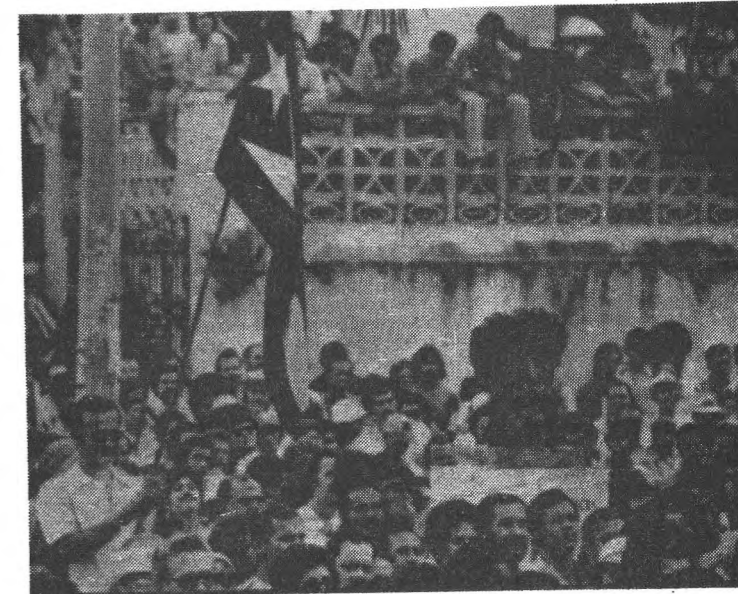
In this edition of OEM, we reprint the complete text of the joint declaration made by the most important labor representatives in Puerto Rico regarding the slaying of attorney Alan H. Randall and the subsequent campaign of harassment and intimidation that has been unleashed by the U.S. forces and the colonial government against the organized labor movement in the island.

As many of our readers know, Alan H. Randall, an associate of the State Department and vice-president of the Federal Bar Association, as well as an "expert" on labor relations for the National Relations Board, was shot to death in the city of Santurce on September 22, 1977. The shooting occurred just a few days before the planned gathering of the US's most important figures in the fields of labor relations, judicial matters and intelligence gathering, this last including representatives of the FBI, the Rand Institute and the CIA. Under the leadership of Randall, the Federal Bar Association had selected Puerto Rico as the site for its annual convention, which this year was to be highlighted by seminars on "union violence" and the question of terrorism.

According to a communique found soon after the slaying of Randall, an unidentified "labor commando" took responsibility for the act. Among other things, the immediate effect of this act was the temporary cancellation of the yearly convention by the FBA as well as the possible changing of its site. As was to be expected, the colonial government of Puerto Rico took the opportunity to declare "war on subversive elements," unleashing its repressive apparatus against its most obvious and real enemy: the working masses of Puerto Rico and its leading representatives. Union headquarters, in particular the offices of the Teamsters Local 901, were quickly placed under constant surveillance with its organizers followed and their homes, and families forced to endure direct acts of intimidation by the FBI and their Puerto Rican counterparts of the *Negociado de Investigacion Criminal*. Other unions such as the National Workers Union (UNT) who also had negative experiences with Randall in the past encountered, to a certain extent, similar repressive actions. It was evident to most people, and in particular to the working masses, that the government was exploiting the Randall affair in order to disguise their continuing increasingly repressive attacks against the organized labor movement in the island.

### THE LEFT IN PUERTO RICO FAILS THE TEST

With the most militant sector under attack by the ruling class and the forces of Northamerican capital in the island, and the slaying of Randall coming just a few hours before the yearly patriotic celebration of Lares, the organized labor movement, looked with great expectations to the leading representatives of the independence movement in Puerto Rico for analysis and direction. The gathering at Lares offered the best of opportunities, because it was the first time in many years that the independence movement, with the exception of the PIP, was participating in the Lares activities in a united fashion. This was in response to a call for unity made by the imprisoned Nationalist Patriots. Yet the expectations were not satisfied. With rare exceptions, the developments resulting from the Randall slaying were not even mentioned by the speakers at the activity. Once again, the influence of sectarianism took the form of disregarding the historical responsibility of revolutionaries, in particular Marxist-



Leninists, of providing direction and orientation to the working class on all matters that concern their interests.

Moreover, the day after the Lares activities, the mass media—radio, newspapers and TV—made public a number of declarations by leading figures of the independence movement. These declarations, lacking any analysis, tended to confuse rather than provide direction to the working masses of Puerto Rico, and in particular to those under the direct attack of the ruling class. Their statements, consisting of empty slogans and poor attempts at revising Puerto Rican history and that of its revolutionary movement, were poor substitutes for the much needed analysis of the present situation and the support to those victimized by the repressive mechanisms of the state. This is particularly true for those Puerto Rican leaders and organizations who have in the past seen in every "drunken sailor" a military objective, and in every criticism to their organization, the "dark hand of the CIA." Such careless "analysis" sometimes have a boomerang effect, and that is definitely the case today in Puerto Rico. Disregarding the repressive steps being taken by the ruling class against the organized labor movement on the island, some leaders of the independence movement have opted for irresponsibly speaking of "political assassination" and raising questions as to whether or not Randall was a CIA agent. Not only do these leaders fail to understand and grasp the significance of this period of intensified repression and economic desperation for the working masses of Puerto Rico, but they appear, at this most crucial of moments, to be suffering a state of political amnesia.

As an organization, we of EL COMITE—MINP subscribe to the principle that political parties are the product and consequence of historical developments. In the epoch of imperialism, only the revolutionary party of the working class can express and defend its class interests. Directly linked and actively engaged in the daily activities of the working masses, the revolutionary party is able to guarantee the unity of its political direction with the objective reality—and needs—confronted by the working class. This necessary link and subsequent analysis and direction cannot be substituted with rhetorical phrases, "charisma" or empty slogans. If revolutionaries are to gain prestige and authority among the masses, it is fundamental that we

understand the significance of this principle, and it is crucial that we never assume a sectarian attitude toward the people, and in particular, the working class. As an organization actively engaged and committed to the genuine support of the National Liberation Movement of Puerto Rico, we urge all anti-imperialist organizations in Puerto Rico—and in particular Marxist-Leninist organizations—to rectify and understand the significance of this present period in the class struggle in the island.

In our view, admittedly from afar in physical distance, but close in revolutionary spirit and with clear commitment to the principles of proletarian internationalism, we understand from the joint declaration made by the most significant sectors of the labor movement in the island, that the issue at hand is not the matter of the Randall affair but rather our attitude toward the working class of Puerto Rico. We choose to close rank with them in denouncing the maneuvers of US imperialism and its colonial representatives. That in our view is our responsibility.

The following is a statement signed by more than 25 trade unions in Puerto Rico:

#### UNITARY STATEMENT FROM THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT

The Puerto Rican workers' movement is again confronting a campaign of slander and repression. The violent death of the company lawyer Alan Randall is now being used as an excuse to attack trade unions and labor leaders. Because of the fact that Randall represented the employers' interests in many labor conflicts, some sectors are trying to place the responsibility for his death on workers' organizations.

The real identity of those who killed Randall still remains a mystery. Also unknown are the motives which lay behind the action leading to the death of the North American company lawyer. Not one piece of evidence has yet been discovered to link anyone with this deed.

But in spite of this, some people insist on blaming the workers' movement for this incident. Lacking the proof to support their charges, these accusations are irresponsible, unfounded and vicious. Only one thing is clear: the interest in repressing the workers' movement.

Puerto Rico is experiencing an epoch of violence. Assaults, robberies, rapes, acts of aggression, murders all daily fill the front pages of the newspapers. There is also other forms of violence of which workers are also the victims: unemployment and low salaries. And to complete the picture, workers and their unions every day have to confront a ferocious offensive by the employers, advised by strategists and experts like Randall, who are trying to cut back even more the gains which have already been won. The slander campaigns against the unions and the use of

para-military organizations of professional strike-breakers like Security Associates in labor conflicts, are also examples of the violence from which our working people suffer.

Within all of this violence Randall's death occurred, followed by the anti-worker campaign. This is why it is urgent to defend the workers' movement from any attempt aimed at dividing, weakening and repressing it.

As usual, the newspaper *El Mundo* led the new anti-worker offensive. This enterprise has a long history of repression against its own employees. It also has one against the entire Puerto Rican workers' movement, which it has insulted and slandered in a continuous manner over many years.

In an *El Mundo* editorial eulogizing the life of Randall (who always dedicated himself to fighting unions on every front), at the same time that Randall's death is condemned, the name of a labor leader, Arturo Grant, is mentioned, implicating him in this way in the death of Randall. This libelous editorial commentary of *El Mundo* constitutes an act of aggression and violence against the whole Puerto Rican workers' movement; this is why the objectives which *El Mundo* pursues in its vicious accusation must be explained.

*El Mundo* and other groups and persons want to use the Randall case to justify the persecution and repression against the workers' movement. They want to arouse public opinion against those who continue being the main victims of violence in Puerto Rico. And they want to judge us and condemn us without the least bit of evidence against us.

We hold the newspaper *El Mundo* responsible for any act of violence that could be carried out against the trade unions at this time. We also hold responsible the public authorities who are guilty of having consistently protected the employers in all labor-company disputes in the last years.

We warn the authorities that the workers' movement is indivisible. Therefore, any action against a labor leader, or against a union, will constitute an act of aggression against the whole workers' movement. Fabricating a case against a labor leader cannot be correct under any circumstances. Therefore, we demand that the authorities investigate all the angles of the case, and that they suspend the harassment and persecution of labor leaders singled out by the government.

The Puerto Rican workers' movement will not retreat, much less surrender before this new employer offensive. On the contrary, beyond giving (unitary) support to this statement, we commit ourselves before all of the Puerto Rican workers, to rise above all that which could divide us for the sake of achieving a sincere and solid unity that carries us forward toward the total victory of our aspirations for liberty and progress.



## UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS & CARTER'S "REFORM"

Once again, undocumented workers, in the name of reform, are being victimized for the economic and social ills of this society, this time, by President Carter. The proposal he has made to Congress regarding undocumented workers not only perpetuates the myths and lies which have been traditionally used against them, but also threatens to undermine the rights of all workers and bring a further division within the working class as a whole. The proposal would grant permanent legal alien status to those undocumented persons who have been living in the United States for over seven years (since January 1, 1970), and grant temporary legal alien status to those persons who entered the country between 1970 and January 1, 1977. Those who entered the country without documents in 1977 or after would be deported if found. In addition, Carter's program proposes to beef up the US border patrol along the boundary between this country and Mexico by assigning about 2,000 new officers to police the border. The proposed program would also, for the first time, prohibit US employers from hiring undocumented workers and would impose fines of up to \$1,000 for every such worker employed. Although the proposal is being passed off as a liberal piece of legislation, its reactionary essence, and the serious implications that this holds for the entire working class, will be made clear if we examine the question of "illegal aliens" within its broader context.

The positions the US has taken regarding foreign and undocumented workers have always reflected its historical development. As once, they mirrored the economic and political policies established during a period of expanding capitalism, today they must be understood as reflective of the policies of imperialism.

Unbearable poverty, false promises and coercion brought foreign-born workers to the US. They were welcomed with open arms and super-exploitation. They worked long hours under intolerable conditions and were paid practically slave wages. It was the labor of these millions of workers in the factories, mines, and railroads of this country which advanced production and increased the wealth of the ruling class. Yet as soon as the economic and political situation took a bad turn for the capitalist, foreign workers immediately became the scapegoats.

The Know-Nothing Movement of the 1850's was aimed against the Irish and German workers who arrived primarily between 1940 and 1960. The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) penalized Chinese workers for rising unemployment after their super-exploited labor helped build this country's railroads. Not only were these anti-alien campaigns used to cloud the real source of the developing social problems, but they were used to reinforce racism, the ideological weapon used by the capitalists to keep the working class divided.

The severe wage cuts in the basic industries and the overall social discontent around World War I brought about the same response. From 1919-1920, the then attorney general, A. Mitchell Palmer, ordered the infamous Palmer Raids; vast dragnet actions in which some 10,000 foreign born persons, mostly Italian and Eastern European Jewish workers were arrested for deportation. The raids during the Depression of the 1930s and those of the McCarthy era of the 50s continued this tradition.

Today's undocumented workers for the most part come from those countries whose economies have been maintained underdeveloped or dependent by the policies of US imperialism in order to insure its profits. Workers and peasants from South and Central America and the Carib-



bean account for the overwhelming number of undocumented workers. But among these workers, Mexicans account for roughly 90% of all undocumented workers in US.

This most recent campaign against undocumented workers, once again, coincides with a severe economic crisis in this country. A 1965 federal immigration law which went into effect in 1968 slammed shut the northern and southern borders of the US, imposing strict quotas. Simultaneously in 1965, the "bracero" program, under which Mexicans were admitted for temporary farm labor, was terminated. These changes in the law converted many law-abiding workers, especially Mexicans, into "illegal aliens." Yet the demand of Southwest agribusinesses for temporary farm labor continued unabated. This business thrives on the back-breaking, labor intensive "stoop-labor," in which workers put in long hours for extremely low wages.

Claiming that over-stayed and undocumented persons were depriving Americans of needed jobs as well as burdening the social services, the Nixon administration sponsored legislation in 1971 that would criminally penalize such employees and the employers who hire them. This dangerous measure was based on the same propaganda campaign which today is being perpetuated by the press, the courts, and Carter himself. Yet according to the official U.S. Labor Department research report (Linton, 11/17/75), the undocumented workers' "impact is least likely felt in the American labor market." What's more the report found that Social Security taxes were withheld for 77% of illegals," and federal taxes withheld from 73%. Yet only 3.9% collected unemployment insurance, 1.3% obtained food stamps, and only 0.5% secured welfare, and these were primarily unwed mothers. In other words, they contribute more to the economy than they take out.

The criminalization and levying of fines continues to be pushed as one of the central points of Carter's proposal. It has been pushed on the federal level by the Nixon-Rodino-Ellsberg bills. The Dixon-Arnett bill has already had effect in California and the Field-Knorr bill is being fought in New York. This legislation will further increase the climate of fear and repression against undocumented workers. It will continue to convert the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) into another police force, arbitrarily terroriz-

Continued on page 9

# MINE WORKERS & THE WILDCAT STRIKE

During the summer months and into September, a 10-week long wildcat strike was waged by miners in the coalfields of West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Ohio. The strike was precipitated by the demand of the coal companies that union health benefits to miners be cut. Though there were few concrete gains won by the strike (as of October, the health cuts have yet to be restored), the strike is significant for the workers' movement because of the mass upsurge by thousands of rank and file miners in the face of a sellout union leadership that actively worked to stop the strike.

## HEALTH FUND CUT

As part of the contract signed between the United Mine Workers (UMW) and the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association (BCOA), the coal companies are responsible for financing the health (as well as other) benefits that miners receive. The companies pay for the benefits according to the number of hours worked by the miners and the tonnage of coal they produce. Last spring, the coal operators said that the health fund was operating at a deficit. They said that due to an increase in wildcat strikes, there was a great loss in coal production. Therefore, the benefits had to be cut back proportionately.

The cuts meant that miners would have to pay 40% of all outpatient medical care and the first \$250 of any hospital bill. In addition, some 50 union-supported clinics serving nearly one million people in mining towns—very often the only health care available in those towns—would probably be eliminated. Instead of bringing the issue back to the rank and file membership, the UMW Health & Retirement Fund agreed to implement the cuts.

The wildcat strike began in late June, immediately after the union announced the cuts. Almost 40,000 miners walked off their jobs, particularly in the mines of West Virginia. However, the wildcats were cut short by a two-week industry-wide vacation period early in July. It is highly probable that the BCOA timed their demand to the union to coincide with the vacation period which would undermine the effectiveness of the strike and limit its spreading. However, this attempt at subversion failed. When the vacation period ended and the cuts had not been restored, the strike began again and this time spread to involve more than 80,000 miners in 4 states. In West Virginia (where the most militant strikes occurred) coal production was shut down almost completely.

## NO SUPPORT OF UNION LEADERSHIP

The union leadership did not support the strikes of the rank and file. Arnold Miller, president of the UMW, and the rest of the national leadership refused to "legitimize" the local strikes by calling for a nationwide stoppage. While Miller assumed a militant stance by "demanding" that the coal operators restore all health benefits, it was clear he did not intend to go beyond the stage of negotiations. At a meeting of the union's international executive board at the end of July, not only did they vote not to call a strike, but they also initiated a back-to-work movement among the locals. Furthermore, they threatened to institute even more cuts (in the area of pension benefits) if the wildcat continued. The executive board also threatened strikers with disciplinary action if they did not return to work. These actions brought even more miners out onto the picket lines.



A number of miners felt that it was not the correct time to call a strike. These miners felt that since the contract ran out in December, the rank and file should spend the time building up its reserves for an all-out national strike at the end of the year. The question of whether or not the wildcats played into the hands of the mine owners was extensively discussed. Despite the disagreements and uncertainty, however, these forces still supported the strike and refused to cross the picketlines at their mines. What was primary to them was to show unity against the coal operators and against a union leadership that was selling them out. Thus the wildcats cannot be looked at only from the narrow perspective of a strike for restoration of health benefits. They also must be seen as an indication of a growing protest movement against Miller and the others in national and district leadership who have not defended the interests of the rank and file membership.

In 1972, Miller won the presidency of the UMW running on a reform "Miners for Democracy" ticket. Since then however, he has rarely taken a strong stand against any attacks on miners' rights by the coal operators. Increasingly Miller's "leadership" conciliated to the interests of the mine owners. Today his support among the rank and file is almost nonexistent as reflected by the growing number of wildcat strikes in the past two years. The latest UMW elections also reflect his lack of support. In a 3-way race in June (immediately preceding the announcement of the health cuts), Miller barely won the election by taking 41% of the vote. The fact that over half of all miners eligible to vote didn't even participate in the election further testifies to Miller's lack of a base.

The present militancy of the rank and file is no thing new to mine workers. Since the beginnings of the century, the combativeness and determination of miners to win their democratic rights to a decent wage, safe work-

ing conditions and the right to organize as well as their example of class spirit and solidarity with other workers has always been an inspiration to the rest of the workers' movement. One of their many victories was in 1941 when, after years of struggle the UMW signed a contract with Southern coal operators which eliminated the 40-cent daily wage difference between Northern and Southern workers (Southern workers receiving 40-cents a day less). This gain led to a breakthrough for Southern workers in the steel, textile and other major industries still maintaining the wage differential. This was truly a victory for the working class.

## THE LEADING ROLE OF COMMUNISTS

The period of the 1930s and 1940s saw great victories in general for the working class overall. During these years, the industrial sectors of the U.S. economy were organized: miners, steel workers, auto workers, longshoremen, packers, electrical workers, etc. The original motto of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was to "organize the unorganized" and during its most militant and progressive period it did just that. The reaction of the ruling class to the developing unity among different sectors of the working class was to raise the "red scare"—to accuse the CIO and every one in it of being a "red," a Communist. While many of the most militant fighters in the CIO were not Communists, many of them were—and it is these forces that took the lead in organizing the unorganized and in general defending the rights of the U.S. working class.

After WWII, an all-out attack on the labor movement was launched by the major industries, (United States Steel, General Motors, General Electric) that one decade ago had been forced to submit to the demands of workers to organize. The result of Capital's attack on the labor movement and in particular the CIO, was the expulsion of all left forces, individuals and unions alike. Within the CIO alone, nearly one million members were expelled.

Besides being the most militant fighters, the Communists and other left-identified forces were also the hardest fighters against racism. This struggle had serious weaknesses and Communists often belittled its impor-

## Undocumented CONT.

ing undocumented workers and citizens alike through illegal raids and dragnets and summary deportations. Unscrupulous employers will increase their exploitation of undocumented and other Latin workers. They will pay them even lower wages, develop informers and refuse employment even to citizens who may not have proof of birth. Aside from escalating the racism directed against Latin workers, the legislation will pit skilled against unskilled workers and hinder the unionization of undocumented workers. According to the Linton report, 37% of those in New York are union members, this percentage is above the national average.

At the moment, there are various national and local organizations doing commendable work around the question of undocumented workers. This is of tremendous importance. Analysis of the situation will clearly show, however, that unions must play a leading role in this struggle. Some unions which have taken positions defending the rights of undocumented workers are: The United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers Union (UE), United Auto Workers (UAW), United Farm Workers (UFW), and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), to mention a few of the more prominent ones, together with many locals. At the same time, however, the vast machinery of the labor bureaucracy, such as the AFL-CIO, continues to take



tance, yet the fact remains that they were still the strongest supporters of black-white unity. Communist forces also demanded union democracy and pushed for the widest participation of all workers in the union as the only way to insure that the leadership would continue to represent the true interests of the rank and file.

The ouster of Communists and other left forces from the trade union movement was the key factor that led to unions falling under the domination of class-collaborationist forces. This is why, despite their history of militance and combativeness, the struggle of the UWM rank and file today must be and is against the union "misleaders" as well as the coal operatives.

However, a serious weakness exists within the miners' rank and file movement, which is that a new leadership has yet to develop. Since 1972 when Miller was first elected, the wildcats, the picketing, the mass rallies and the mobilization of the miners has been largely spontaneous. The most consistent fighters are not organized into any formation. Occasionally, the presidents of locals have assumed leadership, but in general they have taken the same vacillating and conciliating positions of the national leadership. There are several organized rank and file groups (with some communist participation within them) but they have not been able to win the support of large numbers of miners. The development of an organized rank and file movement with a leadership responsive to the demands of the base is crucial for the miners at this time.

divisive and reactionary positions, continuing their collaboration with the bosses. It is for these reasons that rank and file and progressive unions must intensify the defense of their fellow workers. The UE, having consistently taken strong positions in defense of undocumented workers, passed a resolution at its 41st International Convention. It asked guaranteed unconditional amnesty and the right to file for residency status, without the imposition of any sanctions, to all undocumented workers. It asserted that any worker who pays the usual payroll taxes be able to collect unemployment and other public assistance and be eligible for all other social benefits, and that undocumented workers be protected from harassment, from seizure and deportation and that the arbitrary power of the INS be curbed. It also resolved "that the UE continue its determined effort to organize these workers, as we organize all other workers, to fulfill the basic principle of organization to national origin, because only by the full and complete organization of all workers will we all be protected from unemployment and low wages."

This resolution points to the path that the labor movement must begin to follow. Confronting the class collaboration of the entrenched labor bureaucracy, we must begin to consistently raise the demands of the undocumented worker, the unemployed, the minority worker, and the forced labor on welfare recipients. At the same time, we must struggle against any and all reactionary legislation which intends to bring division within the class.

# MIR SPEAKS IN THE U.S.

October 8th marked the 10th anniversary of the death of Ernesto Che Guevara, heroic guerrilla and revolutionary leader and October 5th was the 3rd anniversary of the death of the founder and Secretary General of the Chilean Movement of the Revolutionary Left (M.I.R.) and Founder of the Revolutionary Coordinating Council, Miguel Enriquez. Both revolutionaries who fell in combat are clear examples of the true meaning of Proletarian Internationalism. *Obreros En Marcha*, in commemoration of their deaths and recognition of their great contributions to the revolutionary movement in Latin America and throughout the world, publishes excerpts of the speech made by Armin Espana, member of the Central Committee of M.I.R., during his visit to the United States in September.

Following is the English translation of the speech provided to us by Non-Intervention in Chile (N.I.C.H.).

Companeros y Comaneras:

To begin we would like to bring you the militant and revolutionary greetings from the Central Committee of the Chilean MIR and from the thousands of unnamed militants, men and women, who from the underground anonymously make up the Popular Resistance Movement.

This week is the 4th anniversary of the coup with which the bourgeoisie and imperialism declared war on the People's movement in Chile. Since then the Chilean people have resisted the big capitalists' offensive. Thousands of known and unknown heroes have opened the road of the democratic and revolutionary struggle of the resistance and working class and the people of Chile. We therefore dedicate these words to them, to Miguel Enriquez and Salvador Allende, to Enrique Paris and Isidor Carrillo, to Arnoldo Camus, Orlando Letelier and Alejandro Villalobos, to Diana Aaron and Olga Carrasco and to the hundreds of companeros and companeras who, with their sacrifice and decision have irrevocably demonstrated the road which we must follow in order to successfully carry through the triumph of the proletarian revolution.

In spite of the blows, the Chilean workers' and people's movement is advancing, has been reviving, reactivating and regrouping its forces, accomplishing much with the little it has, striking hard with small forces and hitting with small forces in many places. It moves from the simple to the complex, aided by the decades of struggle which forged its proletarian consciousness, until one day it will overcome that dark night of the gorilla military dictatorship.

The revival of the mass movement in fact is a slow process, gradual but sustained. The process of revival is strongest in the driving force of revolutionary activity, the working class. The working class has begun its progressive recomposition, reorganizing its trade unions and federations, struggling to maintain its standard of living and to regain the right to organize. Over the past year industrial unions throughout Chile have presented hundreds of lists of demands. The majority of the demands center on economic problems, but there have also been political demands among them, demands which struggle against the bosses' labor legislation which is designed to castrate the advance of the working class. Nevertheless, that class has increasingly come forth as clearly the only force which is consistently confronting the dictatorship. In spite of the strong repression, the working class continues its revival, using all forms of legal struggle left from the decades of trade union struggle in the past. And there are also new forms of struggle, both semi-legal and illegal.

It is mainly these latter forms of struggle which will clear the road and carry class confrontation to higher levels.

The peasantry—which was hit hard by the gorilla military repression, with hundreds of massacres carried out by the army and right wing gangs in September 1973 and in the following months—is also beginning its revival. The Chilean peasantry, with its heroic traditions, is beginning to reorganize in its struggle for land.

The pobladores of Chile—all those who live in working class neighborhoods and shantytowns—are also beginning to rise up as the natural rearguard for the exploited



classes. It is one of the social sectors where the results of the gorillas' anti-popular policies are felt the hardest—including persecution, jail, unemployment, hunger and death.

The hard-hit exploited classes are retreating into the poblador sector. The oppressed population has been concentrated into the poblaciones, transforming them into fermenting vats of hate against the system and the dictatorship, where the discontent grows into protest and the will to struggle. New organizations and new forms of struggle are also being created there, to build the semi-legal and illegal struggle against the dictatorship—the people's resistance struggle.

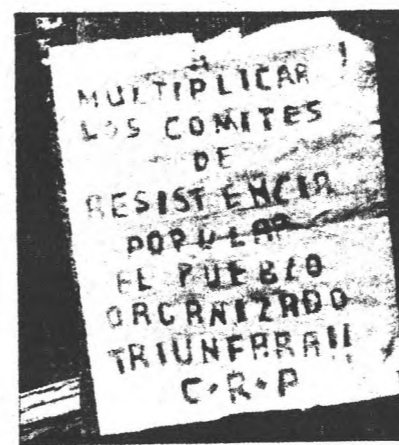
It is in the poblaciones that the working class is preparing its struggles in the factories, turning the poblaciones into the backbone of the driving force of all the classes which struggle against the bosses.

Imperialist and monopoly capital's economic policy has left hundreds of thousands of workers unemployed. There are more than 350,000 unemployed, who with their families amount to two million Chileans who are suffering the consequences of unemployment. Among the unemployed the people's resistance is also growing, and we are seeing the creation of hundreds of semi-legal organizations, such as the communal kitchens, sustained fund-raising for the unemployed, and other forms of organization, all of which are building solidarity among the exploited.

There is also resistance among the sectors of the white-collar and professional petit bourgeoisie, among intellectuals, Christians, students, and women. The discontent also reaches the troops of the armed forces, the non-commissioned officers and honest officers.

We can say with certainty that our people's resistance struggle in these four years has displayed a slow and gradual advance. But it is a firm and sustained advance, which the repressive forces have been unable to detain. The main task in these years has been the reorganization of workers' and people's parties in the underground. The dictatorship has concentrated all its resources and used the most cruel and blood thirsty methods to annihilate the parties of the left. All the workers' parties have suffered hard blows, but the dictatorship has failed to achieve its aims. Gorilla terror and violence have not stopped the parties of the Chilean left from re-emerging from the ranks of the people to lead the unbending struggle against tyranny.

But we have not only concentrated on internal reorganization. We have also been building the mass movement, particularly among the vanguard proletariat. A resistance movement which—in the form of resistance committees, factory commissions, workers'



Multiply the Resistance Committees; The People Organized Will Win!

commissions—have become the centers of the people's resistance. The first sign of the revival of the mass movement came with the action of vast sectors which, directly affected by the dictatorship's aggression, audaciously and bravely began to take up the tasks of the resistance. The forms of struggle in the present period are not spectacular, and this may confuse those watching from abroad, and give the impression that the resistance is not advancing.

But it is not so. Today the resistance is advancing in the underground and openly, building its clandestine agitation and propaganda, developing the issue-oriented struggle and trade union resistance. The MIR, together with the working class, is also developing small-scale armed propaganda, sabotage and boycott. We have the examples of the May Day and Sept. 11 bombings. Thus, over these years, we have been building a force which in the future will be able to move to the higher stages of struggle.



Another major advance of the people's resistance and of the left is the unity which has been achieved in these years. The masses are building a new kind of unity, which, at the grass-roots level is forging the indestructible social force which will overthrow the dictatorship and both local and foreign monopoly capital. We have not yet achieved a greater strategic and programmatic unity, but there have been advances in the past year. The working class and the people, the rank-and-file of the left have no doubt that what they need is the Political Front of the Resistance, which can contest the bourgeoisie's and imperialism's political, ideological, economic and military power, by uniting the various detachments of the Chilean working class.

Recently, in the month of August, we signed a tactical agreement to build common action with the Popular Unity. This agreement contains points of common understanding to struggle together, to defend human rights and fight against repression; to defend the masses' standard of living and increase trade union actions; to defend Chile's culture and its cultural heritage; to struggle against the militarization of education; to struggle and work to stimulate international solidarity, intensifying the isolation of the military junta, building boycotts, and democratic and revolutionary solidarity, assuring the joint leadership of the solidarity movement in order to avoid duplication and dispersion.

We would have liked to have reached a broader agreement, and we think that this is simply a first step. We will have to redouble our efforts in the ideological struggle and in the deepening of the understanding of the importance of unity as a method of struggle, but this tactical agreement is a victory of the entire Chilean left, of its rank-and-file and of the majority of its leaderships, who have been demanding unity for a long time.

Parallel to the broad unity of the entire left, the Chilean revolutionaries, both inside Chile and abroad, are converging. This convergence has a strategic basis, in the perspective of building the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat, an indispensable instrument for uniting the proletariat with the revolutionaries and a firm guarantee of victory. To this end, the unity of the MIR, the MAPU and other revolutionary sectors of the Chilean left which support the revolutionary policy of proletarian hegemony and the unity of the entire left is the only path for the triumph of democracy and socialism in Chile. Companeros, Companeras,

We are not under any illusions, our resistance will be prolonged. The process of accumulating forces is slow, but sustained.

The crisis of imperialism has been brought full force into Latin America, creating the conditions for a strong counterrevolutionary process with continental dimensions.

With the successive defeats in Indochina and Africa during the past decade, and after

the failure of formulas like the Alliance for Progress on our continent, after the triumph of the Proletarian Revolution in Cuba, imperialism put forth its so-called Doctrine of Counterinsurgency and filled our continent with military regimes whose purpose has been to annihilate the revolutionary vanguards, crush the mass movement into an acceptance of imperialism's project of placing the burden of the crisis of accumulation on the shoulders of the working class and the peoples of Latin America. These military regimes are a necessity for monopoly capitalism, although imperialism is today obligated to maintain a certain formal distance and attempts to legitimize the military regimes through propaganda due to the repulsion of world public opinion which has been horrified by the open terror of military repression in the majority of Latin American countries of the continent.

The military regimes which have imposed a state of terror, repression and superexploitation



tion of the workers have a fundamental role: to contain the popular masses of Latin America and extract the highest rates of profit based on the superexploitation of workers.

For this reason, the struggle of the Chilean peoples Resistance and of our party is the struggle of all the peoples of Latin America against the bourgeoisie and imperialism. The military dictatorships of the bourgeoisie are the last card of the bourgeoisie within our continent.

To confront the counterrevolutionary offensive in our continent it is necessary that all the detachments or sectors of the Latin American working class tighten ranks. The working class must gather all the democratic and anti-dictatorial sectors behind it. The

# MIR cont.

workers alone can significantly push forward the democratic struggle for socialism. For this to succeed we must forge within the struggles the unity of revolutionaries on a continental scale; coordinating our forces, gaining strength, overcoming divergent positions and eliminating left and right deviations.

The People's Movement in our continent has not been defeated. Very much the contrary. We have overcome the most adverse conditions and are recuperating and growing in the various countries of Latin America. We see this in Argentina, in Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, Brazil, El Salvador, and Guatemala. We are using legal and illegal forms of struggle, using armed struggle to prepare the road indicated to us by Che: that of Workers', Peoples and Continental War.

## Companeros(as)

One of the most serious problems confronting our Party, the Chilean Left, and the Latin American Left is the lack of a rearguard close to the front lines of the struggle. This is one of the objectives of our struggle in the next years, but we know that the objective of gaining a rearguard is one which we can achieve only in an intermediate period, by liberating a geographical territory in our country or in a neighboring country. The political rearguard of the People's Resistance is made up of the vanguard proletariat, the working class and the people

of Chile, then from this inexhaustible source and on the basis of its strength, the MIR will recover from the blows it has received, increase massively its human and material resources and extend the political and social influence of the Resistance in the front. The duration of the struggle in years or decades will fundamentally depend on the capacity of the working class and the people to organize themselves in a combative response to the dictatorship, but it will also depend on the strength and consistent efforts of the International Solidarity Movement, of its organizations, its militants, its effectiveness in incorporating solidarity work with local struggles, that is, of taking up the prolonged resistance struggle of our America.

The tasks of international solidarity must grow and be strengthened in this direction. We are dealing with an attempt to weave together a growing network of activities, programs, and organizations which can succeed in developing this indispensable rearguard—today and for a long time to come—for the struggle of the peoples of Latin America. That is, a political and social territory which can supply effective political, moral and material aid to revolutionaries, and where the tasks of the resistance are taken up effectively, with the support of proletarian internationalism.

This solidarity converted into the rearguard of the resistance, must continue growing in the broadest social and political sectors. Thus, we will achieve the sustained support of both democratic and revolutionary

solidarity for the working class and the peoples of Latin America.

You, *companeros* and *companeras*, have a broad field for action and a great political responsibility. In this country, solidarity with peoples, such as the Chilean people, who are struggling against the bourgeoisie and imperialism is an unavoidable political task. It is a means of organization and struggle which will advance the anti-imperialist and revolutionary struggle of the United States to higher levels of consciousness, organization and militancy. And if the US is the main imperialist metropolis, it must also be the center and metropolis of the most active and combative internationalism. This is the only way to struggle against the common enemy.

The experiences of the past decade and the support given by the North American people to the heroic Vietnamese people prove it. This is an experience which we must learn from in order to carry it to higher levels. It is clear to us that our struggle will require throughout its many moments and phases, the firm support of the North American working class, minorities, intellectuals, students, women and broad democratic sectors. By combining both elements: Resistance and socialist revolution on the Chilean front, and the workers' and people's solidarity in the rearguard, we will triumph over the tyranny of monopoly capital.

Combining diplomatic work and denunciation, with the support of the masses and the work carried out by the solidarity committees, we will implement the tasks we have before us.



Guardian photo by George Cohen

NYC picket in support of the Chilean Resistance