

Prisoners of the Class War

Torture in Spain

TO THE NEW MASSES:

A NEW and more terrible Inquisition today grips Spain—an Inquisition against the Workers.

More than 7,000 workers have been massacred, it has been estimated by the Spanish Committee of Action. Some 60,000 are in prisons which are little better than torture chambers. Virtually no food or water is supplied. Many prisoners are chained to the walls. Invariably the prisons are so crowded it is impossible for anyone to lie down on the rat-infested floors. The more militant workers are thrown in pitch-black subterranean chambers and left to die. In the horrible Oviedo prison are 2,000 workers who have been so tortured and maimed that, even if their release were obtained, they would never be able to work again, would never be able to return to normal life. At the Burgos prison conditions are equally terrible: boiling water poured on the backs of stripped prisoners, others compelled to sleep on the ground with the temperature fourteen degrees below zero. Astorga: prisoners beaten with rifle butts and forced to whip each other.

Looted despite government promises to the contrary, Asturias is today a living hell. The surviving wives and children of the militant Asturias workers who defended their little Spanish Soviet to the last, live in pillaged wreckage with little or no food, slowly starving to death. A reign of terror continues to envelope the community. The families of militant Asturians are subjected to constant cruelty.

Professional workers of liberal outlook, particularly teachers, are under a reign of repression. Many teachers have been summarily executed; death today awaits 150 condemned teachers; ninety are awaiting sentence.

Despite this new inquisition of the workers and the fascist reign of terror over Spain, workers, magnificently united, continue their struggles. Strikes, hunger marches, organized resistance, peasant demonstrations—these continue in the face of fascist reaction.

This was the grim but inspiring picture of the Spanish struggle against fascism which was drawn at the recent (April 13 and 14) European Relief Conference for Spain held in Paris—a conference which pledged international solidarity with the workers of Spain. Organized by the Friends of Spain, the Peoples Relief Committee for the Victims of Spanish Fascism and the World Committee Against War and Fascism, the conference reflected all political points of view united in a common struggle. Some 207 delegates came from seventeen countries; of these delegates seventy-nine were affiliated with no party; seventy-eight were Communists; thirty-

four were Socialists and sixteen were members of left bourgeois parties. Many came at the risk of their lives, particularly the thirty-three delegates from Spain who stole across the Spanish border with soldiers at their heels. The following delegates came illegally from other fascist countries: Germany six, Austria six, Bulgaria six, Yugoslavia six, Greece three, Italy fourteen, Rumania three.

The delegates included industrial workers, peasants, liberal bourgeois authors, professors, even government officials. Professor Wallon, typical of academicians only in appearance, presided. The speakers included Elie Faure, French author; Margarita Nelken, Socialist deputy in the Spanish Cortes; Alvarez del Vayo, executive member of the Second International, President of the League of Nations Chaco Commission and Socialist deputy in the Spanish Cortes; Maitre Serveze, famous French barrister; Lord Listowel, member of the British House of Lords and M. Cudenet, president of the French Radical Socialist Party.

It remained, however, for a simple Spanish miner's wife—"Passionaria" as she is called by the workers of Spain—to stir the meetings to its depth. Passionate in her hatred of fascism, passionate in her love for the workers, this symbol of revolutionary Spain kept the delegates hypnotized with her account of conditions in Spain and with her plea for international solidarity against fascism wherever it appears. The conference gave her its pledge of solidarity, proclaiming its "entire solidarity with the Spanish workers who have shown to the world that only mass struggle can triumph over fascism."

M. B. SCHNAPPER.

McNamara—California

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I HOPE every reader of THE NEW MASSES saw the splendid appeal made by Nora Conklin on behalf of James B. McNamara, Tom Mooney, John Cornelison and Matthew Schmidt, in the issue of May 7, and resolved to swell the flood of protests against this fascist treatment of our comrades in San Quentin.

The danger which threatens J. B. McNamara must not be minimized and only the workers can save him. June 2 is his birthday, the twenty-fourth he has celebrated behind prison walls. Let this be the day on which your letter of greeting falls into the hands of J. B. and your protest lands on the desk of Warden Holohan. Let Warden Holohan once realize that J. B. McNamara has friends—the aroused working class of America—and he will see to it that no harm befalls James B. McNamara.

Every worker should rally to the defense

of the man who has served a longer term than any other political prisoner in the entire world; the man who, in all these years, has never asked anything for himself; whose every thought is for that better world to be built by the workers. William Z. Foster once said of him: "Such a brave fighter is an inspiration and honor to the working class." Suppose we let him know on June 2, by letters, gifts and telegrams, how many of us love and honor this grand fighter of and for the working class of the world, whom the Holohans of capitalism can never break!

HILDA S. JARDAN.

The Rueggs—China

TO THE NEW MASSES:

PAUL RUEGG, secretary of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, together with his wife Gertrude, has been in prison for nearly three years on a charge of having carried on Communist activities in China. The farcical trial which ended in their death sentence and then commutation to life imprisonment, is well known to thousands who followed it. The "trial" violated every legal statute of the Nanking government itself under whose authority it was held. However, what immediately concerns us, and should concern advanced opinion throughout the world, is the fact that Paul Ruegg is lying dangerously ill in the Central Hospital in Nanking, suffering from a severe case of typhus contracted in the First Kiangsu Prison where he and Gertrude Ruegg are prisoners.

Ruegg not only contracted typhus, but lay in prison for nine days without medical aid, denied the right to hospital treatment. He was removed to the hospital only when the disease was approaching its most critical stage and only after the International Defence Committee had been accidentally informed of Ruegg's condition.

If Paul Ruegg contracted typhus in the so-called "model prison" in Nanking, it means that many other prisoners have also contracted the disease which, in the vast majority of cases, is fatal. The others, however, are Chinese, among them large numbers of political prisoners. No information concerning their sufferings or the conditions under which they spend their miserable existence is allowed to reach the outside world.

For Chinese prisoners there is not the slightest care. Not only in this so-called "model prison," but in all the other prisons in which tens of thousands of Chinese political prisoners—men, women and often youths little more than children—conditions are barbarous. The prisoners are nearly always in chains, jammed into dark, filthy prison cells, five and six times the number of prisoners to the space allotted. Often they have no bedding, their clothing is changed only when it

falls from their backs, vermin make their lives a hell, they do not receive boiled drinking water until guards or officials are bribed, and they are given only the most filthy and inadequate food. The death rate in prison is not known, because the officials refuse neutrally-constituted bodies the right to make investigations.

Numerous letters smuggled from prisons have revealed the feudal, barbarous torture of political prisons. The prisoners die like flies, and in most cases the chains are removed from them only after their bodies are cold and stiff in death. Often they are left to die in the prison cell in full view of other

prisoners, at other times they are merely removed to the corridor until they stiffen in death. When epidemics, such as typhus, typhoid, dysentery or cholera break out among them, there is no earthly possibility of the victims receiving proper treatment. Only an aroused international public opinion wrung the right to hospital treatment for Paul Ruegg.

The public should remember that imprisonment in China nearly always means death after a few months or years. Few human beings can endure the unspeakable conditions of Kuomintang prisons. Let the whole world know that Chinese political prisoners, like

those that once filled the prisons of Czarist Russia, are men and women whose "crime" is that of struggling for a new and free society. Thousands of the most intelligent and courageous men and women of China have either been tortured to death, shot, beheaded, strangled to death for their national-revolutionary activities, or are sitting in the disease-infested dungeons of the Kuomintang.

We call upon advanced men and women of all lands to raise their voices in mighty protest, demanding the release of Paul and Gertrude Ruegg as well as the release of all Chinese political prisoners suffering and dying in silence. MME. SUN YAT-SEN.

Fraternity Minus the Bunk

BRUCE MINTON

AN HOUR before the workers of San Francisco buried their dead last July, an hour before that unending, silent column of mourners followed the coffins of two pickets who had been shot in the back by police, another group marched. A few hundred tired old men paraded. They strutted in cocked hats adorned with flowing plumes; they trudged up Market Street with their silly tin swords jangling at their sides, or rode decrepit nags hired for the occasion. These old men were delegates to the Knights Templars' Convention. No one paid much attention to them—least of all the thousands upon thousands of workers who had gathered on the waterfront to bury their dead.

The Knights Templars resented the strike. It inconvenienced them, particularly when the taxis and street cars stopped running, when the restaurants and theatres closed, when no one paid the slightest attention to their jinks. Their fraternal order opposed the strike. So did officials of the Masons and the Elks and the Eagles. The membership in these organizations is composed largely of industrial or white-collar workers, but the policies that the orders pursue remain anti-labor. Support may come from dues paid into the treasuries by workers and clerks; but the policies are directed from above, designed to serve a system based on private profit, in which the interests of the majority are opposed to those of the ruling class.

Last week, another fraternal order held its convention, this time in New York. A special train from Chicago, another from Cleveland, brought delegates; more than 1,100 in all, from all parts of the country, from labor unions of all kinds, from nearly every trade and profession—printers, machinists, steel and auto workers, writers, dentists, pharmacists, blacksmiths and many others. At the opening session Madison Square Garden was jammed with delegates and spectators.

The members of the International Workers' Order didn't have gold-mounted ivory

elks' teeth dangling from watch chains, or wear cocked hats with plumes or the Turkish fez or fancy costumes. They were workers, and their order had more serious business than to turn out for a junket ending in a glorified drunk. The I. W. O. is the only genuinely working-class fraternal order in the country. Five years old, it has grown in this brief time from 6,000 members (who broke away from the reactionary, social-democratic Workmen's Circle) to 72,500 members subdivided into language groups and a Youth Section. The original Jewish nucleus that quit the Circle has in five years become but another unit in the various sections composing the I. W. O. Now there are Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Yugoslavian groups, etc., including an English and a Youth Section.

This rapid growth can be readily understood upon a brief examination of what the I. W. O. offers. In the first place, rates are far lower than in any other fraternal order. There are no high-paid officials to support, no Senators and ex-Cabinet members such as Senator James Davis of Pennsylvania, once Secretary of Labor, who found his executive position in a bourgeois fraternal order enormously lucrative. Besides, members receive more insurance, more benefits in the I. W. O. for the amount paid than they could possibly get in any other order. For example, 99 cents a month entitles a thirty-year-old man to a \$1,000 life-insurance policy, plus a \$4 weekly sick benefit, a \$20 weekly tuberculosis benefit over a period of twenty-six weeks, and a disability (accident) benefit graduated, according to the gravity of the accident, up to \$300. A small additional sum means an increase in the amount payable in case of illness, doctor's services free not only to the member but to his or her family. Specialists, X-ray treatment, even medicine, can be obtained at reduced cost. Insurance for a child under nine costs 12 cents; under sixteen, 16 cents—in which is included a copy of the monthly, anti-fascist magazine, New

Pioneer. These rates are about a third of those charged by commercial insurance companies.

Foreign born were first to enter the I. W. O. in any numbers. These workers had the most difficult time obtaining employment; they worked under the worst conditions, drifting in and out of mining and steel towns, into the sweat shops of the crowded cities. They lacked any form of security. They could not join the bourgeois orders: they were foreigners, they were unable to pay high dues; if they did join, they remained outsiders. Yet they had a strong fraternal tradition. The I. W. O. solved their problem—they became members by the thousands.

American workers have also been joining. The Convention just held was especially concerned with enrolling Americans. To this end, the federated set-up of language groups which prevailed in the I. W. O. to the present time has been altered: henceforth, the English section will predominate, the language sections will form auxiliaries. The convention also stressed the activities of the I. W. O. above and beyond the fraternal benefits. Unemployment, industrial disease, death on the job, accident and disability are products of the present system which underpays workers, speeds up the tempo that they must maintain on the job until exhaustion and carelessness are the natural result. Benefits partially provide for the emergency needs of the workers; but it is also important to see that the causes of these needs are reduced. The usual fraternal order elaborately avoids such problems, spending its time parading on holidays, solemnly going through mumbo-jumbo rites, listening to patriotic declamations, or serving the Chambers of Commerce by passing anti-radical resolutions (aimed at the organized labor movement). The I. W. O., on the other hand, fights vigorously on a class-conscious basis for the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill (H. R. 2827), against deportations, against war and fascism.