The forces of liberation and decolonization, and the campaign to free political prisoners and prisoners of war held by the U.S., have won a tremendous victory. Eleven Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war were released from U.S. prisons in September, under a conditional clemency by President Clinton. We must savor the victory, and also deepen our understanding of how it was won and how it can be built on.

Edwin Cortez, Eliseo Escobar, Ricardo Jimenez, Adolfo Matos, Dylcia Pagan, Alberto Rodriguez, Alicia Rodriguez, Luiz Rios, Luis Rona, Alejandro Torres, and Carmen Valentin were, justly welcomed as heroes and patriots by the Puerto Rican people. Each was greeted by family members and supporters as they emerged from prison gates for the first time in as much as 19 years. The campaign had united even Puerto Ricans who identified with commonwealth and staunch parties behind the demand for freedom for the imprisoned people. Over 100,000 people marched in San Juan to demand that Clinton eliminate the unjust and insulting conditions he was placing on their release.

An ecstatic crowd celebrated the released freedom fighters when they arrived in Puerto Rico. As TTT was going to press, the prisoners were scheduled to appear together at a rally in Lares on September 23 in commemoration of the call for Puerto Rican independence from Spain. This act further challenged and obviated some of the unjust restrictions Clinton imposed in his clemency offer.

WHY AND HOW THE VICTORY WAS WON

Despite the conditions, the release represents a breakthrough in the struggle to gain recognition that the U.S. holds political prisoners and POW's. Why? "We think that this is an unprecedented, historic moment," said attorney Jan Susler, who represented the prisoners and was describing the conference call to discuss Clinton's offer. TTT reported that the prisoners recognized that men and women who had dedicated their lives to the freedom of their country deserved to be united in the struggle for their liberation upon being able to associate with each other and with other leaders of the Puerto Rican independence movement such as Rafael Cancel Miranda, one of the Puerto Rican nationalist prisoners released somewhat later by Pres. Jimmy Carter 20 years ago.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE

First of all, we must support and defend the released prisoners in their efforts to participate in and advance the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. The U.S. Department of Justice and Department of the Interior have said plain talk that the prisoners must not have granted clemency," Jan Susler said. "Because they have shown us how and showed us that they will not be intimidated by police repression, we have taken it upon themselves to mobilize the political prisoners and watchdog groups who will be watching the people responsible for enforcing the conditions. This political prison system must now include the organizations and campaigns to support elections, political prisoners and watchdog groups who will be watching the people responsible for enforcing the conditions. This political prison system must now include the organizations and campaigns to support.

Puerto Rico
L.A. killer cop David Mack got caught robbing banks. His ex-partner, L.A. killer cop Rafael Perez, got caught stealing cocaine from the LAPD evidence locker and selling it on the street. That cocaine had been logged in by L.A. killer cop Frank Lyga (a white undercover cop who killed off-duty Black cop Kevin Gaines). Perez’s current partner, killer cop Nino Duren, gave perjured testimony about gang violence that enabled L.A. District Attorney Gil Garcetti to obtain a controversial gang injunction against Latino youth in the Rampart Division where these killer cops worked.

But now that this nest of vipers has been exposed, Perez has cracked and begun blowing the whistle and police and federal investigators are digging how high and wide the culture of violence and cover-up extended.

As we go to press, we know that Perez has admitted shooting an unarmed, handcuffed man, Javier Ovando, in the head, and that his partner Duren covered it up with a planted ‘drop’ gun and rock cocaine. We know that Perez has admitted that another incident, in which cops shot Jose Perez, wounded a witness, Salvador Ochoa, and killed Juan Manuel Chávez, was also dirty, with police covering up that the victims were unarmed with perjured testimony and ‘drop’ guns.

We know that L.A. killer cop Brian Hewitt, involved in that incident, has been fired along with a fellow cop, for the bloody beating of Israel Jimenez in a Rampart station interview room and its subsequent coverup.

We know that Duren invented stories of mad-dog gang killers armed with semi-automatic weapons to help the D.A. convince a judge to grant an unprecedented injunction limiting the rights of association of Latino youth. And the disclosures are still pouring out daily!

The problem is hardly restricted to California. In New York, where the killing of Amadou Diallo was met by a massive campaign of civil disobedience, police responded by shooting nine people in the month of August alone. In Florida, prison guards beat to death a man on Death Row. In Chicago, police shot and killed Black people in two different traffic incidents on the same night. In Las Vegas, two men who were then cops, Christopher Brady and Ron Morstern, were found guilty of a 1996 hate crime. According to the US attorney, the two conspired to harass and intimidate Hispanics, resulting in their shooting to death Daniel Mendez. 21 And the list could go on and on. Big cities and small towns, victims, Black, Latino, Asian, white, Native American.

What is most remarkable is that these new atrocities and disclosures come in the face of alleged efforts at police reform, in the face of a growing political movement focusing on stopping such racism and abuse, in the face of a supposed commitment by Janet Reno and Clinton’s Justice Department to “restore trust in the police” by investigating and prosecuting excessive force. This persistence should push us to deepen our understanding of how acceptable and systemic this problem is. But it should also make us sharpen our analysis and understanding of the basis of police abuse. And it should challenge us to come forward with more effective solutions and organizing strategies that can deal with a problem of this enormity. On October 22nd, tens of thousands of people will march against police brutality in cities across the country. But what will we do on October 23rd? How can we materially affect the strategies and operations of the police?

The gas injunctions obtained with perjured testimony by the L.A. District Attorney, were simply the new court-sanctioned version of the old “Operation Hammer” program of massive “gang sweeps” of Black and Latino youth, marked by 30,000 “pre-emptive” arrests by the LAPD.

Such programs and methods aim to criminalize a whole generation of Black and Latino youth simply for their “demographic profile.” Yet these crimes of racial status are forming the basis for the three strikes incarcerations that are locking increasing numbers away for the rest of their lives even as crime rates continue to fall.

It is not necessary for all cops to be bad guys in order to function in this way. It is not necessary for every cop to be a killer cop. It is only necessary to the system that the bad cops, the killer cops, be allowed to do their work unmolested for prolonged periods of time. That way, on the streets, at any given time, the people they patrol do not know whether the particular cop they see is one of the so-called ‘bad apples’. This is the use of state terror to cow the population into obedience.

The problem is not only police misconduct, but police conduct. In New York, the cops boast about the fact that arrest rates continue to rise even as crime rates drop. Last year in N.Y.C., the first time, police made more arrests than there had been reported crimes—50,000 more! Those officers, who join to serve the communities are often broken down or driven out by the harsh realities of colonialism. The officers for whom the temptations and corruption of power prove too strong are protected by the blue wall of silence and by the system until they become too rich or too old or too damaged.

But the system goes on, training others to take their place.

Good cop and bad cop is in fact a strategy of policing and of interrogation, in which officers take turns playing the parts, to exert physical or psychological domination over the people they are dealing with. The good cops do not function to keep the bad cops honest; they are simply a necessary part of the equation of control, the cartel that works in tandem with the stick. This is similar to the torture techniques taught by the US military and CIA to repressive Latin American militaries. Effective torture requires not simply the application of pain, but the provision of relief.

Nor are reforms, like the Christopher Commission proposals made in response to the outrage about the beating of Rodney King, going to solve the problem. Some of the exact “bad cops” identified by name in that report were never even removed from the LAPD, because the powers-that-be need that kind of element in the mix. What’s more, the main Christopher reforms, community oriented policing and the post of Inspector General, have been utterly debased under the clean machine regime of LAPD Chief Bernard Parks.

In fact, the proponents of community oriented policing describe it as the domestic equivalent...
of psychological operations in the military, the effectiveness of the training of the population and the enemy to your advantage. In other words, it is more of the same militarization of the police that marks the colonial approach.

Policing in the U.S. has functioned increasingly as a militarization model since the Black rebellions of the 1960's, when local police forces were overwhelmed, and the National Guard and regular Army forces were called in to cities across the U.S. The riots were never to be caught short again. They unleashed COINTELPRO, a domestic counter-insurgency dirty war against Black revolutionaries such as in the Black Panther Party, and they began to provide military weaponry, training and centralized strategic planning to police departments under the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). This process has continued unabated. Frank Morales, a New York community activist, spelled out the extent of recent militarization of the police in an article in the Summer 1999 issue of Covert Action Quarterly. The Clinton administration continued the police-military connection by mandating that the Department of Defense (DOD) and its associated private industries form a partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ). Morales wrote in CAQ, "Technology Transfer From Defense" calls for the transfer of military technology to domestic police organizations. Previous direct transfers of this sort had been made only to friendly foreign governments. Morales concludes that this Clinton directive "ensures the formalization of direct military control of the police."

A recent round of organizing on the issue of police abuse was directed at getting Clinton to speak out on the problem and Attorney General Reno to act on it. Yet Morales reports that Reno, speaking to members of the defense, intelligence, and industrial communities under Clinton's program in November 1993, welcomed her guest's "to the kind of war our police fight every day." Let me challenge you to turn your skills that served us so well in the Cold War to helping us with the war we're now fighting daily in the streets of our towns and cities across the nation." Shortly after Reno issued this challenge, DOD and DOJ entered a five-year partnership to formalize joint technology sharing and development efforts for law enforcement and those military operations unrelated to war. Armed of shared military technology included "devices to detect concealed weapons," to avoid Fourth Amendment limitations against unreasonable searches. Another shared technology is in the area of "virtual reality training, simulation, and mission planning."

Such training has been provided, according to Morales, by Firearms Training Systems, Inc. (FATS), which, since 1984, has specialized in customized firearms training and psychological conditioning of police forces in the U.S. and foreign military organizations, including the armies of Singapore and Italy, the U.S. Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and the BATF, FBI, and LAPD. The President and CEO of FATS is Peter A. Marino, who was formerly the Director of the Office of Technical Services of the Central Intelligence Agency. Morales provides documentation that nearly half of the hundreds of para-military police units in the U.S. have trained with active duty military experts in special operations, while another 30 percent trained with police officers who had special operations experience in the military.

Morales quotes FATS own description of the nature of its simulation training. "You've got him in your sights. Drawing a gun, he turns, you fire. A life and death situation? Not if it's a simulation system from Firearms Training Systems (FATS), the leading worldwide producer of interactive simulation systems designed to provide training in the handling and use of small and supporting arms.... FATS developed its first video simulation system for police and military application in 1983. Since, Morales reports, they have sold more than 2,200 systems in over 30 countries.

FATS simulation systems, according to its manufacturer, "enable users to law enforcement agencies and the military the ability to train in highly realistic scenarios through the integration of video and digitized projected imagery and modified, laser emitting firearms that react to the input, feel, and response of the original weapon.... The FATS simulator evaluates and guides the user through a series of training exercises, which include appropriate use of deadly force." The company also boasts that "FATS systems used by law enforcement agencies are a viable defense tool against liability lawsuits relating to alleged uses of excessive force. The reasons: officers training on FATS systems receive the most realistic training available to law enforcement personnel. An important selling point to departments that have been plagued by lawsuits for wrongful deaths caused by their officers!"

Recently, Morales reports, FATS Inc. contracted with the Office of Naval Research to produce a commercial version of the Weapons Team Engagement Trainer (WTET). They will work directly with potential military and law enforcement customers to develop a commercial version of the system. The training simulators link large, video projection, digital audio technology, and infrared (IR) location sensors to provide realistic training exercises to combat and law enforcement personnel in place of traditional marksmanship exercises. The long pieces by Morales is available in Covert Action Quarterly, at 1500 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. URL: http://www.covertaction.org

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, a former Army Ranger and paratrooper, and author of "On Killing," says that "modern training uses what are essentially B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning techniques to develop a firing behavior in the soldier. This training comes as close to simulating actual combat conditions as possible." Grossman asserts that operant conditioning is "the single most powerful and reliable behavioral modification process yet discovered in the field of psychology, and now applied to the field of warfare." He explains that behavioral engineering geared to produce better killers is relatively recent.

According to Grossman, it has been demonstrated that "in World War II, 75 to 80 percent of riflemen did not fire their weapons at an exposed enemy, even to save their lives and the lives of their friends," but that by the Vietnam War, the non-firing rate was closer to 5 percent. This was accomplished through a process of desensitization, denial and indoctrination. "The method used to train today's U.S. Army and USMC soldiers is nothing more than an application of conditioning techniques that develop a reflexive quick-quick firing ability," Grossman concludes, and now these methods are being used to train street cops in waging war in our cities. No wonder we are seeing killings in which cops empty their weapons into anyone perceived as a threat! The problem behind these shootings is not "lack of training," as liberal police reformers assert. The training is one source of the problem!

How can we begin to make a dent in this police state regime? Remember the message of the Black Panther Party -- the people's spirit is greater than the man's technology. The strength of the police rests not fundamentally on their armaments but on their political support. Only by directly changing their anti-democratic, colonial role can we begin to erode that support.

We need to wage a pro-active campaign not only to denounce atrocities after they happen, but to organize a community base to take on the power of the police. We need to build the call for a special prosecutor to handle complaints of police abuse. Beyond that, we need community control of the police. We need elected boards that set policies, hire and fire top police administrators, and oversee the discipline of officers. We elect the people who control our schools, why not the people who control our cops?

We can take a step in this direction by creating local assemblies for community control of the police, a kind of Shadow police commission that can begin the steps and organize around a program of de-militarization of the police, that can provide a place for people to bring their complaints and reports, and for officers who are expelled by the role they have been assigned by the rulers to come and blow the whistle.

Other measures are needed. We certainly need to publicize the systemic nature of the atrocities, to protest the killings, beatings and injustice and to pressure the system to build killer cops accountable. We can expand the network of CopWatch projects out on the streets observing police procedures and acting as a preventive measure against brutality. We need to build mechanisms of community self-defense. One contribution PART is making to this process is in the small distribution of cases of police abuse and examples of the people's resistance to anti-shooters activities around the U.S. If you'd like to get on the list, email us at part2001@usa.net.
Filipino gays and lesbians take to the streets, waging their fists at authoritarianism.

Filipino Gays Join Anti-Dictatorship Movement in Philippines

The Progressive Organization of Gays in the Philippines (Progay-Philippines) and Gays United to Wipe Out American Military Presence in the Philippines (GUWAP) called on gays and lesbians to join the broad anti-dictatorship movement under the auspices of the September 21 Committee, to march on the Malacanang presidential palace in Manila to oppose the resurgence of authoritarian rule under the Estrada regime. GUWAP and Progay rallied sexual minorities to join the multi-sectoral protest rallies in major cities in the Philippines scheduled for Tuesday, September 21.

Atadero knows first-hand about the potential for political repression in his country. He was illegally arrested and became a political detainee during the former Marcos dictatorship. He noted a number of danger signs of the rebuilding of a dictatorial police state, such as the increasing bullying of citizens during rallies. He cited the rebuilding of CAGUs — right-wing para-military organizations — in the barrios and pointed out that this development, along with arrests of suspected political enemies of the president by the police, are chillingly similar to the months before martial law was declared by Marcos.

Michael Bismar, president of the GUWAP, was scandalized by the return of Marcos-style extravagance by President Estrada and his entourage at a time of economic hardship throughout Asia, when the funding is drawn from the taxes paid by the increasingly impoverished masses of Filipinos. "The hot cars for Estrada's Cabinet members and the rampant couturier remind us of Linoada's thousands of shoes and excessive jewelry," Bismar remarked.

"While the prices of oil and other basic commodities are rising beyond our means, it pains me to know we need to have an administration teaching people to gamble in order to solve the country's financial crisis," he added.

Meanwhile, a Filipino lesbian group called "Lesbonds" also prepared to march against the dictatorship on September 21. They were scheduled to rally in Baguio together with the Inabanyog Women's Federation and Tongtangan ti Umili-BAYAN.

Calling themselves "makaabangiyang bayanang" or nationalist lesbians, feminist lesbian poets from the city, tomboy farmers from the Mountain Province and butch workers from the factories are on the war path against charter change, the rising pyramid of the US-backed and directed Estrada regime. Meanwhile, Progay-Davao and the Pink Collective of Gay Campus Writers were also scheduled to spice up the September 21 Committee movement in Southern Mindanao.

The Progressive Organization of Gays in the Philippines (Pro-Gay) is a national mass organization of Filipino gay men seeking the liberation of gays through genuine national freedom and democracy in the Philippines. It also links with other gay-friendly heterosexual groups within as well as outside the Philippines.

Visit the Pro-Gay Homepage at http://members.tripod.com/~progay_philippines/