A letter on the FBI murder of Puerto Rican independence figure

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The following letter was sent to the World Socialist Web Site *on* "FBI murders Puerto Rican independence figure."

The murder of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos at the hands of the Federal Bureau of Investigation stands as a statement to the impunity and arrogance with which the United States federal repressive apparatus operates in Puerto Rico. Like the so-called "natural" disasters precipitated by the inadequacies of the capitalist profit system recently unleashed by two consecutive hurricanes in the Gulf Coast, the oppressive conditions that are evident to socialists are in plain view for the entire world to see. Katrina and Rita revealed the longstanding class and race oppressive livelihood conditions under which millions are forced to live; Ojeda Rios' murder has made manifest that Puerto Ricans live in a colonial system whose people, resources, and territorial integrity are at the disposal of the American government. It is clear to thousands of Puerto Ricans that, more than one hundred years after the American invasion of 1898, they live in a society where true democratic aspirations have not been realized.

The crisis of the American profit system and its ruling elites is further evidenced by this questionable victory the federal government claims to score in the ostensible "war on terror." Far from any concrete outcomes as a result of the operation, the FBI has attempted to humiliate and demoralize the independentista (separatist) movement in the Caribbean nation by invading Ojeda Ríos' home precisely during the commemoration of the 23 September Grito de Lares, an event of great historical and political significance to thousands of Puerto Ricans. It also has succeeded in flaring rejection of the colonial condition of the island nation.

The massive operation, where hundreds of agents surrounded the house where the elderly Ojeda and his wife lived clandestinely, demonstrates the desperation of imperialist forces against those who dare rebel against their reactionary policies. It must not be lost that what may appear to be an insular issue of wrongful death at the hands of the FBI is, in reality, a manifestation of the mounting crises that the American capitalist system is experiencing at home and abroad: the war in Iraq and the torture scandals associated with it; the failure of domestic agencies to provide emergency services to their citizens; the skyrocketing national deficit and mounting prices of gas. The latest crisis to touch the lives of 3.8 million Puerto Ricans in the island-colony is the murder of a person whose deeds evoke a centuries-old struggle for self-determination.

That there is no correlation of forces between the FBI and Ojeda Ríos' firepower capabilities was evident from the moment the shootout erupted. The subsequent cordoning-off of the scene, and the fact that the FBI barred access to district attorneys, negotiators, neighborhood residents, and medical teams, stands as an indictment of the powerlessness and humiliations which Puerto Ricans are subjected to in their own land. All of this also indicates that the FBI's mission was not to apprehend the nationalist leader, but to eliminate him.

Puerto Rico lives in a submissive and humiliating condition that can only be resolved through the articulation of a working class-based movement against colonialism and imperial militarism. Puerto Ricans, and working class people worldwide, must respond to this latest criminal offensive on the part of reactionaries with a broad movement to end imperialist oppression in all its forms.

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