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# CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

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## Militarization in Puerto Rico: old problem, new problem

### INTRODUCTION

"Supermilitarization. The latest phase in U.S. plans to maintain Puerto Rico as its colony, preventing its development as a sovereign nation, using its people as guinea pigs, sources of cheap labor and raw human material-- Spanish speaking--to exploit for militaristic purposes against the legitimate popular struggles of the peoples of Central America and the Caribbean. Human beings being used as fodder to feed the fires of anti-Castro hysteria. Warm blood, to fight a Cold War."

These strong words are from a report written by the National Ecumenical Movement of Puerto Rico, an organization of clergy and lay Christians involved in social education. This article shows how, strong as it seems, the quotation is only too accurate.

The first section of the article outlines briefly some aspects of U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico,

points to the military origin of the U.S. presence on the island, and stresses the military background of many of the colonial governors of Puerto Rico until WW II. The second section addresses the historic and current role of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. armed forces. The third section assesses the increase, since 1979, of the military operations of the U.S. armed forces in Puerto Rico in the context of the larger U.S.-sponsored militarization of the Caribbean that is now under way. The fourth and last section discusses the present program of establishing defense-contract oriented industries in Puerto Rico as a means of overcoming the structural crisis of the island's economy and of supplying a potentially much larger U.S. military presence.

### I. U.S. COLONIALISM IN PUERTO RICO AND THE EARLY MILITARY GOVERNORS

Puerto Rico was invaded by the armed forces of the United

States in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. Together with Cuba and the Philippines, Puerto Rico ceased to be a colony of Spain and passed into the fold of the United States. In Cuba, a war of independence had been raging since 1895. At the time of the American occupation the pro-independence movement was still strong enough to prevent outright annexation of the island by the United States. Cuba became an independent republic, but it was forced to recognize the "right" of the United States to intervene militarily in the affairs of Cuba, and to grant the U.S. the right to have military bases in Cuba (one of which remains, in Guantanamo). In the Philippines, a section of the independence movement continued to fight the U.S. occupation and engaged the U.S. military in a bitter war in which as many as half a million Filipinos died.

In Puerto Rico, in contrast to both the Philippines and Cuba, the American invasion met with little resistance. The long term results were the annexation of Puerto Rico as a territory of the United States, without ever being incorporated fully as a state of the union. It is worth emphasizing that the U.S. presence in Puerto Rico has its roots in a military invasion, an invasion which occurred at a time when nothing like a foreign communist or Soviet presence could be invoked to justify it.

Similarly, the wave of U.S. interventions in the Caribbean that followed the Spanish American War predates by a long period the current "justification" of preventing Soviet expansion. In 1905,

the U.S. seized the customs of the Dominican Republic in order to "guarantee" the collection of the foreign debt of that country to the U.S. and European bankers. The U.S. overthrew the government of José Zelaya in Nicaragua in 1911 and invaded the country two years later. Five thousand marines were sent to Nicaragua in 1926 to defeat a revolution and a military force was kept there for seven years. The U.S. intervened in the Dominican Republic in 1916 (for the fourth time) and kept troops there for eight years. It intervened in Haiti in 1915 (for the second time) and kept troops there for nineteen years. Between 1900 and 1933, the United States intervened in Cuba four times, in Nicaragua twice, in Panama six times, in Guatemala once, and seven times in Honduras. It invaded the port city of Veracruz, Mexico, in 1914; it acquired the Danish Virgin Islands in 1917; it was instrumental in organizing the secession of Panama from Colombia in exchange for the right to build a canal in Panama, and so on. The U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico needs to be placed within this larger context of intervention in the Caribbean.

The role of the U.S. armed forces can best be explained by citing the testimony of Marine General Smedley Butler before the U.S. Senate in 1935:

"I spent 33 years and four months in active service as a member of the [...] Marine Corps [...] And during that period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business [...] Thus I helped make



Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank to collect revenues in [...] I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909 and 1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras 'right' for American fruit companies in 1903."

Within the overall context of intervention in the Caribbean, a look at the early colonial governors of Puerto Rico offers insight into the historical dimensions of militarism on the island. Who were these men?

The invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898 was led by Nelson Miles. A veteran of the American Civil War, Miles came to be known as

"the Indian fighter". He is probably the most outstanding exterminator of American Indians of the nineteenth century and responsible, among other things, for the Massacre of Wounded Knee and the defeat of the most important Indian chiefs--Geronimo, Sitting Bull, Naiche, Crazy Horse, Lame Deer, Spotted Eagle, Broad Trail, King Joseph.

The first military governor of Puerto Rico, John Brooke, was also a veteran of the American Civil War and the Indian Wars, and had been in charge of the suppression of a railway strike in Pennsylvania in 1877. He participated in the invasion of Puerto Rico, became governor, and abandoned the post in December 1898 to become governor of Cuba. His post in Puerto Rico was filled by Guy V. Henry, also a veteran of the Civil War and the Indian Wars, who in

addition had participated in the suppression of an Irish independence organization (Fenian Brotherhood) on the U.S.-Canada border in 1869. The third and last military governor of Puerto Rico, George W. Davis, again a veteran of the Civil and Indian Wars, had been vice-president of the Nicaragua Canal Construction Company in 1893. He served as acting military governor of Pinar del Rio, Cuba, in 1898 and became governor of Puerto Rico in 1899. After leaving his post in Puerto Rico in 1900, he went to the Philippines, where he served successively as "provost-marshal general", commander of the division of Mindanao, and finally as commander of the entire division of the Philippines. In 1904-05 he was governor of the Panama Canal Zone.

The civilian governors who replaced the military governors in 1900 were directly appointed by the president of the United States until 1946. Among them was Charles H. Allen (1900-1901) who had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the Spanish American War; George R. Colton (1909-1913), veteran of the Civil War, a lieutenant-colonel in the Philippines in 1898, a customs officer in the Philippines and director of the customs in the Dominican Republic when they were forcibly seized by the U.S. in 1905; Theodore Roosevelt Jr. (1929-1932), who served in WWI, became governor of the Philippines in 1932, and served later in WWII; Blanton Winship (1934-1939) was a veteran of the Spanish American War and served in the Philippines in 1904, in the "Army of Cuban Pacification", in the U.S. expedition that occupied Veracruz in

1914, and in WW I. In 1927-28 he was military advisor to President Coolidge, and between 1928 and 1930 legal assistant to the governor of the Philippines Henry L. Stimson. William D. Leahy (1939-1940) was an admiral of the U.S. Navy who had participated in the Spanish American War (invasion of Santiago, Cuba), in the Philippines, and in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China. He participated in operations against Nicaragua in 1912, in "punitive expeditions" against Mexico in 1915, in the occupation of Santo Domingo and Haiti in 1916, and in WW I, and thereafter occupied several important posts in the U.S. Navy.

Of the eighteen American governors of Puerto Rico between 1898 and 1946, eight were military men. It is true that after 1900 the governors of Puerto Rico were civilians, but many of them, as we have seen, were military men or else closely related to military circles in the United States. Their presence was a permanent feature in the life of the colony.

During the 1930s, the so-called "Good Neighbor" policy of the U.S. partially diminished the U.S. military presence in the Caribbean, with the exception of Panama and Puerto Rico. The period of the New Deal was characterized in the U.S. by a set of reforms aimed at containing a potentially explosive social crisis caused by economic depression. In Puerto Rico, by contrast, the trend was toward repression, as expressed by the appointment of Blanton Winship to the governorship in 1934. Winship was, as we said before, a military man, and had no sympathies for the

reforms of the New Deal, In the years 1934-39 he greatly strengthened the police force inside Puerto Rico and carried out several massacres against the independence movement. The problem of militarism in Puerto Rico before WW II was felt directly by the population of the island as an internal problem, that is, as a restriction on the internal political life of the country.

In the years after WW II Puerto Ricans acquired the right to elect their own governor. American military men no longer occupy the position of governor, but the military presence in the island has increased significantly. The problem of militarism has not subsided. Instead, it has acquired new dimensions.

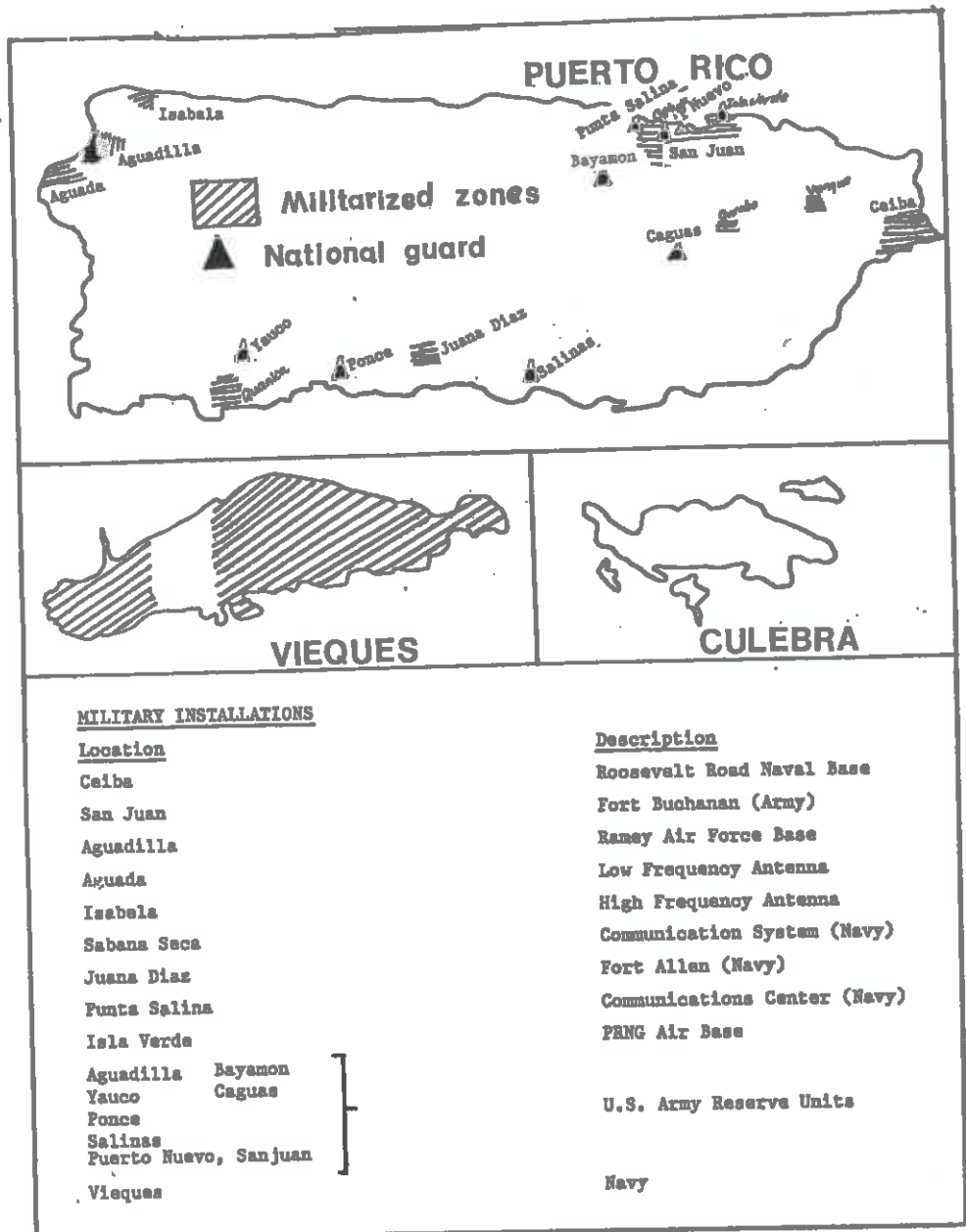
## II. PUERTO RICANS IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

Puerto Ricans have participated in all U.S. wars since 1917, when the U.S. imposed United States citizenship on Puerto Ricans so that they could be drafted to fight in World War I. Seventy-six thousand Puerto Ricans participated in WW II, 61,000 served in Korea and 48,000 in Vietnam. It was estimated in 1970 that 1 out of every 5 Puerto Rican males was a U.S. veteran. Today the U.S. armed forces have a substantial number of Puerto Ricans on active duty. Between 1976 and 1983, the number of Puerto Ricans in the military almost doubled, as did their proportional representation: in 1976, 13,258 Puerto Ricans made up .64% of the total U.S. military personnel, while in 1983, 25,724 made up 1.22% of the total.

An increasing number of young Puerto Ricans have been choosing military service as a source of employment because of the high unemployment rate on the island, 21% according to official figures. Between 5,000 and 6,000 young men and women enroll in the U.S. armed forces every year, and 2,000 university students participate in the ROTC program. All of this has increased the number of Spanish-speaking soldiers that can be used by the Pentagon in Central America and the Caribbean. For example, the Pentagon's official in charge of political-military planning for the Caribbean is a Puerto Rican, Lieutenant Colonel Hector Negrón. In 1982 a Puerto Rican, Diego Hernandez, was named Commandant of the Roosevelt Road naval base (the largest U.S. naval base in the world). In Central America, Puerto Ricans are being used in intelligence and training activities, including a large number in Honduras who have trained Salvadorean, Guatemalan and Honduran soldiers.

The Puerto Rico National Guard (PRNG) has been given a central role in the U.S. military strategies for the Caribbean and Central America. The Pentagon covers most of the expenses and personnel costs of the 12,000 member PRNG, which is regarded as the best trained and equipped National Guard in the U.S. In 1982, the Department of Defense (DOD) spent \$72 million in reserve and guard pay. "The PRNG can be used as an intermediary in the flow of military aid and training to its Caribbean neighbors, particularly those that belong to the Regional Defense Force. A congressional man-





date prohibits the use of foreign aid, either economic or military, in the training of foreign police." (Barry, et al, p.202)

6 In the summer of 1979, President Carter "federalized" four units of the PRNG and sent them

to the Dominican Republic to assist in reconstruction work after that country was struck by a hurricane. The next year, the Commander of the PRNG and U.S. Admiral Harry Train went to the Dominican Republic to arrange for training by

the Guard of the Dominican armed forces. During the summer of 1980 the Barbados Defense Force sent 50 soldiers to a PRNG training camp in Salinas, Puerto Rico. Later in 1982, security forces from Barbados and Dominica received training in Puerto Rico from the PRNG. The Jamaican Defense Force regularly attends training sessions in Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican police has also been used, regularly, to train policemen from Central America and the Caribbean countries. The training is conducted at Roosevelt Road naval base.

The PRNG has participated in U.S. military maneuvers, in Puerto Rico and in Central America, confirming its new role as a regional force. In February 1983, 211 PRNG members participated in the Big Pine maneuver in Honduras. At the end of this maneuver a permanent presence of PRNG members was established in Honduras for the purpose of training Honduran forces and performing logistics activities. There is speculation in Puerto Rico that the U.S. would use the PRNG in a direct intervention in Nicaragua. It is clear that the PRNG is strategically important for the U.S., not only because of its location, but also because of its troops' bilingual abilities.

### III. PUERTO RICO AS A LAUNCHING STATION FOR U.S. INTERVENTION

Beginning in 1973, there was

a partial reduction of American military installations in Puerto Rico, most of which had been built during World War II. They had been used, directly or for contingency operations, in the U.S. intervention in Guatemala in 1954, during the protests against Vice-President Nixon in Venezuela in 1959, during the "quarantine" of Cuba in 1962, and during a rebellion in Trinidad in 1970.

Yet in the 1970s the U.S. Army closed several installations and there was talk that Fort Buchanan, the main installation in San Juan, would be closed. The Air Force closed the base of the Strategic Air Command in Aguadilla (Ramey Field). The U.S. Navy concentrated its activities in Roosevelt Roads on the eastern side of the island. Also in the seventies, the fishermen and other residents of the small island municipality of Culebra led and won a campaign to get back their lands and fishing waters from the U.S. Navy, which used them for target practice.

In the late sixties and early seventies the student movement at the University of Puerto Rico opposed the conscription of Puerto Rican youth into the U.S. armed forces and accomplished the removal of the ROTC from the campuses of the University. The issue of

(Continued on page 10)

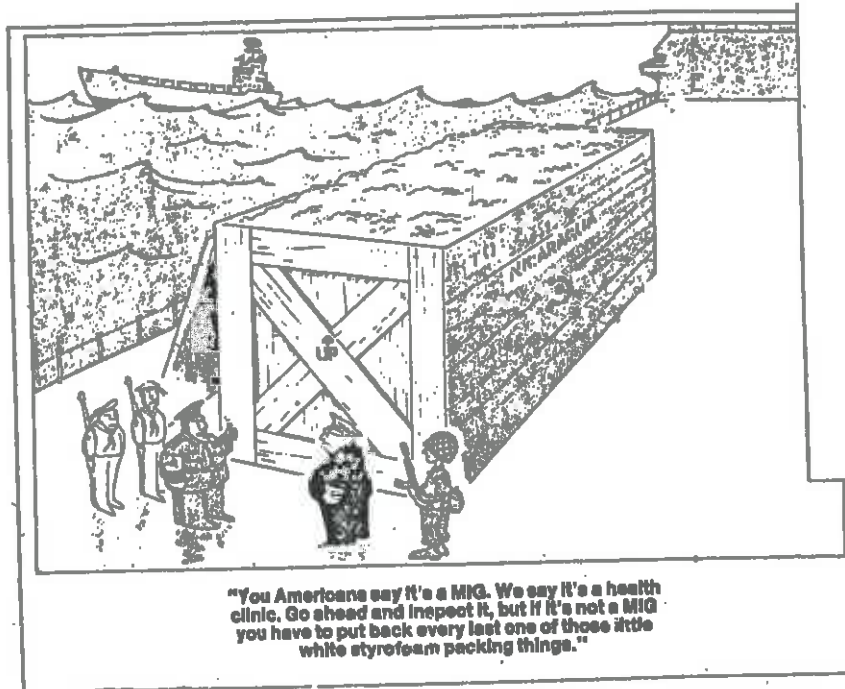
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The CUSLAR Newsletter provides CUSLAR members and other concerned individuals with the opportunity to present information and analysis on topics pertaining to Latin America and the Caribbean. Therefore, the positions of the articles in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the positions taken by CUSLAR as an organization.

# ITHACANS RESPOND TO NICARAGUA CRISIS

On November 6, the night of its re-election, the Reagan Administration began a barrage of anti-Nicaragua propaganda, creating an atmosphere of crisis over the alleged delivery of Soviet MiG fighter planes to Nicaragua. Although the MiGs never materialized, the propaganda continued, with the Administration repeating that "another Cuba" would not be tolerated.

On Saturday, November 10, some 30 Ithacans who were worried that stepped-up U.S. military action against Nicaragua was imminent met to plan an emergency response. The ad hoc group, which named itself the "Emergency Committee to Stop U.S. Intervention in Nicaragua", includes members of the Tompkins County Campaign for Peace with Justice in Central America, T.C. Nuclear Freeze Campaign, The Citizen's Coalition to Defeat Reagan, CUSLAR, the Ithaca Sanctuary Committee, the Nov. 11th Committee, Pax Ithaca, the Unemployed Council, the Citizen's Party, the Ithaca Friends Meeting, First Baptist Church, St. Paul's Methodist Church, Democratic Socialists of America, Pax Christi, Centerpeace, T.C. NOW, Ithaca Lesbian and Gay Task Force, Ithaca Men's Network, UAW Local 2300, Ithaca Women's Union, GAYPAC, New Jewish Agenda, Greenstar Coop, and Ithaca War Tax Resisters.



Tony Auth  
The Philadelphia Inquirer  
Washington Post Writers Group



Activities of the Committee have included: a vigil at the Ithaca Journal on Nov. 12 to draw attention to the role of irresponsible media reporting in creating the MiGs crisis; a vigil on Nov. 22 at the Federal Offices in the Babcock Building; participation in the nationwide phone-in on Nov. 27; a talk on Nov. 29 by Paul Doughty, who observed the Nicaraguan Elections as a member of the Latin American Studies Association team; a gathering on the Ithaca Commons on Dec. 1; a visit with Matt McHugh on Dec. 2; and tables on the Commons, at Cornell, and at TC3 during the week of Dec. 3-8.

The local committee is working in conjunction with a national campaign, the "Call to Resistance", to gather pledges to protest U.S. military action in Central America (see enclosed flyer). The "Pledge of Resistance" was first published in Sojourners magazine in August. The list of national sponsors is now extensive, including religious, peace and solidarity groups. According to a Nov. 21-Dec. 4 In These Times article, tens of thousands of people across the U.S. have already signed the pledge.

The national contingency plan would be invoked in case of a U.S. naval blockade, troop deployment, air strike, massive bombing, or other significant escalation of U.S. military involvement in Central America. If the call goes out, people will gather at local churches or other meeting places to prepare for emergency action. Congressional offices, federal buildings and military installations have been suggested as appropriate sites for demonstrations and civil disobedience. While some people participate in local actions, others will gather in Washington to protest.

In Ithaca, pledge-signing began on Dec. 1 on the Commons and is continuing at tables at various locations. So far, a total of about 300 pledges have been signed, about half of which are pledges to participate in civil disobedience. Nonviolence workshops are being planned to help prepare for possible actions. (The first will be on Sat. Dec. 15 from 10am to 4pm in Uris 202. Others will be held in January and as needed.)

A preliminary national tally of pledges will be taken during the week of Feb. 14-21, with activities in anticipation of a congressional vote on renewing aid to the contras. Although the contingency plan is to be activated in case of a major U.S. military escalation, it is hoped that the existence of the plan will pressure Congress and the Reagan Administration to stop the war against Nicaragua.

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The Committee on U.S./Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) is a Cornell-based group which works to promote understanding of Latin America and the Caribbean. We are particularly concerned with the role of the United States in influencing the social, political, and economic conditions of the region. The CUSLAR office is in G-29, Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell (phone: 256-7293). The office is open to the community on weekdays; meetings are Monday at 5pm in the CUSLAR office. Come join us.

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Vietnam had a double importance. On the one hand there was widespread opposition to conscription, and on the other there was sympathy among the student youth for the Vietnamese cause, which they perceived as an anti-colonial movement struggling, as they themselves were, for national liberation. The reduction of the military presence in the 1970s occurred in the context of the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, the crisis that led to the resignation of Nixon, widespread opposition to the U.S. military in Puerto Rico itself, and the seeming stability of the U.S. sponsored status quo in the Caribbean after the "pacification" of the Dominican Republic in 1965.

The situation changed dramatically in 1979. Revolutions in Grenada, Nicaragua, and Iran re-oriented U.S. policy towards traditional "security concerns". The Carter administration began to reverse the policy of reducing the U.S. military presence in the Caribbean initiated by Nixon. Successive visits by the commander of the Atlantic Fleet, Harry Train, and by Major General Robert L. Schweitzer to the Caribbean involved attempts to obtain rights to naval bases in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In Puerto Rico, there has been an increase in the presence and maneuvers of U.S. forces; an increase in recruiting efforts by the armed forces; a strengthening of the National Guard and the internationalization of its functions to include assistance and training activities in Central America; and the regionalization

of the functions of the police of Puerto Rico to train and give technical and intelligence assistance, through Interpol, to other police forces in the Caribbean and Central America. (Beruff, p.21)

The bases in Puerto Rico have been used intensively since 1979 to train regular U.S. forces--especially the Rapid Deployment Force. The process began under Carter with the Readex 80 maneuvers and the Solid Shield 80 maneuvers in Puerto Rico and Guantanamo.

In 1981 a series of large-scale maneuvers began. Ocean Venture 81, officially defined as the largest maneuver in the region since WW II, included rehearsals for invasions of Grenada and Cuba. The magnitude of the operations was such that they included participation by 120,000 troops, 240 ships, and 1,000 planes. (Beruff, p.21)

Ocean Venture 82 was a smaller operation but nevertheless a gigantic one involving 45,000 troops, 60 ships, and 350 planes. The UNITAS maneuvers were carried out jointly with other Latin American forces and were coordinated from Puerto Rico. The Readex-2 82 maneuvers included 39 ships, two aircraft carriers, and 200 planes. In 1983 the Readex maneuvers were repeated on a larger scale.

Universal Trek-1 83 was the final rehearsal for the invasion of Grenada. The maneuvers simulated an attack by sea and air on an island, the seizure of an airport, and its defense against foreign ambushes. The maneuver took place only four months before the real invasion of Grenada, in which the bases on Puerto Rico played an im-

portant role.

The most recent manuevers, Ocean Venture 84, held last October, involved 30,000 troops, 250 planes and many ships. They were coordinated with the Granadero I exercises in Honduras. All the Ocean Venture and Universal Trek manuevers included participation by the National Guard of Puerto Rico.

Since the Second World War, Puerto Rico had been the seat of the Antilles Defense Command (ADC). At the end of 1981 the ADC was transferred to Key West. Puerto Rico retains command of the naval forces (Naval Forces Caribbean). That means that there is a new triangular structure of commands in the region, with a unified command in Key West, the Command of the Army (USSOUTHCOM) in Panama, and the naval command in Puerto Rico. (Beruff, p.22)

The Ramey Air Base of the Strategic Air Command is being reopened in swiftly successive stages. The base, which housed B-52 nuclear bombers, was closed in 1973 and taken over by the Coast Guard. But in the recent Ocean Venture 84 manuevers, B-52 bombers and C-130 and C-141 transport planes landed at the base. Just very recently, on the weekend of November 17-18, Ramey Field was utilized for exercises, including amphibious landings of troops and target practice from ships at sea. (Claridad, Nov. 23-29)

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) established a center for police training of agents from Central America and the Caribbean inside Roosevelt Road naval base. The school has been operating secretly for several years, and of-

fered courses in how to conduct police "interviews". The last class graduated agents from Honduras, Panama, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Puerto Rico. (Lidin)

#### IV. ECONOMIC CRISIS: MILITARY SOLUTION?

Another aspect of the growing militarization of Puerto Rican society--and one which can most influence the socio-economic future of the island--is the attempt to "solve" Puerto Rico's acute economic crisis by promoting military industries. But before discussing the "military solution," it is necessary to take a brief and general look at the economic development of Puerto Rico in order to understand the origins of the present crisis.

#### The Economic Crisis: Structural Origins

During the first half of this century, U.S. capital moved into the island and completely dominated agricultural production. The growing and processing of sugar cane in huge plantation/refinery complexes became the main productive activity in Puerto Rico from the 1900s to the 1940s. In effect, Puerto Rico became a sugar cane plantation for the United States. But as a result of the recession on the mainland and other factors (such as the higher productivity of sugar cane plantations in Cuba), the economy of Puerto Rico had stagnated by the late 30s and early 40s.

In keeping with the interests of U.S. capital and the local ruling elite, the colonial government

launched Operación Manos a la Obra ("Operation Bootstrap") in 1947 as the development plan to move the economy out of its stagnant state. The strategy of Operation Bootstrap was to attract U.S. investment to the island. The two main incentives offered by the Puerto Rican government were a cheap labor force and complete tax exemptions (both local and federal) for periods ranging from 10 to 30 years. In addition, the Development Office of the Puerto Rican government helped those companies investing in Puerto Rico with plant construction and with recruitment and training of the labor force. The Puerto Rican economy was transformed from one based on export agriculture to one based on industrial exports, totally integrated into the U.S. market.

The cheap labor force was available as a result of the disintegration of the sugar cane economy which left thousands of seasonal laborers and semi-subsistence farmers unemployed. Thus began a large movement of people in search of employment from the countryside to the cities. But the jobs provided by industrialization were not enough to compensate for those lost in agriculture. The unemployment rate in Puerto Rico during the 50s and 60s hovered around 10%, despite the fact that during that same period an average of 50,000 Puerto Ricans emigrated to the U.S. per year. When the migration flow decreased in the 70s, the unemployment rate increased rapidly, reaching 20% in 1977 and remaining in the 20s ever since. "Between 1948 and 1965 Puerto Rico saw the unusual spectacle of a booming economy with a

shrinking labor force...and shrinking employment." (Labor Migration, p. 27)

In the mid-sixties, however, Puerto Rico became less and less attractive to U.S. corporations. The primary reason for this was the competition offered by a number of Third World countries (Taiwan, South Korea, Haiti, for example) that offered even lower wages. With the same ease that U.S. capital flowed into the island it left. The "solution" to the crisis of the 60s was seen by the colonial government to lie in the development of a petrochemical/pharmaceutical industry. The main incentives offered to U.S. companies were special tax exemptions (available by executive decree of the U.S. president) and much-relaxed environmental regulations. Total investment in the petrochemical/pharmaceutical industry in Puerto Rico between 1965 and 1976 exceeded \$1.4 billion. But the petrochemical/pharmaceutical industry did not solve the problem of chronic unemployment. On the contrary, while it was promised by the Puerto Rican government and the corporations that over 40,000 jobs would be created, only 6,000 workers are employed by the petrochemical industry.

By 1975 the panacea of the petrochemical industry had exhausted itself too, except that this time there was no "solution" forthcoming from the colonial government. As many of the manufacturing and refining corporations ceased operation in Puerto Rico (again to leave for more profitable locations), Puerto Rico was left with only the shadow of a viable econ-

omy. Local and federal tax exemptions no longer attract corporations to the island but merely keep them there. Those corporations that have remained on the island, however, continue making substantial profits. "Each year, the more than 2,000 firms...on the island bring about \$3 billion in profits back to the United States....Profits from the island account for 22 percent of all (non-finance) profits from U.S. foreign investment throughout the world." (Barry et al, p. 245-246)

Puerto Rico's rate of participation in the labor force, that is, the percentage of its population over 14 years old which is actually working or actively seeking work, is one of the lowest in the world. Already a low 52% in 1940, it stood at 41% in 1983. Moreover, since the official unemployment rate (21% at present) is a calculation based on those still considered part of the labor force, the actual number of Puerto Ricans who have no possibility of working is much higher than the unemployment figures alone would suggest. With 62% of the population living below the poverty level; 50% receiving foodstamps; 100,000 idle young people from 16 to 24 years old who are not working and not in school; and with the more than \$4 billion yearly inflow of federal funds needed to subsidize the importation of consumer goods from the U.S.\*, Puerto Rico is no longer referred to as the "American

Puerto Rico, the largest per capita consumer of U.S. goods in the world, constitutes a market with an annual value of over \$5.5 billion.

success story in the Caribbean."

### Militarization of the Economy

Given Puerto Rico's economic crisis, the increase in U.S. military activities in Puerto Rico has had an important economic impact. The economic effects of militarization operate in two related areas: 1) direct & indirect expenditures by the Department of Defense (DOD) in Puerto Rico; and 2) the growing militarization of industry.

1) The operating costs of the DOD in Puerto Rico increased from \$74.7 million in 1980 to \$174.7 million in 1983. Excluding contracts with local industry, military spending in Puerto Rico during 1983 exceeded \$500 million. Included in this figure are \$129.9 million in salaries paid by the DOD and \$279.9 million in veterans' benefits (there are 127,100 veterans in P.R.) The importance of these expenditures within the context of Puerto Rico's economic crisis cannot be overestimated. A large segment of the Puerto Rican population depends, directly or indirectly, on DOD money for their subsistence. The number of Puerto Ricans (individuals and their families) who depend on DOD money is even greater (and is increasing) if we take into account that there are over 25,000 Puerto Ricans in the U.S. armed forces and that an average of 5,000 of the island's youth join the armed forces per year looking for employment.

2) Beginning in 1983 a new economic "alternative" for Puerto Rico began to be promoted by important political and economic sectors in Puerto Rico: the promotion of contracts with the DOD by industries already established or that could be established in



Puerto Rico. This "solution" was first proposed in 1981 in a document prepared by the Republican Party (GOP) of Puerto Rico, headed by Puerto Rico's leading capitalist Luis Ferre. The document pointed out that while the Reagan Administration cuts in federal welfare programs could have devastating effects for the island, some of the increased defense spending could be channeled to industries operating in Puerto Rico. This could take place either by directing the production of industries already established on the island (many of them idle) towards military production, or by opening new plants.

This plan was accepted by the Reagan Administration. (One of the main promoters of the plan within the Administration has been George Bush.) On October 21, 1983 a group of top executives from nine of the ten most important defense contractors--Lockheed Corp., Grumman Aerospace Corp., Newport Shipbuilding and Drydock Corp., McDonnell Douglas Corp., Litton Industries, General Electric, General Dynamics Corp., Sperry Corp., and United Technologies--visited Puerto Rico to investigate investment possibilities. They were accompanied on their trip by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics and the Deputy Director for Acquisition Management in the Defense Logistics Agency. Everybody expressed satisfaction and optimism at the investment possibilities after visiting the island and meeting with local officials. A DOD official declared that a lot of attention is being paid to Puerto Rico, by the DOD, since Puerto Rico "plays a particularly important

role in the Caribbean both from an economic and defense standpoint." (Barry et al, p.203)

In 1983 DOD contracts with industries based in Puerto Rico amounted to \$183.8 million, an increase of 28% from 1982. The colonial government has set a goal of attracting \$1.5 billion in military contracts, which would lead to the creation of between 40,000 to 60,000 direct jobs. We have, once again, the spectacle of the Puerto Rican government brandishing a new solution to the economic crisis and high unemployment. The effect of creating this number of jobs, however, would not greatly alleviate unemployment: "...it would be necessary to create 154,000 new jobs during the rest of the 1980-90 decade only to reduce unemployment to 17%." (Cordova, p.2)

The military solution to economic stagnation, that is, the use of military expenditures to utilize excess or idle industrial capacity, is one that has become standard (indeed necessary) practice on the U.S. mainland. "For instance, the present phase of military expansion, from 1977 to (at least) 1986, is the longest in U.S. history. Amid long-term stagnation, it is the engine of what vigor remains in the [U.S.] economy." (Kopkind and Cockburn) The colonial government of Puerto Rico is now trying to tie industrial production on the island to the military expansion promoted by the Reagan Administration.

The provision of jobs (or their promise) by military-related industry can have the effect of diffusing opposition to militarization by a job-hungry population. What happened in Vieques is illustrative of this.

Vieques is a small island-municipality off the North-East coast of Puerto Rico. At the end of WW II the U.S. Navy took control of 2/3 of the island and since then has used the land and adjacent waters for shelling and bombing practice, ammunition storage and training maneuvers. The expropriation of most of the island by the Navy meant an end to the cattle and sugar industries. It also meant suffocating restrictions on the activity of fishermen. Unemployment in Vieques eventually reached 50%. Beginning in 1978 the Vieques community, led by the Fishermen Association, carried out a militant resistance against the Navy. For example, forty fishing boats successfully disrupted a NATO naval maneuver in 1981. Vieques became a focus of the anti-military and pro-independence movement in Puerto Rico.

At the end of 1983 the U.S. Navy opened a factory for manufacturing military shirts which provides 500 jobs, thereby significantly reducing unemployment in Vieques. This move has greatly decreased opposition to the presence of the Navy in the Vieques community. As Carlos Zenon, president of the Vieques

Fishermen Association, said: "These people [the community of Vieques] are pro-stomach, not pro-Navy...you can't blame people who are hungry and want to work who now support the Navy." The government of Puerto Rico has said that the opening of the factory in Vieques is an experiment for a plan that would be applied to the whole of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has become a pawn, a launching station and a source of "raw human material", which seems destined to play an ever greater role in the colonial power's interventionist plans for Central America and the Caribbean. The Puerto Rican people's acquiescence is being bought with promises of prosperity based on a militarized economy. But the promotion of defense contracts, pumping momentary vigor into an exhausted system, will not address the structurally inherent causes of Puerto Rico's economic disintegration. Hopes are being raised which will be followed by frustration and demoralization, the pattern of the past 86 years of U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico.

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and José Lobo

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# SALVADORAN REFUGEE VISITS ITHACA

Alejandro Rodriguez, a Salvadoran Trade Unionist who has been living in Sanctuary in Rochester since June, visited Ithaca Nov. 27 and 28.

During the last three years, hundreds of Guatemalans and Salvadorans have been harbored by U.S. churches, in defiance of U.S. government policy. Members of the Sanctuary Movement maintain that, according to the 1980 Refugee Act, Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees have a right to political asylum in the U.S. It would be too much of an embarrassment, however, for the U.S. government to admit that political repression exists in countries whose governments it supports, so the refugees continue to be deported, even when deportation means almost certain death.

When Alejandro and his family escaped from El Salvador to Mexico, they had an opportunity through a UN refugee program to live safely in Canada or Sweden. When they heard about the Sanctuary Movement in the U.S., however, they decided to come here, risking arrest and deportation, because they felt it was so important to speak to people in the United States. Alejandro said that he could not imagine feeling comfortable leading a normal life, having a job in a safe country, while the people of El Salvador continue to live under the extreme repression of their current government. He expressed a feeling of personal responsibility to speak out about what is going on in his country. "To know what I know and remain silent would make me complicit in this crime," he said.

In addition to giving general public presentations while he was in Ithaca, Alejandro met with members of the Ithaca Friends Meeting, which has decided to offer sanctuary to a refugee family, and with members of the First Baptist Church, which recently voted in favor of supporting the Friends' sanctuary declaration.

