

# OBREROS EN MARCHA

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# EDITORIAL South Africa - Apartheid Tightens Grip

In recent months, the reactionary and fascist government of South Africa has lashed out ruthlessly against the rising tide of Black discontent with apartheid. During this period, the government has murdered Steven Biko, the leading figure in the black consciousness movement and head of the South African Students Organization, outlawed 18 major black organizations, and imprisoned hundreds of black leaders. In addition, it has banned the largest black-read newspaper—The World—and jailed its editor, Percy Quoboza.

To justify its actions, the regime of Prime Minister John Vorster has had to resort to the big lie technique of all reactionaries and oppressors. However, these lies, by a discredited and lawless government, have been rejected not only by the black masses and the white liberal opponents of apartheid but even by imperialism which has been forced, by the outrage of the world community, to acknowledge their lack of substance.

In the case of Steven Biko, the government claims that he died in jail from self-inflicted wounds. It maintains that he injured himself when he resisted arrest. However, leaks from the Biko autopsy indicate that he died of "extensive brain injury" caused by severe blows to the head. This information has not been published in the pro-government press and was censored from publication in the rest of the "free" press that exists in South Africa. Nevertheless, the Vorster regime's explanations of Biko's death were transparent attempts at a cover-up. It is clear that Biko was killed because the movement which he led, threatened the very foundations of apartheid, despite the fact that it did not pinpoint armed struggle as the fundamental method to seize political power.

The premeditated murder of Biko was denounced by all progressive forces in South Africa and raised a storm of protest when it was raised not only among the black masses but also among the white sympathizers of the black consciousness movement. The news of Biko's murder reverberated throughout the black townships of South Africa and heightened the black masses anger and contempt for the Vorster regime.

It was in the wake of this discontent that the Vorster government made the decision on October 19th to outlaw the major black organizations (among them the South African Students Organization, the Black People's Convention (BPL), the Soweto Student's Representative Council, the Black Women's Federation, etc.) and arrest leading black leaders as well as white sympathizers.

The actions of the Vorster regime prompted the 49 African nations within the United Nations to call for a special session of the Security Council to discuss sanctions against the South African government. The African-sponsored resolutions would have imposed stiff economic penalties on South Africa because of its repressive racial practices against blacks. In specific, their proposal was to ban all foreign investments and credits for South Africa, to prohibit arms sales and revoke licenses to manufacture weapons as well as an end of cooperation in nuclear development, and a move toward punitive measures.

The United States, along with Britain and France, vetoed the African proposals. What they supported was a modified arms sanction which would oblige U.N. members, as well as call on non-members, to cease providing arms, ammunition, military vehicles and equipment and spare parts. But this proposal was a farce since South Africa is 75% self-sufficient in arms because of licenses to produce foreign weapons granted by the French, West Germans and Israeli arms industries.

The U.S. response to recent developments in South Africa exposes the class character of U.S. foreign policy in South Africa, in all of Southern Africa and indeed throughout the world when it is stripped of its "human rights" camouflage. It is a policy stamped by the dollar sign. Perhaps Andrew Young articulated the policy best when he said: "The free market system can be the greatest force for constructive change now operating anywhere in the world."

Despite the Carter Administration's public emphasis on the violation of human rights in South Africa, economics continues to be the determinate factor in U.S. foreign and internal policy. The sweeping sanctions demanded by the African resolutions would have imposed unacceptable economic restrictions to the imperialist countries who have billions of dollars invested in South Africa which produces billions in profits. The U.S. alone has over \$2 billion invested. As in Latin America and Southeast Asia, the rhetoric of U.S. imperialism is demonstrated to be nothing but a cover to protect the interests of U.S. multinational corporations to exploit the peoples of South Africa and their natural resources.

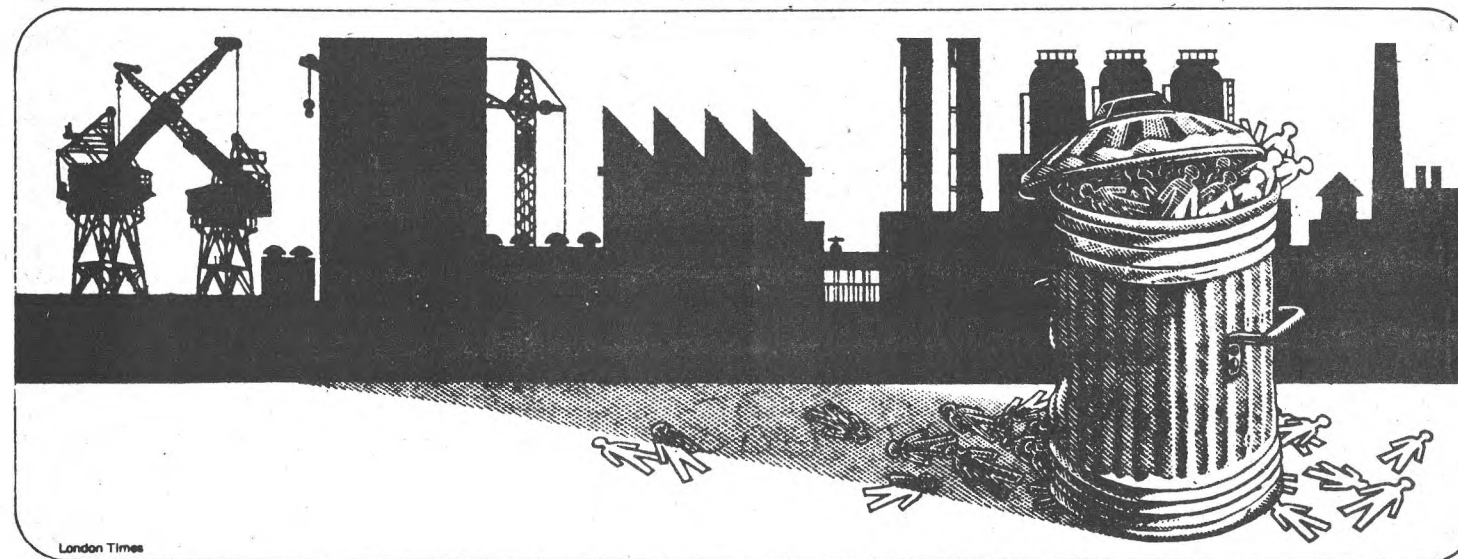
The most recent repressive actions by the South African regime have received world-wide condemnation. They have also confirmed the political position of the revolutionary forces in South Africa who pose that armed struggle must be the path followed by the black and non-white masses in their struggle for liberation.

The rising consciousness, militance and organization that is developing among the black and oppressed masses of South Africa as well as the changing correlation of forces in Southern Africa make it clear that apartheid's days are numbered. In the internal struggle within the ruling class of South Africa, the most reactionary circle—led by Prime Minister John Vorster and his Justice Minister James Kruger—have the upper hand now. They want to smash this developing process among the black masses and that is what lead them to take their most recent fascist actions.

In this country, we have a responsibility to the struggling people of Southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular. We have to put mass pressure on the Carter Administration to cut off political and economic relations with South Africa. Such an action would weaken the South African government and economy and heighten the internal contradiction between the exploited working masses of South Africa and the small circle of white rulers that oppress them. We must take this struggle to the U.S. working class and progressive groups and show the links of oppression and exploitation that unite us in a common struggle against U.S. imperialism.

## STEEL INDUSTRY

# DRIVE FOR PROFITS GENERATES UNEMPLOYMENT



During the past 4 months, steelworkers in the U.S. have been hit with one blow after another. Due to a decrease in profit margins over the past several years, the steel industry has attempted to recoup its losses by laying off more than 20,000 workers. In particular, workers in the "steel belt" of western New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio have been most affected.

The greatest cuts came from the country's biggest steel monopolies. In August, Bethlehem Steel—the second largest producer in the U.S.—announced a 10% cut in production and the layoff of 7300 workers at its plants in Johnstown, Pa. and Lackawanna, New York. In the Chicago area, U.S. Steel—the No. 1 producer—and Inland Steel laid off nearly 4000 workers and the number is expected to go up. The Alan Wood Steel plant in Pennsylvania added 3000 more workers to the unemployment rolls when it announced in July that it was closing its doors. Five thousand more workers lost their jobs when the Youngstown Sheet & Tube plant in Campbell, Ohio drastically cut down their operations.

In implementing the layoffs, the steel industry is using the method it has historically used whenever its profits have been threatened: to make the workers pay. In order to understand why profits are being threatened at this time, we must look at developments within the steel industry itself. At the same time, we must always keep in mind that despite a decrease in total earnings from last year, these money-hungry monopolies are still making millions of dollars from the labor of the workers that produce steel.

### INEFFICIENT PRODUCTION

The crisis facing the steel industry stems from the period of industrial development after World War II. During the war, the industries of Europe (particularly Germany) and Japan were almost totally destroyed by the widespread bombings. After the war, most steel companies completely rebuilt their mills employing the latest technological advances that had developed. The mills were built with U.S. dollars. The money was provided not out of the kindheartedness of the U.S. government, but because the U.S. needed markets for the goods that the rapidly expanding U.S. economy was producing. U.S.

capitalists needed to insure the development of international centers of capitalism that would be able to buy U.S. goods. In addition, these centers were needed to form a solid defense against the growing number of socialist countries, in particular, the Soviet Union.

In contrast, U.S. companies continued to operate mills using prewar production methods and equipment. Some innovations were implemented, but fundamentally the industry continued to produce as it had before the war. During the 1940s and 1950s, the U.S. retained its advantage in the market. It was by far the largest steel producer in the world. Over the years, however, the advanced technological methods of European and Japanese industry enabled those countries to produce more steel, cheaper, and of a higher quality. This is particularly true in the case of Japan.

Today, Japan's steel industry is the most modern and efficient in the world. Its production costs are much lower than in the U.S. In part, this is because Japanese steelworkers get paid less than their fellow workers in the U.S. At the same time, however, it is also true that productivity in Japanese steel production has risen 100% since 1967, compared to only a 16% gain in U.S. steel. This shows that the modernization of Japanese industry and the more efficient use of resources and raw materials are the key aspects in Japan's expanding industry. In the same way, the lack of modernization is the key aspect to the problems of steel in the U.S.

### FOREIGN COMPETITION

However, the steel industry holds a very different view about where its problems stem from. The industry characterizes as its greatest problem the growing competition coming from the advanced capitalist countries. Japan, for example, accounted for over one-half of the steel imports in the U.S. last year. The capitalists find it convenient to view their problems from the wrong angle. It is to their advantage politically to blame foreign imports for the layoffs. But the position of capitalist countries in the world capitalist market is fundamentally determined by the conditions in their own internal market. Thus imports and foreign competition are not the basic problem in the steel industry, but rather a symptom of its deeper problems. U.S.

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steel monopolists are losing control of their market because of their growing inability to compete in terms of cost levels and output capacity.

In addition to the problem of increased imports, U.S. steel corporations have accused several Japanese and European companies of "dumping"—that is, selling their excess steel in the U.S. at prices lower than in their own internal markets. For U.S. corporations, this means fewer sales, less profit, and therefore less investment in new plants, machinery, etc. Less investment means lower productivity in the future, which thereby increases the country's dependence on imported steel.

To counter this trend, an aggressive campaign against foreign imports has been launched by the steel industry. In mid-October, the heads of the major steel corporations, together with Congressional representatives from the steel states and officials from the steelworkers' union (USWA) met with President Carter and government economic advisors to discuss the crisis in the industry. The steel producers want enforcement of strict legislation against dumping and either a curb on imports or the imposition of taxes on imported steel that would raise the selling price to the same level as U.S. steel.

#### CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE RULERS

However, taxes and quotas on imports are a risky business for capitalists, and the steel manufacturers are well aware of this. If the government—whose fundamental role it is to protect corporate and financial profits—decides to implement "protectionist" policies (i.e., policies that protect the home market from foreign competition), other countries might decide to do the same thing to protect their own industries. This in turn would hurt those U.S. businesses which make much of their profits through exports. Quotas would also hurt U.S.-based multi-national corporations which benefit from the lower prices of imported goods.

Thus there are contradictions within the U.S. capitalist class as to how to resolve the present troubles of the steel

industry. For the moment, the industry is focussing its campaign in two areas. In the first place, corporations have filed several anti-dumping suits with the Treasury Department against Japanese and European businesses. If dumping (which is illegal) is proven, these businesses will have to pay millions of dollars in import duties, in order to equalize the price advantage over U.S. steel. As a result of these suits, both Japanese and European companies have offered to voluntarily limit their exports for up to three years, but only if the dumping charges are dropped. So far this had not been accepted by U.S. steelmakers who want a more formal and far-reaching agreement.

Secondly, the steel industry is demanding tax breaks from the government which would allow them to compete more "equitably" with foreign steel. By limiting competition in the home market, the monopolists are able to protect their profits and maintain high prices. The companies are demanding changes in the tax laws, giving them more money to invest; they also want the government to stop interfering in steel-pricing decisions. Undoubtedly these measures would increase the profits of the steel monopolies. But they are clearly no solution for the thousands of laid off workers.

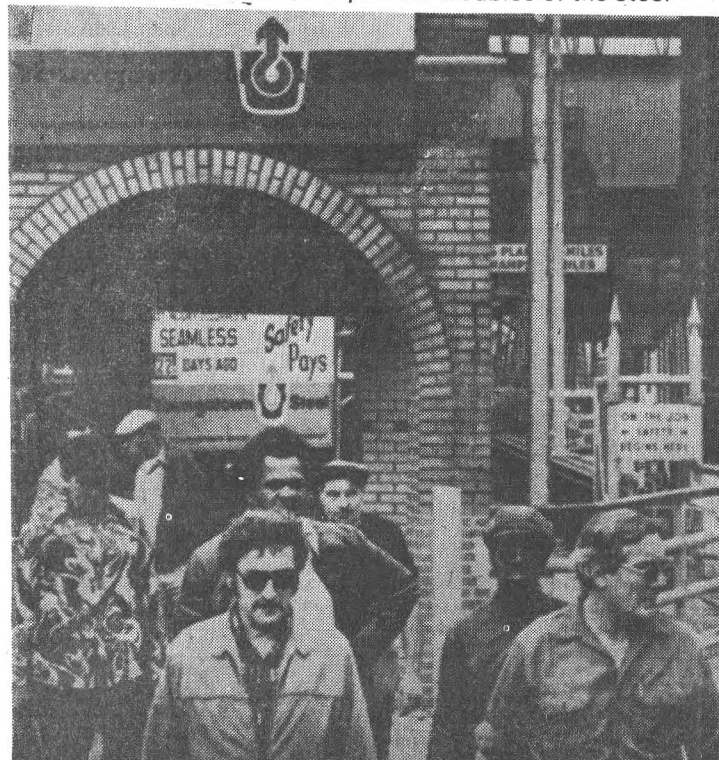
#### NO HELP FROM THE UNION

Despite its problems, however (both internally and externally), the steel industry is far from collapsing. It is taking whatever measures it can to insure its profits continue to be maintained. Negotiating with capitalists from other countries about the question of quotas is only one part of its tactics. The main thrust of its offensive is directed against the workers, as reflected by the thousands of layoffs. [Those workers not laid off are subjected to speedups, the lowering of plant health and safety standards (through the attack on anti-pollution regulations) and wage freezes, all as a way of lowering costs and increasing profits.]

The response of the union, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) to the attacks has been little more than words. While various locals—particularly those hit hardest by the layoffs—have attempted to organize protests, they have been discouraged in their efforts by the union leadership. The role of the leadership has been to cool out the anger and potential militancy of the workers. The participation of various union "misleaders" in the steel conference at the White House was not to insure that the workers' interests would be protected, but rather to assure the capitalists of the continued loyalty of the labor traitors.

These false leaders sell out the interest of the workers by trying to convince them they can work in cooperation with their bosses. The Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA), signed between the union and the steel industry in 1973, is the ultimate expression of the betrayal of the union's so-called leaders. By forbidding industry-wide strikes, the ENA robs steelworkers of their most powerful weapon—the power to stop production.

In their thirst for markets, the capitalists are in constant competition with each other. Sometimes, particularly during a world-wide recession such as now, economic agreements are made to ease the bad conditions. But whatever international agreements are reached between capitalist nations, it is the workers—both here at home and those in the other countries—who will pay the price of the agreements. This is why the working class cannot allow itself to be misled or confused by phrases like "mutual cooperation" or "partners in progress." On the contrary, the working class can only guarantee its class interests by waging militant struggles against the "solutions" of the capitalists and their mouthpieces within the working class movement.



YOUNGSTOWN SHEET AND TUBE PLANT COMPANY LAYED-OFF 5,000 WORKERS

## Puerto Rico Informa

# Death Squad Tortures & Murders Labor Leader

**Editor's Note—**Since the killing in Puerto Rico of Alan H. Randall, an accused CIA agent and official of the Federal Bar Association, the island has experienced a state of heightened tension culminating in the discovery on October 26 of the decomposed body of Teamsters' shop steward, Juan Rafael Caballero Santana. The corpse, found in the mountainous area of El Yunque, Puerto Rico, was examined by the government's pathologist, Dr. Rafael Criado. Under questioning by the press, he admitted that Caballero had been tortured for a number of hours in a most sadistic manner and then finally strangled by hand with most of the larynx torn from his neck. When he was found, his body was covered with burns and his hands were tied and linked to an electric cord around his neck in a classic method of torture which was employed by the U.S. military in Vietnam and which is now being practiced in Latin America by fascist bands such as the Argentinian AAA and the Chilean DINA.

The events have led to massive indignation from every sector of Puerto Rican society. The people are calling for the formation of an impartial commission to investigate police involvement in the murder of Caballero as well as to investigate the existence of a "Death Squad" within the police department. However, the just requests of labor leaders, lawyers, church officials and others have been continuously denied by the government. Moreover, the police are intensifying their acts of provocation to create a climate of mass hysteria as a means of diverting public attention from their murderous acts and their many inconsistencies during the process that led to the death of Juan Rafael Caballero.

#### DEATH SQUADRON KIDNAPPED, TORTURED, AND KILLED CABALLERO

As this edition of OEM goes to print, the Teamster leadership in Puerto Rico has announced that affidavits have been signed by reliable witnesses which testify that Caballero was kidnapped by the police on October 13th soon after dropping off a fellow worker near his home in the city of Bayamon. The signed affidavits also describe the house in El Yunque where Caballero was held, tortured, and eventually murdered by four policemen. These four were part of a "death squadron" which was formed within the police department several years ago. The names of the leaders of this squadron, Homicide Chief Julio C. Andrades, Major Alejo Maldonado, and Captain Angel M. Torres, were made public by the Teamsters and corroborated by other sources.

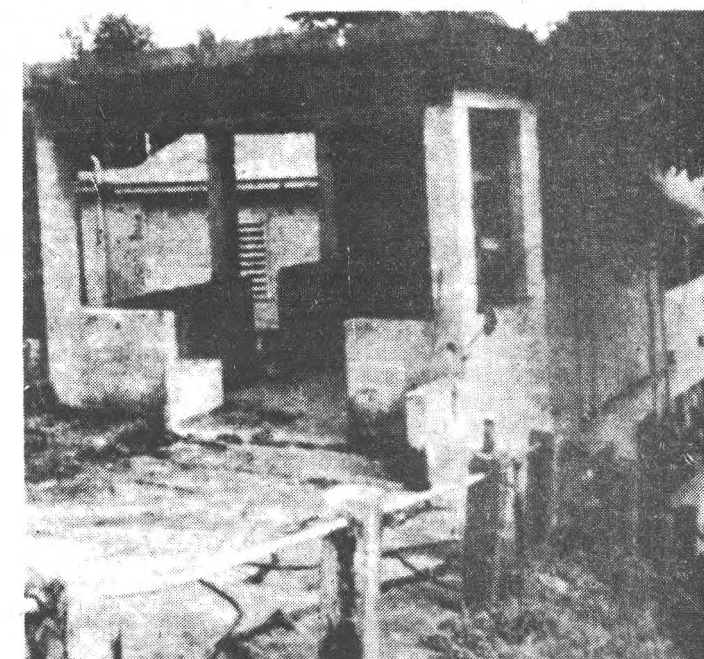
#### WHY CABALLERO?

Juan Rafael Caballero bore a strong resemblance to a Teamster official, Luis Carrion, who had been the victim of constant harassment and surveillance by the police since the death of Alan H. Randall. Further, Carrion often borrowed the car which Caballero was using on the evening of his reported disappearance when he dropped off his friend and fellow worker just two blocks away from the home of Carrion's parents in Bayamon. Teamster

leaders reported these circumstances soon after Caballero's disappearance, and also after Carrion himself, along with a union secretary, Benita Vasquez, was kidnapped at gunpoint by police agents in the vicinity of the union's headquarters on October 17th. On that occasion, only quick action and immediate public statements by the union saved Carrion from possibly meeting the same fate as Caballero. This is made evident by the police response to the union statements regarding the illegal detention of Carrion. At first, the police, through its superintendent, Torres Gonzalez, denied having arrested anyone. They only changed this denial when Carrion was seen by members of the press in one of their precincts, and when Ms. Vasquez, upon her release, spoke to the press of her detention.

Having made the "error" of kidnapping Carrion with a witness to the act, the police were forced to admit hours later that Carrion was arrested for questioning about "recent acts of bombings in the island." The inconsistency of this was pointed out in a press conference held by the police second in command, Desiderio Cartagena, when members of the press inquired as to why the Homicide Division had arrested Carrion for questioning on bombings when it is precisely the Bomb Squad which has jurisdiction over such matters. Furthermore, and as learned in the press conference, Carrion was forced to participate in a police line-up. Subsequently, the police attempted to interrogate him, not on bombing matters, but on the Randall affair.

All this occurred while the police maintained ignorance about any arrest and while Carrion was being moved from one precinct to another. The denial of arrest was expressed not only to union officials, families, and the press, but to a team of lawyers headed by Graciany Marchand of



House in El Yunque used by the police to torture Juan Rafael Caballero.

the Puerto Rico Bar Association. Obviously, the police violated all of Carrion's fundamental rights because it was not their intention to arrest anyone, as the fate of Caballero would prove, but rather, to kidnap, torture, and murder. This became clear to many people in Puerto Rico when it was discovered that leading the kidnapping agents was Julio Andrades of Homicide, an accused head of the "Death Squad."

Upon the release of Carrion, the union made public the disappearance of Caballero and accused the police of complicity in the act. From that date on, and until the body was eventually found ten days later, the police maintained ignorance as to Caballero's whereabouts. In official statements, they suggested the possibility of Caballero having left the country, a suggestion which was further reinforced by the sudden appearance of Caballero's car in a parking lot at the International Airport. It was on October 20th, when the police were suggesting that Caballero probably left the country "toward Cuba" that his body was found in El Yunque.

The discovery of Caballero's body resulted in mass indignation among the Puerto Rican people. Even the public media was forced to editorialize on the many inconsistencies of the police department, thereby implying police involvement in the process.

Confronted with this situation, and with the tortured body of Caballero clearly indicating the police as the primary suspect, the colonial government responded by making demagogic statements designed to confuse public opinion and to divert attention from what is obvious—that the "Death Squad" eliminated Juan Caballero after confusing him for Teamsters' official, Luis Carrion.



Juan Rafael Caballero



Luis Carrion

**LABOR MOVEMENT UNITES IN RESPONSE TO POLICE AND COLONIAL GOVERNMENT**

Responding to the demand of the Teamsters for an impartial investigative commission, and for militant opposition to these latest attacks against the labor



Banner in Nov. 10th march reads "Ours is the strength; ours is the victory".

movement, the most important unions in Puerto Rico have come together to jointly plan their strategy for this next period of social unrest in the island. This organized response by the leaders of the Puerto Rican labor movement was coupled with the support of most of the Puerto Rican left and progressive forces. After an initial serious error (see last edition of OEM), these forces have begun to recognize the significance and possible consequences of this period and have expressed their solidarity and support for the labor movement, and in particular, the Teamsters of Puerto Rico, who have consistently played the leading role in these moments of class struggle.

In its declaration of October 27th, "A Call to the Nation," the Trade Union Committee Against Repression, a coalition of 27 unions, stated:

"The Puerto Rican labor movement is under attack. What began as police surveillance of various unions has developed into acts of provocation, hostile activities, and illegal arrests by the police. The murder of Teamsters' organizer, Juan Rafael Caballero, completes the repressive picture. One fact is evident—these are attempts at destroying the labor movement through official acts of terrorism.

"The death of corporation attorney, Alan H. Randall, has been taken as an excuse to spearhead a new repressive anti-labor campaign. Twenty-seven unions, meeting in assembly, denounced the start of this repressive campaign just three weeks ago. Today, all of the labor movement prepares itself to close ranks and to defend itself against those in attack, while at the same time, avoiding any weakening that these attacks might cause. Hundreds of thousands of workers in Puerto Rico would be left without leadership and organization if we allowed the forces of reaction to maintain their anti-labor offensive."

Further on, the "Call to the Nation" reads, "The murder of companero Caballero is a proven fact. Equally proven are the illegal kidnappings of Teamsters' leader, Luis Carrion and Benita Vasquez. It is also a proven fact that surveillance and hostile activities by the police against known labor leaders are still in continuance.

"We will denounce the problem internationally and when we consider it opportune. We will mobilize the

**Puerto Rico : WORKERS MARCH AGAINST POLICE REPRESSION**

San Juan, Puerto Rico: On November 10 thousands of workers, led by the Trade Union Committee Against Repression, marched from the Sixto Escobar Park to the capitol building, protesting the assassination of Teamster leader Juan Rafael Caballero Santana and the repressive wave unleashed against the labor movement in Puerto Rico by the government of Romero Barcelo.

The march which began at 6 a.m., paralyzed all traffic in the metropolitan area. Bus drivers, taxi drivers, and public transportation drivers stopped their operations in support of the march. The march was led by 2000 trucks from the Teamsters Union and the General Brotherhood of Workers.

The island's labor movement has united to protest the assassination of Caballero at the

hands of a "death squad" and to defend itself against the attacks unleashed by the bosses and the colonial government.

In recent years different sectors of the country have protested the existence of a "death squad" within the police force. There have been many victims of this squad. Recently the Teamsters offices have been receiving calls and signed statements by many who have either been victims of that squad or know of its operations. The information being held by the Teamsters reveals that the squad has used a federal house (where Caballero was tortured and assassinated) in El Yunque Forest to obtain information through torture.

Faced with this reality the labor movement

is demanding that an impartial commission be created composed of representatives of different forces in Puerto Rico, to investigate the assassination of Caballero. The governor refused to create such a commission and has instead assigned the investigation to the Secretary of Justice.

Confronted with the governor's intransigent stand the labor leaders decided to call a march protesting his repressive politics. The Trade Union Committee Against Repression made it clear that the march would be the beginning of a series of actions that will be taken until those responsible for the assassination of Caballero are brought to justice and the repression against the labor movement ends.



Workers at rally Nov. 10.

working class not only for the defense of its wages but in order to gain the freedom and respect for the lives of its leaders. The new repressive wave counted on a dispersed labor movement, but the tactics used served the opposite purpose because the attacks upon some of us have forewarned us all. We have begun to unite on a more solid basis to defend our gains, and to move forward.

"Our main purpose is not to make public declarations. We will forge a true mechanism in defense of the working class. The hour for effective unity has arrived.

"The murder of Teamsters' organizer, Juan Rafael Caballero, will not detain the movement of Puerto Rican workers. On the contrary, Juan Rafael Caballero has become the spiritual leader of the reconstruction of the fighting spirit of the Puerto Rican labor movement."

The united response of the most important sectors of the labor movement in the island, coupled with the mass indignation of the Puerto Rican people regarding the torture and murder of Juan Caballero, has led the colonial government to engage in absurd declarations designed to create mass hysteria and divert attention from the murder. In this context, on the weekend of October 27th, the Puerto Rican police were placed in a State of Alert for the first time in recent years under a supposed "threat of violence" by the Labor Commandos. In obvious provocation, the specially trained "Shock Troops" were mobilized for the first time ever to the activities celebrating the October 30th Rebellion in Jayuya. Absurdities are being expressed by high government officials and the police as to a link between "Caballero's death" and "those responsible for Randall's death." In short, the mass media is being used to counteract the atmosphere of mass indignation.

First Caballero, and then Carrion. Surely other labor leaders will suffer the consequences of a government intent on destroying the labor movement in Puerto Rico, and in particular, its most progressive forces. We urge all progressive forces in this country, and in particular, such organizations as the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, to be on the alert and to denounce these latest actions by the colonial government and the ultimate culprit, U.S. imperialism. We must translate our expressed solidarity with Puerto Rico into mass actions in opposition to U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rico. This is our task and our responsibility.

Oct. 30

## FREEDOM DEMANDED FOR NATIONALISTS

On Sunday, October 30, in commemoration of the 27th anniversary of the 1950 Jayuya uprising in Puerto Rico, more than 1000 people from the East Coast went to Washington to demand from the Carter Administration the release of the four remaining Nationalist prisoners: Lolita Lebron, Oscar Collazo, Irving Flores, and Rafael Cancel Miranda.

In 1950, and again in 1954, these four patriots, together with Andres Figueroa Cordero, committed armed actions in the United States against the U.S. government. The purpose of these actions was to call attention to the colonial situation in Puerto Rico and the intensifying exploitation by the U.S. government.

These 5 patriots are the longest held political prisoners in the Western Hemisphere. The fight to secure their release began the moment they were arrested. Recently, Andres Figueroa Cordero, because he is suffering from terminal cancer, was released from prison after years of pressure from progressive forces both in Puerto Rico and in the U.S.

The other demands of the rally and picket called for the independence of Puerto Rico, freedom for all political prisoners and an end to grand jury investigation into progressive and liberation movements within the U.S.

In the messages of solidarity given at the rally, other demands were raised, in particular, one referring to the police murder of Juan Rafael Caballero, a Teamsters organizer assassinated in Puerto Rico by the police (see our article in this issue). In our solidarity message, we spoke about the growing repression against the labor movement in Puerto Rico—as exemplified by Caballero's death—and at the same time, its developing unitary and militant response to that repression. We spoke of the need to strengthen and expand the Puerto Rican solidarity movement in the U.S., particularly within the working class, and also of the special responsibility of Marxist-Leninists to insure that such solidarity develops. We raised the slogan "Caballero, camarada, tu muerte sera vengada" ("Caballero, comrade, your death will be avenged") to symbolize our commitment to our task.



Colombia

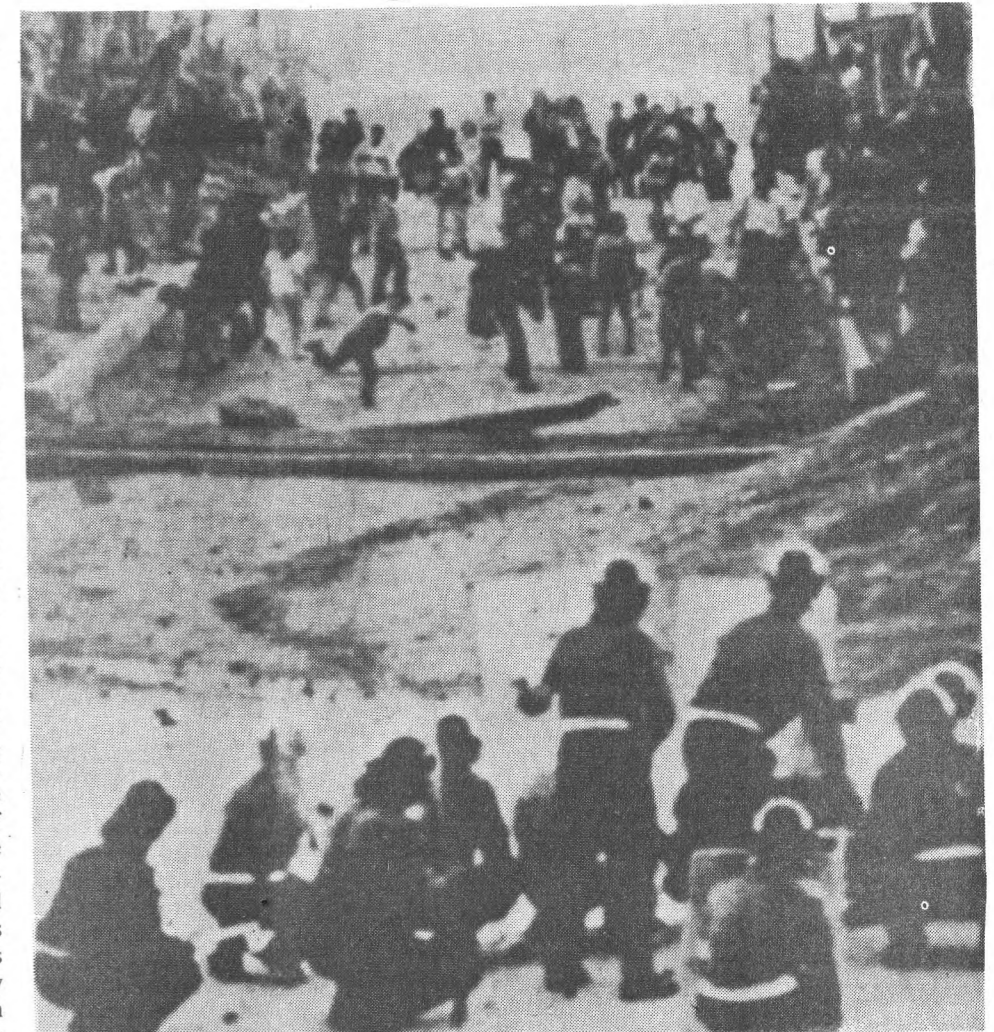
## General Strike Paralyzes Bogotá

On Wednesday, September 14th, the greater part of the working class of Colombia did not show up for work as the bosses expected. The streets of the principal cities, especially the capital, Bogotá, became the scenes of confrontations between the working and poor people and the superbly well-equipped army and police of the supposedly democratic regime of Colombia. The workers demonstrated a high level of maturity in the execution of their first general strike in several decades. On the night before, the streets were littered with nails and covered with oil to impede the passing of traffic. In many areas, the workers organized themselves into brigades which blockaded streets, attacked vehicles that were trying to defy the strike, and evaded the army troops, all with military precision. In other areas, workers stoned and charged the troops in an unorganized manner and thus were easily routed. The press reported some of the confrontations which took place.

In the industrial zone of Bogotá, workers organized into brigades which avoided confrontations with the troops and concentrated on impeding the flow of traffic. A train that went by was systematically stoned and forced to derail; when the army arrived, everyone fled. In the south of the city, where most of the poor and working class people live, the troops were neither able to prevent acts of arson against cars, trucks, buses, and buildings, nor halt the looting of factories and shops. In Kennedy, a working class neighborhood, the troops, overwhelmed by the people, began firing indiscriminately. In the course of the day, three police precincts were attacked.

In the Miramar section of Medellín, the second largest city of the country, people battled the troops for six continuous hours. In Barranquilla, a large port city on the Caribbean, 91% of all traffic was halted. In the industrial zone of that city, only three factories were functioning. In Cali, a city in the southwest of the country, 70% of the traffic was halted and battles were waged during most of the day in the working class neighborhoods. The strike was a total success in Barrancabermeja, the "oil capital." In many areas of the countryside, peasants held rallies in support of the strike.

As night fell, the government declared a curfew which the firing troops were unable to enforce. That night, Lopez Michelsen, the president, appeared on television, and in a classical case of attempting to cover the sky with a hand, he declared the strike a failure. Throughout the day, the police and army did not hesitate to use their U.S. supplied weapons against the people. A labor spokesman has put the casualties at 33 dead,



WORKERS BATTLE POLICE ON SEPT. 14th

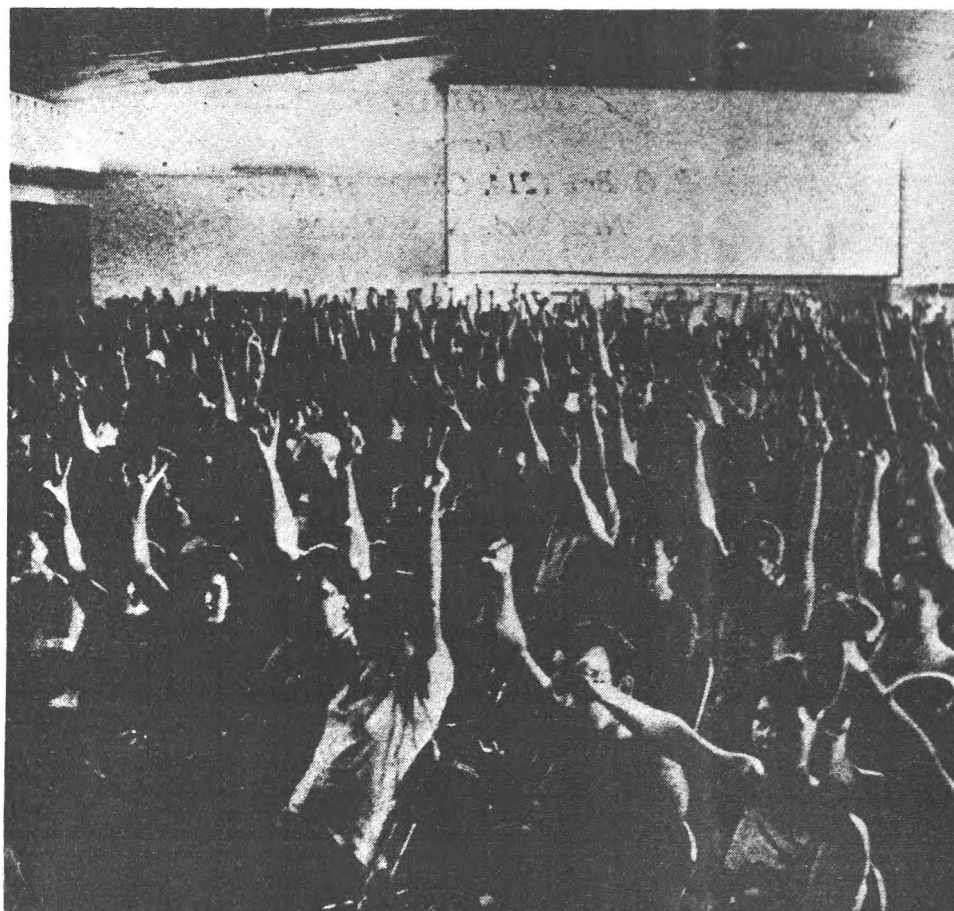
several hundred wounded, and 3,800 taken prisoner in stadiums in the manner of Chile.

### BONANZA FOR THE BOURGEOISIE; MISERY FOR THE WORKERS

The situation that led the Colombian working class to declare a general strike exemplifies the effects of the economic strait-jacket known as "dependent capitalism." In 1975, a drought in Brazil in conjunction with the Angolan War of Independence, disrupted world supplies of coffee. The price of a pound of coffee went from 55¢ to \$3.40. Colombia, the world's second largest producer of coffee, accumulated \$2 billion in foreign exchange, more than it had ever had in its entire history. Apparently, the country would now be able to feed, house, and take care of the pressing needs of its population as well as raise itself out of underdevelopment. But the road out of underdevelopment is not

through bonanzas. The people of Colombia have seen the bulk of their bonanza wealth go to imperialism. The government lifted all restrictions on imports of luxury items, particularly caviar, wines, clothing, and electrical appliances. A member of the Confederación Sindical de Trabajadores de Colombia (CSTC), one of the four labor federations, asked, "How can it be that while factories are being closed in the country—and unemployment increasing—the government authorizes the importation of goods that will further debilitate the national industry?" The government's authorization is illogical from all points of view except that of imperialism. Thus, while inflation this year has reached 41%, workers salaries have decreased by 17% since 1970. Twenty-seven of the most important companies operating in the country reported a 44% increase in profits from 1975 to 1976.

Besides suffering an increase in inflation, the people have had to suffer an increase in



WORKERS OF UNION SINDICAL OBRERA  
VOTE TO PARTICIPATE IN STRIKE

government corruption. It is estimated that contraband of marijuana and cocaine now bring in as much earnings as the country's "legal" export, coffee. Corruption is so rampant in the government that no one dares to blow the whistle. Of course, in order to further underdevelop the country, the government has reinstated the state of siege under which the country had been living for almost thirty years.

#### THE STRIKE WAS A PREMEDITATED ACT

Since the 1st of May, the four labor federations had been planning a response to the attacks on their living conditions. The Confederacion Sindical de Trabajadores de Colombia (CSTC-Communist) and the Confederacion General del Trabajo (CGT - Christian Democrat) asked the other two labor federations, the Union de Trabajadores de Colombia (UTC-Conservative Party) and the Central de Trabajadores de Colombia (CTC-Liberal Party) to unite in a general strike around the following demands:

- 1) a salary increase of at least 50%
- 2) a price freeze of transportation and

basic food items

- 3) an end to the state of siege and a full return of political and organizing rights
- 4) a reopening and demilitarization of National Universities
- 5) distribution to the peasants of government-held lands
- 6) an 8 hour day for transportation workers
- 7) nullification of the decrees which reorganized the Social Security System to the detriment of the workers

The traditionally collaborationist leadership of the UTC and CTC looked for ways to avoid unity and sabotage the general strike. They had managed to obstruct the unity and impede the growth of the labor movement since the late 50's. This time, however, they were not successful. As late as the middle of August, the leadership of the UTC and CTC were calling for a dialogue with the president. In case they failed in that endeavor, they promised to hold a strike separate from that of the CSTC and CGT. Fortunately for the working class of Colombia, the bases of the CTC and UTC began to condemn and to defy their collaborationist leaders. Several federations belonging to the UTC and CTC began meeting independently and threatened to secede unless the confederations par-

ticipated fully in the general strike.

Furthermore, there were already four strikes taking place in the country which were polarizing the workers and bosses. The oil, cement and agricultural workers and the teachers were carrying on strikes that were clearly demonstrating the government's intransigence. Several of the unions involved in the strikes had had their legal status voided and their leaders arrested. In the cement, agricultural, and oil strikes, army troops had been sent in. In the midst of such polarization, and in fear of splitting their confederations, the leaders of the UTC and CTC agreed to participate in the general strike just two weeks before it was to be carried out.

Once the unity of the four confederations had been assured, the preparations were intensified. Local committees were formed with the participation of different unions. Neighborhoods also formed strike committees. Tasks were assigned and a national coordination committee was named. All corners of the country were informed and peasant organizations were asked for support.

As the 14th of September drew near, the government made frantic attempts to halt the strike. It declared the strike illegal. Thus, anyone participating would not only lose his/her job, but would also be subject to arrest. The CTC and UTC were called upon to continue the dialogue while censorship of the press, television, and radio were imposed. But all of the efforts were of no avail because the Colombian working class was undertaking its historical role and was moving forward.

#### OUR ROLE: PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

What is the significance of the general strike in Columbia for revolutionaries and the working class of the United States? Clearly, any advance by the working class of any country is an advance for us. But how do we go beyond rhetorical support to practical support? First, Marxist-Leninists must educate themselves about the reality of other countries and keep up with the latest developments. This knowledge, of course, must be passed on to the workers in their workplace and communities. At the same time, we must educate the workers that the problems of unemployment, inflation, government corruption and repression that they experience are experienced by workers all over the world. We must make it clear that they suffer a common oppression and exploitation because they share a common enemy—U.S. Imperialism. Therefore, our struggles here are not isolated, but are intimately connected to the struggles of all peoples committed to destroying the system which oppresses them.

In future articles, we will update the situation in Colombia.

## Dawson 5

# ANOTHER RACIST FRAME - UP

### The Dawson Five

"In the history of humanity the contradiction between races [has] never constituted the motor of any process. The racial factor [is] always secondary and could only be made to appear as the principal factor..." *MPLA—Document on Origins of Racism*

In January 1976, in the poor rural town of Dawson, Georgia, five black youths were arrested and charged with the robbery of a grocery store and the murder of a white customer. The owner of the store reported to local police that four blacks wearing ski masks had entered the store, stole \$100 from the cash register and killed the customer. At the time he reported the incident, the storekeeper stated that he did not recognize the murderers. Yet, five days later he identified Roosevelt Watson, the son of a family he had known for years, as the one who had pulled the trigger. Watson, age 16, was apprehended, beaten and brutalized by the police who forced a "confession" from him at gunpoint. The police demanded the names of his "accomplices" and Watson named his four closest friends, J.D. Davenport, Henderson Watson, James Jackson and Johnnie Jackson (aged 16 to 21). They were arrested and subjected to the same brutal treatment by the police. The only so-called eyewitness to the murder originally stated that four men were involved in the incident, but local authorities gave no explanation as to why the five were charged. No murder weapon has been found and several local residents have testified that they saw the youths, at the time of the murder, drawing water from the well at a neighbor's farmhouse. Bail was set at \$100,000 each and the prosecution asked that the young men be killed in the electric chair.

This September the presiding judge ruled that the "confessions" were inadmissible as evidence, because the defense had proven that they were forced from the defendants by torture. The prosecution is appealing this ruling, but it has decided to withdraw its request for the death penalty. Bail has been raised for Roosevelt Watson by local and national supporters and the other four were recently released in their own recognizance. The real reason for these developments in the past few months is the wide support for the youths which the Dawson community and people across the country have demonstrated.

This kind of police brutality and racist frame-up is not uncommon in the United States. During the pre-trial hearing in August 1977 in the case of the Dawson Five, many local residents gave testimony and evidence about similar incidents of police harassment and abuse. Dawson is typical of many small southern farming towns, predominantly occupied by poor Blacks and poor whites, most of them sharecroppers, cotton and peanut field hands, or workers in small textile sweatshops. Dawson has a Black population of 60%, and has a history of racist terrorism. Blacks have virtually no political or social power in their own communities which are among the most impoverished in the country.

It has been acknowledged time and again that the U.S. is a racist society. The case of the Dawson Five is but one manifestation of a racism institutionalized through education, the judicial system, the media, etc. Naturally,



The Dawson Five.

From left to right: J.D. Davenport, Henderson Watson, James Edward Jackson, Roosevelt Watson, and Johnny B. Jackson.

this racism is reflected in the social relations between Blacks and whites and in the consciousness of each individual. Racism, built on fear and on the attitudes of white supremacy, is an ideological tool of the oppressor which permeates all aspects of life, including consciousness. It is not enough to point out the common interest of all workers nor is it enough to address the most blatant examples of racism. We must build a consistent campaign of education about the nature of racism in its most subtle and intricate, as well as obvious, forms. This means not only its social and institutionalized character but the ways in which it appears within each individual.

The struggle for racial equality has been bitter and continuous since the days of slavery. The anti-discrimination legislation and the many governmental programs won during the period of the Civil Rights movement seemed to indicate that U.S. Society was finally prepared to correct the age-old injustices against Blacks and other national minorities. Unfortunately, this view failed to understand the economic roots of racism and its role in this society. The gains were attained in the Civil Rights Movement through the organized force and militant demands of a mass movement but did not reflect a deep class understanding on the part of the North American people.

However, the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement must not be minimized. In a very real way they served to improve the conditions of Blacks. For example,

in many parts of the South where Blacks lived in conditions little better than those of slave times, massive protests and demonstrations against underemployment and segregation forced the passage of laws to outlaw legal discrimination. Thereafter discrimination was less blatant but equally entrenched. Blacks also attained limited access to better jobs, education and decent housing. The decline of the Civil Rights Movement can be attributed in part to co-optation by the ruling class of those who received immediate material benefits, combined with the outright murder, imprisonment, harassment or slander of the more militant and uncompromising leaders.

Blacks and other national minorities clearly occupy an economic, social and political position lower than that of whites. In times of economic crisis, it is these sectors of the working class who bear the heaviest burden. Thus, in the face of the current crisis of capitalism, victories won by the working class in general and by minorities in particular during the past two decades are being rescinded by the ruling class. A steady increase in unemployment (sometimes reaching 40% for Blacks), drastic cuts in social services, and unemployment benefits, efforts to undermine affirmative action (as in the Bakke case) and a general climate of repression are part of the attack on the working and oppressed people. We also suffer the reinforcement of institutionalized racism as revealed by cases such as the Pendleton 14, the Wilmington 10, etc. Racism

is again serving the same purpose it has always served as a tool of the rulers to obscure the worsening exploitation suffered by all workers regardless of race. The case of the Dawson Five is one more expression of this trend.

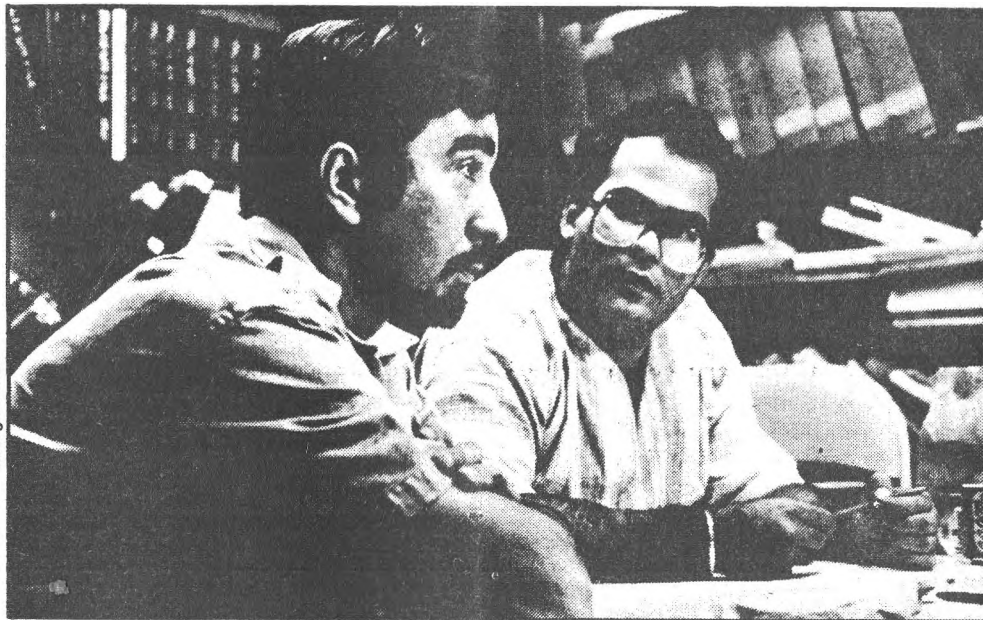
The working class must defeat racism within its ranks and unite in the struggle against its class enemy and common oppressor—the capitalist. History shows that the divisive tactics of the capitalists have always been very effective, and have severely impeded the unity of the working class whether exercised through outright repression of rank and file organizers, or through co-optation of union leadership and the creation of a labor bureaucracy. Racism has been one of the most powerful and widely-used tools for dividing the working class. In labor struggles here for the past century, the factory owners (with the active support of the state) have consistently pitted one group against another.

Our task is to make the unity of the working class into a reality. This unity must be based on concrete and consistent support. We give active support to the struggle to free the Dawson Five and understand our responsibility to combat daily, in all places and at all times, the destructive and divisive ideology of racism.

**Free the Dawson Five!**

**The Workers United Will Never Be Defeated!**

## CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST ALBA & PEREZ



George Cohen

*David Perez (left) and Vicente Alba*

### PEREZ AND ALBA FREED FROM ALL CHARGES

At a recent court hearing the charges which had been brought against David Perez and Vicente Alba, members of the Committee for the Freedom of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners, were dropped.

Despite the initial claim by the police that they had found FALN (National Liberation Armed Forces) literature and guns in Alba's house, the police were not able to bring evidence to establish any connection between Perez, Alba and the FALN.

For three years the FALN has been able to escape capture. This has frustrated the repressive agencies and has led them to strike at other activists in the Puerto Rican

Liberation support movement. Several people have been called to testify before the Grand Jury and are presently serving sentences for refusing to comply.

Attempts are being made to link these people with the recent FALN bombings. The state will continue its campaign to discredit the independence and revolutionary movement. In the process they are attempting to intimidate the masses from engaging in struggle or supporting the victims of state repression.

Faced with this situation we must respond effectively and in an organized manner. It is through continued support work and through active campaigns of education among the masses that we will be able to struggle against all forms of repression by the state.