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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC :

A LEADER SPEAKS FROM JAIL

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With each passing year the regime of Dr. Joaquin Balaguer takes on greater resemblance to that of his predecessor and mentor, Raphael Trujillo. Assassination of political opponents, students and critical journalists, the cynical manipulation of government agencies for partisan political purposes, the maintenance of a democratic facade over a one-man dictatorship that will not allow itself to be removed through legal political processes, the humiliating subservience to U.S. economic and political interests—these are some of the features of Balaguer's eight year rule that Dominicans thought they had rid from their country when they overthrew the 30 year Trujillo dictatorship in 1961.

The continuity of "Trujillioism without Trujillo" can also be perceived in the nation's prisons, filled with political opponents who have fought Balaguer with the same determination that a generation of Dominican patriots applied to the struggle against Trujillo. While public opinion has recently forced the Balaguer government to release a handful of political prisoners there are still more than 200 political opponents held in Santo Domingo's notorious La Victoria prison, and scores more in jails scattered throughout the country.

Perhaps the best known political prisoner in La Victoria is Rafael (Fafa) Taveras, a leader of the Dominican Popular Movement (MPD), a Marxist-Leninist party that has played a prominent role in the political opposition to the Balaguer regime. Last week Fafa completed the fourth year of what appears to be an indefinite sentence, accused of being an "intellectual author" of the kidnapping of U.S. Air Force Colonel Donald Crowley in Santo Domingo on March 23, 1970, while the colonel was engaged in early morning polo practice on the grounds of the luxurious Ambassador Hotel.

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RUNAWAY SHOPS

THE CASE OF HAWAII

(Editor's note: The following article was compiled from two articles appearing in recent issues of The Guardian, by the Labor-Community Alliance of Hawaii, which RESIST funded earlier this year.)

The phenomenon of the runaway shop is hardly of recent vintage. Throughout history, capitalists have moved their factories and plantations when faced with what they consider to be high production costs and shrinking profit margins. Profits in the original area need not be low in any absolute sense, but become low when compared to what is obtainable in other areas. Although lower taxes, fuel, transportation and overhead costs are considered in making a decision to move, labor cost differentials are the fundamental factors responsible for the runaway shop. Since World War II, and particularly since the 1960's, the trend to move shops to countries and regions with lower labor costs has grown by leaps and bounds.

Attention has been focused on the migration of Northeastern textile and electronics concerns to the Southern states of the U.S., and to Third World countries, most notably Taiwan and various Latin American countries. The case of the Hawaiian plantation and cannery workers, however, illustrates that this trend and the crises that it creates for workers whose shops move away, affect all types of industry and geographical regions. The nature of the labor-management/government struggles over runaway shops, and the fact that the policies of the Marcos regime in the Philippines have made that country the major recipient of Hawaiian industry point up a very important concept; the nature of the political system that is necessary to protect and facilitate the flow of U.S. capital to foreign countries.

The main trend in Hawaii's economy for quite some time has been the export of capital—the crisis of the runaway shop in sugar and pineapple operations in Hawaii, and their relocation in countries like the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and Iran. Though a general reduction of workers in agriculture has been going on for the last two decades through mergers, consolidation, and mechanization, the present crisis is a recent development.

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Crowley was released unharmed two days later in return for the freedom of 19 Dominican political prisoners threatened with death, including MPD Secretary-General Maximiliano Gomez (El Moreno), who was murdered in Brussels a year later.

The successful kidnapping operation set off a wave of terror against the Dominican left in general and the MPD in particular, once the May 16 "election" was over.

In the two month period following the election nine MPD members were killed and about 40 or 50 imprisoned. In January, 1971, five members of the political commission were arrested and held in solitary confinement for nine months. And in May, 1971, El Moreno was poisoned to death in Belgium.

U.S. "public safety advisors" in Santo Domingo played an active role in the hunting down of these Dominican political leaders. At one point in 1970, there were 14 advisors known to be in the country, some of whom were observed with weapons in hand as they engaged in numerous tactical operations, usually shouting orders to their Dominican colleagues.

Fafa began his political work in the late 1950's as an activist in the anti-Trujillo underground, at first connected with a progressive Christian group (reflecting his own early training for the Roman Catholic priesthood) and later with the June 14th Movement, named after the day in

1959 when more than 150 Dominican revolutionaries were killed in an unsuccessful armed uprising against the dictator. Fafa rose to national prominence during the 1965 rebellion and subsequent resistance against the 22,000 U.S. occupation force and became a close advisor to the late Col. Francisco Caamano, leader of the Constitutional forces. Later that year, Fafa was elected Secretary-General of the June 14th Movement. When the Movement entered a state of profound internal crisis the following year, Fafa and a large majority of the central committee along with a large segment of the movement's bases joined the ranks of the MPD, strengthening that organization significantly and transforming it into a focal point of popular aspiration and a priority of official repression.

This was also the beginning of the Balaguer era and intensified penetration into Dominican society by U.S. imperialism, from the opening up of intensive exploitation of Dominican nickel deposits to the strategic placing of U.S. "advisors" in all branches of the Dominican government. The job of the kidnapped Colonel Crowley was that of training officers and advising the command of the strategic San Isidro Air Base outside of Santo Domingo.

While Fafa has now spent more than half the Balaguer era behind bars (he was jailed for six months in 1969) he has remained very much in the

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"DOMINICAN REPUBLIC" cont.

public eye, due mainly to the vigorous campaign for freedom for the political prisoners and two or three mass circulation newspapers and radio stations that continually defy the repression by reporting the views of its victims.

"Here", Fafa wrote not long ago in a communication smuggled out of La Victoria, "our enemies would like to see even our thinking dry up within the body. They would like to see us without a voice over our bones and reduced to our most primitive instincts of subsistence. They measure out the air we breath and try to fill our every moment with fear...To this panorama must be added the joke of continual injustices, to see people accused without proof, condemned to long sentences and then after completing them kept in prison under new accusations. The regime attempts to saturate the consciousness, to spread desperation among the prisoners, destroy their spirit, erase their hopes, crushing them with its exhibition of abuses."

Now the regime has been forced to release many of the prisoners, as Fafa had suggested in an interview published in the magazine Ahora, last October.

"Some people think that amnesty can't be forced out of Balaguer. That's like going to a fight with defeat in your pocket. It is an erroneous attitude. The gates of the jails can be opened even under this government." He predicted that mobilization of all the opposition groups that supported release of the prisoners and return of the exiles, groups that even reached into sectors of Balaguer's own party, would bring results. "I am sure!" he said, "that if this great chorus comes out into the streets and fills the parks, the locks will burst from the bars. Balaguer only understands the force of the people. Put this into motion and you will see the red rooster (symbol of Balaguer's Reformist Party) retreat."

This force, accompanied by an avalanche of international protests, has indeed sprung the locks for a number of the Dominican political prisoners. June 21-29 was set as a week of solidarity activities to demand the release of those still imprisoned by the Permanent Committee for the Freedom of the Political Prisoners. The protest helped to bring about the release in the past two weeks of six members of MPD from La Victoria.

In the Ahora interview, Fafa was asked what effect his long imprisonment had had on him. His reply perhaps summarizes the experiences of many political prisoners.

"I'm older, with a few more wrinkles and grey hairs, but I feel more human, closer to other people's pain, more ardently identified with the necessity of the revolution. And more conscious of the degradation of a social system that needs hails like this to maintain its domination over the great majority of the nation."

"RUNAWAY SHOPS" cont.

Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), will be seriously weakened. On April 7, 1974, 6000 pineapple workers joined 9000 striking sugar cutters for Hawaii's first simultaneous strike in both industries. Although the ILWU succeeded in gaining substantial wage hikes for their membership, gains in the crucial area of job security and protection from runaway shops fell far short of the original demands.



The ILWU has not really developed any strategy or program to stop the runaway shops. Rather, their program is one of winning some concessions in the form of severance pay or early retirement benefits for the workers. In the context of productivity increases, corporate profits, and inflation, even these gains are limited.

The dynamics of the situation point past limited economist and trade union strategies to a much more comprehensive analysis of imperialism. Only by raising the questions of who benefits from the dictatorship in the Philippines, and who rules Hawaii, can strategies be developed which are capable of combatting runaway shops. As long as political repression, whether in the Philippines, the American South, or Chile, is used to destroy workers' movements, a region will always exist with lower wages. And where this difference affords capitalists the opportunity of sidestepping growing or established union strength, they will move to these areas and their profit margins will expand accordingly. The result for those who must remain behind is unemployment and pressure to lower wages, either through speed-up, inflation, or actual wage reductions. Only a program whose aim is to place the productive capacity presently controlled by the likes of Dole and Del Monte in the hands of the workers whose jobs are at stake, and puts the political power which is presently used to safeguard exploitation at home and abroad in those same hands, can effectively meet this challenge.