

The White Terror in Finland

Petrograd, August 8th.

EVERY day Finnish Socialists arrive here who have succeeded in escaping from prison camps in Finland. They confirm, one and all without exception, the most horrible reports about the White Terror, about hunger and death from starvation. It has, however, come to the knowledge of the prisoners that the Socialist parties of other countries are protesting energetically, and this, although it has not, as yet, had any results in the treatment they receive, has nevertheless awakened joy and new hope. Your correspondent received yesterday a letter from one of his Finnish friends who, at present confined in the prison camp at Ekenas, managed to smuggle this letter through the lines. He writes among other things:

"What is this prisoners' camp but an antechamber of death?"

"Here human shadows are walking about until they expire from exhaustion and hunger. The death rate increases day by day. At first the number of deaths per day amounted to from 20 to 30. Today, after the number of prisoners has been reduced by several thousand, and now amounts in all to about 5,000, the mortality rate has risen to 64 per day.

"One becomes so accustomed to this close proximity of death that men become callous and think nothing of eating their breakfasts with an odorous corpse right beside them. It happens that a corpse will lie for hours on a cot, or in the corridor, or outside on the sand—wherever it may have happened to fall. One day the bodies of two men from Brahestad lay in the sun near a water faucet. About fifty prisoners stood in line to get water and all passed by the two corpses without being seemingly much affected.

This morning, as I came out of my door, I found a corpse outside. Many die while in the latrines, and in the latter, during the prevailing summer heat, emit a stench which alone is almost enough to kill.

Some die after they have received a food parcel, others because they never receive any food from the outside. The oat bread and the half-done dried cod-soup cause stomach disorders so that no one who has to subsist on this food is free from them.

"It is a sad sight to observe how these shadows move about. One debilitated body supports another, both barely able to keep on their feet, they drag along listlessly, their eyes staring dully before them. All are weak and appear sunken. Those that still have a somewhat better appearance are orderlies or belong to the sanitary or kitchen personnel. But after sentence has been pronounced it will be all over with

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them as well. It is said that food parcels from the outside can be received for only seven more days after sentence has been passed.

"It would be great to be able to outlive all this but it is a lottery."

The man who brought this letter also gave us a partial statistical report of the mortality at the Ekenas prison camp, covering the period from June 4th to July 23rd.

For seven consecutive weeks the number of dead was 1,038; of this number 23 were shot.

The causes of death (for the same period) were: stomach diseases, 88; jaundice, 8; other diseases, 18; general debility (starvation), 801; unknown causes (including those shot), 23.

From one of our best-known members of the "Jugendbund," himself a prisoner, your correspondent received, about fourteen days ago, a letter wherein he said:

"It seems that you outside in Europe have some sort of information of our suffering since you protested so sharply. Every time we read here how you in Sweden deal with those butchers, strikebreakers and Royal Swedish "Brigadists," we are ever so glad. The International still lives and the solidarity of the workers is not dead.

"With us everything is under suppression. The members of the "Jugendbund" have to suffer most.

We, who had to hold aloft the noble banner of the revolution, we have had much work to do and we had to make the greatest of sacrifices. As soon as the 'Whites' [adherents of the "white" or bourgeois Finnish government] find out that one has been a member of any S. D. U. K., they butcher him at once or, as they express it more 'refinedly,' we are being 'fusilladed.'

"At the Viborg camp, where I have been interned for one month together with Comrades A. and G. among many others, eight members of the 'Jugendbund' were shot without trial, among them one of our best novelists and poets, Kossi Almala. Because there were so many of us at Viborg—10,000—I succeeded in escaping. In Viborg, during the month of May, about sixty to seventy persons were butchered every day, among them several women.

"One day a teacher, Riku Penttinen, and his wife were shot, but their three-year old little son was spared! After we had been captured, on April 29, we did not get anything to eat for four days. Since then our food has consisted of four herrings and of herring soup on two occasions. They gave us bread

now and then, about 30 grammes, but not regularly. We had to sleep on the cement floor of the old Russian barracks. Our daily labor consisted of ridding ourselves of vermin. We were overrun with vermin. Every day we had to carry those comrades who had died to the morgue. 'Acute stomach catarrh,' that is what the 'Whites' called it.

"On Sunday, May 12, we were all in the courtyard of the prison. All was quiet and peaceful. All at once we heard the well-known rattle of a machine-gun. What was the matter? All around us men dropped. Four were killed on the spot. Seven were wounded and had to be carried to the hospital and of these two died soon thereafter. And why was the machine-gun turned upon helpless prisoners? Simply because the director, Wiklander, had taken too stiff a dose of whiskey for an eye-opener and had then gone forth to test the gun. In the papers this was afterwards referred to as a 'little mishap.' That same director used to pelt the prisoners with stones.

"There is now much work to be done by our 'Jugendbund' comrades. We have done our share during the revolution and shall continue to do so in the future. A special 'Jugendbund' company had been formed in Helsingfors. It fought against the Germans at the Karis front. Not many have survived. These brave young comrades are the heroes of the revolution.

"I am now reading all the trashy 'literature' that the 'Whites' are trying to feed us with. But they fail to convince me or any one else that the fault for the present catastrophe lies with the Finnish workers. The bourgeoisie are guilty and they feel and know it. That is proven by their treatment of us, by all their terroristic attempts to eliminate all traces of their guilt. Our salvation will come. It lies in the lap of the world revolution. And for that we live. Send our greeting to the proletariat of the world and convey to it that within us faith and fighting spirit are not dead.

"Long live the Zimmerwald International!"

Thus writes this Finnish comrade. From other sources I learn that the general conditions in Finland are indescribably bad for the working class. Unemployment is widespread. And in tens of thousands of families, where the bread-winner has either been taken to a prison camp or has been shot, wives and children are starving to death. The authorities are doing nothing and hardly can do anything. The several bourgeois parties are disputing and fighting each other and no one pays attention to the starving working class. Everywhere there is despair and misery. A splendid result of the 'war of liberation.'

Written by Ferdinand Freilgrath
in 1848

THE REVOLUTION

Translated from the German
by Edith Bagg

And even if, with your hangman's vassals,
You capture him—a noble stag,
And even if you drive them, as Prisoners,
Straight and upright, within your fortress walls—
And even though, since many a day,
The hills are covered with their corpses,
Those hills, over whose green in sunrise's glow—the
young peasant
Lays wreaths for her dead—
Yet I say to you—she is not dead.

And even though those flowing locks
their high foreheads you sheared away,
even though you seek as companions
murderer and the thief,
even though they wear Prisoners' garb,
in their laps, the bowls of prison fare,
even though they weave oakum and wool,
boldly I say to you:
is not dead.

even though you hunt them into exile,
hary them from land to land,
even though their wounded feet
y in the stream of distant waters,
never hangs she high her harp on Babel's willows,
so—she places it before her.

plays it defiantly—in defiance of you,
scoffs laughingly at her exile,
as she scoffed at the scaffold.

She sings a song, that makes you spring horrified
from your chair,
That makes your heart—your cowardly heart—your
false heart—
Shake in your body.
No songs of sorrow,
No song of tears,
No song of lamenting for those who fell
And even less—a song of mockery
At that abject interlude.

The beggar opera—which at present
You now act so clumsily;
How moth-eaten your Ermine!
How rotten also is your purple!
Oh no, what she sings to the waters
Is not the pain,
Not the ignominy,
It is a song of victory,
A song of triumph,
A song of the Great day of the future.
The future, which is no longer distant—
She speaks with bold prophesyings,
Even as your God spake—a short time since—
I was—I am—I shall be.

I shall be, and once again
I will go on ahead of the peoples.
On your necks, your heads,
On your crowns I shall stand
Deliverer—Avenger—Judge.

With drawn sword—shall I stretch out my arm
That the world may be redeemed.

You see me only in the prison;
You see me only in the pit;
You see me only as a wanderer
On the thorny path of exile,
You silly fools—do I not live
There, where your power has an end?
Have I not my abode
Behind each forehead?
In each Heart?
In every brain that thinks defiantly?
That carries itself high and unbowed?
Is my asylum not every breast
Which feels humanely,
And humanely beats?
Not in each workshop
Where blows fall?
Not in each hut, wherein one groans?

Am I not the breath of humanity,
Which restlessly thirsts for deliverance?
Therefore I shall be—
And once again I shall go on ahead of the Peoples
On your necks—your heads—on your crowns
I shall stand.
It is History's iron MUST;
It is no boasting—No threat.
The day glows hot.
How cool you wave
O willow leaves of Babylon!