

struction and judicial workers, and a coalition of 60 state sector unions representing another 200,000 workers. In addition to a call for a 50 percent hike in the minimum wage, the demonstration demanded an end to the two-year state of siege and a solution to the soaring cost of living.

The first to walk off the job this week were 60,000 hospital workers demanding several months of unpaid wages due them. They were immediately followed by the 200,000 workers grouped in CITE, the Interunion Committee of State Employees. CITE has charged the government with deliberately attempting to destroy the union movement by doing away with the right to strike and to collective bargaining under the anti-labor "public employees code." Teachers in several departments around the country are also out demanding back wages and a wage increase to keep pace with the 30 percent yearly inflation rate. Steel, oil telecommunications, construction, judicial and other sectors are all poised to strike as well.

The economic crunch behind these workers' protests is emphasized in a report published last month in the Colombian journal *Sintesis Economica*, which said that one kilo of meat in Colombia now costs the equivalent of eight hours of labor, and a kilo of bread at least four hours! The government's decision to allow meat prices to rise 12-15 percent this week was taken by the angry workers as the ultimate provocation.

The same deliberate government provocation was evident in the public declarations this week of the director of Ecopetrol, the huge state-owned oil and petrochemical company. Despite weeks of open concern expressed in the press and elsewhere over the anticipated effects of a national oil workers' strike, Ecopetrol's director blithely declared that such a strike, were it to occur, "would not be very serious." He went on to assert that the leadership of the oil workers' union had been

seized by communist extremists who had forced a commitment to strike upon an unwilling rank-and-file. His implications were clear: any workers who go out on strike will automatically be considered communists, and treated to the same repressive measures currently meted out to communists in the rural areas of the country — brutal Chilean-style persecution, torture and assassination.

In preparation for the provoked strike confrontation, the government has ordered a full-scale military occupation of the city of Barrancabermeja, including stocking up on sufficient food, clothing and medicines to supply a strike-breaking force for 75 days. Maoist countergangs and agent provocateurs have heavily infiltrated the oil workers' union to insure the kind of anarchist provocations required to "justify" the planned military crack-down.

The government's "non-negotiable" stand on labor has already been demonstrated with the striking hospital workers. In several instances, combined assaults of security police and marines were ordered by the government to dislodge workers from hospitals they were occupying. Numerous arrests and extensive damage to the hospitals were all part of the violent scenario.

The government's undisguised strategy of full-scale war measures to impose a full-scale war economy is rapidly alienating the workers who constitute the base of the pro-government UTC and CTC labor confederation. In particular, the UTC and CTC leaderships fear a massive flight of their membership to the Communist Party-led CSTC, which has demonstrated both its capacity and willingness to fight against the austerity conditions. The UTC has already been threatened with a revolt from a majority opposition faction within its ranks which denounced the UTC executive committee for endorsing a political candidate who had "absolutely nothing to say about labor's concerns."

## U.S. Reporters Find Cubans 'Outraged' By Carter Remarks On Human Rights

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### CUBA

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Despite lip-service on the part of the Carter Administration to the idea of rapprochement with Cuba, every knowledgeable source indicates that Carter's Cuba diplomacy is working in exactly the opposite direction.

Benjamin Bradlee, a senior editor of the *Washington Post*, reported this week after returning from Cuba that President Castro and Cuban diplomats generally are "appalled" and "outraged" by President Carter's remarks about human rights and the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. In several hours of talks, President

Castro made it quite clear to Bradlee that Cuba feels it has nothing to learn about human rights from the country which perpetrated the Vietnam war and planned the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

President Castro was "steaming," Bradlee reports, about last month's provocative meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and several prominent anti-Castro Cuban exiles, including the commander of the Central Intelligence Agency's Bay of Pigs invasion. Castro emphasized to Bradlee that these individuals represent to Cubans everything that was corrupt about pre-revolutionary Cuba. Bradlee reported: "Castro said he could not imagine the names of three Americans whose consultations with the Cuban minister of foreign affairs would be comparably absurd."

Bradlee's report corroborates the estimate made two weeks ago by *Newsday* publisher William Attwood, who, after talking to Fidel, noted that if Carter continued to make statements on Cuba's internal or international policy, Fidel would make an "emotional response" which would likely end the possibility of further negotiations.

Cuba's refusal to tolerate Carter's overtures much longer should come as no surprise. It has been clear since the policy was first laid out in the Linowitz Report last December (written by the Committee on U.S. Latin American relations and the basis of Carter's policy for Latin America) that the strategy will only lead to confrontation with Cuba and as a result, a confrontation with the Soviet Union. Cuba will never agree to terms which amount to abrogating their revolution. The reactions of the Cubans have already exploded the fiction created by the Linowitz Report and its more recent "left" version, "The Southern Connection" published by the Institute for Policy Studies, that rapprochement with Cuba will be rapidly forthcoming. The March 7 *U.S. News and World Report* features an article entitled "Why It Won't Be Easy to Strike a U.S.-Cuba Deal," accurately describing Cuba's refusal to bargain on most of the issues Carter has laid out as preconditions.

The London-based *Latin America Political Report* published Feb. 25 one of the most explicit recognitions to date that the Carter policy is not what it appears to be. According to *Latin America*, Carter is following "a new policy option" designed by the U.S. "to improve its image" and "maintain its political and economic influence" in the region "without making any real concession." What *Latin America* fails to point out is that the results will not merely mean disappointing the strong lobby in the business community in favor of trade with Cuba — but inevitable war.

Recent statements from the Carter Administration have become increasingly provocative, disregarding the Cuban reaction. President Carter clarified to the nation in his radio talk show last weekend the apparent contradiction between his and Vance's previous statements on preconditions to relations with Cuba. He made clear that there are no preconditions to talking with Cuba, but there absolutely are preconditions to acting on the normalization of relations. "Before any full normalization of relations can take place," Carter said, "Cuba would have to make some fairly substantial changes in their attitude." He emphasized that he will "insist, for instance, that they not interfere in the internal affairs of countries in this hemisphere and that they decrease their military involvement in Africa and that they reinforce a commitment to human rights by releasing political prisoners..."

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young has been falling over his feet keeping up with Carter policy statements on Cuba and Angola. Earlier this week he reversed a statement he made in late January that Cuba was a stabilizing factor in Angola. In an effort to elaborate the Administration's allegation that Cuba is an aggressor in Angola, he asserted in an interview with the *Washington Post* that Angola is Cuba's "South Vietnam." Young claimed, "A dozen or so bodies are going back to Cuba every week — maybe more — and people are asking 'What are we doing, dying over there?'"

Young's accusation came after President Castro had already rejected the U.S. position on Cuban troops in Angola, indicating that Carter's Feb. 16 assertion that Cuba would remove its troops from Angola was groundless. According to Bradlee, President Castro stated categorically that Cuban troops are in Angola "pursuant to a treaty at the request of the government, in exactly the same way that U.S. troops are in other countries, such as West Germany, the Phillipines, South Korea, Japan, and so on.