August 30th, 1987 marks the second anniversary of the arrests in Puerto Rico of thirteen Puerto Rican activists. Over 250 FBI agents arrived in airplanes and helicopters, and, without warrants, raided the homes of 35 families. The arrests were allegedly in relation to a Wells Fargo robbery that occurred two years earlier in Hartford, Connecticut. Seven months later two more Independentistas and a North American attorney were arrested. The detainees were taken to the United States in U.S. military planes, and most were imprisoned without bail for sixteen months. Two have remained behind bars for two years.

As the case unfolds, constitutional lawyers are challenging every aspect of the surveillance, arrest and detention of the Puerto Rico 16. The trial is expected to take another two years at least. While raising funds for the defense, Puerto Rican activists are stepping up a campaign to educate people about the case, and to connect it to other issues, including the militarization of Puerto Rico and Central America. We at RESIST want to call attention to the Hartford case in particular, and to the ongoing struggle of Puerto Ricans for democracy, civil rights and independence.

For more information, contact the Puerto Rican Committee Against Repression, P.O. Box A 840, New York, New York 10163. In Boston, contact the Boston Committee for Puerto Rican Civil Rights, P.O. Box 1222, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

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Non-Stop War Practice in Puerto Rico

VANESSA RAMOS

Vanessa Ramos, director of the Office of International Information for the Independence of Puerto Rico, was in Boston earlier this summer, at the invitation of the Boston Peace Council. This is a shortened version of her talk.

The militarization of Puerto Rico goes back to 1898, when the island was invaded by U.S. forces as a result of the Spanish-American war. Since then Puerto Rico has played an important political, strategic and military role for U.S. interests, particularly in the Caribbean. Today Puerto Rico is the biggest U.S. naval base in the North Atlantic.

The use of Puerto Rico as a military base began in World War I, when land was appropriated near San Juan, to build the Buchanan Army Base. Military bases in Puerto Rico have facilitated U.S. intervention into other countries beginning with Haiti in the 1920s. After World War II, the U.S. expanded its military operations in Puerto Rico, and thousands of acres were taken from peasants and farmers without compensation. This was the period when Roosevelt Roads Naval Base was built, and when two-thirds of the island of Vieques, just east of mainland Puerto Rico, was appropriated.

Puerto Rico was used in the intervention into Guatemala in 1954 by the inclusion of combat planes from the Puerto Rican National Guard (PRNG). It was used during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, and for the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. And, most recently, for the invasion of Grenada in 1983. Puerto Rico has continuously been used for the training of U.S. armed forces and the police and military forces of countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America; for the joint military exercises of the U.S. and its NATO allies; and for the testing of nuclear and chemical weapons. The island is now being used for the storage and deployment of nuclear weapons.

Puerto Rico as a Training Center

Since the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua in 1979, Puerto Rico has seen an increase in the presence and military activity of U.S. armed forces, culminating in the invasion of Grenada. There has been an increase in the recruitment of young high school students, increasing the number of Spanish-speaking personnel in the U.S. Army. Because of high unemployment in Puerto Rico, fluctuating between 30% to 35%, the island has become a paradise for military recruiters. Five thousand to six thousand Puerto Ricans join the U.S. armed forces every year.

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War Practice

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The PRNG has been integrated into military exercises taking place in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and Honduras. We have also seen the regionalization of the functions and duties of the Puerto Rican police with its participation in the training of police forces in the Caribbean and Central America in conjunction with the FBI. A police school has been established at Roosevelt Roads, at which the teachers and professors are members of the FBI.

Puerto Rico’s island of Vieques has been used extensively as a training camp for the U.S. regular forces. The island is divided into three parts, with the military controlling either side, and the civilian population of 8,000 sandwiched in the middle. This is one of the principle training areas for the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force, where, in joint operations with other countries, military exercises have taken place almost every year since 1979. The purpose of these exercises is to increase the capacity for military intervention against countries in the region.

Among the most important of these operations was Ocean Venture 1981, at the time the largest exercise since World War II. It included a staged invasion of Grenada and Cuba, and involved 120,000 troops, 240 warships and 1,000 planes. In 1983, four months before the invasion of Grenada, a final rehearsal was held in Puerto Rico, including a simulated attack by air, land and sea. In Ocean Venture 1986, a military reaction to a communist insurrection in a Caribbean country was simulated, and Vieques was “recaptured.” Among the 10,000 troops involved were U.S. troops and American-trained fighting units from six Caribbean countries. The PRNG also participated in the exercise. This May the largest joint exercise yet, Operation Solid Shield, took place in Honduras, Puerto Rico and North Carolina. The scene was a simulated American response by a request from Honduras to help fight Nicaraguan invading forces. Three hundred members of the PRNG participated in the land and sea assaults on Honduras.

Storage and Deployment of Nuclear Weapons

Puerto Rico is now also being used as a deployment and storage center for nuclear weapons. In 1984, the Puerto Rican Bar Association Special Commission on Nuclear Weapons made public a report including a study of military installations in Puerto Rico linked to U.S. nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear war plans. This documentation, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, demonstrates activities violating the obligations of the U.S. under the 1967 Treaty of Tlateloco, which made Latin America a nuclear-free zone.

The Treaty specifically outlaws the testing, use, production, or acquisition of any nuclear arms by any means; and the receiving, storage, installation, deployment or possession of any kinds of nuclear weapons directly or indirectly. The Bar Association report concluded that the U.S. has violated the treaty by preparing and planning the command of submarines carrying nuclear weapons from Roosevelt Roads Naval Base. Buildings that store nuclear weapons at Roosevelt Roads have been identified, as have the names of personnel designated to assume command and control functions with regard to nuclear weapons.

The U.S. maintains a complex communications network in Puerto Rico integrated into the communications and control systems for nuclear weapons. Among the installations are the low frequency installations in Aguada, in the west of Puerto Rico, a principle vehicle for communication to submerged submarines at sea. There is also the high-frequency transmitter in Isabela, which is used for communications between military commands and distant bases. It has the capacity to communicate with ships carrying nuclear weapons anywhere in the world.

Recently Puerto Rico has seen an increase in military contracts between Puerto Rican industries and the defense department. In 1983, the total amount of military contracts in Puerto Rico was 183.8 million. In 1985, it increased to 300 million. In 1987, it is estimated that the figure will approach 819 million dollars. Protests against the militarization of Puerto Rico, and the accompanying environmental devastation, have included not only dependistas but church groups and cultural organizations. Representative Ronald Dellums, Chair of the Military Installations and Facilities Committee, has demanded an answer from the Pentagon in terms of what it is doing in Puerto Rico with regard to the storage and deployment of nuclear weapons. So far, the response has been denial that the U.S. is in violation of any treaty.

Puerto Rico has the infrastructure to become the center for nuclear war in the region. It has the communications network to carry out any kind of intervention or attack. The equipment is sophisticated. As one Puerto Rican commander has said, the orchestra practices before it reaches the public. The stage is set in Puerto Rico for invasion in Central America.

Vanessa Ramos is an attorney in the New York area, and an advisor to the Decolonization Committee of the U.N.
Colonialism Ravages Puerto Rican Environment

NEFTALI GARCIA MARTINEZ

This article originally appeared in Spanish in La Alternativa, a Boston newspaper for the Puerto Rican Community. Translation by Tubal Padilla. For subscription information, write La Alternativa, P.O. Box 1993, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

By definition, a colony presupposes the economic, political and ideological domination of an empire over a nation and its territory. This is the context in which we have to analyse the exploitation of natural resources and the myriad of environmental problems that plague the colony of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico's basic political framework is determined by the United States government. Most U.S. federal laws have direct bearing on Puerto Rico. What has happened to Puerto Rico's environment and natural resources, therefore, has happened within these political limits and with the complicity of federal agencies.

Puerto Rico's colonial economy depends on the importation of capital, primarily U.S. capital. Industrial, commercial, financial and speculative capital invested in Puerto Rico is estimated to be around thirty billion dollars, leading to the loss through runaway profits of about six billion dollars every year. Most of those profits go to non-Puerto Rican companies operating under Law 936 (part of the Caribbean Basin Initiative) which exempts them from paying federal taxes as well as Puerto Rican state taxes.

The prolonged capitalist economic crisis, beginning during 1974-1975, has had a profound impact in Puerto Rico. To the economic crisis we must add the austerity measures that have cut social spending and the increase in military spending embraced by the U.S. government since late in the Carter administration and throughout Reagan's administration. Because there are no substantial contributions by 936 corporations, and the unemployed and sub-employed do not pay taxes, Puerto Rico's economic base is extremely weak. This leaves insufficient resources to confront the economic, social and environmental problems Puerto Ricans face.

For the colonial state, the only choice available has been an uncritical, development-at-any-cost attitude, resulting in the acceptance of almost any industry or industrial activity in exchange for marginal jobs. Workers' health, the contamination of whole communities, loss of natural resources, and the health of the environment overall, are not considered at all. This attitude towards development must be seen within the framework of empire-colonial relations. This becomes apparent when one looks at the role played by federal agencies in Puerto Rico with regard to the environment.

El Yunque—Agent Orange and Deforestation

A number of federal agencies authorized experiments with Agent Orange and other herbicides in Puerto Rico's El Yunque National Rain Forest before their use in Vietnam to exterminate vegetation, where they caused unquantifiable damage to the Vietnamese people as well. The agencies involved included the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and the Department of Defense.

The latest attempted assault on El Yunque was the Forest Service plan to log 21% of the forest. This would have had a monstrous effect on recreation, fishing, and the many unique or near-extinct species in the area. Their plans, however, were not to touch the special-permit areas where federal communications facilities, both military and civilian, are located. Thanks to massive organizing and demonstrating in Puerto Rico, the latest plans are now on hold.

U.S. Navy in Vieques

On the island of Vieques, off the east coast of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Navy has destroyed ponds, coral reefs, agricultural activity, and the social life of the people of Vieques. The Navy's impact is particularly strong in the three-quarters of the island which it controls. The EPA, the Fisheries and Wildlife Service, the Federal Courts, the Engineering Corps and other federal agencies have done nothing to stop the destruction.

Roads built by the Navy have closed the natural channels that connect the ponds to the sea; bad management has allowed over-grazing that has led to erosion and sedimentation of the ponds. During Navy exercises ships out at sea explode bombs which are constantly damaging reefs, beaches and vegetation. All of this has put Vieques' fishing, agriculture and overall economy in jeopardy.

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For the People of Argentina, It’s Not Yet “Punto Final”

ESTELLE DISCH

In late 1986 and early 1987, Estelle Disch spent three weeks in Argentina. The purpose of her trip was to get a sense of how Argentina is doing with its relatively new democracy, and specifically to find out how the people there are recovering from one of the worst military dictatorships in the history of Latin America. Disch was particularly concerned with the impact of the political situation on individuals’ psychological well-being.

Throughout most of this century, Argentina has alternated between military and civilian rule, with neither type of government being very successful at either stabilizing the Argentine economy or at meeting the expectations of the population. The civilian governments of Juan and Isabel Peron (1973-1976) were so ineffective that a seige of terror emerged in the country, perpetrated by both left and right paramilitary groups.

On the right was the Triple A (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina), headed by José López Rega, known as The Witch (El Brujo), a vicious anticommunist. Triple A murder gangs killed leftists for several years before 1976, but they diminished in importance as the military took over their attack on the Left. The so-called terrorist groups of the Left were the Montoneros and the Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP). These groups attacked police stations, banks, government officials, military installations and other targeted individuals.

In 1976, a coup representing all three branches of the Argentine military removed Isabel Peron from power and set about to bring order out of chaos. The methods of terror used by the military to create “order” were some of the most brutal in the history of South America. Under the guise of “the best interests of society,” the government attacked not only guerilla groups, but also thousands of other people, many of whom had no involvement with politics.

Some of the chosen targets were relatives of people in the guerilla movements. Others were members of non-violent political parties. Social scientists were a common target, along with psychiatrists, lawyers, clergy and other professionals. And students, especially, were removed from society if they posed any sort of threat. In this situation, simply being young with the capacity for critical thought qualified a person as a potential threat to the new system of military rule.

The kind of terror used by the military was unique to South America up to that point. Instead of killing people and leaving their bodies lying around, people were instead “disappeared” — kidnapped from their homes in the middle of the night or removed from the street in broad daylight, driven away in Ford Falcons without license plates, often never to be seen again by family or friends.

These people were not arrested or tried. There was no due process, no justice. The few who survived the initial disappearance, who by some twist of fate or political connection were released, were often witness to and victims of brutal torture. It is the testimony of these few released people which has offered the best documentation of what actually happened to the disappeared. And a few military men, feeling guilty for their activities during this time, have come forward to confess and to tell what they saw others doing. Ultimately most of the disappeared were buried in mass graves or pushed out of airplanes into the sea, sometimes alive, leaving scratch marks inside the doors of the airplanes as they tried to hang on in a final fight for life.

Certain people were singled out for particularly brutal torture. Women, especially pregnant women, were raped and sexually tortured. Jews were subjected to vicious verbal harassment and to more severe physical abuse than others. Jews were also disappeared in disproportionately large numbers compared to non-Jews. (Ten percent of those disappeared were Jews, although they represent only 1.25% of the population.) Jacobo Timmerman, an Argentinian journalist who later wrote about his abduction and torture, estimated that Jewish women were raped twice as often as non-Jewish women.

In all, an estimated 30,000 people disappeared at the hands of the dictatorship, the vast majority of whom were between 20 and 35 years of age, 40% of them women. Approximately 300 pregnant women were captured, their babies probably given to families connected to the dictatorship (see the film "The Official Story" for a realistic account of this issue). Another two million people, mostly in the same age group, went into exile.

In a country of only 25 million, this has created a huge gap in the population, a “missing generation” in the society. The age group which would be, at this time, moving into leadership positions are not there to do so. And many who are there have had their lives irrevocably changed, their friends gone, educations interrupted, values fractured. An estimated 25,000 of the disappeared were completely uninvolved in political activities ordinarily called “terrorist.” They had no idea why they were abducted and were innocent victims of the dirty war.

The effects of government atrocities were felt in the entire population. The irrationality of the pattern of disappearance left no one safe, since political activity or inactivity did not automatically determine one’s risk for disappearance. Political activity which criticized the government certainly increased one’s probability of disappearance, but many other people disappeared as well. Even talking about a disappeared relative was a risk. People felt that they could not talk with...
friends; lawyers feared taking on the cases of the disappeared since that put them at real risk for disappearance themselves; and psychiatrists and psychologists refused to treat relatives of disappeared people, based on the same fears. The press, under strict censorship, gave almost no attention to what was happening.

Many people learned that routine aspects of living had become risky. It was dangerous to be listed in the wrong person’s address book. It was dangerous to admit that you didn’t like what the government was doing either economically or in terms of the dirty war. It was dangerous to have the wrong books in your house (Freudian psychology was particularly bad, as were those books with overtly political content). Many people destroyed books and documents in fear that they’d be in worse trouble should the police or military appear.

The three branches of the Argentine military acted somewhat separately, sometimes without coordinated activity. Records were kept secret from civilian inquiry and people were given lengthy run-arounds as they attempted to locate the whereabouts of missing relatives or friends. The government’s strategy of denial left survivors feeling crazy and served to discourage many people from looking further. And often, people feared that if they made too many waves in a search for someone, they or another loved one might be next to disappear. This process was designed to reinforce the total control the military had over the society. To a large extent the strategy succeeded. Even the church supported the dictatorship and remained silent about the disappearances.

Families under this system could not grieve their loved ones since the facts about mass deaths came out only later. Since few people were released after abduction and torture, there was always a bit of hope that a loved one would return alive. Families learned to live with a suspended state of grief. Even now, eight or ten years later, some mothers I met still hoped that perhaps their children would reappear. Without certainty of death and without a funeral, it is very difficult to grieve the loss of a loved one.

Many of the two million forced exiles relocated in Europe or Mexico, never seeing their families again. Some of the exiles are back in Argentina now, trying to rebuild their lives after a ten-year absence.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

The worst of the terror and the majority of the disappearances occurred between 1976 and 1979 (after 1979, international pressure on the dictatorship worked to slow down the disappearances). During this time, many women whose children had disappeared spent endless frustrating hours at government agencies in efforts to locate their children (husbands were ordinarily working, so the task of slogging through the bureaucracy fell to the women). Eventually women began to recognize each other and figured out that they had something in common.

A small group started to meet and ultimately decided to hold a weekly protest outside the governmental palace in the Plaza de Mayo to demand information on the whereabouts of their children. These protests have continued for the past nine years, except for one year when the repression was so complete that several mothers were themselves disappeared and the group had to meet in shifting locations, sometimes passing notes along the pews in churches, in order to escape detection. When the repression had lessened slightly, a core of mothers decided that they were willing to risk their lives in order to continue their public protest.

The courage of the Mothers of the Plaza appears to have been a key element in bringing back civilian government in Argentina. Human rights groups began to stir quietly. By the end of 1979 nearly everyone knew someone who knew someone who had disappeared, and nearly everyone had a family member in exile. And even though most people felt they could not take an active stand themselves, they felt supportive of the mothers and the other groups which were beginning to emerge in response to the brutality.

While other factors actually brought the dictatorship down—namely the war in the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands which Argentina badly lost, and an

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almost non-functional economy—the people of Argentina were ready for a change. The work of the Mothers and others had set up a giant, though sometimes silent, coalition which elected a democratic president in 1983. Raul Alfonsin had been an activist for human rights and was elected with the full support of the Mothers.

President Alfonsin immediately set up a special commission to investigate the disappearances which ultimately documented in detail about 9,000 cases. Others involved with this work estimate that 30-40,000 actually disappeared but were not reported, or were abducted secretly with no witnesses. Fear still reigns in the lives of many Argentines who have not yet spoken up about what happened. The report of the investigatory commission was published under the title Nunca Mas (Never Again) in 1984 (See Resources, page 7). Later, the Center for Legal and Social Studies published the names of 692 military people responsible for disappearances, torture and deaths. As of this writing, thirty trials had been completed and nine top commanders are in jail, two of them with life sentences.

Punto Final? (Period, the End?)

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo are still demonstrating every Thursday afternoon at 3:30 because they do not yet know what happened to their children. In an effort to cover up the truth, the military has managed to disappear its own records, in spite of the shift to civilian rule. The process of justice has been blocked and delayed to such an extent that in the first three years of Alfonsin's presidency, only thirty cases had been tried.

Well before the end of 1986, 1700 prosecutions had been filed against 500 members of the military with the possibility of many more cases to be opened as people developed the courage to come forward with their complaints. One of the most brutal torturers, a man who specialized in sexual violence, was acquitted under a statute of limitations after a long and detailed trial at which his guilt was certain. All of this has left the Mothers pessimistic about the government's ability to respond to their demands. And the large military structure remains intact.

An additional insult came in December 1986 when both houses of the Argentine congress passed a law called "Punto Final" which granted effective amnesty to the vast majority of military personnel accused of crimes committed under the dictatorship. Under the law, any case not filed and fully documented in preparation for trial within the sixty days after passage of the law will be permanently dropped. In spite of public protests (one of which drew 70,000 people) and in spite of public opinion polls which reflected 70% opposition to Punto Final, legislators voted "party line" and the parties seemed to have struck a deal with the president, who supported the law. Even a legislator whose child had disappeared supported Punto Final; according to one newspaper, his wife stopped talking to him because of his position.

In April, 1987 some of the effects of Punto Final exploded in Argentina. As a result of the law, the courts actually worked more quickly than before and accepted 170 new cases before the sixty day deadline. This enraged both the military and the public for opposing reasons. Part of the military rebelled against the new cases and refused to turn in "their own," threatening a coup and blockading themselves in a barracks. One issue provoking the rebellion was the fact that middle-level officers felt they were being singled out while many higher-level officers had not been prosecuted. The Argentine public was also angered—partly because the military was overtly resisting the trials and partly because approximately 500 members of the military will go forever untried. About a half million people marched into the Plaza de Mayo in April to protest the resistance of the military and to reaffirm their commitment to democracy.

A new amnesty law was approved by the Argentine Supreme Court on June 4, exempting all but about four dozen top military officers from prosecution. This "due obedience" bill maintains that junior officers had no choice but to follow the orders of their superiors. The court simultaneously ordered the release of three men who had been sentenced to jail terms ranging from four to twenty-five years after being found guilty last December of torturing political prisoners. This will contradict the 1984 UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Argentina ratified the UN Convention in 1986. Argentine human rights lawyer Marcelo Parrilli recently told The New York Times that Argentina is the only country in the world where the use of torture is legal. It appears that Alfonsin is walking a fine line between a fragile democracy and another coup.

What Next?
The Argentine economy is still shaky. Inflation is rampant. The huge foreign debt makes development loans difficult to get. Unemployment is very high. The University of Buenos Aires with its 160,000 students is chaotic and not very effective at preparing students for jobs, even when the jobs are available. People fear a return of military dictatorship. Some people told me that they feel the dictatorship continues, though in a milder form.

Argentina is definitely a much better place to live since the election of Alfonsin. Artists are "out" again; some exiles have come home; people can be actively involved in politics without risking their lives; banned disciplines are being taught in the university again; there is more open discussion. But I sensed a lot of worry wherever I went. Many people are still afraid to speak openly, in fear of what might happen in the future.

A lawyer at the Center for Legal and Social Studies (one of the active human rights groups) told me that he thinks Alfonsin is going to need the support of the police and the military to repress worker uprisings in the hard economic times ahead. Others hypothesize that Alfonsin is now a puppet of the military in civilian guise. Throughout

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The Resist Pledge System

The most important source of Resist's income is monthly pledges. Pledges help us plan ahead by guaranteeing us a minimum monthly income. In turn, pledges receive a monthly reminder letter (in addition to the newsletter) which contains news of recent grants and other Resist activities. So take the plunge and become a Resist pledge!

Yes, I would like to pledge $ ______ monthly to the work of Resist.

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City______State______Zip__________

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Contamination of Sub-terranean and Superficial Waters

Sub-terranean and superficial bodies of water in Puerto Rico have been contaminated by U.S. transnational corporations. Contamination of subterranean water supplies in the towns of Vega Alta, Patillas, Guayama, Santa Isabel, Manati, Barceloneta, Caguas, and others has occurred in the presence and with the approval of the EPA and the U.S. Geological Survey. Salt water has penetrated water supplies in Manati, Barceloneta, Yauco, Arecibo, and other towns despite assurances to the contrary by the U.S. Geological Survey. Toxic dumping in Juncos, Barceloneta, Yauco, Arecibo, and many other towns has also happened in the presence of federal agencies.

Cuidad Cristiana:
An Unbelievable Story

Cuidad Cristiana, a city housing development, was built in 1979-1980 by the Morris Demmel Construction Company. In 1978, the presence of mercury, lead, zinc, and other toxic substances had been discovered in the waters of Quebrada Frontera and Caño Frontera. Nevertheless, Morris Demmel Construction dredged Quebrada Frontera and deposited the sediments in several parts of what was to become Cuidad Cristiana. Houses were built directly on these sediments. The construction had the approval not only of Puerto Rico’s Board of Environmental Quality and Puerto Rico’s Planning Board, but also the EPA, the Engineering Corps, the Fisheries and Wildlife Service, and other federal agencies. The project was partially funded by the Farmers’ Home Administration.

In the intervening years the residents of Cuidad Cristiana have suffered severe toxic poisoning, and there is no doubt that the mercury in the residents’ blood, urine, and hair comes from breathing mercury vapors, eating foods grown in contaminated soil, and using water probably contaminated because of broken underground pipes.

The denial and cover-up by the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta is well known. But it has to be remembered that the toxins were originally dumped in Quebrada Frontera by transnationals like Squibb, Technicon, Reedco, Alcon, and others located in the industrial complex at the town of Humacao.

Imperial Sanctuaries

Liberal environmentalists and the federal government have recently begun to lobby for the creation of marine and estuary sanctuaries in Puerto Rico. The islands of La Mona, Monito, Desecheo, Caja de Muertos, parts of Vieques and Culebra, the coastal area from Guánica to Cabo Rojo, parts of Fajardo, and other coastal areas, have been included in the sanctuary plans. These sanctuaries are justified, according to imperial logic, because: the puertorricans destroy the environment and the feds clean and protect it. Initially the direct participation of the U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in these plans was overt. More recently, to make the project appear more “Puertorriquen” (or “nativized”), federal participation has been downplayed.

These sanctuaries would be created by the federal government with funds from the NOAA. If, after five years, the government of Puerto Rico has not maintained the areas in a way satisfactory to the federal agency, the funds will be appropriated. What has not been said in this case, but has been made crystal clear by previous examples, is that if the federal government deems it necessary for its strategic defense, or for American political-military interests, any portion of these areas can be used by the U.S. Department of Defense.

Given the historic use of El Yunque and Vieques for launching and rehearsing the invasion of the Dominican Republic and Grenada, and the training for wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and other countries, we cannot afford to allow the transfer of any portion of the soil of Puerto Rico to the federal government. Even when these military uses are not mentioned in the regulations for the sanctuaries, it’s a highly likely possibility as long as Puerto Rico remains a colony of the United States.

Neftali García Martínez has spent the last ten years studying and making public the economic and environmental impact of U.S. presence in Puerto Rico. He is a member of the editorial board of Pensamiento Crítico, a magazine of the Puerto Rican left.

Argentina

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downtown Buenos Aires there were disturbing posters advertising a book entitled The Day They Killed Alfonso. I don’t know what this book is about but the posters showed Alfonso with a chunk of his head missing. The posters reinforce my sense that if Alfonso can’t work with the military his days as president are going to be numbered.

What I find the most hopeful in this picture is the ongoing deep commitment of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, and the mass support they are now receiving in Argentina. The question remains whether they and Alfonso can maintain democracy. The Mothers of the Plaza are members of FEDEFAM—the Latin American Federations of Families of Disappeared Prisoners—a regional humanitarian organization formed by the families of disappeared political prisoners in thirteen countries in Latin America. FEDEFAM is based in Venezuela. Through this organization the Mothers are gaining international support.

Anyone interested in contributing to human rights work in Argentina can send money to:

Argentine Information Service Center
210 5th Avenue, Suite 1102
New York, NY 10010

Estelle Disch teaches sociology at U. Mass/Boston and does feminist therapy at Tapestry in Cambridge. She is particularly interested in how societies create emotional troubles for their members. The author gratefully acknowledges the invaluable help of Rita Arditti in preparing this article.

Argentina Resources—


FILM: “The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” by Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo. 64 min. 15 mm. or video. Available from First Run Features, NY, NY.

Farm Labor Organizing Committee/ Centro Campesino, P.O. Box 1855, Auburndale, FL 33823.

The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), founded by Baldemar Valazyquez in 1967, has been effectively organizing midwestern (primarily Mexican and Mexican-American migrant) farmworkers and defending their rights through twenty years of struggle. FLOC’s successful Campbell and Vlasic boycotts recently resulted in historic three-way negotiated settlements between the companies, the farmers and the farmworkers. FLOC is now negotiating with Heinz, Inc.

Since half of FLOC’s membership migrates to Florida from October to June, FLOC combined efforts with Centro Campesino, a local farmworker organizing center. FLOC/CC in Florida is working to organize new members who will migrate to Ohio and Michigan this summer and participate in ongoing contract struggles there. Preparations are underway for the first Florida conference of FLOC members.

Prior to the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Centro Campesino worked actively with state and national coalitions to prevent passage of the law, because of its serious repercussions in the undocumented community. In the next two years, thousands of farmworkers will be denied employment, social services, medical care and housing because they fail to apply for legalization as a result of migrancy, or are unable to produce the necessary documents to prove eligibility.

FLOC/CC is undertaking a legalization project to not only assist those undocumented workers who can qualify under the law, but to develop a core of active, concerned newly-documented members who will continue to resist the intended outcome of the legalization process—the deportation of the majority of farmworkers currently in field labor, and their replacement with the euphemistic “guest workers” or “temporary workers.”

RESIST’s grant of $500 will go towards the legalization project.

Lesbian Community Project, 1404 S.E. 23rd St., Portland, OR 97214.

Concerned over the lack of organization and activism in their community, lesbians in Portland, Oregon gathered information on community needs through a variety of outreach efforts and designed Portland’s first Lesbian Conference, “Building Community: Common Ground for the Future” in 1986. The conference attracted 500 participants, the largest lesbian gathering in the city’s history. The result was an ongoing organization committed to a multi-cultural, multi-issue focus.

LCP has an Interim Steering Committee composed of 50% women of color, including Black, Native American, Latina and Asian women. All the members represent a range of class backgrounds, cultural and political perspectives, and occupations. The organization intends to develop an active membership, cultivate leadership, offer a wide variety of educational, social activities, and carry out a strong affirmative action policy.

While performing the tasks necessary to structure and incorporate themselves, writing by-laws, conducting a membership drive and electing a Board of Directors, the LCP has also sponsored community programs including a forum on Big Mountain, organizing around a Lesbian/Gay Rights bill, publishing two newsletters, conducting an anti-racism workshop, training the police in cross-cultural issues, holding an evening of older women’s stories, and presenting a community service recognition evening. Not only that, they’ve also worked in a number of coalitions such as the Women of Color Caucus, the ACLU Commission on Lesbian and Gay Rights, and the Rainbow Coalition. They have sponsored education programs on Women in Mexico, Lesbians and Gays in Central America, and other international issues. And, in case you were wondering if they ever relaxed, they held an open community party!

LCP is committed to putting in place a diversified grassroots fundraising system that will enable it to become self-sufficient. RESIST’s grant of $500 will be used to conduct a major donor campaign and a membership drive. If our reports are correct, any group anxious to build a community organization that will really reflect the needs of its community would benefit by contacting the LCP for suggestions.

Radical Opportunity Still Available!

RESIST is in the process of broadening the representation of its Board in order to better reflect the communities we fund. We are specifically recruiting people of color. The main responsibility is to attend and participate in board meetings which are held approximately every six weeks. Most of the meeting time is spent evaluating the 20 or 30 grants received. Board members are also asked to participate in subcommittees which meet occasionally between regular Board meetings to deal with particular issues such as hiring staff, recruiting Board members, and investment of Resist funds. A minimum two year commitment is expected. If you’re an activist in your community who would enjoy knowing more about the movement nation-wide, have the time and commitment that reflects the above Board member description, and would like to participate in the concrete task of helping hundreds of groups around the country develop their work, please call and/or write to RESIST for more information on our selection process. RESIST, One Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143, (617) 623-5110.

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REGIONAL ACTIONS

New England: General Dynamics Electric Boat Co. (New London, CT)
Delta: CTR Shantytown, 41 Dracut Rd, Dracut, MA 01826

Midwest: Ralph Meier, 709 W 66th St, Chicago, IL 60637

Northwest: Open Comm. Valley Pulp, Portland, OR 97213

South: CATE: 760-34-81, 807 2nd St, Elyria, OH 44035

West: Jose Ribeiro, 1014 S 5th St, Seattle, WA 98144

Northwest: Seattle: Tenacity Project

Other sites: Vermont:_target_13, 1111 Broadway, New York, NY 10013

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