

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Are the Russians coming?

The Olympic Games could be the next victim of the anti-Soviet hysteria being whipped up by the Reagan administration and others. Already some Congressmen have suggested denying visas to the Soviet team. This might insure a U.S. victory, but it could also be the death knell of the games.

Although U.S. athletes are still traveling to the U.S.S.R., some invitations to Soviet athletes to compete in this country have been cancelled by the U.S. and others have been withdrawn by the Soviets due to public hostility. The Soviet basketball team's tour of the U.S. has been cancelled and the soccer team's tour is in danger. The phenomenon is not limited to athletes — visas to tourists and performers have also been removed.

The future of the Olympic Games may well be at stake. In 1980, the U.S. boycotted the games and in 1976 the African nations stayed home. So far no boycott of the L.A. games has developed. Apparently, the African nations will overlook U.S. involvement with South African athletes.

There are legal questions: If the U.S. were to bar any country, would the games be moved or cancelled? There is also a great deal of dissatisfaction in other nations with the Los Angeles site. There are serious concerns over the potential effect of L.A.'s smog on athletes' health and an even more serious concern over the city's high crime rate and the inability of the authorities to protect the athletes from robbery and assault. Many of the Third World nations are dismayed by the high price they will be forced to pay for their athletes' room and board.

There are others who decry the extreme commercialization of the games, with official Olympic candy bars, pop, toilet paper, etc.

There are many questions to be raised about the 1984 Olympic Games and one of them should not be whether the Soviet athletes are welcome to participate. If the Soviets are barred from the games they will be joined by many of the socialist nations and the U.S. will be left to compete with the small Third World nations and a few athletes from Western Europe. It will be like the Pan American Games without Cuba — lots of medals for the U.S. but not much in the

way of athletic competition.

Those who are interested in the future of the Olympics and those interested in an economic success in L.A. should fight any attempt to bar the Soviets.

Support schools

The voters across Oregon have approved school levies to insure the operation of their schools. The Newport schools can be reopened and many other will remain open.

Those who continuously vote against school levies and other taxes should search their hearts and remember what the taxes of others have done for them. We pay very little for the advantages we receive and appreciate them very little until they are gone.

You will usually find that most of the complaining about high taxes comes from those with the ability to pay and those who have benefited most.

The gift of life

The latest scheme to get rich off of illness and misery is the proposal to buy and sell body parts. With the discovery of new drugs that prevent rejection of transplanted organs, transplants will become more and more routine. The only problem now standing between the patients and recovery is the shortage of available organs and the high cost.

Across the nation many suffer and die because an organ cannot be found or because the cost is too great.

Rather than allow the sale of body parts on the market like a slab of beef, the medical profession should launch an educational campaign and an all-out effort to obtain donors. Only when the public is willing to participate like it has in the call for blood donations can there be a supply of organs available free or at low cost that will insure the latest in medical care to those in need.

You can provide the gift of life. Call the Health Science Center's donor program.



Puerto Rico and Black America

by Dr. Manning Marable

Last month, the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee requested that I present an address before the United Nations on the urgent necessity to free Puerto Rico from American control. For eight years, the Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee has lobbied at the UN's Special Committee on Decolonization, and the issue has rapidly acquired worldwide support, particularly among Third World nations. Without hesitation, I agreed to add my presence to those of other Americans who advocate independence for Puerto Rico. Not surprisingly, the U.S. Ambassador boycotted the presentation.

After tracing the heritage of slavery and political oppression which led to Puerto Rico's evolution under Spanish rule, I focused on the racism and corporate exploitation fostered by the U.S. Puerto Ricans who actively denounce oppression are subjected to U.S. repression, not unlike that aimed at Black civil rights activists. In October, 1977, progressive trade union leader Juan Rafael Caballero was kidnapped, tortured, and executed. The next year, two independence leaders were butchered in a police ambush in Puerto Rico. In November, 1979, Angel Rodriguez Cristobal was beaten to death while in custody in Tallahassee, Florida. Grand jury repression continues to mount: in 1983, criminal contempt charges with demands for lengthy prison terms were brought against "independentistas" who have refused to cooperate in the suppression of their

freedom movement.

Two different concerns were raised in the discussion before the Special Committee. Why does the U.S. insist upon maintaining that Puerto Rico is an integral part of this country? And what is the relevance of Puerto Rico's status to Black America?

The ambassadors from Cuba, the African nations and Latin America could quickly answer the first question. With the advent of the Reagan administration, U.S. policy in the Caribbean and Central America demanded that Puerto Ricans be used as cannon fodder and as a strategic tool against liberation forces. In 1981 and 1982 the Puerto Rican National Guard took part in war maneuvers along with U.S. and NATO troops. These war maneuvers were designed to develop the capacity of military intervention against Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada. In February, 1983, the National Guard was sent into Honduras. Simultaneously, the Reagan administration openly violated U.S. laws by conducting a vicious campaign against Nicaragua, which involved the CIA, Somocista and counter-revolutionary terrorists. The crucial function of the Puerto Rican Guardsmen is to play the role of a Spanish-speaking Foreign Legion, buttressing local dictatorial regimes.

Why is Puerto Rico relevant to Black America? The Afro-American community is also the historical product of slavery and racism; we intimately understand the weight of

political repression which has been placed against our own leaders. We have experienced high rates of unemployment, the lack of adequate human services, inferior schools, and the racist attacks which Puerto Ricans face, here and in their island.

The greatest Afro-American scholar, W.E.B. DuBois, took a special interest in the plight of Puerto Rico. DuBois supported Puerto Rican rights activists, and championed the independence of the island a half century ago. Black Congressman Ron Dellums has introduced a bill in the House, which calls for the "Transfer of Powers to Puerto Rico" in compliance with UN requirements. In the bill, Congressman Dellums openly states that "the move toward the elimination of colonialism and all vestiges of colonialism is now irreversible. The practices followed by the U.S. with respect to Puerto Rico have been developed in open contradiction to the principles upon which this nation was founded. Puerto Rico constitutes a full-fledged Latin American nation."

We have an international responsibility to unite with oppressed peoples of color across the world. As Malcolm X noted, the United Nations is the most appropriate forum to charge the world's chief perpetrator of oppression, the U.S., with crimes against humanity. We must seize every opportunity to develop international links with others, and in doing so, we will advance our own liberation struggle.

Syria: Crossroads of history

The Syrian Arab Republic is an ancient land in the heart of the Middle East at the juncture of Asia, Africa and Europe. Syria is located in a limestone plateau with mountains on the western side. Its main river is the Euphrates. Other rivers are the Assi, which flows from the Beqaa Valley to the Mediterranean, and the Barada which waters the oasis surrounding the capital city, Damascus.

An important crossroads throughout history, Syria has been the site of several ancient civilizations. Its cultures were contemporary to and rivals of those of the neighboring Mesopotamia. The world's oldest alphabet, written on clay tablets in cuneiform script, was discovered in Ugarit.

From 1200 B.C. to 636 A.D. Syria was the battleground for many struggles. The Hittites, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Persians all marched through Syria. Then came Alexander the Great, the Romans, the Byzantines and the Persians.

The Arab conquest of Syria came in 636, only two years after the death of the prophet Muhammad. In 661, Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan became the fifth Caliph, or successor to Muhammad, and chose Damascus as his capital, thus making Syria the center of the spreading Islam.

Between 661 and 750 A.D., under the Umayyad Dynasty, Syria was the center of a flourishing trade. Muslim Arab armies pushed across North Africa into Spain and France, conquered central India and reached the borders of China.

In 750 A.D. the capital was moved to Baghdad, Iraq and the prominence of Syria declined. It fell prey to petty invaders, including the Crusaders, and in 1516 was conquered by the Turkish Ottoman Empire which ruled it for 400 years.

The Syrians hoped for independence after the defeat of the Ottomans during World War I, but instead were placed under French mandate. Revolts were frequent and bloody but independence was not

achieved until the French and British left after World War II.

Government

Following independence, in 1945, Syria had several weak governments. In 1958 it joined with Egypt in the United Arab Republic but this alliance was ended by a military revolt in 1961.

The Revolution of March 8, 1963, led by the Ba'ath Socialist Party, began a new era in the country's history. The Ba'ath party has worked for a socialist transformation of economic and social conditions to achieve political stability and a higher standard of living.

The Constitution of 1973 provides for three branches of government — legislative, executive and judicial. The legislative authority is embodied in the People's Assembly, chosen for a term of four years through direct general elections.

The system of government is republican, with the president heading the executive branch. On November 16, 1970 General Hafez al-Assad became Prime Minister and he was later elected President. The president is chosen by popular referendum for a term of seven years after being nominated by the People's Assembly on the recommendation of the Ba'ath Party. The president appoints the prime minister and members of his cabinet.

The judicial branch is independent and the Constitutional Court determines the constitutionality of laws.

The national administration is assisted by Peoples' Councils, which carry out local administrative duties. The councils include organizations elected by the people, who thus are able to participate in the administration of their local affairs.

The political leadership is embodied in the National Progressive Front, which was established in 1974 and includes five political parties. The NPF decides issues of war and peace, approves the state's five-year economic plans, debates economic policies and directs the coun-

try's general political orientation.

The Constitution vests the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party with the leadership functions in the state and society. The President is the secretary-general of the Party and is the leader of the NPF.

Economy

Syria is ranked among the developing nations but it is one of the few Third World nations that has no population problem (9 million residents) and whose development potential is equal to future needs.

Syria's extensive agriculture, its oil and mineral wealth, and its industrial potential, a population open to progress, and its strategic location guarantee economic development.

Economic and social plans are implemented through a series of five-year plans that began in 1960. Petroleum is the country's major export and its primary source of hard currency. The phosphate industry is second and the textile industry third. Thirty-two percent of the population is engaged in agriculture.

The new Euphrates Dam at Tabaka is the cornerstone of development. It irrigates 640,000 hectares and produces 900,000 kilowatts of electrical energy, some of which is exported to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Twenty-three new industrial projects were spawned by the dam and others are planned under the 1981-1985 plan.

Education

There are nearly 1.9 million students in Syria. Primary education, to the 6th grade, is compulsory. The aim of the education system is to increase the literacy rate and open educational opportunities to all. The overall objectives emphasize the need to nurture a sense of Arab unity among the young, encourage scientific development and widen the scope of technical and vocational education. There are four major universities and 40 colleges. Government scholarships are provided for students studying abroad.



"They don't grow horses like they used to."



Portland Observer

The Portland Observer (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, Inc., 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217, Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

The Portland Observer was established in 1970. Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.



283-2486

Alfred L. Henderson, Editor/Publisher
Al Williams, Advertising Manager

National Advertising Representative
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.
New York



Portland's largest black-owned newspaper.

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

News for and about you.

Subscribe today!

Yes, I would like a subscription to the Portland Observer.

I have enclosed my check or money order for \$15, for a one-year subscription.

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to: Portland Observer
Box 3137
Portland, Oregon 97208