

Peace & Plenty

"Then there's the Gem of the Caribbean, Jamaica . . . lovely mountains, deep canyons, broad fertile plantations . . . Jamaica, now a peaceful British colony, once was the stronghold of those swashbuckling pirates who roamed the Spanish Main."

In May and June a strike of almost general proportions in Kingston, Jamaica, spread to rural districts, involving thousands of laborers on the "broad fertile plantations."

An orchid for every woman and a gardenia for every man who visits Puerto Rico (the flowers to be grown by prisoners in the penitentiary gardens) was the plan announced by Governor Winship last winter.

It is to be hoped the origin of the flowers would not remind the tourists of Puerto Rico's political prisoners. The fragrance of gardenias, however, might keep the tourists' nostrils from being assailed by the stench of the Island slums—some of the worst in the world.

Paul V. McNutt, U. S. High Commissioner in the Philippines, is to have a summer place in the mountains in addition to the one now being built in Manila.

Congress appropriated \$750,000 for the palaces. The Philippines must not be left in doubt, despite illusions of independence, as to whose is the power and the glory.

Cuba has expressed her willingness to do her bit towards solving the refugee problem. A State Department communique announced she was ready to receive capitalists, and favored "the eventual admittance of capitalists who might contribute to the improvement of our national economy."

Czechoslovakia displays a similarly touching generosity. A Prague dispatch states, "The authorities recently have shown sympathy for the position of these fugitives from Nazi Austria and have considered establishing a concentration camp for them at Svatoborice in Moravia."

Brazil is checking up on the 4,800 European refugees who have arrived on tourist passports good for six months, but have remained. The means of support of each refugee will be investigated, and they will be placed under police supervision until the authorities decide what to do with them.

On his seventy-fifth birthday, Henry Ford received the Grand Cross of the German Eagle, awarded by Hitler for the first time in this country. It was officially given for Mr. Ford's services in making "automobiles available to the masses."

Reminder on the Anniversary of the World War: "A manufacturer of steel for shells, who had been allotted troops to work in his factory, remarks to me: 'At last I shall discover what is the working man's maximum output. For if they don't work I shall send them back to the trenches.'" Diary of Michel Corday, "The Paris Front," 1914-1918.

"November 14, 1917. Steeg strongly advises me against Clemenceau (to form a cabinet). He believes it necessary to associate the socialists with governmental action and the repressions which, he says, are indispensable. Otherwise they will form an opposition that would very quickly become pacifist." Poincare's Memoirs, Vol. IX.

Was Leon Sedoff Murdered?

Trotsky Presses Question In Letter to French Court; Finds Inquiry Avoids Essential Facts

On February 16th, Leon Sedoff, son of Leon Trotsky, died in a Paris hospital following an abdominal operation. The suspicious circumstances attending his death, combined with persistent persecution by Stalin's agents in France, pointed an accusing finger at the G.P.U. Friends of Leon Sedoff requested an investigation by the public authorities into the causes of Sedoff's death.

To M. Penegal, Examining Magistrate of the Inferior Court—Department of the Seine. Monsieur le Juge, Sir:

This morning I received from my attorneys, Maitres Rosenthal and Rous, materials relating to the preliminary investigation and the medical findings on the death of my son, Leon Sedoff. In so important and tragic a case I deem it my right to speak with complete frankness, without any diplomatic subterfuges.

Messrs. medical experts arrive at the conclusion that Sedoff's death may be explained by natural causes. This conclusion, in the given circumstances, is almost void of meaning. Any sickness may under certain conditions lead to death. On the other hand, there is no sickness or almost none that would necessarily result in death exactly at a given moment.

During the Bukharin-Rykov trial this year in Moscow, it was revealed with cynical frankness that one of the methods of the G.P.U. is to assist a disease in expediting death. The former head of the G.P.U., Menzhinsky, and the writer Gorky were not young and were ill; their death, consequently, might have been readily explained by "natural causes."

On February 4, 1937, Sedoff published an article in the French periodical, Confessions, in which he warned that "he was in excellent health; that his spirit had not been broken by the persecutions; that he inclined neither to despair nor suicide and should death suddenly strike him, those responsible for it must be sought in Stalin's camp. This issue of Confessions I forwarded to Paris to be placed in your hands, Monsieur le Juge, and that is why I am quoting from memory. Sedoff's prophetic warning, flowing from unimpeachable and universally known facts of a historic magnitude, should, in my opinion, have determined the course and character of the judicial investigation.

NEXT ISSUE OF N.I. PREVIEWED

The September issue of The New Internationalist will contain new features to add to an already highly-attractive and substantial organ of revolutionary Marxism. The management announces a partial list of articles for the September number.

- 1. Canada and World Politics, by E. Robertson.
2. Diplomatic Origins of the Stalinist People's Front Policy, by Max Shachtman.
3. Anniversary article on the Murder of Ignace Reiss by the Stalinist G.P.U., by Elisa Reiss, his widow.
4. An extensive omnibus review by Dwight Macdonald of books on economics and kindred subjects, issued recently by the Harvard University Department of Business Administration; the Brookings Institute of Economics; and "Save America First" by Jerome Frank of the Roosevelt Administration.
5. Articles on problems now being discussed in the S.W.P. and Youth organizations.
6. The regular features: Editorial Comments; Dwight Macdonald's "They, the People"; Archives; besides numerous other articles and features to be announced shortly.

The August issue of The New Internationalist, out last week, has met with a very enthusiastic reception. The variety of contents and the high quality of the articles have resulted in increased demands for the current issue. Orders for the current and forthcoming issues may yet be placed. The price per single copy is 20 cents; and the subscription rate is \$2.00 per year. Address:

THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 116 UNIVERSITY PLACE, NEW YORK, N. Y.

details, I take the liberty of calling your attention to the verbatim report of the Bukharin-Rykov trial published by the Soviet Commissariat of Justice.

Messrs. experts declare that death "might have" also resulted from natural causes. Of course, it might have. However, as is evident from all the circumstances of the case none of the physicians expected Sedoff's death. It is clear that the G.P.U. itself, trailing every step of Sedoff's, could not have pinned its hopes on the possibility that "natural causes" would accomplish their work of destruction without extraneous assistance.

My attorneys have placed at your disposal, Monsieur le Juge, all the necessary data proving that the G.P.U. considered the extermination of Sedoff as one of its most important tasks. Generally speaking, French judicial authorities can hardly entertain any doubts on this score, following the three Moscow trials and especially after the revelations made by the Swiss and French police in connection with the murder of Ignace Reiss. For a long period of time, and especially for the last two years, Sedoff lived in a constant state of siege by a G.P.U. gang which operates on Parisian territory almost as freely as in Moscow.

At all events, M. Theilheimer, the surgeon who operated on Sedoff, was taken unawares by the events of the fatal night. He asked Sedoff's wife, Jeanne Martin de Pallieres: "Hasn't the patient tried to commit suicide?" To this question, which could not be deleted from the general history of the sickness, Sedoff himself had supplied an answer in advance in the above cited article, a year prior to his death.

What is most striking is that the content of the letter in all its details stands in direct and clear contradiction to hundreds of letters written by the same Klement up until a very short time ago to me personally and to mutual friends. The letter is written as if the past had not existed at all. Only a person tied hand and foot physically and morally could write like this and then only under the dictation of other people absolutely unfamiliar with Klement's past but who wanted to make use of him for their purposes.

There is no ordinary case. It may be argued that the above-developed considerations, however weighty in themselves, cannot alter the negative results of expert medical examination. I reserve the right to return to this question in a special document, after a consultation with competent physicians. That no traces of poison were found does not imply that no poisoning took place, and in any case it does not imply that the G.P.U. did not resort to some other measures to prevent the overcoming of the illness. If in question here were an ordinary case, under normal living conditions, then the findings of medical experts, while not exhausting the question, would have preserved their full force of conviction. But we have before us a case quite out of the ordinary, namely, a death, unexpected by the physicians themselves, of an isolated exile, following a prolonged duet between him and a mighty state machine armed with inexhaustible material, technical and scientific resources.

The formal medical examination is all the more inadequate because it stubbornly overlooks the central moment in the history of the illness. The first four days after the operation were days of obvious improvement in the health of the operated patient, whose condition was considered so favorable that the hospital administration discharged the special nurse. Yet on the night of February 14, the patient, left to himself, was found wandering nude and in a state of wild delirium through the corridors and premises of the hospital. Doesn't this monstrous fact merit the attention of the experts?

Theilheimer should contain the elements of the well-known "accusations" of the G. P. U. We must not forget for one moment that Klement was closely familiar with the life and work of the Fourth International, that he was especially indignant at these "accusations" and that his indignation found inimitable expression in dozens of letters. Klement took an active part in the unmasking of the Moscow trials, and this work, again, is imprinted in numerous letters and documents.



Leon Sedoff, son of Leon Trotsky, died in a Paris hospital following an abdominal operation.

Left Unattended. If natural causes must have, not might have led to the tragic denouement, then by what and how explain the optimism of the physicians, owing to which the patient was left completely unattended at the most critical moment? It is of course possible to try to reduce the whole case to an error of prognosis and poor medical care. However, in the materials of the investigation there is not even a mention of it. It is not difficult to understand why: if there was inadequate supervision, then does not the conclusion force itself automatically that his enemies, who never lost sight of Sedoff, could have utilized this favorable situation for their criminal ends?

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Trotsky Tells of 'Letter' from Victim of G.P.U.

By LEON TROTSKY

This morning, August 1, I received a letter apparently in the handwriting of Rudolf Klement, in German. The letter is dated July 14 and presumably went via Paris and New York. The handwriting is undoubtedly similar to the handwriting of Klement but bears an extremely uneven, sickly and feverish character. The letter peculiarly is signed, "Frederic". As to its contents it is one of the most fantastic documents that I have ever held in my hands. To start with, the salutation—all the preceding letters of Klement, including those written just a few days before, begin with the words: "Dear Comrade" or "Dear L. D." (my initials). This last letter begins with the words, "Mr. Trotsky." From beginning to end the letter presents an incoherent piling up of accusations against the Fourth International, against me personally, and against my deceased son.

Where Is Klement? It is most probable, however, that the letter is written in the grip of the G. P. U. and that Klement, in fear for his life or for the lives of people dear to him, or finally, under the influence of some drugs, submissively wrote down what he was ordered, not bothering to correct obvious absurdities. It is even possible that Klement included these absurdities with complete readiness in order, in this fashion, to compromise the G. P. U.'s plot beforehand. In any case this letter written and transmitted to me testifies that this affair will have its aftermath. The very fact of Klement's disappearance remains of course the chief mystery. Where is he? What has happened to him? The letter bears no indication of the place of mailing. Apparently the letter passed from city to city; the inner envelope bears only my initials. I will endeavor of course to obtain the necessary information about the postal route of this letter.

Theilheimer should contain the elements of the well-known "accusations" of the G. P. U. We must not forget for one moment that Klement was closely familiar with the life and work of the Fourth International, that he was especially indignant at these "accusations" and that his indignation found inimitable expression in dozens of letters. Klement took an active part in the unmasking of the Moscow trials, and this work, again, is imprinted in numerous letters and documents.

Medical Men Find Death Mysterious, But Authorities Fail to Investigate Work of G.P.U. Assassins

plied an answer in advance in the above cited article, a year prior to his death. The turn for the worse in the patient's condition was so sudden and unexpected, that the surgeon who was acquainted neither with the identity of the sick man nor with the conditions of his life, found himself compelled to resort to the hypothesis of suicide. This fact, I repeat, cannot be deleted from the general picture of the illness and death of my son! One might, if one were inclined, say that the suspicions of Sedoff's relatives and intimates arise from their apprehensiveness. But we have before us a physician, for whom Sedoff was an ordinary patient, an unknown engineer by the name of Martin. Consequently the surgeon could not have been infected with either apprehensiveness or political bias. He guided himself solely by those symptoms which came from the organism of the sick man. And the first reaction of this eminent and experienced physician to the unexpected, i.e., unaccounted for by any "natural causes," turn in the cause was to suspect an attempt at suicide on the part of the patient. Isn't it clear, isn't it most palpably evident that had the surgeon known at that moment the identity of his patient and the conditions of his life he would instantly have asked: "Couldn't this be the work of assassins?"

This is precisely the question that is posed in all its force before the judicial investigation. The question is formulated, Monsieur le Juge, not by myself but by the surgeon Theilheimer, even if involuntarily. And to this question I find no answer at all in the materials of the preliminary investigation forwarded to me. I do not find even an attempt to seek an answer. I find no interest in the very question itself.

Truly astonishing is the fact that the enigma of the crucial night has remained thus far not only unexplained but even unprobed. That time is allowed to lapse, rendering extremely difficult the work of any subsequent investigation, cannot be explained away as an accident. The administration of the clinic has naturally tried to avoid any investigation of this point, for it could not fail to bring to light gross negligence owing to which a gravely sick man was left without any attendance and could have committed acts fatal to himself or could have been subjected to such acts. The doctors-experts, for their part, did not at all insist upon clarifying the events of the tragic night. The police investigation was confined to superficial depositions of individuals who were guilty at least of negli-

JAPAN SEARCHES FOR RETREAT

(Continued from page 1)

flagration in hopes of somehow pulling themselves out of their Chinese bog, these calculations were upset, at least temporarily. If Japan moved in the first instance at Hitler's advice to see what Moscow's reaction would be, both received a severe jolt because Moscow, confident that Japan's difficulties in China made Russia an easy master along the Siberian frontier, has assumed an aggressively defensive position and has indicated that it would be just as prepared to call a show down here and now if necessary. Indications are not lacking, indeed, that Moscow was not displeased at having the opportunity to rehabilitate its diplomatic position in Europe by a show of strength on the Far Eastern frontier. The risk of war was present, obviously, but under conditions which could not but be favorable to Russia because Japan is so seriously weakened by the failure of its China adventure.

So when Shigemitsu came, hat in hand, he was virtually shown the door and 6,000 miles away the Soviet guns continued to shell Japanese positions on the disputed hills and Soviet aircraft engaged in threatening demonstrations which the Japanese did not dare reply to in kind. Nothing has more clearly evidenced Japan's desire to retreat from an uncomfortable jam than the fact that not a single Japanese plane has yet taken to the air.

There remains always the dangerous possibility that the border clashes will automatically extend and that both protagonists will find themselves in the midst of a war that neither has really desired at this time.

World At A Glance

Two items in the recent dispatches from Prague throw a piercing light on the true character of the capitalist democracies which are being touted by social reformists, Stalinists and so-called liberals as bulwarks in the fight against the Fascist dictatorships.

Item No. 1. A large group of Viennese Jews, after being deprived of all their possessions, were deported across the Czech border two weeks ago. Discovered by the police of that democratic republic, the Viennese Jews were rounded up and arrested. Unable to show entry permits or to explain by what means they intended to support themselves, they were re-deported over the Austrian border.

One of the most heinous cruelties of the Fascist dictatorships is their maniacal anti-Semitism. One of the "basic principles" of the democracies is the right of asylum to refugees. To the Jews who have to bear the actual brunt of Nazi atrocities, the "basic principles" of capitalist democracy have proved precious little, in action. No property—no right of asylum! That's how a democratic principle is interpreted under capitalism.

Item No. 2. The Czech Na-

tionalist Party, the organization of the Czech Fascists, which has six deputies in the Prague parliament, has rallied to the democratic government in its hour of danger. Faced with the threat of a Hitler invasion of the Sudeten German area to add the cause of Henlein's Nazis, the Czech Fascists have decided to rewrite their constitution to include a clause in defense of democracy!

For the defense of the status quo, for the defense of predatory nationalist aims, the Czech Fascists have thus shown themselves just as facile as our Stalinists in bandying about the slogans of bourgeois democracy.

In raising the banner of the Socialist United States of Europe, in refusing to be encompassed by the wave of social-patriotism, in calling for an intensification of the class struggle, the Czech revolutionists prove themselves to be far more realistic fighters against Fascism than all the People's Fronters. The latter are only preparing the road for further Fascist victories by their super-nationalistic politics, both at home as well as over the border.

Sugar Companies Grab Lands in Puerto Rico

Editorial Note.—Recent events in the Caribbean have forcefully reminded the American people that Yankee imperialism holds sway in those islands to the south. Strikes and peasant revolts have forced the government to send troops against the oppressed colonials. The reception Governor Winthrop received at a "celebration" of the annexation of Puerto Rico by the United States was a rude shock to those who expected the islanders to meekly accept the most terrible exploitation.

The article below deals with the manipulations of the huge sugar corporations that own the island of Puerto Rico. This brief sketch depicts vividly the ruthless oppression practiced by the masters of the Caribbean.

By FRANCES MERRILL

The Puerto Rican Supreme Court on August 1 upheld a Congressional resolution passed in 1900 limiting the amount of land held by a corporation to 500 acres, but which has never been enforced. The land law was enacted by Congress in 1917 as part of the Island's Organic Act, but it was not implemented until 1935. The Supreme Court ordered the Rubert Hermanos sugar company, owner of the central San Vicente to dissolve, and fined it \$3,000. The small fine was explained by the long period during which the law was disregarded by the authorities. Cases against the Fajardo Sugar Company and the Central Cambaleche are pending, with further hearings to be held in the fall.

The big sugar companies, dominated by absentee capitalists in the United States, own or control the greater part of the sugar lands in the four chief cane sections that fringe the Puerto Rican coast. All of the most fertile soil is "the property of men who seldom or never see the Island and who have no interest in it except dividends." (Diffie: Puerto Rico, A Broken Pledge.) Rubert Hermanos, Inc., the company convicted under the act, is one of the smaller ones, owning 12,188 acres and producing 31,247 tons of sugar in 1935-6.

One of "Big Four"

The Central Cambaleche is about the same size, but the indicted Fajardo Sugar Company is one of the "big four" American corporations that dominate the industry. (The others are the South Puerto Rican Sugar Company, Central Aguirre Sugar Company, and Eastern Sugar Associates.) Together they produced nearly half of the total output for 1935-6; 399,207 tons out of 880,908. Fajardo's output was 104,207 tons. (Figures from Farr's Manual of Sugar Companies, 1937.) Many of the smaller companies are American or foreign owned. According to Diffie, about 60 per cent of the sugar crop in 1931 was ground by American and other absentee companies.

Fajardo owns 30,132 acres of cane land, leases an additional 20,011 acres, and controls through grinding contracts with small plantation owners another 16,096 acres. The South Puerto Rican Sugar Company owns 50,000 acres through a subsidiary, Russell and Company; Eastern Sugar Associates owns 31,000 acres and leases 17,000; and Aguirre owns 25,000 acres and leases 22,000. The "big four" also own railway, telephone and shipping lines. The South Puerto Rican Sugar Co. owns the Dominican Steamship Company and sugar centrals in Santo Domingo, and Aguirre has a controlling stock interest in the New England Alcohol Company.

Sugar Pays Dividends. The commanding position of these sugar corporations in Puerto Rican economy is obvious from the fact that the value of sugar and its products represents 70 per cent of the total value of all Puerto Rican products, and cane growing occupies 40 per cent of all land in crops. Cane land is

the Island's greatest source of wealth. The sugar companies have been highly profitable to their American stockholders. The principal companies by 1931 had paid dividends sufficient to replace their original investment many times over. Dividends exceeding 100 per cent a year have been known, and from 10 to 30 per cent is the rule.

How little American sugar imperialism has contributed to the Island's prosperity, however, is indicated by the wages paid the native workers on the plantations and in the centrals. For 1936-7, wages for men employed on the plantations averaged \$3.65 a week, or 12.8 cents an hour. In the sugar factories they averaged \$7.73 a week or 17 1/2 cents an hour. The sugar companies have also contributed far less than their share of taxes, for their property has been scandalously under-assessed.

Land Pressing Problem

The ownership and use of the land is one of the most urgent Puerto Rican problems. Population density in Puerto Rico is more than 500 to the square mile. Only one-fourth of the total land area is cultivable, with the result that every square mile in cultivation must support over 1800 people. The State of S. Carolina is comparable to Puerto Rico in that it is 80 per cent rural, a similar proportion, but in South Carolina there are only 55 persons to a square mile and the per capita wealth is more than six times that of Puerto Rico.

The monopoly of the land by the sugar companies has reduced the land available for other crops with the result that the Island must import practically all its food from the United States—again paying tribute to American imperialism through both the costs of the food and American steamship lines. The land monopoly has also lessened the area available for housing to the point of distress.

The workers in the sugar industry cannot live on the cane lands. They must crowd into the scabrous, malarious slums that fringe the coastal towns. Every spot of waste land, no matter how unfit for decent living, is occupied by wretched shacks. They are built above several feet of stagnant water or over the tide flats. As many as ten people live in tiny one-room hovels. But the acreage in sugar has expanded ten-fold since 1900.

Although enforcement of the land laws may remedy some abuses, it will be no solution. It will make little difference whether the land is held by absentee corporations or individual Puerto Rican capitalists and landlords, whether it is held in immense tracts or 500 acre-lots, for 500 acres of valuable sugar land is no trifle. There is only one real solution: ownership of the land by those who work it. Until the Puerto Rican workers and agricultural laborers expropriate U. S. imperialism—and for this they need the help and solidarity of the workers in the United States—there will be no prosperity for the Puerto Rican masses.