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ROUGH DRAFT FOR POLITICAL COMMITTEE
RESOLUTION ON PUERTO RICAN STRUGGLE IN THE UNITED STATES

I. PUERTO RICO'S COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE U.S.

Since 1898 Puerto Rico has been a direct colony of the United States. Along with Cuba, the Philippines, and several other island territories, it was seized from the decayed Spanish empire at a time when the U.S. was emerging as a world imperialist power.

Puerto Rico's relationship to the U.S., however, developed along somewhat different lines than the other booty of American conquest. Cuba was granted formal independence in 1900 and was a U.S. protectorate until 1960 when it became a workers state and broke from imperialist domination. The Philippines won its independence in 1946, and since then has been tied to the U.S. in a semi-colonial status.

Puerto Rico, however, after nearly 80 years remains subjugated to the U.S. in a direct colonial relationship. There have been several important changes in the legal relations between the U.S. and its island colony, but none that have fundamentally changed its status.

In 1900, authority was transferred from the U.S. military to U.S. civilian governors appointed by the president and a Puerto Rican legislature was established; in 1917 Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship (in large measure to

provide cannon fodder for the U.S. army); in 1948 they were permitted to elect their own governor; and in 1952 the present Commonwealth status was established.

As a result of considerable nationalist sentiment in the 1930s and 1940s, the Commonwealth status was imposed to give the appearance of greater autonomy for Puerto Rico. In reality it attempts to camouflage the true relationship between the island and the U.S. by hypocritically declaring that Puerto Rico is an Associated Free State, i.e., is "self-governing" and "voluntarily" associated with the U.S.

In response to growing pro-independence sentiment and international pressure, the U.S. Congress is now discussing a new form for its continued domination of the island-colony. This is called the "Compact of Permanent Union Between Puerto Rico and the United States" and attempts to cover up more than the present Commonwealth status does, the colonial relationship.

It would not increase the present power of the colony's legislature and permit it to legislate over such vital matters as foreign relations, immigration, customs, tariffs, monetary policy, postal service, or licensing of television and radio stations. Under the Compact these will remain the exclusive right of the U.S. Congress.

Under a "Compact" government, as under the present "Com-

monwealth" set-up, Puerto Rico would remain under the thumb of most federal regulatory agencies. U.S. courts and cops would retain their authority in Puerto Rico, and the highest arbiter of the meaning and constitutionality of laws would remain the U.S. Supreme Court.

Independence Struggle

At various times over the past seven decades there has been considerable support on the island for independence. In the 1930s and 1940s there was a massive independence movement. One indication of the widespread sentiment for independence at that time was that when the bourgeois liberal Popular Democratic Party was formed in 1938 and won a majority in the Puerto Rican legislature in 1940, it felt pressure to include a plank supporting independence. It later abandoned this position which led to a split and the formation of the pro-independence Puerto Rican Independence Party in 1948. In 1952 the PIP received the second highest number of votes in the elections.

There was a temporary ebb in pro-independence activity in the 1950s due to the McCarthyite witch-hunt, which was carried out even more savagely on the island than the mainland, and to the improved economic situation on the island.

The colonial revolution, particularly the Cuban revolution, played a significant role in inspiring and ideologically

influencing the reemergence of the independence movement in the 1960s. The formation in 1959 of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement (MPI), which became the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in 1971, and its subsequent growth reflects this new sentiment.

Testifying to the depth of this movement is the size of several pro-independence demonstrations in the past decade, including actions of 20,000 in Lares in 1968 and 80,000 in San Juan in 1971. The latter was the largest pro-independence action ever held in Puerto Rico. Major struggles with a nationalist and implicit pro-independence thrust include those against conscription into the U.S. army to fight in Vietnam; against the Navy's target practice on Culebra; and against the construction by the U.S. oil monopolies of a superport to accommodate mammoth oil tankers. The struggle against the draft was so successful that it virtually became impossible to arrest thousands of Puerto Rican youth who resisted conscription. The U.S. Navy was also forced in 1975 to finally stop its target practice on the small offshore island of Culebra.

The struggle for Puerto Rican independence has received considerable international attention especially due to the long struggle to get the United Nations Committee on Decolonization to adopt a resolution clearly declaring that Puerto

Rico is in fact a colony. This was a public slap in the face to the U.S. government which denies that Puerto Rico is a colony and pressured the United Nations in 1953 to cease characterizing it as a "non-self governing territory."

Democrats and Republicans Oppose Independence

The U.S. government, both under Democratic and Republican administrations, has ruthlessly attempted to suppress the decades-long fight for independence. Thousands have been jailed and scores shot down as the American capitalists tenaciously resist any move that would restrict their freedom to exploit the island's natural resources and labor.

At the present time most of the U.S. ruling class as well as its agents in Puerto Rico favor the Commonwealth status or some modification of it like the Permanent Union Compact.

The only major alternative supported by sections of the ruling class is statehood. This is the position of the New Progressive Party in Puerto Rico, which has ties with the Republican Party in the U.S.

At its founding conference in 1938, the Fourth International declared that it stands for "the immediate and unconditional independence of Puerto Rico." This remains the position of Trotskyists in Puerto Rico today.

The resurgence of the independence movement in the 1960s and its continued growth in the 1970s indicates that this was not a phenomenon peculiar to the 1930s or ephemeral in character. Rather it testifies to its deep roots as a significant and powerful force in Puerto Rican politics.

Revolutionary Marxists in the United States have the elementary obligation to oppose all aspects of colonial domination over Puerto Rico and to demand that Washington recognize Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. We unconditionally support the demand for a free and independent Puerto Rico. While we believe that full national and social liberation can only be achieved through a socialist Puerto Rico, we do not make this a condition for supporting the struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

American working people have no interests, whatsoever, in preserving imperialist slavery over Puerto Rico. On the contrary, breaking the chains that bind Puerto Rico would be a serious blow to the American capitalist class which is also the enemy of U.S. labor.

The labor movement, under its present pro-capitalist leadership, has seriously defaulted by not placing its considerable weight behind the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. In fact the labor bureaucracy openly supports the U.S. govern-

ment's colonial policy in Puerto Rico and loyally helps to maintain it.

But a labor movement led by a class-struggle leadership would be a powerful force in helping to put an end to the decades of colonial rule Puerto Rico has endured.

II. PUERTO RICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

Migration and Distribution of Puerto Ricans in the U.S.

Migration

The massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States is rooted in the oppressive economic and social conditions imposed by Yankee imperialism. High unemployment and low wages in particular have driven hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans to leave their homeland and come to U.S. cities looking for jobs and better economic opportunities.

The rhythm of this migration is determined in large part by the economic situation in the U.S. The greatest number came during periods when unemployment in the U.S. was relatively low and job opportunities were greater.

Some Puerto Ricans migrated in the early decades of this century. The largest proportion went to New York City, but others were also recruited to work on sugar plantations in Hawaii and cotton fields in Arizona. Migration on a really

large scale, however, did not begin until towards the end of World War II. In the last years of the war, the War Manpower Commission recruited thousands of Puerto Rican workers and brought them to the mainland in army transports. When the war ended daily air service and lower fares were established between San Juan and New York City to facilitate bringing more cheap labor to the U.S.

The largest number came during the economic boom in the 1950s when there was an annual net average of 41,000. The rate decreased in the 1960s and since 1970 the number of Puerto Ricans coming to the U.S. has even been slightly smaller than the number returning to the island.

Today, nearly two million Puerto Ricans live in the U.S. compared to less than 60,000 in 1935. Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. represent more than one-third of all the Puerto Rican people and are the third largest oppressed national grouping in the U.S. after Blacks and Chicanos.

Twenty-five years ago the largest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. was "El Barrio," or Spanish Harlem, and only 20 percent lived outside of New York City. Today an archipelago of barrios has been created by the settlement of Puerto Ricans in more parts of New York City and in more cities throughout the country. Nearly 40 percent of the Puerto Ricans

in the U.S. now live outside of New York State. Ten percent live just across the Hudson River in Newark, Jersey City, Hoboken, and other New Jersey cities. Twenty percent live in six states -- Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California, and Florida. Fewer than one percent live in the other forty-two states and the District of Columbia.

Although Puerto Ricans are only about 1 percent of the U.S. population their concentration in a few large cities gives them greater potential political and social weight than their numbers would indicate. Eighty percent live in major cities and they are significant minorities in Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Newark. In New York, the country's largest city, Puerto Ricans are about 11 percent of the population, giving them a decisive role in coming social struggles.

Most Puerto Ricans in the United States are part of the working class. The largest proportion of those coming from the island were semi-skilled workers in San Juan or other Puerto Rican cities.

Severe discrimination in employment opportunities restricts most Puerto Ricans to jobs that are the lowest paying and most menial. By far the greatest number are employed in semi-skilled jobs and as service workers and laborers. There is a sizeable number of Puerto Rican steel workers in cities like

Buffalo and some auto workers in plants in the Midwest.

Many, especially women, work in the garment industry in New York City. Over the past decade a growing number of Puerto Rican women have also been employed as clerical workers. Although the number of Puerto Ricans in white-collar and professional positions is increasing, this is still a small percentage of the Puerto Rican work force.

There is a thin stratum of small businesses owned by

Puerto Ricans, especially barrio grocery stores (about 10,000 in New York City). ^{The main base of forming the petty bourgeois social stratum in the Puerto Rican people} ~~are~~ ^{are a tiny handful of individual capitalists} ~~there is no Puerto Rican bourgeoisie in the U.S.~~ ^{they do form} ~~but not a Puerto Rican bourgeoisie as~~

They are too few in numbers and too little

as well as a small layer of independently employed professionals. But

National Oppression

Puerto Ricans migrating to the U.S. are part of a people who have suffered several centuries of national oppression under both Spanish and American rule. They come looking for better opportunities than are available to them on their superexploited island. Because wage levels are higher in the

U.S. many have found better paying jobs than what they had in Puerto Rico. However, there is no escape in the U.S. from national oppression and inequality. In some respects it is more intense due to the depths of racism and language discrimination.

Racial and language characteristics are utilized by the capitalist ruling class to brand Puerto Ricans and restrict them to second-class status. They are discriminated against in all aspects of economic, political and social life and segregated into hellish barrios. Thousands of youth early despair of bettering their miserable situation and try to escape with drugs.

The recent economic depression, which has forced millions into the ranks of the unemployed, has heaped especially heavy burdens onto Puerto Ricans. And an even deeper crisis in Puerto Rico closes the door to finding any relief by returning to the island.

Discrimination in employment means that the official jobless rate among Puerto Ricans is at least twice that for the population as a whole. It is probably higher because thousands of youth who have never had jobs and many others who have given up looking for work do not appear in the official statistics.

Like other oppressed national groupings, Puerto Ricans are part of American capitalism's pool of cheap labor. When there is a labor shortage employers can hire from this supply, and when production is cutback and layoffs occur these workers are an easily identified layer that can be fired first. The existence of this reserve labor force also helps the ruling class restrain wage increases and create divisions in the working class. Some Puerto Ricans who received jobs in the past few years as a result of "affirmative action" plans are among the first to lose them with the cutbacks and layoffs.

One result of the high unemployment rate is that many Puerto Rican families are forced onto welfare rolls. In 1970, even before the recent economic downturn, 24 percent of the Puerto Rican families were receiving some form of public assistance.

Puerto Ricans are restricted to the worst and lowest-paying jobs. In 1974 the median income for Puerto Ricans was an estimated 59 percent of that for white families. The long-run trend is for the gap to widen, shown by the fact that in 1959 Puerto Rican income was 65 percent of what it was for white families.

Even when a job does not require complete proficiency in English, a Puerto Rican applicant with a heavy accent will often

be turned away. And civil service examinations are not given in Spanish, making it difficult for many Puerto Ricans to get government jobs.

Segregated housing and low incomes has confined most Puerto Ricans to rundown and unsafe apartment buildings in crowded barrios. Today the worst slum areas left by previous waves of immigrants have become the lodging place for Puerto Ricans. Some areas like the South Bronx, the Lower East Side, and parts of Brooklyn more resemble bombed-out zones than residential areas.

These ghettos have been put to the torch, in some cases, by greedy landlords anxious to collect insurance and to divest themselves for the responsibility of maintaining them as dwellings fit for human habitation. The response of government agencies to provide housing has not even kept up with the rate at which housing becomes unfit.

Cultural stimulation, recreational facilities for the young, day care for infants, are doled out with an eyedropper. The sanitation services are minimal and the garbage and glass on the streets become an additional depressant to the ghetto resident.

When Puerto Ricans have sought escape by buying homes in better neighborhoods they've often been subjected to arson and

bombing by racist vigilantes.

The housing patterns have also segregated Puerto Ricans into schools that receive less funds and are inferior to schools attended by most white students. This inequality in education is made worse by language discrimination. Tens of thousands of Puerto Rican children begin with little or no knowledge of English. Many of them have transferred directly from schools in Puerto Rico. Very few teachers know Spanish, so that all instruction in arithmetic, geography, science, etc., is conducted in English. The Spanish-speaking students, struggling to learn English, fall behind. Monolingual racist teachers call them "retarded." Many students give up and the "push-out" rate is high. As of 1972 it was 57 percent for Puerto Ricans in New York City from tenth grade to graduation, compared to 29 percent for white students. The problem is aggravated because there is only a handful of Puerto Rican teachers. Most teachers are racist in their attitude toward Puerto Rican students and insensitive to their history, culture, and problems.

Although the courts have ruled that bilingual education is necessary to provide equal education opportunities and some bilingual programs have been established, they are totally inadequate. And even these meager programs are being cut back.

Language discrimination not only makes it difficult to get jobs or a decent education, but pervades all aspects of social and political life. When a Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican goes to a welfare or unemployment office, hospital, library, or any number of public facilities, the chances are slim that there will be competent Spanish-speaking employees on hand to help. Until recently participation in political life has been restricted to English on ballots and voting instructions and racist gerry-mandering continues with only minimum restraint.

Puerto Ricans are subjected to particularly barbaric treatment by the cops, courts, and prisons. While organized crime and the drug traffic operate under their benevolent eye, the police harass and murder Puerto Ricans. Even the mildest expression of Puerto Rican unity and cultural identity arouses the cops to frenzy as shown in attacks on annual Puerto Rican Day parades in Newark, Boston, and other cities in the past few years.

Racist judges and a scandalously inadequate number of Spanish-speaking interpreters weight the scales against Puerto Ricans in the courts. Far more Puerto Ricans are in jail proportionately than their numbers in the population as a whole. High bail has forced thousands of Puerto Rican youth, convicted

of no crimes, to serve long terms in crowded detention centers while they wait for trial. Insufficient Spanish-speaking personnel and lack of Spanish-language books in the prisons worsen the generally inhumane and racist treatment that are part of prison life.

Recently released documents on the government's COINTELPRO program reveals that Puerto Rican radical organizations are the target of harassment by local red squads and the FBI.

Racism

From its very inception, U.S. imperialism has utilized racism to help justify the savage repression and superexploitation of the peoples in its colonies, semi-colonies, and territorial possessions. Whether the inhabitants are black, brown, or yellow, they are considered inferior and are treated accordingly.

Puerto Ricans are no exception. Although there is considerable diversity in color among Puerto Ricans, reflecting their Spanish, Indian, and African origins, all Puerto Ricans are considered racially inferior and therefore targets for racist indignity and injustice.

Racist abuse against Puerto Ricans is intensified when they come to the U.S. to live. Although racism exists in Puerto Rico it is not as sharp or institutionalized as in the

U.S. Many Puerto Ricans who in their country thought of themselves as white, because of their appearance, find that in the U.S. the criteria are different. In the U.S. appearance is not the criteria; the racist mentally categorizes anyone vaguely associated with a dark people, African, Asian, Latin American, as part of the colored world. In the U.S. Puerto Ricans are an oppressed minority surrounded by a hostile society where racism is woven into every aspect of life. They are confronted by the fierce hatred spawned by centuries of racial prejudice and are all "spicks" in the eyes of the ruling class.

One of the consequences of this racial oppression is that Black Puerto Ricans are particularly subjected to abuse and discrimination. It is even more difficult for them to find jobs and decent housing. Since the days of slavery, racist ideology in the U.S. has considered black to be "bad and ugly" and the blacker a person is the more inferior they are.

The influence of anti-Black prejudice perpetuated by the ruling class permeates our society and its institutions so extensively that it even affects its victims. As a result some lighter-skinned Puerto Ricans look down on Black Puerto Ricans -- sometimes even within the same family.

This dual nature of the oppression of Black Puerto Ricans

has been the subject of a number of books, interviews, and workshops at recent Puerto Rican conferences. Perhaps the best known accounts of this experience are Down These Mean Streets and Savior, Savior Hold My Hand by Piri Thomas, a Black Puerto Rican writer who grew up in Spanish Harlem and who is today an outspoken Puerto Rican nationalist.

Women

Puerto Rican women suffer the added burden of sexual discrimination and abuse characteristic of capitalist society. They are especially the victims of the values and traditions of machismo and the family, stemming from their Hispanic heritage.

Discrimination makes it more difficult for them to obtain decent jobs than either Puerto Rican men or white women, and their incomes are lower. This is especially a problem because more than 20 percent head households and are the principle breadwinners in their families.

The problems of working and maintaining families is compounded by the obstacles placed in the way of economic independence. Child care facilities, already too expensive and inadequate, are being cut back. Despite the 1973 Supreme Court ruling on abortions, there are still numerous restrictions, especially the financial expense, to obtaining them.

The right of Puerto Rican women to choose whether or not to have children is also attacked by the high frequency of forced sterilizations. In 1972-1973 there was a 180 percent rise in the number of sterilizations performed in New York City hospitals which service predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Racist hospital administrators and doctors who want to help limit the growth of the Puerto Rican population, use subterfuge to pressure Puerto Rican women to have sterilizations. Many hospitals also pressure women who don't need hysterectomies to have them in order to provide training to interns.

In many struggles around child care, housing, and education in the Puerto Rican community, women are the principal organizers and activists, and there is a growing acceptance of feminist ideas among them.

Oppressed as part of the working class, a national minority, and as women, Puerto Rican women have a special stake in fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment and its enforcement.

The Puerto Rican Movement

A massive radicalization of the Puerto Rican population in the U.S. emerged in the late 1960s which continues today. It developed in response to the miserable conditions in which Puerto Ricans are forced to live and was inspired by the

explosive rise of the civil rights movement, the development of Black nationalism, and the political radicalization in Puerto Rico.

It has reached all layers of the Puerto Rican population, especially the youth, and established itself as an important component of the class struggle in the U.S. It has been involved in a wide range of struggles and given birth to new organizations.

The adoption of radical methods of struggle and radical ideas about society has led to the rise of Puerto Rican nationalism expressing new pride and self-confidence. Among a smaller number there is a growing interest and acceptance of socialist ideas. The scope and militancy of this movement can best be appreciated by tracing some of the earlier history of the Puerto Rican movement in the U.S.

During the 1930s the principal radical organization of Puerto Ricans was the Nationalist Party -- an island-based party -- which maintained a branch in New York City. It primarily organized support for the Puerto Rican independence struggle and defense of Nationalists jailed in Puerto Rico. It won the ear of Democratic Congressman Vito Marcantonio whose district encompassed Spanish Harlem and obtained his support for independence for Puerto Rico. However, the re-

pression of the Nationalist Party in Puerto Rico by the U.S. government and the jingoist feelings aroused by preparations for World War II seriously undermined its effectiveness. The Nationalists opposed the war and refused to serve in the army of U.S. imperialism, which led to arrests and imprisonment for draft evasion.

Another political force within the small Puerto Rican community was the Stalinized Communist Party. Due to its influence in the unions and its dominance in the American radical movement, some Puerto Rican militants were drawn into its ranks. They became disoriented and miseducated during the war when the CP shamelessly collaborated with the employers and their government to stifle militancy among workers in order to support the imperialist war effort.

During the Cold War when the Stalinists became victims of the McCarthyite witchhunt most of the CP's Puerto Rican cadre melted away.

The twists and turns of the CP line, their failure to support the Nationalist victims of repression during World War II and the miseducation of their membership kept the CP from becoming a major political force among the "Marine Tiger" generation of Puerto Ricans, i.e., those who began to migrate towards the end of World War II and after.

Following the 1950 attack on Blair House, Truman's home at the time, and the 1954 pistol shooting in the House of Representatives, by members of the Nationalist Party, the ruling class whipped up a campaign of hysteria against Puerto Ricans. They were accused of causing the housing shortage, unemployment, coming to New York solely to collect welfare, and all the ills of society. The press also attempted to create the impression that Puerto Ricans "naturally" resort to terror and arms when they participate in politics.

The result was to alienate the vast majority of Puerto Ricans from politics, especially radical politics, and to inhibit them from exercising their rights. This provided the environment for the Commonwealth Government's office in New York to become one of the key organizing centers for the community. It permitted the Catholic Church to appear progressive by its role in exposing some of the racketeer unions that were preying upon Puerto Rican workers. However, there was no authentic voice of the Puerto Rican community -- no organization that commanded the respect, loyalty, or allegiance of the majority of the Puerto Ricans in the U.S. During that period liberal sociologists and academicians commented on the "passive" nature of Puerto Ricans. What was really at work was the process of Puerto Ricans adjusting to a new and hostile

environment without any leadership or powerful ally to help.

The new Puerto Rican movement burst onto the political scene in 1966 with the revolt against police brutality in Chicago's Northwest Side. Since then Puerto Ricans have been involved in strikes, campus struggles, prison revolts, demonstrations against cutbacks in social services. They have fought against inequality in education and discrimination in employment policies, and for better treatment for veterans.

Fight for equal education

To justify its discriminatory policies the ruling class and its apologists utilize the fact that Puerto Ricans speak Spanish and therefore do not deserve the same pay, working conditions, rights, housing, or standard of living that English-speaking workers deserve.

The response of Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking minorities, especially Chicanos, has been to fight for the constitutional right of their children to an equal education. This right was recognized in the 1974 U.S. Supreme Court decision, Lau V. Nichols, which stated that, "Basic English skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that before a child can effectively participate in the educational program, he must already have acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public

education." The court ruled that a public school, failing to educate non-English speaking children in a language they can understand, is in violation of their right to equal protection of the laws under the 14th amendment.

Another aspect of the struggle for bilingualism is the refusal to acknowledge that the language of Cervantes is inferior to the language of Shakespeare. While desiring to become part of the workforce in the United States, which means becoming proficient in the tools, customs, and language of the shop, factory, restaurant, or institution in which they work, Puerto Ricans want to maintain their own language and cultural modes. Spanish is a tie to their country of birth and origin as well as an avenue to a much broader world and culture which would be narrowed by the loss of their language by substituting it for one that is different.

The struggle for bilingual and bicultural education led to the landmark Supreme Court decision but like other court rulings its implementation requires a fight. Following the Lau decision the New York City Board of Education was sued by Aspira, a federally funded organization set up to help Puerto Ricans gain college education. A federal court decree agreed to by both sides requires the institution of special classes for all children who cannot function in English.

When the children are able to function in English they are to be moved back into the monolingual English classroom. However, the ability to function is determined by inaccurate, teacher-controlled tests and may only mean the child knows enough to hear commands from a monolingual English-speaking teacher to sit down or keep quiet.

The Aspira decision has not significantly changed the number of bilingual teachers in the system and the struggle must be continually fought. Even the totally inadequate Aspira decree demands too much for some school administrators who with aid of racist teachers are sabotaging the attempts to set up classrooms for Spanish-speaking students.

The fight for bilingual-bicultural education in some areas has been accompanied by the demand for parent control over the hiring of administrators and teachers, curricula, and allocation of funds. This has been posed by Puerto Rican parents as a necessary means to fully implementing bilingual programs and insuring that teachers and administrators aren't abusing their children.

The fight for bilingual-bicultural education is complementary to the struggle for school desegregation by busing. They both are aimed at fighting inequality in education.

District One Struggle

The struggle against racism in New York City's School District One is one of the most significant struggles in which Puerto Ricans have played a prominent role. It grew out of the city-wide struggle of Blacks and Puerto Ricans in 1967 and 1968 to combat inequality in education. In 1967, three districts were set up in the city as experiments in decentralization. They included Ocean Hill-Brownsville in Brooklyn, a district in Harlem, and a district in the Lower East Side, part of which included what is now District One.

When the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district tried to hire Black teachers and institute new teaching methods more in tune with the needs of Black and Puerto Rican students, the UFT leadership called a racist strike to beat back this move and discourage similar initiatives in other districts.

The strike unfortunately defeated the Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggle and led to the weakening of a proposed law that would have given parents more say in the running of the schools in their communities. Despite its many deficiencies, Black and Puerto Rican parents have effectively utilized the law that was adopted in 1969 as a weapon in the struggle against racist inequality in the schools.

In the Lower East Side, parents challenged the 1968

strike by opening nearly all the schools and keeping them open with parent volunteers. This was where Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese parents in the district first forged a fighting bloc.

In the first school board election in 1970, the UFT leadership successfully elected a majority of the District One school board. However, parent struggles in the next two years forced resignations and new appointments until the pro-community control forces held a majority. One of its first moves was to appoint Luis Fuentes, a veteran of the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggles as superintendent. It also hired more competent Spanish-speaking administrators, established more bilingual and bicultural programs, and moved the district office so it was more accessible to parents.

However, since then the Shankerites reestablished a majority on the board and reversed most of the gains won by the parents including the removal of Fuentes.

This struggle has highlighted the central demands Puerto Rican parents are raising to combat inequality in the schools. These include more funds to improve schools in their communities; more bilingual programs to help students learn basic subjects in their own language; and parent control over curricula, hiring and allocation of funds for the schools

in the Puerto Rican communities.

Despite its ups and downs this struggle has been a model because of the way it has drawn together a broad array of forces in direct action struggle. It successfully avoided the pitfall of basing its direction and financing on government-financed antipoverty programs and Democratic Party clubs which have derailed countless other community struggles. It has utilized direct action such as picket lines, demonstrations and rallies; court suits against illegal and undemocratic moves by the city administration, the board of education, and the UFT leadership; and election campaigns for school board.

The District One struggle has played an important role in cutting through Albert Shanker's demagogy by exposing the racist policies and attitudes of the UFT officialdom. It has served as a beachhead in the struggle against Shankerism and been an example to other oppressed communities as well as to rank-and-file teachers looking for allies in the struggle against cutbacks and layoffs.

Student Movement

The general radicalization among students in the 1960s and '70s also found its reflection among young Puerto Ricans. This became particularly visible when Puerto Ricans and Blacks in New York's City University system waged a militant struggle

for admission to the colleges. The City University system had boasted of its free tuition policy but through competitive examinations had succeeded in maintaining an almost totally white system.

At the City College of New York Black and Puerto Rican students took over the university in 1969 and held it with the support of the community. Their demand for open admissions was finally granted despite protestations from both liberal and conservative politicians that this was "racism in reverse" and would lower educational standards.

In the South Bronx Puerto Ricans won the struggle to have a college planned by the Board of Higher Education set up in their neighborhood. In that way Eugenio María de Hostos Community College, the only bilingual college on the East Coast, was established.

The educational system, when it deals with Puerto Rican people at all, does so in a distorted and dishonest way. At many colleges throughout the Northeast, students demanded and won Puerto Rican studies programs to counter this obliteration of Puerto Rican culture and roots. These victories and others demonstrated the militancy and confidence of young Puerto Ricans raised in the U.S.

As a result of these struggles the Puerto Rican Student

Union was formed to try to unite the Puerto Rican campus organizations and forge a common city-wide federation. Lack of resources, and the rise of other groups and struggle cut across this development.

The open admissions victory brought a dramatic rise in the number of Puerto Ricans who entered the city university system. From these students and student leaders emerged the bulk of the counselors, teachers, and professors of Puerto Rican studies.

The total number, in comparison to the Puerto Rican population, was small, but seemed to open up new hope that Puerto Ricans would now be able to enjoy a change in their status and standard of living. The hope was to be shortlived. In 1976 in the context of the general offensive against the working class in New York City and cutbacks in social services, the City University budget was cut and open admissions ended. Underlining the racist nature of the cutbacks, Hostos is to be closed. This attack is aimed at the entire Puerto Rican community that utilized the facilities, night classes, and special programs. It galvanized a militant takeover of the school by students demanding that it not be closed down.

The Young Lords

The 1966 ghetto rebellion in Chicago prepared the ground for the Young Lords Organization. It had been a street gang but evolved into a political organization under the pressure of the rebellion and its aftermath.

This revolt, the first solely Puerto Rican explosion to hit the national press, marked the political awakening of a new generation that was at home in the barrios of the cities, considered them their "turf" and was willing to fight for them. They had little or no memory of Puerto Rico, although they were eager to trace their roots. It also marked the beginning of the end to the illusions of Puerto Ricans that they would improve their material conditions and become assimilated by American society without a struggle.

The rise of the YLO in Chicago inspired a similar formation in New York and several other Eastern cities. Unlike the Chicago organization, its leadership was composed principally of college students and student activists, some of whom had been radicalized on the campuses and influenced by the Students for a Democratic Society. The two groups coexisted together in a common formation for a short time, but split when it became clear that a national organization could not be directed from Chicago or New York City. The Young Lords Party, as the New York group was named, initiated a series of

actions: cleaning streets and forcing the sanitation department to clean them; taking over a church to serve the community's needs; a dramatic, though shortlived takeover of Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx in order to get better medical care and end racist practices. The Young Lords Party received wide media coverage and won sympathy from the Puerto Rican community at large for its actions despite the fact that the majority of the community did not understand its "revolutionary" rhetoric.

The impact of the Black movement on the Young Lords Party could clearly be seen by the organizational emulation of the Black Panther movement, by the fact that Black Puerto Ricans played the major role in its leadership, and by the fact that some of the leaders had been in the Black Panthers while others left the YLP to join the Black Panthers.

Like the Panthers, however, they became victims of police harassment and infiltration. Their ultraradical rhetoric and disdain for study, discussion, and revolutionary theory proved their undoing and led to their becoming a Maoist sect called the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization. Most of the original leaders left or were driven out by 1972 when the PRRWO was founded. They downplay demands of the Puerto Rican community like the right to speak Spanish and the

struggle for bilingual programs, and their Stalinist methods have led them to use physical force against opponents. Their influence on campuses in New York has been reduced to just one because they want students to add the slogan of fight imperialism while fighting against the cutbacks in the City University system. Their influence on the Puerto Rican community is imperceptible.

The Young Lords Organization in Chicago has been reduced to a relatively small group under the leadership of "Cha Cha" Jiminez, one of the organization's founders. It is active in community work and orients towards Democratic party politics. Jiminez ran a pro-Democratic party campaign in the non-partisan elections for alderman in 1975 and was a delegate to the Democratic party's mini-convention in Kansas City.

Puerto Rican Socialist Party

The PSP is the U.S. section of the largest radical party in Puerto Rico, which until 1971 was called the Movement for Puerto Rican Independence (MPI). It has been operating in the U.S., first as the MPI then as the PSP, since 1959, but has substantially stepped up its activities since 1971.

Politically the PSP has been influenced primarily by the colonial revolution, particularly the Cuban revolution, and the heritage of the nationalist movement in Puerto Rico. Its

basic positions are closest to those of the Cuban Communist Party and it has generally followed the turns of the Cuban CP for more than a decade.

This is not surprising considering that historically the revolutionary movements of the two countries are closely linked and today the Castro regime is one of the foremost champions of the cause for Puerto Rico's independence.

The PSP attempts to avoid taking sides on the big debates between the major tendencies in the international workers movement by invoking solidarity within the "socialist camp." This stance has led the PSP to remain silent or condone the suppression of dissidents by the bureaucratic regimes in China and the USSR and to defend popular frontism in Chile and Portugal.

In recent years the PSP has become more involved in struggles in the U.S. However, the policies and program of the PSP in the United States is basically determined in Puerto Rico and the political axis of its activities is organizing support for political struggles in Puerto Rico. Operating on the basis of its theory of "One Nation, one party," the PSP in the U.S. is oriented primarily toward helping to lead the struggle for independence and socialism in Puerto Rico rather

toward the coming American socialist revolution. It sees its role as one of organizing Puerto Ricans in the U.S. behind this goal and winning supporters and help from other social forces in the U.S. It doesn't aspire to be the revolutionary socialist party of the U.S. revolution. It tends toward the view that the American revolution will be led by a coalition of revolutionary parties.

In this role, the PSP more than any other organization in the U.S. has waged an extensive propaganda campaign against U.S. colonial oppression of Puerto Rico. It was the prime initiator and organizer of the massive Oct. 27, 1974, rally in Madison Square Garden in support of Puerto Rico independence, the largest action around this issue ever held in the U.S.

To help further the work of gaining support for Puerto Rican independence the PSP has been the principal inspirer of the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee. The PSP has also initiated activity around the slogan of a Bicentennial Without Colonies for July 4, 1976 along with many of the forces that were present at the "Hard Times Conference" in Chicago. The PSP, along with the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, were the principal forces at that conference.

A major step taken by the PSP is the announcement of candidates for the 1976 elections in Puerto Rico. This breaks

with their past policy and the policy of the MPI of boycotting colonial elections. In the U.S. their electoral policy is less clear. When Herman Badillo, Puerto Rican congressman of the Democratic party fought to be that party's candidate for Mayor of New York City in 1973, the PSP clearly stated that it was against supporting bourgeois candidates. However, recently it has taken a step back from this class position by lauding Democratic presidential candidate Fred Harris as "almost anti-imperialist on foreign policy, nearly a socialist on domestic policy," and hunting up opportunities to praise Badillo. This reflects the unstable and vacillating nature of the PSP's politics.

The organization is very heterogeneous and includes different currents and many levels of understanding.

While it generally has proved difficult to work in united actions with the PSP because of its sectarian attitudes, the approach of the SWP is to try to unite with the PSP in common actions and to find as many ways as possible to talk to its members about our politics and win them to Trotskyism.

Independent Political Action

Although Puerto Ricans come to the U.S. as citizens with the legal right to vote, run for office, and work without special permits, the ruling class has deliberately denied

them their rights and tried to exclude them from political life. Literacy tests, refusal to hold bilingual elections, and racist gerrymandering are the principal means they've used to accomplish this. Consequently most communities with Puerto Rican majorities are represented in city councils, school boards state legislatures, and U.S. Congress by non-Puerto Ricans.

For a long time Puerto Ricans have been waging a struggle against these restrictions and for the democratic right to be included in the political life of the U.S. and to be represented by Puerto Ricans. As a result several important victories have been won. In 1973 a federal court ordered New York City to have bilingual ballots and voting instructions for the first time in both the general election and the school board election. This ruling was upheld by a 1974 court decision and extended to include Spanish-speaking personnel at the polls. In 1975 congress extended the 1965 Voting Rights Act another ten years and broadened it by making bilingual elections mandatory in districts where more than 5 percent of the voters don't speak English.

However, in spite of these important rulings and laws, Democratic and Republican election officials still attempt to find ways of circumventing them as shown in recent school board elections in New York City.

The emergence of Puerto Rican Democratic Party clubs, which attempt to replace the older, more established party machines in the barrios, reflects the struggle for Puerto Rican representation. Many of these have been closely tied to government-financed antipoverty agencies. With the rise of the Puerto Rican movement and the breaking down of some of the barriers to Puerto Rican involvement in politics, these clubs have been able to get a few Puerto Ricans elected to local positions in the Democratic party and to public office. The most prominent is Herman Badillo who was elected to U.S. Congress from the South Bronx in 1970. Badillo is pointed to as a symbol that Puerto Ricans can "make it" in U.S. politics. When he ran for mayor of New York in the Democratic primaries in 1969 and 1973 many Puerto Ricans hoped he would be elected and would do something to alleviate the intolerable burdens placed on them.

Significant sectors of the ruling class also backed him because they believed a Puerto Rican mayor, supported by Puerto Ricans and many Blacks, would be more effective in drawing the support of these oppressed minorities behind the city administration and in demobilizing their struggles. They favored a course similar to that followed by the ruling class in other major cities where Black Democrats have been elected mayors.

Badillo has clearly demonstrated his loyalty to big business especially in his response to the New York City "budget crisis" where his proposed solution is to limit the wage increases of city workers. He refused to support the "Por Los Niños" campaigns in New York's school District One and opposes independence for Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican elected officials have joined with their Black and Chicano counterparts to form caucuses and press their demands in legislative bodies and the Democratic Party. In New York Black and Puerto Rican legislators have formed their own caucus in the state legislature. Prominent Puerto Rican Democrats, like Badillo, have joined with Chicano elected officials and others of Latin American heritage to establish the National Hispanic Caucus affiliated with the Democratic Party. Formed in November, 1975, its stated goal is to demand greater recognition of the needs and aspirations of the 15-million Americans of Latin American heritage in the 1976 Democratic Party platform.

An attempt to form a similar organization in 1971 failed to get off the ground when hundreds of militants, including La Raza Unida Party leaders and Puerto Rican independentistas intervened in the founding conference. The Democratic officials worried that things were getting out of hand, adjourned the

gathering before they were able to set up an organization.

Although Puerto Rican clubs and caucuses in the Democratic Party reflect greater participation of Puerto Ricans in politics, they are not a form of independent political action. On the contrary, they encourage dependence on one of the capitalist parties responsible for perpetuating the oppression of Puerto Ricans. And reliance on either the Democratic or Republican party will not advance the struggle of the Puerto Rican people.

The only gains Puerto Ricans have won so far is the result of their own independent action, including demonstrations, rallies, and marches. The Democratic officials may take credit for these gains but they are only demagogically responding to the pressure of the Puerto Rican masses.

The Puerto Rican struggle is a political struggle -- that is, it places demands on the government and requires political action to meet these demands. And the thrust of its political actions are independent of the Democratic and Republican parties.

To help reinforce this independent action, Puerto Rican communities should consider running their own independent candidates against those of the Democrats and Republicans. Campaigns for these candidates would strengthen the mass

struggles of Puerto Ricans giving them a public voice in the electoral arena. The concentration of Puerto Ricans in big cities, especially New York, means that state and city legislators and a few members of Congress could be elected who would for the first time be beholden to no one but the Puerto Rican community. It would also be an important example to the labor movement and other oppressed national minorities to break from capitalist politics.

So far there have been very few examples of independent Puerto Rican candidates. The Socialist Workers Party has endorsed these representatives of the Puerto Rican community whenever they have run for office independently of and in opposition to the capitalist parties, even if they were not socialist.

Puerto Rican Struggle and the Labor Movement

The American labor movement is potentially the most powerful ally of the Puerto Rican struggle but under its present class collaborationist and self-serving leadership, it is indifferent or hostile to the struggles of the most oppressed groups. Its record in respect to Puerto Ricans is particularly miserable.

The first experience for tens of thousands of Puerto Rican workers with the labor movement in the U.S. was recruit-

ment into racket-infested locals of the Retail Clerks, United Textile Workers, International Jewelry Workers, and other unions in New York City in the 1940s and 1950s. These were traps for grabbing dues while "sweetheart contracts" guaranteed sweatshop wages for the workers, big rake-offs for the racketeers, and class peace with the employers. Usually these unions held no meetings or elections, and both the city government and the AFL-CIO hierarchy were complicit in this mammoth dues robbery of Puerto Rican newcomers. Attempts by some Puerto Rican workers to organize their own unions to circumvent this situation were crushed with city government help.

These particular conditions were somewhat alleviated when several of the locals were expelled from the AFL-CIO in the late 1950s after Puerto Rican workers flooded the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists with requests for legal assistance and the ACTU helped expose the situation.

Today Puerto Ricans are often barred from more skilled jobs by unions that act as job trusts for white workers. Most notorious are the United Federation of Teachers in New York City and the building-trades unions.

In New York City, for example, where 23 percent of the students in the public schools are Puerto Rican less than one-half of one percent of the teachers are Puerto Rican.

This is the bitter fruit of Shankerite opposition to affirmative action programs and preferential hiring to help achieve equality for Blacks and Puerto Ricans.

The Shankerite leadership of the UFT has also waged a fierce struggle against Puerto Ricans and Blacks having a say over the administration of the schools in their communities. In 1968 it conducted a reactionary strike against struggles by Black and Puerto Rican parents in Ocean Hill-Brownsville to control their schools. Since then it fought to remove Luis Fuentes as superintendent of school District One and to impose a racist school board in the district.

Like the Shankerites the officialdom of the construction trade unions has vigorously resisted opening their doors to Puerto Rican workers. Puerto Ricans, united with Black and Asian workers in New York City, have participated in demonstrations against the discriminatory hiring policies of the construction industry and the racist, white job-trustism of the building trades.

In some unions like the Transport Workers and Taxi Drivers in New York City, Puerto Rican unionists have joined with Blacks in caucuses fighting for their special interests.

The unions with the largest number of Puerto Rican workers today are the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees.

Puerto Ricans in the ILGWU basically have second-class status. No Puerto Ricans are on its Executive Board and few hold staff positions. Hundreds of Puerto Rican garment workers work in unorganized sweatshops that the ILGWU won't organize

Both AFSCME and NUHHCE reflect the growth of public unionism in the past fifteen years. They have brought thousands of new forces into the labor movement including Blacks and Puerto Ricans, and have tended to feel more pressure to support social struggles. AFSCME, for example, supported the Por Los Niños campaigns in New York's Lower East Side.

However, today public employees are the main target of the ruling-class offensive to drive down wages, working conditions, social welfare, and social services. Massive layoffs of public employees have particularly hit Puerto Rican workers who are being laid off in disproportionate numbers.

The bureaucratized leadership of these unions are demonstrating their total bankruptcy by counting on collaboration with capitalist politicians rather than class-struggle methods and by attempting to defend a shrinking number of relatively more privileged workers in their unions rather than charting a course to fight for the broader social needs of the class

as a whole.

This narrow policy facilitates the ruling-class strategy of dividing the working class by pitting workers in the private sector against public workers; public employees in different departments against each other; employed workers against the unemployed, students, and welfare recipients; workers with greater seniority against those more recently hired; and white workers against Blacks and Puerto Ricans. This dead-end scramble for fewer jobs and funds especially victimizes Puerto Ricans, who have lower seniority, greater unemployment and proportionately more welfare recipients.

For labor to become a champion of the most oppressed and lead the fight for even the most elementary needs of the working class, a new kind of leadership is needed. The development of a class-struggle left wing in the union movement is necessary to provide this leadership. It will help lead all types of social struggles by the oppressed and will map out a political course of independence for the unions. It will lead the fight for a labor party based on the organized power of the unions. This will not be a labor version of the Democratic and Republican parties or a vote-catching machine for up-and-coming "labor politicians." It will be a new type

of party that reinforces the independent mobilization of all sectors of the oppressed and helps aim their force at the common enemy. Union power organized in a labor party will be a crusader for the Puerto Rican struggle for equality, the organization of Puerto Rican farmworkers, and independence for Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican unionists will be in the forefront of developments toward the formation of a class-struggle left wing and the creation of a labor party.

Farmworkers

There are between 60,000 and 150,000 Puerto Rican seasonal workers mostly employed in agriculture on the East Coast. There is no accurate count of how many come each year and the number varies from year to year depending on the economic situation in the U.S. A portion of those who come (an estimated one-fourth in 1974) are employed under contracts negotiated between the Puerto Rican government and the growers. Workers under these contracts usually get about the legal minimum wage which is only a pittance. The rest of the migrant workers have no contracts and most do not receive even the minimum wage.

Conditions for all Puerto Rican farmworkers are barbaric and inhuman. Housing is crowded and unsafe, field sanitation facilities are nonexistent or inadequate, and pesticides

endanger the health of the workers. Farmworkers get no overtime pay, no fringe benefits, no promotions, and no unemployment insurance. Growers overcharge them for food, beer, wine, and cigarettes and shortchange their paychecks. In the 1970-1975 period nearly \$4,000 workers in New Jersey won complaints settling for \$190,000 of pay systematically cheated from them. Thousands of others did not file complaints for fear of losing their jobs.

There have also been a number of cases where Puerto Ricans who wanted to leave the farms were prevented from doing so and kept in involuntary servitude.

The outrageous treatment of seasonal farmworkers has generated protests, strikes, legal actions, and a union-organizing drive.

In 1972, migrant workers employed in the potato fields on Long Island conducted an unsuccessful strike for decent wages and humane living conditions.

There have also been attempts to organize Puerto Rican tobacco workers in Connecticut. This effort is being undertaken by the Farm Workers Association (Asociación de Trabajadores Agrícolas) which seeks to replace the Puerto Rican government as bargaining agent and negotiate higher wages. This drive had its highest peak so far in 1974 when it received

broad church support and the endorsement of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, and threatened to call a strike against the growers. In 1975 the drive was set back because the growers hired mostly local unemployed workers.

Relationship with Other Oppressed National Minorities and Nationalities and National Minorities

Most Puerto Ricans are concentrated in cities where there are also large populations of other oppressed nationalities and national minorities, especially Blacks and Chicanos. Usually the Puerto Rican barrios are next to or overlap with the communities of other oppressed minorities. The similar nature of their oppression naturally leads to common struggles and sometimes common organizations. The Por Los Niños coalition in school District One in New York's Lower East Side united Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese parents in a common fight for equal educational opportunities. This alliance, not without its frictions, was key in sustaining this struggle for so long.

The Attica prison revolt in 1971 was also an example of Black and Puerto Ricans uniting around demands that affected both groups.

The struggles of each oppressed national minority have reciprocally influenced each other. Victories won by Puerto

Ricans fighting for bilingual elections in New York have reinforced struggles by Chicanos in Texas demanding the same thing. The rise of the Black movement in the 1960s particularly helped stimulate the radicalization of both Chicanos and Puerto Ricans.

Although there are many points of natural collaboration between Puerto Ricans and other oppressed nationalities and national minorities, the ruling class attempts, and sometimes succeeds in pitting one group against another. School officials in Boston, for example, have tried to take advantage of court ordered busing to slash the bilingual-bicultural programs which are concentrated in a few schools and disperse Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans through the school system. Moves of this type should not be allowed to divide Blacks and Puerto Ricans fighting for the same goal -- an end to inferior schools for their children. School busing should not be carried out at the expense of bilingual-bicultural programs.

The ruling class also attempts to widen hostilities by getting Black and Puerto Rican antipoverty agencies fighting with each other over the few crumbs doled out by the federal government.

In respect to collaboration with other forces, Puerto Ricans can best guarantee that their demands and needs will

not take a second place if they unite themselves in their own independent organizations. This will both strengthen their struggle against the ruling class and help reinforce their position in relation to their allies.

Which Way for the Puerto Rican National Minority?

The large stream of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. in the past 30 years means that more than one-third of all Puerto Ricans now live in the United States. According to the 1970 census about 40 percent of this national minority was born in the U.S. compared to 30 percent in 1950, and a large number of those born in Puerto Rico came to the U.S. at a very young age. Thus, the outlook of an increasing proportion of Puerto Ricans is being influenced by life in the barrios of the U.S.

Puerto Ricans, unlike European immigrants before them, are not being assimilated, that is, becoming another "ethnic" group with simply residual cultural characteristics of their homeland. While more Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are becoming better educated and a thin layer of lawyers, educators, public officials, and politicians is emerging, there has been no significant improvement in the condition of the great majority of Puerto Ricans compared to the rest of the population. The gaps between the unemployment rates and income levels of Puerto

Ricans and the population as a whole are not narrowing. The segregation of Puerto Ricans into inferior schools and housing is not disappearing, and more than 70 percent speak Spanish as their main form of communication.

The fact that Blacks, who have been in America for more than 300 years, Chicanos, who were annexed 130 years ago, and Native Americans, who were here before the Europeans, have not been integrated into capitalist America points to the difficulty and unlikelihood of this road for Puerto Ricans. The American "melting pot" has not included non-white national minorities.

Even if all second, third, or fourth generation Puerto Ricans adopt English as their principal or exclusive language and become "Americanized," they will still be subjected to deep-rooted racism -- racism that is necessary to American capitalism and will be eradicated only with its overturn.

Towards a New Nationality?

Many of the social and cultural pressures, deprivations, and abuses experienced by Puerto Ricans living as a minority in the U.S. are different from those in Puerto Rico where virtually everyone is Puerto Rican. Life in the barrios leads to different political experiences, social outlooks, and cul-

tural tastes, especially among the younger generation that has never lived or lived only a few years in Puerto Rico.

Some Puerto Rican radicals, particularly among the Maoists, have concluded that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. now constitute a new oppressed nationality, distinct from Puerto Ricans on the island and from white Americans. The logic of declaring that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are a new nationality is to support its right to self-determination, including the right to establish a separate state, that is, a state separate from the U.S. and from Puerto Rico. This is the position, for example, the Socialist Workers Party holds in respect to Blacks and Chicanos.

Although it is not excluded that the Puerto Rican national minority will evolve into a new oppressed nationality, it is premature to say that this change has already occurred. The Puerto Rican population is still very fluid and consists of sectors with different experiences and outlooks.

Every year thousands of Puerto Ricans move back to the island from the U.S. Many of them are here long enough to save some money or learn a skill. Others aren't able to find the opportunities here they seek. For most Puerto Ricans, Puerto Rico is still a place they can return to where they have relatives and friends. This also includes some U.S.-born

Puerto Ricans who are now about 5 percent of the population on the island. It is not excluded that there could still be very massive migrations back to Puerto Rico. This depends on economic developments and the class struggle in both Puerto Rico and the U.S.

The relative newness of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. is reflected in the fact that first-generation Puerto Ricans are still a majority in the U.S. In 1970 the average age level of the second generation was only nine years old and most second-generation Puerto Ricans have not entered the labor force. Only 7 percent of the heads of households over the age of 16 were born in the U.S.

There is no indication that the masses of Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. view themselves as a people radically different from Puerto Ricans on the island, and there is a wide range of political and cultural contact between them.

On the other hand, Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are getting more deeply involved in the political life of the U.S. as they fight back against the specific forms of oppression they face here. They are establishing organizations, organizing protests, and running for political office. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, which makes this process easier than for other national minorities like Dominicans, Haitians, and Mexicanos

who face deportation for political activity.

Also, the young generation of Puerto Ricans growing up in the barrios of the U.S. is seeking its own identity. Puerto Rican writers, artists, and musicians are attempting to express the unique feelings and values of the "Neo Ricans." The Young Lords emerging from Puerto Rican street gangs in the late 1960s and early 1970s were an authentic political expression of the particular resentments and aspirations of Puerto Ricans growing up in the U.S.

If present trends continue the younger generations, which are more rooted in the life of the United States, will play an increasingly important role in the Puerto Rican community. What changes this will bring in attitudes, cultural traditions, and ties to Puerto Rico remain to be seen.

Program for Puerto Rican Struggle

1. Two-fold character of struggle (against national oppression and class exploitation).
2. Puerto Ricans are both an ally of the working class and part of the working class.
3. Neither the struggle for national liberation nor class emancipation can be won without replacing capitalist state power with workers government.
4. Strategic road for Puerto Rican struggle is to com-

bine democratic and transitional demands to mobilize Puerto Rican masses against capitalist rulers.

5. Democratic program

- a.) job inequality: preferential hiring, no discriminatory layoffs
- b.) educational inequality: bilingual-bicultural education
- c.) language discrimination: more bilingual personnel in social life, social services, etc., etc.

6. Transitional program

- a.) Refer to Political Resolution
- b.) Cite key points of program

The Socialist Workers Party

The American working class has the momentous task of wresting state power from the most powerful ruling class in all of history. The opportunity to carry out this mission is now being prepared by the breakdowns and crises of the capitalist system. But the working class will need something it does not yet have -- its own mass political party.

We are confident explosive events will change the political consciousness of the working class rapidly and lead to an upsurge where a mass revolutionary socialist party can emerge. However, this can only happen if the cadres of this party are assembled beforehand around a clear perspective and program.

This is what the Socialist Workers Party is doing.

Only a party that is deeply rooted in the working class, especially among its most oppressed sectors, can lead the American working class and its allies to power. This means systematic work in all sectors of the mass movement to recruit the most capable fighters to the party. There is no way that the working class can achieve its aims unless it brings together in a common fighting party the most resolute revolutionists from all nationalities and national minorities -- Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and white. The centralized power of the capitalist state dictates that the working class and its allies have the greatest possible centralization and cohesion in their political direction.

Puerto Rican militants, concerned first and foremost with the Puerto Rican struggle, may at first see a liability in belonging to a party with broader perspectives and concerns. However, its revolutionary activity in the labor, Black, and other mass movements provides a means of enlisting allies and neutralizing potential enemies of the Puerto Rican movement and of connecting the class struggle with the Puerto Rican struggle in such a way as to strengthen both. Puerto Ricans in a party that includes revolutionists from other sectors of the working class will help sharpen the understanding of their

allies about the needs of Puerto Ricans and strengthen the program of the working class in respect to the Puerto Rican struggle.

The SWP believes and acts on the belief that the working class has no interests that come ahead of or are higher than those of the Puerto Rican struggle. It believes that the working class cannot achieve its goals without the Puerto Rican people and other nationally oppressed peoples achieving theirs.

Membership in the SWP also means being politically part of an international revolutionary movement. While reactionary legislation precludes formal affiliation to the Fourth International, the SWP, since its founding, has been an integral political component of the world party of socialist revolution.

For Puerto Rican revolutionists, this not only means being armed with a world outlook, but being part of an international movement which aspires to give direction to the revolutionary struggles in both the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican Fourth Internationalists who live in the U.S. and are politically active in the Puerto Rican movement and class struggle here are part of the Socialist Workers Party. Those who presently live in Puerto Rico or move from the U.S. and become part of the struggle there are members of the SWP's sister organization, la Liga Internacionalista de los Trabajadores

(the International Workers League).

While the working class struggles in Puerto Rico and the U.S. have their own dynamic and distinct peculiarities, they are very much interconnected because of the colonial relationship between the two countries. Collaboration in a common international movement between revolutionists in the two countries is essential to working out political perspectives and encouraging mutual assistance.

In order to establish itself more firmly in the Puerto Rican movement and win more Puerto Rican members, the SWP has to devote more attention and energies to the Puerto Rican struggle. The membership has to become better educated and more familiar with Puerto Rican history and the current tendencies and organizations in the Puerto Rican movement. The wider distribution of Puerto Ricans throughout the country means that this is not only a question for the New York City organization but for many of the party branches and locals.

More branches oriented especially to Puerto Rican communities will have to be established. Sales of our Spanish-language books and pamphlets should be increased. Although the SWP doesn't have a Spanish-language press at this time, sales of the bilingual Intercontinental Press and of La Verdad and Clave, publications of the Puerto Rican and Mexican

Trotskyists, can be organized.

Our proletarian orientation and unconditional support to the struggle for Puerto Rican liberation gives us optimism that we will succeed in winning Puerto Rican revolutionists. But this will only be achieved with systematic work and serious application to the task. It will be a test of our capacity as a revolutionary party.