

OBREROS EN MARCHA

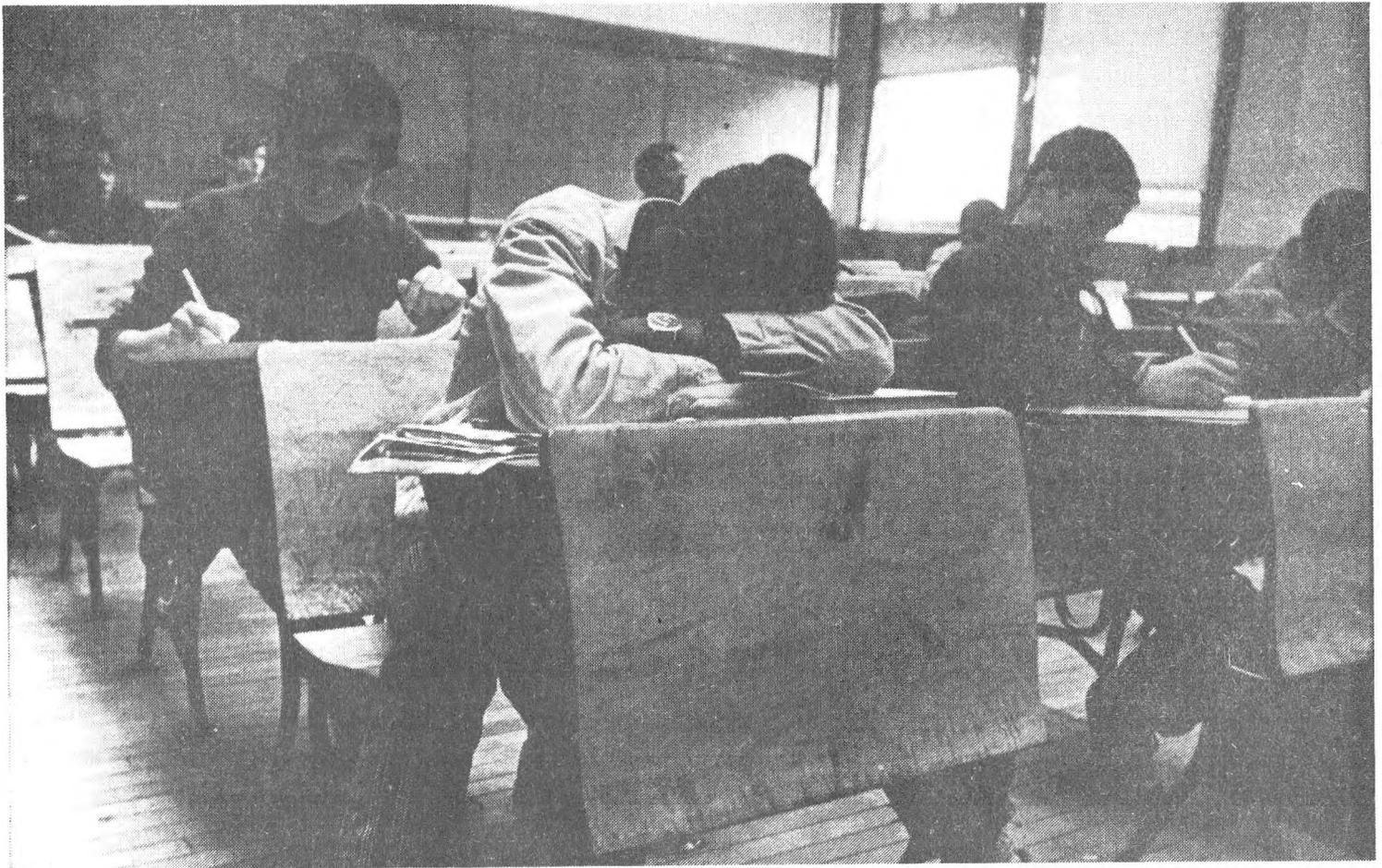
POLITICAL ORGAN OF EL MOVIMIENTO DE IZQUIERDA NACIONAL PUERTORRIQUEÑO—EL COMITE

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EDUCATION

NYC SCHOOLS FAIL OUR CHILDREN



Truancy empties out school rooms: a "normal" school day.

Ken Light/2/79

EDITORIAL

ON THE CHINESE INVASION OF VIETNAM

IN THIS ISSUE:

LOCAL Failure of Schools p.3

..... Koch's Town Hall meetings p.4

PUERTO RICO INFORMA Corruption in Teamster's Union p.6

NATIONAL Teamster strike p.8

..... Dacajeweiah is free p.9

INTERNATIONAL Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty p.10

..... South Africa in Namibia p.11

OBREROS EN MARCHA

Obreros En Marcha is the central publication of M.I.N.P.-El Comité (Puerto Rican National Left Movement). M.I.N.P.-El Comité is a developing Marxist-Leninist organization which originated on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, New York. We formed in the summer of 1970 as a Latin community organization committed to the struggle to improve the living conditions of the poor, mainly minority families who lived in that area. Our goal was to get decent, low-rent housing, quality education and improved health services for these families.

Two years after our formation we began to respond to the needs of Latin workers in the factories. We also started to organize students at the university level and to get more actively involved in the struggle for Puerto Rico's independence. Our participation in these struggles ultimately led to our transformation into a new type of organization with more defined political objective. Thus in 1974 we began a slow and complex process of transition into a Marxist-Leninist organization: an organization guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism and integrated into the struggles of working people.

As such an organization, we understand that an essential aspect of our work is to raise the level of political consciousness of workers in this country. This is one of the conditions necessary to develop the revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing the present order and building onto 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.

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EDITORIAL

ON THE CHINESE INVASION OF VIETNAM

In late February, Chinese troops invaded Vietnamese territory. Part of the invading force continues, as of today, to control portions of Vietnam. This action by the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party is a blatant violation of proletarian internationalism and has been condemned by progressives and revolutionaries throughout the world. We have joined in that condemnation.

For some years now, the once united international communist movement has been experiencing a process of ideological fragmentation. In the last decade in particular, the contradiction within the socialist camp has assumed an antagonistic character. The Chinese invasion of Vietnam is a manifestation of this development. The rise of the antagonistic contradiction can only serve to prolong imperialism's existence as a social-economic system.

For the past few years, China's foreign policy and definition of strategic allies has violated in theory and practice the Marxist-Leninist principles of proletarian internationalism. These deviations have their roots in the Chinese Communist Party's (CPC) position which holds that the Soviet Union is the main enemy of humanity and that therefore U.S. imperialism is a lesser danger.

Guided by this view, the Chinese leadership supported the CIA-backed nationalist movement in Angola, and continues to support the military dictatorships in Latin America (such as the Pinochet regime in Chile), the deposed Shah of Iran and Mobutu in Zaire. China's leadership also prodded the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea to take belligerent action in the Kampuchean-Vietnamese border disputes. In all these situations, China has objectively aligned itself with U.S. imperialism.

But for our organization, and for all communists, to condemn the Chinese invasion of Vietnam is not our only political task. A more difficult responsibility is to examine the course that class struggle is taking in China and the theoretical and practical consequences of the Chinese actions for the consolidation and victory of socialism internationally.

The international communist movement has many difficulties to surmount in its life and death struggle with imperialism. One of these difficulties is the struggle to build socialism in societies saddled with underdeveloped economies. This raises serious questions for the international communist movement, questions related to the broad theoretical, economic, ideological and political problems posed by the task of building socialism in an underdeveloped country where industrialization is very limited, where the socialization of production is limited, where a large portion of the population is peasants and where imperialism narrows all avenues for economic interchange. China is an example of such a society. The current state of the Chinese revolution cannot be examined outside this context.

When viewing the class struggle within China, we think it is important to examine such questions as the roots and consequences of the cultural revolution; the conceptions of economic development underlying the policy of the "four modernizations"; the history and character of the ideological struggles among the masses, between the masses and the CPC, and within the CPC itself; and the roots of the "three worlds" theory.

These are not minor tasks and they are essential if we are to understand current Chinese internal and external policy. A materialist analysis calls for a rigorous look at China's role in this period, the basis for its actions, and their ideological foundations.

At the same time any analysis of China today cannot negate the contributions made to the international communist movement by the Chinese revolution under the leadership of Mao Tse Tung; in particular, the contributions made to the process of national and social liberation of colonized peoples and peoples living under neo-colonialism.

The victory of the Vietnamese people in the spring of 1975 was universally recognized as the most serious defeat of U.S. imperialism in this century. The Vietnamese consistently saw their struggle not only as one for their own liberation but also one that would advance the national and class struggle on a world scale.

After their victory the Vietnamese again faced incredible tasks: to rebuild a devastated economy, reunite a country forcibly divided by U.S. imperialism, and construct an entire country savagely destroyed by U.S. bombings. In the years following the war, Vietnam maintained its principled position of struggle against U.S. imperialism, while demanding reparations and normalization of relations.

In looking at the contradictions within the socialist camp we cannot be blind to the role of U.S. imperialism. Shrewdly exploiting the divisions in this camp, the U.S. refuses to pay reparations to or normalize relations with Vietnam, allows China's second highest leader to boast of "teaching Vietnam a lesson" on a state visit to this country, and by extension approves of China's actions by sending Secretary of the Treasury Blumenthal to China in the heat of the invasion.

Progressive and revolutionary forces have a responsibility to target our real enemy: U.S. imperialism, and to expose those who ally with it. We have a responsibility to support Vietnam and demand both the Chinese withdrawal on the one hand, and, on the other, to call for U.S. payment of war debts and normalization of relations. ●

EDUCATION

NYC SCHOOLS FAIL OUR CHILDREN

This spring, the New York State Board of Regents will give a new test to high school students which they must pass in order to receive their high school diplomas. This test will evaluate students' competency in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. The decision by the Board (the governor-appointed body in charge of the educational system state-wide) to develop these new tests was in response to the growing controversy over the lack of education taking place in high schools throughout the state. This situation is most critical in New York City.

TESTS EXPOSE FAILURE OF SYSTEM

During the past decade, it has become increasingly clear that children from poor and minority families are being processed through the public school system without being taught the basic skills. The percentage of students who graduate from high school unable to read or write is staggering. These figures are a vivid indictment of the entire public education system in the U.S. In response to this situation, many states have adopted minimum competency tests to force the schools to ensure that a higher percentage of their students acquire the basic skills.

The original exam that high school students in New York State were required to take for the past 4 years only tested a

student's ability to perform the most minimal adult functions: reading directions on a label, filling out applications to get a job or an apartment, figuring the cost of groceries, etc. The low level of skill needed to pass the exam caused a great furor in New York's educational circles. Administrators and some Board of Regents members felt that the exam, to say the least, did not adequately test the skills level of high school students; furthermore, testing a student's ability to read labels was nothing but a mockery of the learning skills a high school diploma was supposed to represent. In light of the growing outrage, the Board of Regents ordered that a new and more complex test be developed to be implemented this spring. Students who plan to graduate in June and all future graduates must pass the new exam or lose their diplomas.

WHY CAN'T OUR YOUTH READ?

Principal at a public school in Hunts Point, the Bronx:

"A child who has not learned has to accept the personal responsibility and the personal burden."

Reporter: "You mean the fact that Johnny and Jane can't read is mostly Johnny and Jane's fault?"

Principal: "I would think so, yes."

When the tests were first announced in



After 12 years no education, just indifference, racism and frustration.

LOCAL

January, New York City's Board of Education estimated that at least 15% of the city's high school seniors would not be able to pass the exam. This means that 7,200 students out of 48,000 June graduates would not receive their diplomas.

By the time they are ready to graduate, high school students have spent 12 years within the educational system. What then is the reason for the "failure" of these youngsters, mostly from poor and working class, predominantly minority families, to receive their diplomas? Despite the attempts of many teachers, their union (the United Federation of Teachers—UFT) and many administrators to place the blame on the students themselves, the responsibility for the failure lies with the entire school system and those within it who call themselves the teachers and administrators of education.

When the results of the spring tests are tallied, it is the students who will bear the burden of failure. It is their lives and their future which will be affected. But their failure points to the much greater failure of the educational process and of society as a whole to provide a workable system truly committed to the education of its youth.

REMEDICATION: NOT THE ANSWER

The basic thrust of the Board of Regents is to solve the problem of failure through the use of remedial programs. Although these programs, when properly implemented, are necessary and should be utilized, it must be recognized that historically remedial programs have been another method of tracking the Black, Latin and other minority youth into the "slow" classes, where most teachers had written off their students as "too dumb to learn." It is essential to realize that remedial programs are necessary today mainly because of the schools' failure to provide children with an education from the beginning.

Reading and writing skills are most easily acquired during a child's early years. As the child grows up, developing these skills becomes increasingly difficult. Furthermore, the child develops negative attitudes toward these skills, fearing that he or she really is unable to learn.

Why are so many youth today not receiving an education? The steadily deteriorating conditions in the schools provide some of the answer. Quality education has always been low on the list of priorities for New York City. School facilities are rundown; school supplies are so inadequate that often students must buy their own textbooks. At one high school in Manhattan, each teacher was given 4 reams of paper to last a class of 40 an entire



N.Y.C. schools: teaching failure...

semester. With the cutbacks that began in 1974, so many teachers have been laid off that class size has increased tremendously. It is not uncommon to see 40-45 students in a single classroom. All of these conditions contribute to an incredibly high truancy rate. According to the Community Council of Greater New York, at least 100,000 children and youngsters are illegally out of school every day in New York City.

Another disastrous result of the cutbacks has been the firing of many of the paraprofessionals who were brought into the schools as a result of the community struggles in the 60's and early 70's. These workers freed the teacher from some of their tasks and provided students with more individualized attention. They also served as important links between the community and the school as well as brought into the school greater minority representation.

Community Control: the Struggle for Quality Education

In the 1960's, decentralization of schools was a demand by poor and working class, particularly Black and other minority, parents to improve the educational services that their children were receiving. The large, centralized, tightly-controlled city school department had no mechanism for real parental involvement. The demand for community control of local schools was originally synonymous with the struggle for quality education.

With community control, authority over policy, program, personnel and budgets for grade schools in a given neighborhood was transferred from the central Board of Education to local boards elected by the community. In this way, parents would be able to have more input in the education of their children by insuring the development of programs geared to their particular needs, e.g., bilingual programs. Moreover, since the local board would be involved in the hiring and firing of teachers, teachers could be made accountable to the community they served.

The lack of accountability of teachers is the other main reason why children are not

learning in the schools. From the beginning, community control was bitterly opposed by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). It fought against its passage in the state legislature, went out on strike against it in 1968 and 1969, and continued to undermine it by using the union's money and power to prevent the election to the local boards of people truly committed to their communities. It fought against all attempts to make teachers accountable to the families and children they were supposed to serve.

The positions of the UFT are reflected in the racist attitudes of many teachers. Many do not think that children from poor or minority families are capable of learning. Others use labels such as "culturally disadvantaged" or "culturally deprived" and focus on diagnosing what is "wrong" with the child, instead of looking at what is wrong with the school or with their own teaching methods. These racist attitudes are communicated to the children both directly and indirectly throughout the school day. The students begin to internalize these attitudes, viewing themselves as the problem and as failures. In this way are created generations of children so turned off to school that they either stop trying to learn, drop out completely, or in growing numbers, commit acts of violence within and outside of the schools.

More Attacks on Education

The most recent attack on community control, thoroughly endorsed by the UFT, has come from the new school Chancellor, Frank J. Macchiarola. Under the 1969 decentralization plan, local boards were given the option of hiring their own teachers. These teachers were required to have passed the National Teachers Examination and not NYC's Board of Examiners' test (proven to be severely discriminatory and unrelated to a person's performance as a teacher). For the first time, schools in minority communities could hire minority teachers. But Macchiarola, claiming that this system has resulted in the hiring of illiterate and incompetent teachers, is proposing that all prospective teachers must again be tested by the Board of Examiners.

This would greatly limit the ability of local boards to hire teachers of their own choosing.

On top of everything, Koch is again calling for more cuts in the education budget. He has demanded an \$83 million cut and is planning to divert \$60 million from state aid to education and to help balance the city budget. Once again, it is the youth of this city who will be forced to pay.

Why are these youngsters so expendable? With unemployment so high, particularly among minority youth, it is not in the government's interest to educate youth to the level where they might compete for the few jobs available. Furthermore, despite an increased mechanization of so many jobs, people are still needed to do the most menial and marginal jobs that would be unprofitable to mechanize. These youngsters are condemned by the government—and the corporations whose interests the government protects—to illiteracy, joblessness, or at best, jobs that are unskilled and low-paying.

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY A NECESSITY

The Board of Regents competency tests and the controversy surrounding them exposes once again the failure of the educational system. These tests hold the students accountable for their learning and education. But they cannot truly learn and be educated unless teachers and administrators are held accountable for their teaching. Without this, the students are left shouldering the burden of the failure of those responsible for educating them.

But who is going to assure the accountability of teachers and administrators? Parents and the community as a whole have this responsibility. A well-informed, united and militant parent body can have a direct impact on what goes on in the schools. By demanding that teachers and administrators respond to students' needs, parents can play a determinant role in insuring that their children receive a quality education. ●

TOWN HALL MEETINGS: ATTEMPTS AT APPEASEMENT

The city government, headed by Mayor Edward Koch, has had to deal with growing discontent among the people of New York City. As he continues to inflict seemingly endless budget cuts on the city's working people, Koch must find ways to quell the rising anger. The "Town Hall Meeting" has been his favorite maneuver. The idea behind these meetings is to give the impression of "going to the people" and making it a media event. Yet not one of these meetings has occurred without angry responses from the people present—from loud picket lines to having tomatoes thrown at him. Koch's tactics have been to try to control these meetings as much as possible to create the most favorable media conditions. The following letter was given to *Obreros En Marcha* by a friend who was invited to attend one such meeting relating his experience there. The meeting was held in East Harlem, a predominantly Puerto Rican section of New York City.

Friends at *Obreros En Marcha*,

I have read your paper and I have found it to be very helpful and informative in terms of events that are important to our community. I am writing you this letter to let you know of a meeting that was held between the 116 St. Block Association in *El Barrio* (East Harlem) and Mayor Koch. I know that your paper is distributed in our community and I would like to contribute this experience.

The meeting was set up by the president of the 116 St. Block Association and the mayor's office. It was not a meeting open to the community like others Koch had. People came by "invitations only." I was not sure why it was done like this, but it became clearer later.

The meeting was called for March 22, 1979 and was held at the Methodist Church and Community Center. The place was filled to capacity with 160 people seated and another 50 or 60 standing.

I arrived early when there were only a few people there. A group of women were huddled in one corner and some men were debating something in another. The long, empty table in the front had 12 chairs. The women were talking about how Koch would probably not show and only send a representative, or even totally ignore the meeting as he had done to the Community Coalition in Defense of Puerto Rican Rights a few weeks before.

I asked one of the women in the group what she expected to happen that night. She said that she knew nothing more than "Koch is supposed to speak to us." She then showed me her invitation and smiled. The others also proudly presented their invitations.

People were still entering and invitations were being carefully checked. A woman with curly, white hair and carrying a large black notebook hastily rushed in and began to

check the set-up. She was followed by what could only have been plain clothes security men, who placed themselves strategically in the room. Everything was organized, controlled.

Then the cameramen and women came in and began to set-up their equipment and check the lights. The murmuring began—Koch is coming! He's here! The room then began to fill very quickly and the announcement was made that the program was about to begin.

Koch entered through a side entrance followed by a trail of other politicians. He was warmly received but as he walked towards the table he kept glancing at the applauding audience in arrogant surprise. He made faces showing that he could not believe the reception he was getting. I started to feel uncomfortable.

The moderator from the block association opened the program by saying that the mayor was there to find out what were our problems and tell us what he was planning to do. While he spoke index cards were being distributed throughout the audience for written questions.

The mayor opened the dialogue by making a presentation in defense of his administration. He stated that we were lucky to have elected officials of their quality, especially Deputy Mayor Herman Badillo. This caused snickering in the audience for we know how little Badillo has done for the Puerto Rican community.

Then Koch tried to tell us how much he has done for us. He spoke about summer jobs for the young people, cracking down on corrupt poverty programs, and more police in the streets. Neither I nor anyone sitting around me was impressed by these statements. The situation of our young people continues to get worse; the poverty programs are still separated from the needs of our community;



Koch tries to quiet angry black community at Town Hall meeting in Harlem.

and the police, no matter how many, have never made our community safe.

Koch then said that he had talked enough and he and his staff wanted to answer our questions. The moderator asked for the index cards from the audience. I noticed how certain people around me would put the blank card in one pocket and take a typewritten one out of another. Badillo and the mayor grinned when they saw what was happening. It was then that I saw how "controlled" this meeting really was.

The moderator began reading the questions and people were surprised at how complicated they sounded. They were full of statistics. Koch very expertly dodged them by telling the moderator "you have your statistics wrong." Practically nobody understood the answers to the very important questions on housing, schools and the hospitals. People were becoming restless and frustrated. "Politicians are full of promises" was the whisper. Meanwhile Koch was performing in top form before the television cameras. The whole meeting had become a public relations event for Koch and we had become spectators.

People were now beginning to raise their own questions from the audience. One young ex-convict who was studying at Hostos Community College asked Koch what was being done to give the school the new building it desperately needed. Koch said he did not have enough information about Hostos. "Ask Badillo, he knows," demanded the young man, but Badillo was not speaking. Koch then told the man that the case was under consideration, and that he should have more respect for his elected officials. By that time, people in the audience were getting real angry.

The president of El Barrio Chamber of Commerce stood up and told Koch he didn't have any questions, but then he yelled out "Your administration is a joke!" That was all that was needed to bring the tension out. "Tell it like it is!" people began yelling. The man told Koch that his officials were incompetent and he should get rid of all of them. The place was jumping now and many people were yelling. "This has been so nice, let's not ruin it!" pleaded Koch.

The young ex-convict yelled that his question hadn't been answered. Koch saw his chance. He told the meeting that if everyone quieted down he would answer the young man's question. He then skillfully used his politician's double-talk. "Do you want sex-offenders in your schools?" "No!" came the response. "Do you want crooks in your banks?" again "No!" Then, Koch "answered" the man's question by stating that he wouldn't employ ex-convicts in those kinds of jobs! Koch tried to shift people's anger and attention away from him and put it on the young man who had been in jail. This made Koch look good in front of the T.V. cameras.

After this trick Koch ended the meeting. People had mixed feelings about it, but I felt that our community should not expect anything from Koch and his administration. ●

CORRUPTION IN TEAMSTERS UNION: A NEW CRISIS

Celebrations for labor leader, Miguel A. Cabrera's acquittal (see OEM Vol. III, no. 1) were still going on when the Puerto Rican labor movement found itself facing a new crisis. The Teamsters Union, one of the largest and most militant of the country, became embroiled in a corruption scandal. About ten union officials, among them Miguel A. Cabrera and other progressive elements, were fired by the head of the Union, Secretary-Treasurer, Luis E. Pagan. They had accused Pagan of corruption and had demanded his resignation. Pagan responded, not by refuting the charges, but by immediately and arbitrarily firing those who had accused him.

The charges against Pagan fall into the following categories:

- 1) Utilization of his position as head of the Union to finance and develop companies (such as PEL and Gomas de Puerto Rico) which deny their employees the right to unionize.
- 2) Illegal use of the Teamsters' Health Plan funds.
- 3) Support of the Union's President, Carmelo Nieves, who holds a managerial post at the Caribe Hilton Hotel. This support allowed Nieves to keep his job after crossing the picket line in a Teamsters strike against the Hotel in spite of the fact that many Teamster members and officials asked for his dismissal.
- 4) Defense of the clauses in the life insurance policies held by Teamster organizers which stipulate that in case of death, the beneficiary is the union and not the family of the deceased.
- 5) Violation of union regulations. In the last elections, the membership was not allowed to vote and only 57 persons nominated the present Secretary-Treasurer.

The group of officials who have been fired have formed a committee, with Miguel A. Cabrera as one of the spokes-

men, to continue the investigation and to press for the nullification of the last elections in which Pagan was reelected.

The Teamsters Union is one of the main pillars of the Puerto Rican labor movement. It has a membership of more than 8,000 including several prominent independentists and socialists. If the current conflict is won by Pagan, it will be a setback for democracy and class conscious trade unionism within the Teamsters. But if the Teamsters membership succeeds in ousting Pagan, an important step will have been taken in the democratization and strengthening of the Union. This would be a victory for the entire Puerto Rican labor movement.

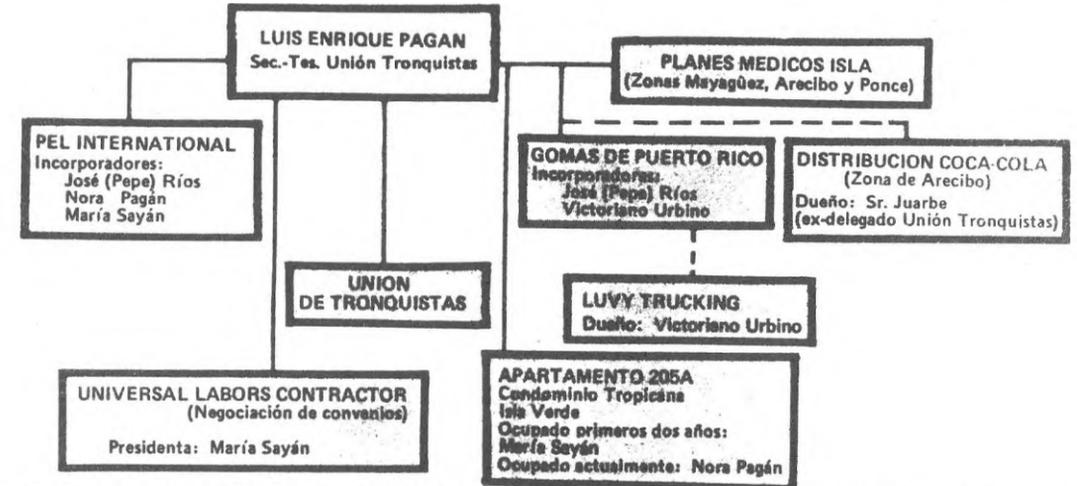
Because of the importance of these events, we are producing excerpts of an exclusive article from *Pensamiento Critico* which details the corrupt practices of Pagan.

The corrupt practices of Mr. Pagan include the creation of private firms under his ownership which engage in economic activities related to those which involve the members of the union. He also obtains many benefits through his management of medical plan funds and workers' dues as well as through the control for his personal use of the union's property.

One of Mr. Pagan's companies is PEL International, a company of trailer trucks with offices in the docks of Isla Grande. PEL which stands for the inverted initials of Luis Enrique Pagan, was incorporated approximately three years ago by Jose (Pepe) Rios, Pagan's son-in-law; Nora Pagan, one of his daughters, and a northamerican, Maria Sayan, his "friend".

According to the information that we have, PEL International, which has modern and expensive trailer trucks, was originally created in 1975, with funds collected from a

DIAGRAM OF CORRUPTION IN THE TEAMSTERS UNION.



HERE IS PART OF THE INTRICATE NET OF INTERESTS OF MR. LUIS ENRIQUEZ PAGAN, PRESENT SECRETARY-TREASURER OF THE TEAMSTERS UNION. IN THE CENTER IS THE UNION WHICH HAS SERVED FOR MR. PAGAN AS AN INSTRUMENT TO ACCUMULATE HIS RICHES, AS WELL AS TO DEFEND AND INCREASE THEM AT THE EXPENSE OF THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS.

fundraiser held in the name of the Union's heart fund.

Since its inception, PEL International has acquired the "mystique" among companies in the docks of being an "untouchable" Teamster entity, which means that it has been able to intervene in regional strikes on behalf of the owners. Mr. Pagan has repeatedly and emphatically ordered Teamster delegates and organizers not to unionize PEL's employees.

On many occasions, Mr. Pagan has used the material and human resources of the union to force the shipping and storage companies, which have collective bargaining agreements with the Teamsters, to favor PEL in the assignment of cargo business. Because of Pagan's impersonal, unilateral and secretive style of work, organizers and delegates have never had a clear explanation of why they had to carry out certain tasks.

An example of this was the order given by Pagan to Cabrera and Luis Carrion, transportation delegates, to call a strike at the Twin Express Company. This is a storage company located in the dock area of Puerto Nuevo, whose employees are members of the Teamsters Union. The strike which took place in mid-1978 had the objective of pressuring Twin Express to give more business to PEL International.

Thus, while Twin Express agreed to give a greater share of its business to PEL, it reduced its volume to the trucking company of Rafael Cancel, whose employees are members of the Teamsters. As a consequence, over a dozen union members were laid-off. Cancel, whose company operates with unionized workers, is forced to pay better salaries, and to provide a medical plan and better working conditions than PEL International. It is therefore in a weaker competitive position than PEL.

Countless testimonies also reveal how the Teamsters Union has been used through slow downs, strikes, and

contract negotiations to pressure different trucking companies to buy their tires exclusively from Gomas de Puerto Rico (another company owned by Pagan). This has been done, at the sacrifice of wage and fringe benefits for members of the union.

Among the companies which have participated in this type of collusion is Coca Cola, whose employees are Teamsters. The deal made with this foreign company was the following. Coca Cola agreed to buy its tires from Gomas de Puerto Rico. In exchange, and in violation of the collective bargaining agreement, Pagan allowed Coca Cola to subcontract another company for the distribution of the beverage in the Arecibo area.

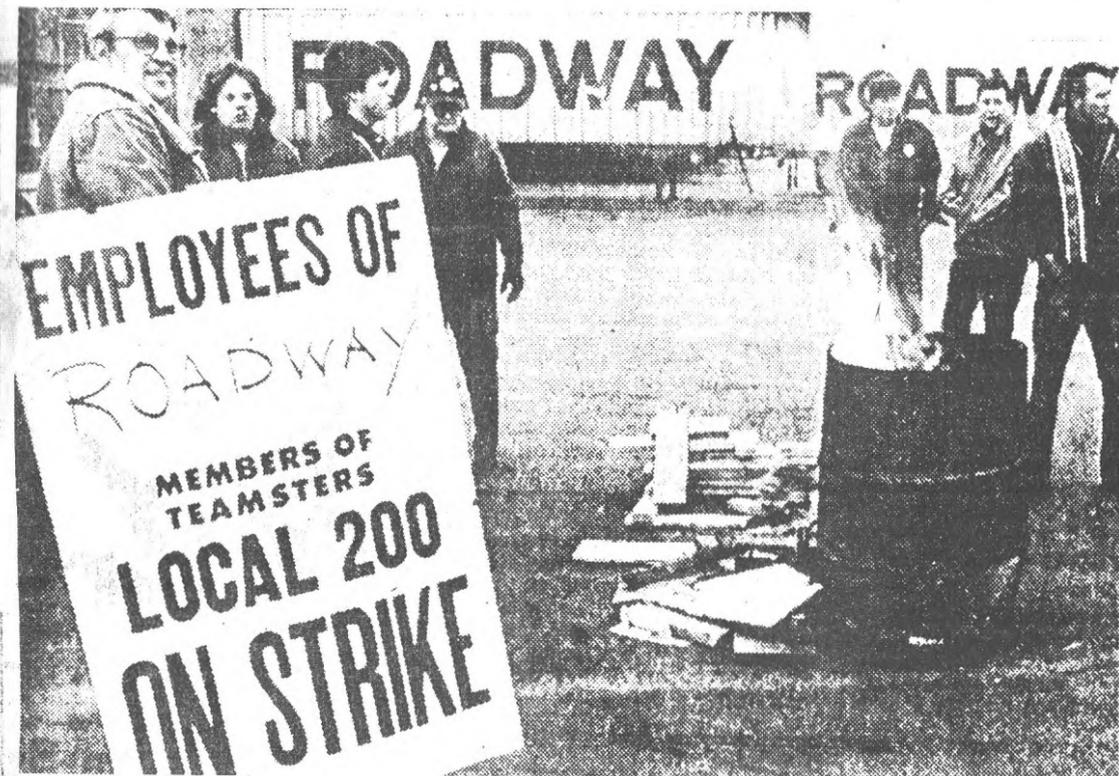
In October of 1978, the country lived through tense moments when the Teamsters Union announced that there would be a general strike in the transportation industry. Because of the adverse economic effects such a strike would have on several sectors of the economy, the whole country was concerned. The strike had originally been planned for the 1st of November but was postponed until the 5th. Then surprisingly, it was cancelled by the Secretary-Treasurer. Not even the organizers of the strike knew what was going on. Not until now has the truth been revealed.

Navieras de Puerto Rico (a shipping company) owed PEL almost \$8,000. Had the strike occurred, payment on the debt would have been delayed a few months. That is why the owner of PEL, Pagan, cancelled the strike.

All the business dealings mentioned represent a quarter of a million dollars for Mr. Pagan each year. That means that this alleged leader of the Puerto Rican proletariat is either directly or indirectly stealing approximately \$20,000 per month from the 7,000 members of the Teamsters union in Puerto Rico. ●



TRUCKING INDUSTRY LOCKS-OUT TEAMSTERS



Teamsters picket: left out in the cold by sold out leadership.

On March 31 the contract between the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the trucking industry expired. That same day, negotiations between the two groups for a new national contract to cover 300,000 Teamsters working in the freight industry broke down; no agreement had been reached.

Teamsters President Frank Fitzsimmons announced the start of a "selective strike" against the industry. This meant that work stoppages would be staged only against a certain number of the 500 companies involved in the bargaining. But a few hours later, the negotiating arm of the trucking industry, Trucking Management, Inc., responded by shutting down the freight companies. It was a general company lockout against all workers.

One of the main reasons why negotiations broke down is because Teamster leaders were unable to secure a contract which would guarantee wage and benefit increases for their membership. The union demanded a 35% wage increase over a three-year period (approximately 11½% each year). Because Teamsters are paid at a higher rate than most workers in the country today (they earn an average of \$9.50 an hour), they've been portrayed in the commercial press as greedy workers whose demands for higher wages are the cause of today's spiralling inflation.

Since last year, prices have been rising steadily at a rate of almost 1% per month. Although the government and company officials blame these rising prices on union demands for higher wages, the fact is that corporate profits are climbing at a much faster rate than wages. In the first 3 months of 1979, profits increased a record 26%. In general the purchasing power and standard of living of workers is decreasing, not increasing. Today's wages are just not keeping up with the sky-rocketing prices. Nevertheless, the trucking companies refused to meet the Teamsters' wage demands, utilizing as their reason President Carter's voluntary guidelines limiting wage increases to 7% a year.

WORKING CONDITIONS MAIN ISSUE

But contrary to industry and union officials and the news media, wages increases is not the primary issue for the majority of the Teamsters rank and file. According to many rank and file workers, working conditions and the question of productivity are the main issues. For a Teamsters driver, hours are long—up to 60 and 70 hours per week on the road; overtime is mandatory and the pay rate is the same. Drivers are often on the road 15 hours a day. The freight companies harass

the workers for detailed accounts of their time and constantly pressure them to drive faster. More than 900 long-haul drivers were killed last year in accidents which also caused the deaths and injuries of many other motorists. Workers attribute many of these accidents to failing equipment which management refuses to repair.

Fumes from faulty trucks and constant fatigue inflict illness on many drivers. Thus pension benefits are another major area of concern for the rank and file. Pension benefits have not increased in six years. Today the average monthly pension is \$275; the maximum is \$550. In the past-six-year period, inflation has cut the buying power of pensions in half.

PURPOSE OF THE SELECTIVE STRIKE

These issues are ignored by the companies as well as by union officials. Historically, the union leadership—widely recognized among the rank and file as corrupt collaborators with management—has not stood up and fought in the interests of the workers but rather has played "politicking" games with both management and the government. Under pressure from growing numbers of the rank and file, the union leadership this time had to make some kind of appearance in defense of the workers' rights. The "selective strike" tactic was exactly that—an ap-

pearance of struggle which actually reflected the leadership's unwillingness to confront the companies with a solid, unified offensive. The selective strike is a divisive action, potentially pitting some workers against others. Those on strike would be in a more dangerous position, placing their jobs and wages on the line, while companies not struck would force its workers to speed-up in order to capture the business of those companies shut down.

The union leadership claims that this tactic would have avoided the possibility of President Carter stepping in and issuing a Taft-Hartley injunction against the union. The Carter administration places great importance on the outcome of the Teamsters contract, because to a great degree it will determine the life or death of Carter's voluntary wage guidelines. If the Teamsters win increases which do not fall within the guidelines' 7% limit, this will greatly affect the demands raised by 2 million other workers in industries up for contract negotiations later this year. Unwilling to challenge Carter in any full scale way, the Teamsters leadership implemented their selective strike.

But the plan backfired when the companies decided to shut down their operations and lockout the Teamsters. If the government decides to invoke the Taft-Hartley Act (in which workers are forced to return to their jobs for an 80-day "cooling off" period), the workers will be forced back to their jobs with little likelihood of achieving a contract that responds to their real concerns.

THE ORGANIZED RANK AND FILE

Rank and file groups are organizing the workers to pressure union officials and fight for better working conditions, more benefits and for greater union democracy. The Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and the Professional Drivers Council (PROD) have approximately 10,000 members who are tired of union corruption and are struggling for greater participation of the rank and file in the union. They call for democratic elections of union representatives, a full rank and file vote on the contract with the contract make available to the workers before voting and a program of demands which are more reflective of the true concerns of the workers. At this time, these groups are not strong enough to ensure a more responsive union leadership, but their influence is growing and the voices of the workers are becoming more outspoken and defiant.

During the next few weeks, the government will undoubtedly wage public campaigns to try to "prove" how the union demands will hurt consumers, that prices for delivery of goods will have to increase if the Teamsters get their wage increases. But the truth is that if prices go up, it is because the companies seek greater profits and will not reduce their profit margins to give to the workers a higher wage and more benefits. ●

Dacajeweah ATTICA: NOT YET A MEMORY



Dacajeweah: victim of government's terrorism.

On September 9, 1971, 1200 prisoners rose up against the brutal and dehumanizing conditions at Attica State Prison in upstate New York. While holding guards as hostages to prevent an armed attack by prison authorities, the Attica prisoners negotiated with state officials for such changes as more than one shower a week and more than 25¢ a day in wages. The state ended negotiations four days later on September 13th, with a slaughter of 39 unarmed people, including ten of their own guards.

The state moved to conceal the facts that the rebellion was provoked by the brutal conditions at the prison and that the killing of the 39 people was mass murder committed by state troopers. The prisoners were made the scapegoats for the uprising and the murders. While then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller praised the massacre, 62 prisoners were indicted for crimes from robbery to murder.

Massive protests of the Attica frame-ups won the release of most of the prisoners, but one prisoner was convicted of first-degree murder. Dacajeweah (John Hill), a young Native American, was found guilty of killing prison guard William Quinn. Quinn had been seriously injured by a crowd of angry prisoners when the rebellion first began. Dacajeweah was sentenced to twenty years to life in prison for a crime he did not commit.

The state did not expect the small, scattered Indian community to be able to defend Dacajeweah against a frame-up, or other people to rally to his support. But it underestimated public anger and outrage. The one-sided Attica prosecution came under broad attack. The charges against many other prisoners were dismissed. Demands in-

creased for the indictment of the troopers who were the real Attica killers.

To quiet the storm, Rockefeller's successor, Governor Carey, granted pardons to all the guards and troopers and to almost all of the prisoners in December, 1976. But he gave Dacajeweah a form of clemency that required the approval of the parole board. The parole board, under pressure and threats from police, prison guards, and the most right-wing state legislators, refused to release him from prison.

For Dacajeweah's next parole date in January, 1979, many people wrote and petitioned the parole board demanding his release. The Attica Committee to Free Dacajeweah, the Charter Group for a Pledge of Conscience, and the International Indian Treaty Council organized this campaign. This time the protests were successful. Dacajeweah was released from prison on March 21, 1979.

Dacajeweah's release is a tremendous victory, but more work remains to be done. Dacajeweah is on parole for the rest of his life. He could go back to prison for a minimum of 20 years for any felony violation of the law. His conviction must be fully overturned. The prisoners who survived the Attica massacre and the families of those who were killed are suing the state for billions of dollars in damages. The struggle against inhumane prison conditions continues throughout the U.S.

For more information contact either the Charter Group for a Pledge of Conscience at Box 346 Cathedral Station, New York, N.Y. 10025 or the Attica Committee to Free Dacajeweah, P.O. Box 159 Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215. ●



Sadat, Carter and Begin conspiring to stem the tide of history.

MIDDLE EAST TREATY: IMPERIALIST PEACE

Contribution from Palestine Solidarity Committee

On March 26 Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptan President Anwar Sadat signed a formal peace treaty between their two countries, with U.S. President Jimmy Carter affixing his signature as a witness. But Carter was far from being a mere "witness"; he was the treaty's godfather, playing the role of matchmaker, banker, and, in the coming months, enforcer. The U.S. was the driving force in the negotiations leading to the treaty, and only with an unprecedented massive flow of U.S. arms and assistance to Israel and Egypt, is there any prospect that the treaty can be implemented. Far from bringing a genuine peace to the region and an end to the bloodshed and suffering of its peoples, the treaty signals a step forward in the forging of an aggressive conservative alliance in the region; it marks the beginning of an intensified level of U.S. intervention in the area.

Palestinian protests—strikes in the Israeli-occupied areas and demonstrations in cities around the world—point to the obvious fact that the new treaty cannot serve as the basis for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East because it provides no solution to the Palestine question, the crux of the Arab-Israeli dispute. The treaty does not offer the Palestinian people an opportunity to realize their national rights—including the right to self-determination, to an independent state in Palestine, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. Instead, the treaty calls for Israel and Egypt (with the possible participation of Jordan) to negotiate a false "autonomy" scheme for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, which will permit Israel to continue its colonial control

of those Palestinian regions.

The treaty results from the U.S. government's efforts to assert a new degree of control in the Middle East. In overseeing the signing of the treaty in Washington last month, the U.S. government achieved one of the essential political objectives of its Middle Eastern strategy for the last five years: the reduction of tensions between its conservative Arab allies and Israel.

The October 1973 war showed U.S. imperialism that its relations with Israel and also with reactionary Arab regimes could no longer be developed in conveniently isolated compartments. The war demonstrated that Israel could no longer exercise armed domination on an overwhelming scale. The subsequent oil embargo indicated that in order to use the new regional political power which its growing oil wealth had bought, and in fact to survive, the Saudi regime had to demonstrate that it was acting in the Arab national interest. These two factors convinced the U.S. government that it had to integrate its relations with Israel and the Arab states by reducing tensions between them.

Kissinger, then-Secretary of State, seized upon a "step by step" approach: separate issues—such as troop disengagement in the Sinai—would be negotiated to generate an illusion of progress without dealing with the fundamental issue, Palestinian self-determination. Israel, possibly with Jordanian participation, would retain control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to maintain "stability" and contain the Palestinian revolutionary potential.

A number of U.S. strategists soon became

concerned that the limitations of Kissinger's "step by step" policy were pushing the Arab states—whose demands were being left unmet—toward war. The Brookings Institute, a Washington "think tank", assembled an elite panel including Zbigniew Brzezinski, later appointed by Carter to head the National Security Council. This panel issued a study repudiating the "step by step" approach, and recommended pursuit of a "comprehensive settlement," including some unspecified settlement of the Palestine question.

It was this recommendation which framed the diplomatic objective of the Carter administration in the Middle East. However, the U.S. has not yet been able to force an overall settlement. Not even the feudal monarchies of Saudi Arabia or Jordan have been willing to relieve Egypt's isolation on the Arab side, and there has been no success in producing a Palestinian collaborator group. Furthermore, the Palestinian "autonomy" plan, left to the future negotiations of Sadat and Begin, has been universally rejected by the Palestinians as a solution to their national demands.

Nevertheless, the signing of the treaty represents a very significant step towards the forging of a reactionary alliance in the Middle East under the auspices of U.S. imperialism. Carter was desperate for this treaty—he was described in the press as "ashen" at a moment when the prospects for the treaty seemed dim. This can be traced in part to the serious setback his project of a reactionary alliance received when the Shah of Iran was toppled from his Peacock Throne.

The revolution in Iran not only ousted an

Iranian dictator, but also a policeman whose vast supplies of U.S. weapons made it a deadly effective patroller of the Middle East. Particularly in the Gulf area, the U.S. made use of Iran to maintain the status quo. Iran has had an extremely important regional role in U.S. strategy at least since the mid-60s. At that time, the unfolding defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam caused then-President Johnson to cast about for local powers to stand-in for its interests in various parts of the globe. In the early seventies, Iran became a star participant in the implementation of the Nixon Doctrine, which elaborated the strategic concept of effectively arming various states for local and regional counterinsurgency—fighting against the nationalist, worker and progressive movement. The clearest example of this was the Shah's dispatch of his troops, many of them borne into battle in helicopters developed by the U.S. for use in Vietnam, to suppress the revolution in Dhofar, the westernmost province of Oman, a Gulf State.

The loss of such an ally has been a hard blow to the U.S., and severely unsettling to other U.S. clients in the region, which witnessed at close hand the inability of the U.S. to protect the Shah. The Saudis urged the U.S. to prove that it was not a "helpless giant." The U.S. response—which was also a positive answer to Sadat's encouragement that Washington "get over the Vietnam complex"—has been to adopt an extremely aggressive military posture.

In keeping with this stance, Carter has promised \$400 million in arms to North Yemen, a regime closely allied to Saudi Arabia and embroiled in a war against an indigenous national democratic front and a border conflict with its progressive neighbor, South Yemen. Although the conflict has temporarily quieted, the 300 military advisors which Carter pledged are a continuing threat of deeper U.S. military involvement. Yemen has no trained pilots for the planes being supplied by the U.S., and there is real danger that U.S. pilots could begin to fly missions in Yemen alongside Jordanian, Pakistani and Saudi air force officers.

There are a number of worrisome signs. The U.S. is reported to be involved in a major buildup of its forces at Massira, an island in the Gulf. The aircraft carrier Constellation, sent to "show the flag" of the U.S. after the Shah fell, continues to sail the troubled waters; there is discussion of the creation of a permanent fleet for the Arabian Sea. There is also reported to be a split in the Carter administration, with one faction actually advocating the creation of a U.S. airbase in the Sinai. The threats of Energy Secretary James Schlesinger to use military force if necessary to "protect vital U.S. interest" in the Arab oil fields, and the trumped up "oil shortage" lend themselves to building public support for U.S. military intervention.

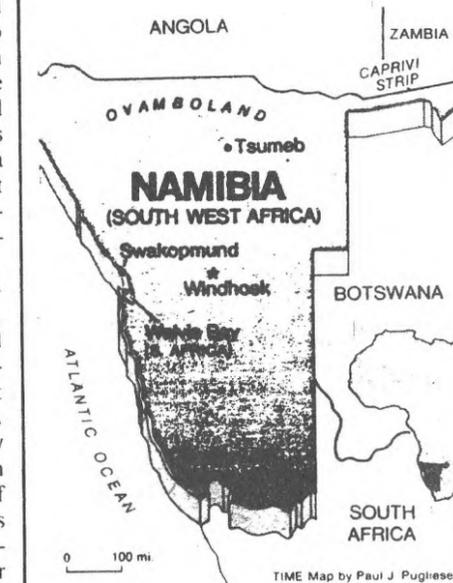
What are the effects of this increased diplomatic and military intrusion on the U.S. working class? First, it means an outpouring

of tax money to the Middle East. Carter has promised an additional \$5 billion in aid to Israel and Egypt. Along with "regular" aid to these regimes, his new promise will bring the cost of the "peace" treaty to a minimum of \$13 billion over the next three years—most of it in military assistance—and the figure could soar higher.

Second, the declarations by government

officials make it clear they are willing to commit not only weapons, but U.S. soldiers as well, to the defense of the oil monopolies. These monopolies try to convince us that high prices for gasoline and heating oil are the fault of the oil-producing countries, while oil monopoly profits have risen 28% in the last year. This is how the U.S. working class may have to pay for the treaty. ●

NAMIBIA SOUTH AFRICA IN NAMIBIA: IN SEARCH OF NEOCOLONIALISM



before December 31, 1978 supervised by representatives of the UN and a South African administrator. Although the pact contained several important unclari- ties—sovereignty over Walvis Bay, Namibia's only deep water port and the status of SWAPO's army during the elections—both SWAPO and South Africa agreed to its terms.

SOUTH AFRICA MANEUVERS FOR A NEOCOLONIAL SOLUTION

Until July of 1978 South Africa had been relying on the creation of tribal homelands (bantustans) as a solution to its colonial problems. To this end it had organized the Turnhalle Conference, attended by white settlers and tribal chiefs to map out the bantustan solution and avoid all contact with SWAPO. December of 1978 had originally been set as the date for elections for a constitutional assembly.

After the victories of Angola and Mozambique, western imperialists led by the United States have been scrambling to stem the tide of national liberation in southern Africa. They have thus been pressuring the apartheid regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia to reconcile their differences with the national liberation forces so as to keep this mineral-rich region within the imperialist camp.

In Namibia (Southwest Africa) the efforts of the five western imperialist nations—the U.S., West Germany, France, England and Canada—produced a peace agreement in July 1978 between the guerrilla forces of the Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and South African troops (see OEM Vol. III No. 7). This agreement called for a cease-fire supervised by a 7,500 (5,000 soldiers and 1,500 civilians) United Nations contingent; South Africa was to reduce the number of armed personnel in Namibia from 50,000 to 1,500; and elections would be held

However, because of pressure from the five western imperialist nations, South Africa acceded to the July peace agreement. But this past September, Prime Minister Vorster announced that South Africa had decided to reject the agreement and continue with its own "independence" plan. Its decision to renege was caused by a UN vote reaffirming Namibia's sovereignty over Walvis Bay.

SHAM ELECTIONS HELD

The election carnival was on. The Turnhalle Conference was quickly remodeled into the Turnhalle Democratic Alliance (TDA). With funds supplied by West Germany's Christian Democratic Party and South Africa, the TDA opportunists and collaborators crisscrossed the country in private planes, mine-proof vehicles and bullet-proof

Mercedes. The racial separatist policies of the Alliance were presented to the Namibian people through the use of slick Western publicity methods: give-aways, posters, buttons, etc. Publicity, however, was not the only method used. Health care, access to jobs and government services were used as leverage to force people to support the TDA. SWAPO members and supporters faced increased repression in the form of arbitrary jailings and torture. SWAPO boycotted the elections and the UN refused to recognize the legitimacy of their act. The TDA easily won.

COMPLICITY OF THE BIG 5

The complicity of the five western nations against the liberation forces was clearly visible during the months after South Africa rejected the peace pact and continued with its plan for tribal homelands. For years the five countries blocked increased UN sanctions against South Africa. When South Africa rejected the pact in September, African and

progressive members of the UN agreed that it was no longer possible to delay the implementation of stricter sanctions. The five western nations fiercely resisted this effort and instead sent delegations to South Africa to negotiate. The only promise they wrested from Botha, the new prime minister after Vorster resigned, was the agreement to hold UN supervised elections *after* South Africa's December elections for a constituent assembly.

The apartheid regime's motives were evident. No democratic elections were to be held until the TDA had had enough time to consolidate its position. Otherwise any democratic elections would be easily won by SWAPO. Thus, after the sham elections, Botha announced that South Africa was once again ready to cooperate with the UN.

Since then, however, the TDA's strength has not developed as expected. Last month, South Africa once again rejected the peace pact. This time the alleged problems were the

size of the UN force (too large in Botha's opinion) and the presence of SWAPO forces in the country during elections—a status which, according to Botha, SWAPO had never achieved during wartime and so should not be granted in peace time. The real reason, of course, was that the TDA needed more time to become a real challenge to SWAPO.

SWAPO'S STRENGTH GROWS

SWAPO was born in 1960. Its early years were dedicated to combatting tribal prejudices and to rooting itself in all regions of the country. Since South Africa's colonial presence in Namibia is asserted mainly through the use of contract labor, the rooting of SWAPO in the migrant labor camps was viewed as essential to the growth of the revolutionary movement. Issues such as arbitrary relocations, poor working and living conditions, low wages, etc., were slowly linked to and placed within the context of the need for national independence. This approach proved to be correct, for SWAPO quickly gained influence throughout the country.

By the latter half of the 1960s South Africa, recognizing the danger that the young organization represented, set out to destroy it. The People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN)—the military arm of SWAPO—was born. Gradually it grew until in the early 70s SWAPO declared armed struggle to be its main form of struggle. The April 1974 victory of the MPLA in Angola has aided the growth of PLAN. Training bases have been set up in Angola which have greatly increased PLAN's effectiveness.

SWAPO's willingness to negotiate has served to further expose the treacherous nature of the South African regime. Even during the period of negotiations, SWAPO has continued its military harassment of the racist colonial power. And it continues to claim Walvis Bay as an integral part of Namibia's territory.

In its political program SWAPO commits itself to the persistent mobilization and organization of the Namibian people to integrate them into the national liberation struggle; to combat all forms of tribalism, regionalism and racism; to unite the working class, peasantry and progressive intellectuals into a vanguard party to lead the struggle for independence and socialism.

The obstacles SWAPO faces are enormous. The military might of South Africa dwarfs its own forces. The hard-won support which SWAPO has gained among the Namibian people is now being challenged with sophisticated persuasion methods by the TDA. The country's economy is totally dependent on South Africa for food and basic manufactured goods. Thus its political independence will precede by years its true economic independence.

Yet both South Africa and SWAPO know that independence of Namibia is not far away: The slogan of South African troops in Namibia is VIGILANCE, while the slogan of SWAPO forces is VICTORY. ●



Pro-SWAPO demonstrator in the streets of Windhoek: taking risks in support of national liberation.