

# RHC: no se explotará el cobre

**NORMA VALLE**  
EL REPORTERO

El gobernador Rafael Hernández Colón confirmó ayer que definitivamente "por el presente no se explotarán las minas de cobre" en el centro de la Isla, donde el gobierno comprará 955 cuerdas de terreno de la compañía minera American Metal Climax (AMAX) por \$1 millón.

Sin embargo, añadió que "esto quiere decir también que Puerto Rico tiene tierras en reserva y en el día de mañana en que esa explotación pudiera ser factible, siempre están ahí las minas, siendo propiedad del pueblo de Puerto Rico".

Hernández Colón señaló que no conoce el ámbito preciso de la negociación, por lo que no podía explicar si el gobierno comprará más cuerdas del terreno que las compañías mineras AMAX y Kennecott Copper compraron a finales de la década del '60 y durante la década del '70 con la intención de explotar los yacimientos de cobre, que para ese entonces era un negocio lucrativo.

La explotación minera en Puerto Rico fue estudiada por ambientalistas, legisladores y diferentes grupos y hubo un consenso generalizado en que la explotación del cobre particularmente era peligrosa en términos ambientales para la Isla, puesto que podría contaminar los cuerpos de agua.

Además, grupos de izquierda a los que se le sumaron personas de todas las ideologías políticas y ambientalistas desarrollaron una intensa campaña contra la explotación minera bajo la consigna de "Cero Minas".

Ahora, cuando baja radicalmente el precio del cobre en el mercado internacional, las compañías mineras norteamericanas que aspiraban a explotar los yacimientos minerales en el centro de la Isla desistieron de su empeño y ofrecieron las tierras que habían a pequeños agricultores y al gobierno de Puerto Rico.

El Gobernador dijo ayer durante la colocación de la primera piedra de la expansión de la fábrica de plásticos y cristal Wheaton Industries que las compañías ofrecieron la tierra y el gobierno estaba interesado, por lo que decidieron hacer el negocio.



# P.R. plans to buy copper-rich tracts

The government is in the final stages of negotiations to purchase 955 acres of copper-rich land in Utuado, Adjuntas and Guayanilla from American Metal Climax, Inc. (Amax), at a cost of \$1 million, for agricultural, recreational and conservation use, La Fortaleza announced Monday.

The land represents less than a third of the copper holdings in the Lares-Adjuntas-Utuado triangle, the focus of negotiations and controversy for nearly two decades.

In a statement issued Monday evening, gubernatorial adviser Mario Rodríguez described the land to be purchased by the Hernández Colón administration as 730 acres in Utuado and Adjuntas, and 225 acres in Guayanilla. Total purchase price is estimated at \$1 million.

The Lands Administration, which is conducting the negotiations, said in a report to Gov. Hernández Colón that the property in Guayanilla is basically agricultural land, and was to be used by Amax to build port facilities if the companies plans for commercial copper mining here became a reality.

The Utuado acreage in Barrio Viví, borders on

farming land currently producing coffee, oranges, and plantains.

The Guayanilla land borders on the Punta Verraca area included in the Conservation Trust's inventory of natural areas, and at its highest point meets the Guánica National Forest.

Amax planned to mine copper on a commercial scale in the Viví River and Tanama River areas, in a joint venture with Kennecott Copper.

The project was stalled initially by opposition from pro-independence groups and environmentalists, and later put on hold because of plummeting copper prices on the world market.

Negotiations were revived in 1980, when copper prices rose slightly but gold soared from \$225 an ounce to about \$700 an ounce and silver prices tripled.

The mining companies estimated in 1981 there were 1.2 million ounces of recoverable gold with a value at that time of \$600 million in the Utuado mountains, along with 2.9 billion pounds of recoverable copper worth some \$3 billion.

of the reductions.

However, in a STAR article last month, Dr. Jorge Pérez Cruet, chief of psychiatry at the hospital, said the hospital had not established a link between the reductions and the suicide attempts.

Rodríguez cited the case of Rubén Santiago, a Vietnam veteran who said he suffers from asthma. Santiago said his monthly compensation was decreased from 100 percent to 70 percent, based in part on erroneous information saying he had been hospitalized and discharged after he showed improvement for a psychological problem. A hospital official familiar with the case admitted an error had been made, but said that after a new evaluation the compensation was raised to 80 percent a few weeks ago.

Also noted was the case of Juan Guzmán, who on Aug. 14 allegedly wounded himself with a knife after having waited several hours to be hospitalized. Rodríguez said Guzmán became depressed when he was told there were no beds available. The man is reportedly recovering in the VA Hospital.

One official who asked not to be identified knew only that Guzmán had gone through a preliminary interview at the hospital where routine checks, such as blood pressure, are made, but did not wait for an appointment with a doctor.