HUNGER STRIKE IN STALIN'S PRISONS

Heroic Struggle of Revolutionary Political Prison is Against Despotic GPU Is Told by Dr. Ciliga in Fourth Installment of Series

By ANTON CILIGA

sentence expired, and should the necessity arise, we would not re- prison yard or the sun . . . frain from resorting to the most extreme measures, sparing neither our strike here. I knew that my com- abinsk, and used to make the rounds health nor lives in the struggle.

obtaining permission to depart to consideration all the possibilities Comrade Draguitch, a former mem- beforehand, and had planned how to ber of the C. E. C. of the Jugoslav meet them. We had agreed that in Communist Party, in his struggle the event of our being separated, or with what the commission had to to achieve this aim is still incar- being taken to some other place tell me, was such a shocking incerated in the secret dungeons of than Moscow, we would begin a stance of lawlessness, such a cynic-Soviet Guiana, the terrible Solovet- hunger strike imediately. A G.P.U. al breach of even formal rights and ski Islands, because he attempted guard was placed over me: I was proletarian morals, the prosecutor's to cross the frontiers illegally after curolled under the G.P.U. in the is- office decided, quite reasonably, that permission to depart legally was olator although I was being kept in it should best be done "without its denied him. Comrade Deditch, a the jail under the militia. On the knowledge". All the more so since well known trade union activist in day of my trans er from Verkhne- the representative of the prosecu-Jugoslavia (Herzegovina) is sitting Uralsk to Chelyabinsk I had receiv- tor's office was himself a foreign ill, famished, and without employ- ed a rotten meal, and I therefore communist, a ormer Polish worker. ment in distant Siberian exile.

Reasons for the Struggle

We were so stubborn in insisting upon permission to depart abroad for several reasons. First of all, we came to Russia in 1926, only for a temporary stay and were supposed with the conviction that he must mong those fity important Polish to return home after accomplishing certain work. By 1933, our mission had long been fulfilled. Secondly. there were no possibilities in Russia for doing revolutionary work as we understood it, and besides we had infinitely greater possibilities abroad. Thirdly, after our harsh experience in Russia we want to become directly acquainted also with the experience and the ideas of the Western European and American labor movement. And, finally, we could not reconcile ourselves with the conduct of the present Soviet Government, which permits itself to treat foreign workers ing them into its perpetual prison- ally, and even more so mentally. In the eyes of the present Stalinand revolutionists like slaves, turn- Eight days had already clapsed ist leadership, which is conducting ers, depriving them of their ele- since my demands. Suspense tends a nationalist policy, every Pole and intended to place the responsibility mentary human rights, seeking to without any answer from the G.P.U. German must be held suspect, if upon you in the event of my prostrip them of all human dignity. to strain and weaken spiritual resis- | not directly considered as a "spy Hundreds of foreign workers and tance more than anything else. The I am personally inclined to consirevolutionists find themselves in G.P.U. is well aware of this, and der this psychology as the underly-Soviet Russia in the status of thinly therefore makes systematic use of ing reason for the monstrous crime hushed up, the GPU would have not diplomatized. veiled slavery and captivity. All this weapon. When the G.P.U. ag- of shooting fifty Polish communists, at all feared my demise, whether this is being perpetrated by a Go- cuts rushed in, I was dozing, and Being somewhat acquainted with by suicide, firing squad, or as a revernment that passes off its re- in the semi-darkness of the cell did the deportment and methods of the sult of an "unfortunate incident" gime so persistently and falsely as not at first recognize the intruders, G.P.U. I can say with certainty But after our declarations in the Columbus' route from the Mediterthe fatherland of the toilers of the Then I perceived that in addition to that it would not be so bad if among Verkhne-Uralsk isolator, and after ranean to India was via America. entire world. It is this combina- Dupnis and six G.P.U. agents, there the executed there were ten or even the declaration of the Elder of the therefore my itinerary from the geoisie feel keenly the threat to many. With the aid of Stalin, the tion of the cynicism of infinite op. was also present the "Commission five real agents of Pilsudsky. pression with the cynicism of infinite lies to the foreign proletariat that most aroused our indignati n at the Soviet bureaucratic customs,

British Imperialism Faces Dilemma Our demand for leave to depart was actively supported by the entire communist sector of the prison. In a special declaration to the Government, the Elder, in the name of all the imprisoned Communists supported our demand to depart, and placed the responsibility for our fate upon dignation is running high. At the Nile. the Government. The universal League Council, Anthony Eden virand decisive support of the entire isolator (up to and including a hunger strike in solidarity) was a manifestation of international solidarity, and of a desire to make known through us to the international working class the position of the persecuted groups of the working class movement in the

A GPU Coup

were heading toward an extensive of India's North-Western Frontier. is harder to apply when the Channel ism, under the somewhat tarnished struggle, it executed a maneuver, . . . Lulled for a time by the habitual has ceased to be the effective bar- banner of the struggle to preserve o'utionary and international" duty; deciding to remove us from Verkh- miscalculations of the military ex- rier to an attack from the continent. democracy. ne-Uralsk on a decorous pretext. perts who dwelt soothingly on im- This is what Baldwin meant when A few days prior to the expiration possible terrain and coming rains, he talked of the British frontier of our prison term, on May 18, 1933 the British moral sense received now being on the Rhine. we were told to surrender our corr- and gave full bay with the Italian espondence, and to get our things capture of Dessye. ready. To our inquiry as to our destination, Bizukov, the warden, loved League did little else than replied-Moscow. To the question cluck its tongue and register its own as to the purpose of the journey, failure. What sanctions have been we received the answer; "Can't say, imposed doubtless created economic Apparently, in order to discuss the difficulties for the Fascist regime. matter you raised in your declara- and depleted its gold reserves. But

they have not brought about its col-We were taken away, The isolator lapse. On the contrary, Mussolini sent us off with the warmest wish- has been able to turn the sanctions es, but also with some doubts as to policy of the League (read English) whether we were not being simply to his own advantage. This he has removed to another prison. Our done by picturing Italy as a poor possessions were examined, our per- "proletarian" state whose road to sons were searched. We were place a place in the sun was being barred ed in two autos, comrades Deditch by the fat imperialist powers. Inand Draguitch in one, myself in the cidentally statistics of the value of other. The machines started togeth- Italian imports and exports for the er, but on the road, the auto with first four months after sanctions my comrades pulled ahead, and dis- "went into effect" reveal that the appeared in a cloud of dust. I never USSR of Stalin actually increased saw my comrades again. They had its trade with Italy. We should be separated us. We rode the entire interested to have an explanation of day, and toward evening we arrived this phenomenon from the Daily in the city of Chelyabinsk. I was Worker or the League Against War French supremacy on the continent French. But their struggle against while, I decided that the first stage taken to the Chelyabinsk political and Fascism. prison, which held at that time from 50 to 80 people (S.R.'s, social democrats, Zionists, anarchists, and a few communists).

Chelyabinsk and Hunger Strike

the GPU agent Dupnis told me that | rom Moscow", the representatives | May 22, 1933 was the day on in that case he refused to accept of the collegium of the G.P.U. My which our prison term expired. On me, and would send me back to old "acquaintances": citiziness And- ium have something to communicate upon the GPU the necessity of em-March 21, we sent a declaration to Verkne-Uralsk. Once again I was reyev, Agranov's assistant, who is to you." the C. E. C. and the collegium of placed in an automtbile and carried in charge of all matters relating to the G. P. U. demanding that we be of .. But not to Verkne-Uralsk the persecuted communist, socialist my eyes, sumbling for my glasses, given permission to depart unhin- They threw me into the cellar of and anarchist groups. There was and half-raising myself on the yev. "We will assign two GPU dered from Russia upon the ex- the jail for criminals under the also the head of the All-Union De- bench. piration of our sentence. We point | Chelyabinsk militia, I was locked partment of Prisons under the colled out in our declaration that in into a damp, cold and dark cell. egium of the G.P.U., citizen Popov, the event of a refusal or failure to The electric light burned night and whose appearance alone bespoke of receive an answer we would begin day. I spent three months in this his functions. The third member a hunger strike on the day our cellar without ever leaving it for a of the commision-the representaminute, -without even seeing the tive of the prosecutor's office-was

A short time ago, I succeeded in somewhere, because we had taken in gether with Andreyev and Popov.

A Nocturnal Visit

I was already quite spent psysic-

By MAURICE SPECTOR

But when it met, the dearly be-

British Cabinet Quandary

absent, although, as I learned later, I immediately began my hunger he was present on the spot in Chelyrades were also on a hunger strike of the isolator during the day, to-

The Execution of the Poles But inasmuch as my case, coupled | ially. . . . began the hunger strike under in- One should imagine that this former auspicious conditions. For this rea. Polish worker is today already so son I began to vomit on the second "Stalinized" as to be able to now or the third day, but afterwards I assume upon himself quite openly began feeling better. I did not feel and brazenly what he undertook onhungry. When a man's conscious- ly shame-needly in 1933. That is to ness is really profoundly permeated say, unless he happened to be anot touch food, he absolutely does communists who were recently shot not feel the pangs of hunger. He in Russia without a trial, upon only feels weak. I had already had the unverified and all-embracing the experience of the great hunger charge of Pilsudskyism, espionage strike of 1931. Of course, the hundand provocation. (In the opinion of ger strike in this place was made the most competent and authoritamore difficult by the cold and the tive representatives of the Polish dampness. Half-dressed, wrapped in labor movement, the great majority suicide does not give notice of it." a blanket I lay the whole time, of the executed, among them a for- objected citizeness Andreyev. night and day, on the wooden bench, mer deputy to the Polish Sejm, were On the tenth day, after midnight a above all suspicion; and that upon group of G.P.U. agents stamped into investigation any impartial inter- ed you do not bear any responsibilthe cell. Night time is the favorite national committe would have prov- ity for it. I am engaged in a potime of the G.P.U. for its work . . . | ed criminal light-mindedness on the | litical struggle against you, and part of the Soviet ruling organs, if you bear full political responsibilnot something worse.

"Citizen Ciliga", said Dupuis, munists, our rate could not be kept

"Well, what is it?" I said rubbing

"Citizen Ciliga", continued citizeness Andreyev, "I have the following to communicate to you: the collegium of the G.P.U. and the C.E.C. of the U.S.S.R. have rejected your demand for permission to depart from the U.S.S.R. By the odder of the collegium of the G.P.U. your prison term has been extended for an additional two years The G.F.U. refuses to recognize your hunger strike and beginning tomorrow you will be fed artific-

"The question of the hunger strike and of artificial feeding has already become a secondary question", I began coldly and deliberately. In answer to the unheard-of decision of the G.P.U. and of the Soviet Government, and the refusal to allow me to return home although I have already served the prison sentence which you yourseives imposed upon me in 1930, to the automatic addition of a new prison term which trans arms me into your perpetual slave and captive. I will resort to the extreme measure left me-suicide. If necessary let my death be the price paid for informing the fereign proletariat into what a position you put those foreign revolutionists who refuse to become your lackeys. I will also inform Moscow of my decision."

"Yes", I said smiling at her, "you would like to see me dead, providity for everything you have done

and will do to me and my comrades. My official declaration is precisely

"We Will Not Permit. . ."

If the death could have been

"the representatives of the colleg- secret any longer. This imposed ploying more cautious tactics.

"We will not permit you to commit suicide," said citizeness Andreagents to your cell, and all your things will be immediately remov-

And she proceeded to issue the necessary orders. I was left only with a few toilet articles. But in them was secreted a new sharp blade, already smuggled out of the isolator. . . . I was triumphant. I it came to "that", I would show them. . . . For this reason I told citizeness Andreyev ironically that man who finds it necessary to do way with himself would not be estrained either by soldiers or any other obstacle.

The next morning I sent a telegram to the Moscow collegium of he GPU and the C. E. C. of the U. S. S. R. containing a declaration similar to the one I had made to Andreyev.

artificially, but instead I was offirially told the following:

An "Official" Decree

"The Political Bureau of the C. P. of Jugoslavia has passed a resolution approving the decision of the GPU to extend your term of imprisonment. This decision of the Political Bureau of the Jugoslav Communist Party will be given to on in writing."

"This is not my Political Bureau," I interrupted the orator. "These are your mamelukes and their decisions are not binding upon me. I do not recognize this Political Bureau, "A man who decides to commit I do not belong to any of your communist parties, nor have I any intention of belonging to them. Therefore I do not recognize their discipline and refuse to submit to

> Four days later, Dupnis appeared and in ormed me that a telegram OF THE EMPIRE had arrived from Moscow stating that the additional two year prison term had been changed to three years exile in Irkutsk.

departure more quickly," the head nations to maintain the status quo. of the Chelyabinsk political prison To the Stalinist bureaucracy that

A New Columbus Itinerary

"You mean to say that since collective of the imprisoned com- Urals to Europe is via Irkutsk and their power in any major distur- masses will be led into thinking Kamchatka," I said to him in a similar tone. "But no." I said, "I want to go from the Urals due Wes: to Europe. Taking into consideration the withdrawal of an addition As Line - Up in Europe Changes al prison term, I withdraw the question of the protest-suicide. But for permission to depart home to Europe.

This occurred on the 14th day of cesses in Ethiopia, British moral in- the Rhine to the headwaters of the hand in the East is, however, that the hunger strike. I struck for a challenge to British interests 9 more days. Again Dupnis arrived. and told me that a new telegram was received from Moscow With instructions for me to go there, demanded that I be given an official written notice to this effect, otherwise I would continue the hunger strike. Within hal, an hour the written statement I had de manded was delivered.

> I called the hunger strike off and in two weeks I was over its effects. (Dupnis really fed me quite well. He obviously thought that he was thus ful illing his "revand, besides, he was trying to "bribe" me so that I would agree to depart for exile)

Still, I was not taken to Moscow. "had made a mistake". The com-

En Raute to Irkutsk I declared a hunger strike. After "political ideals" and "international night, a group of GPU agents burst by 'orce. They packed my things, The greatest of all crimes is that leaded them into an auto, shoved

What to do? After pondering a be considered as closed. The battle Neither war nor fascism can be would have to be resumed in exile. dary. The gorged Empire is caught inication of the Rhineland further overthrown without a revolutionary after I had gathered and utilized struggle against the capitalist-im- all the possibilities it offered. Hav-The smaller states now within the perialist order that breeds them. ing made this decision, I called off When I announced in the prison West. The Italian conquest of orbit of French protection will have The most powerful force for the the hunger strike and began to take office that in view of the trick with Ethiopia would spell more than to reconsider their position when destruction of both Hitler and note of everything new around me. regard to my alleged journey to merely a diplomatic defeat of Eden. French forces will likely find them. Mussolini, and for the creation of For the first time after three years Moscow, and my being separated Mussolini would bestride the Med- selves immobilized by German re- the Soviet United States of Europe. segregation from society, from life, from my comrades, I would immed-iterranean and challenge the British armament on the Rhine. Rumania would be the French Revolution. I was on a train, "among human

(To Be Continued)

MARCH OF EVENTS

Decline of the British Empire

inevitable changes that an unstable even when aimed at capitalist overcapitalism will bring forth. The throw, are not to the liking of men end of Great Britain's world dom- whose sole claim to power rests on ination was foreshadowed even be- the stifling of mass forces, tore the war, with the rise of those collossal industrial rivals, the wrought since have emphasized the of two courses in order to safeguard the creation of a colonial proletar- ored policy of "perfidious Albion," for independence, the internal eco- aggressor at the expense of other feels the sceptre slipping from her to bring about a change of heart

Threatened in every direction and on every front, British imper-No attempt was made to feed me ialism is engaged in utilizing every into the greedy hands of other imful than the present rulers and the masses. masses now under the British whip will suffer new lashes from the new slave-drivers.

RADEK AND CONSERVATION

Radek, playing the Stalinist game, proposes to advise the English bourgeoisie in their frantic efforts at self-preservation as a rul-"Irkutsk is a large city not like ing class. This is the inevitable Chelyabinsk, and you will be able outcome of a policy which places to arrange there the matter of your sole reliance on imperialist combistatus quo includes the one concern that lies nearest to their heart's bance of the present world relation that defense of the empire is "de-

Of all the great powers Britain | chilled to the marrow by the specis today the most vulnerable, the ter of future wars—and revolutions. one that has most to fear from the Tremendous unleashed mass forces,

Writing in "Current History" on "Britain's Way in World Politics," United States and Germany. The Radek bids the "wiser" conserva-World War and the changes tives in England to take the better processes of decay rotting the foun- their system. At the present time dations of Empire—and simulta- the ruling section of the bourgeoisie neously threatening the very exis- is playing the game of balance of tence of the capitalist system as a power once more. In order to prewhole. Viewed from any criterion serve the empire intact, and yet of imperialist power-the decline allow for the expansion of a strangof its capital export, the loss of ling Germany, the tories propose to naval supremacy, the threat of the tie Germany's hands in the West new weapons of warfare that shift and permit Hitler complete free-England's "boundaries" from the dom in the East. Britain proposes Channel to the Rhine, the economic to survive at the expense of the development of the colonies with Soviet Union. This is a time-honiat capable of leading the movement -to make a deal with a possible nomic crisis at home-Britannia powers. How does Radek propose among the slave-drivers? By addressing himself to those "conservatives" who are shrewder and hope to preserve the status quo by means of "collective security" means to stave off the evil day, to through the League of Nations. prolong its rule and with this rule Radek warns that any breach of the entire system of exploitation at peace, despite any hope of the Enghome and colonial oppression lish that they can remain isolated abroad. Under these circumstances, and become the source of supplies it becomes the task and the duty for a warring Germany, can only o.' the class conscious workers to result in a general world-wide war utilize every means to strengthen which would threaten the entire their forces and their organization, structure of the Empire. Far betto unite the struggle of the British ter for them to rely, in accordance proletariat and the oppressed masses with the sentiment of the British in the colonies so as to prepare to masses, on that preserver of peace, wrest power from their brutal im- the League. And please note, my perialist masters. Otherwise the English friends, says Radek, if war fragments of empire can only fall should nevertheless break out, you would through this policy obtain perialist powers, even more power- the whole-hearted support of your

> "But if war becomes inevitable owing to the imperialist policy of Japan, Germany and Italy (not France or Great Britain, of course!) then the British masses, as was shown by the trade union congress and the Labor Party, will be all for the defensive measures adopted by the League (!!). Particularly since the entry of the Soviet Union into the League, those masses see in the League a guarantee that defense against German, Italian and Japanese aggression will not degenerate into a policy of imperialist deals at the expense of other peoples."

In other words, Radek promises desire, the maintenance of their to cover British imperialism with own uncontrolled power in the the mantle of the Soviet Union if Soviet Union. If the British bour- Britain will turn away from Gerof forces, the Stalinists are no less fense of peace in general."

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The Pro-German Orientation

The Cabinet is prepared to give the French General Staff the required guarantees against a German invasion of either Belgium or France. But the section of the Cabinet which is hostile to Eden's pro-French orientation, and sympathetic to ili:ler's offer of a twenty-five year truce, points out that France is tied up with pacts in the East, (USSR, Poland, Czechslovakia). They ask why Great Britain should be incolved in a war or the defence of France in the West, which would be precipitated by French commitments to her Allies in the East.

The politicians of this viewpoint reason that Hitler is no longer as isolated as he was a couple of years ago, and that Germany must be afforded a saftey-valve for expanfacilitated German rearmament, That altered the whole political shadow-boxing. The British Cabinet is in a quan-landscape and the impending fort-

between the pincers of more dyna- enhances Nazi power. mic imperialisms in the East and iately begin a hunger strike, the pickings in Egypt, Palestine and and Yugoslavia have already given That, and not the Popular Front of beings" head of the Chelyabinsk isolator, the Near East generally. It is this clear indications of dissatisfaction; class peace.

realization that shifts British at | others may follow. . . The great pol-Galvanized by the Blackshirt suc- tention swiftly from the banks of itical risk of giving Germany a iree An Anglo-French alliance would would follow at a later stage. tuously denouncing the bombings bring the Italian upstart's threat

and use of poison gas, called for the to the Empire and its communica- Imperialism, the most vocal recent application of fresh sanctions. But tions, to a halt. But the price that supporter of the League, strikingly if we refrain from boiling over in Baldwin-Eden would have to pay- manifest the humbug of the sanc sympathy, it is because our memory sanctions and military action tions policy as a means of struggle has not failed us. It is fairly mod- against Germany-is so high and against imperialism. The use ulern history that British bombers, the consequences so perilous, that ness of the sanctions argument so and under a "Labor" Government. British policy is momentarily in a far has been limited to lining up persuaded Irak villagers to pay state of confusion. The ideal and the liberals, social-democrats and their back taxes more promptly. traditional British course is to hold Stalinists to fight for the interests Less than a year ago, British planes | the scales of the balance of power, of British or French imperialism When the GPU saw that matters rained bombs on the restless natives to act as conciliator. This policy against German or Italian imperial-

Power Politics"

committed by the leaders of the me in, and drove to the Chelyabiusk Second and Third Internationals railway station. Thus, towards the sion, which is not at the expense of who have turned their organizations end of July, acompanied by a conthe British Empire or of the states into official supporters of the aims voy of four GPU agents I was taken quo in the West. The British desire and slogans of such "democratic" to Irkutsk. to reduce the specific gravity of imperialism as the British or Fascism and War was always of my struggle for depart re must

These pre-occupations of British

The "Nations" and "New Republies" are all engaged intoning that I became nervous again. Finally i collective security goes, power I learned the answer. The typist politics return, . . if international law is to be effective, agreements munication from Moscow, it seems, must be uniformly respected.' These | read that I would be called, and not liberal formulas are among the that I am being called there. A great contemporary "democratic" couple of days later, I was told lies. Power politics, the politics of that I must leave for Irkutsk. imperialism, of the struggle for markets, have never ceased to rule since the peace of Versailles. Or these abominations, the question of are we to be treated to a fresh dose the profest-saicide was again on the of Wilsonian diplomacy. When did order of the day. But a ew days this "collective security" come in? later, shortly after I began the The liberal twaddle about warring strike, again in the middle of the law" only serves to obscure the into me cell and informed me of basic causes of the imperialist the decision to remove me to exile