



(The Terror in Cuba)

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"The Mendieta-Batista government, placed in power by the U.S. State Department, against the will of the majority of the Cuban people, has established a military dictatorship which in many respects exceeds in ferocity the former dictatorship of Machado."—
From a Letter of the Executive Council of the National Labor Confederation of Cuba to the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, April 9, 1935.

This pamphlet attempts to give a picture of this terror, how it operates, who is behind it, of its significance to the toiling masses of America, and what they must do to fight it.

BLOOD ON THE SUGAR

IT is after midnight, in Havana. A group of men in uniform, with a sprinkling of people in ordinary clothes, stand knocking imperatively at the top of the flight of steps which leads to the door of the home of Armando Feito, young student leader. The door opens a crack.

"What do you want?" Feito asks.

Behind him, Miguel Roque Fraga, his father-in-law, hovers anxiously.

"You are under arrest," the leader of the band says.

"On what charge?"

"Never mind, come along with us."

Under the watchful eyes of the soldiers of Colonel Fulgencio Batista, military dictator, and of the Mendieta-Batista secret political police, Armando slips on a coat, a shirt. There is no time for more.

"I'll go with you," his father-in-law says, "to see what they want."

The women-folk, driven back by threats and a well-directed blow or two with rifle-butts, stand by helpless to interfere.

The shriek of the siren of the high-powered police car dies down as Feito and Fraga are borne away.

The car races on, its siren muffled now, to a secluded spot in the residential section of Miramar, and stops. Two tortured, twisted figures are flung out. They fall to their knees, rise, and try to stagger away as a hoarse voice from the car shouts:

"Run, cabron!"

The rat-tat-tat-tat of a machine-gun cuts through the night and the two figures fall to the ground.

From the car, an elegant, white-jacketed secret service man strolls over to where the bodies lie. He is followed by two

soldiers carrying rifles. He stoops over, examines the faces of the two men. Then, just to make sure, he takes out his revolver and calmly drives a shot into each of the two torture-twisted faces. The soldiers raise their rifle butts, smash them into those upturned faces. He lights a cigarette, shoves his revolver into its holster under his arm, strolls back to the car.

"Muertol!" he says, as the three climb in and the car drives off again.

Next morning, the bodies of two Cubans, who wished so much to see their country free, are found in a vacant lot of the Miramar section. The find is officially reported, but the police make no effort to "solve the crime."

"Batista!"—the exclamation, with a shrug of the shoulders, closes the cases.

"Ley de Fuga"—The Law of Flight

Feito and Fraga were murdered on March 10. Since then, 14 men have fallen victim to the dreaded "Ley de Fuga" (Law of Flight). Listen to the story of Pedro Cala as told by Carleton Beals, well-known liberal writer, in the *New York Times* of March 28:

"Later I interviewed Dr. Jose Ramon Alvarez, one of the most distinguished physicians in Cuba. About 7 o'clock in the morning Dr. Alvarez said, a servant reported that a wounded man was on the front porch of his home, a few blocks from where the crime was committed.

"The doctor tended the injured man, Pedro Cala. Four machine-gun bullets had traversed his body, one just above the heart, but none of them mortal, and his nose was smashed.

"Cala told the doctor he was employed in the Public Works Department, but that during the recent strike he had not gone to work because he could not get transportation. A few days ago secret police appeared at his home and asked him why he was not at work. He explained. They said, 'Come with us, we'll give you transportation.' They then took him

to a barracks and held him. Early next day he was taken out with the two other victims to be shot.

"Cala recognized the man giving orders as Captain Cortez, who, as head of Colonel Batista's secret police, is a member of the army. The last thing he remembered was Captain Cortez saying: 'Give him the *tire de gracia* (the final death shot)'. It smashed his nose.

"Cala was found by a chauffeur, who took him to the home of Dr. Alvarez, left him on the front porch, rang the bell and fled.

"While the doctor was attempting to save Cala's life, soldiers appeared.

"'Who shot you?' they demanded of the wounded man.

"'The army,' Cala replied.

"'The army doesn't do such things.'

"'Captain Cortez was present and ordered me shot. I know him.'

The soldiers then searched the doctor's house and took the wounded man away. His family found him at Camp Columbia Hospital.

With Benefit of Courts and Clergy

These were executions without benefit of courts. But the Mendieta Government makes use of every means. On April 11, Jose Angulo Terry, 26, was sentenced to death by a military tribunal, on a charge of "terrorism." The courts were called in to help. The clergy too.

Terry was led to a deserted rifle-range outside Santiago. His hands were shackled. His eyes were blindfolded. At his side walked a saintly-looking priest.

"Confess, my son!" the holy man urged.

A crisp order was given:

"Fire!"

And as a volley rang out, "Terry" crumpled to the ground.

Only after that did the courts discover that the man they had tried, sentenced and executed, was not Terry at all,

but 19-year-old Jaime Creinstein, son of German immigrants. A minor matter of mistaken identity!

Crecencio and Cecelio—Terrorists!

In the city of Matanzas, two "terrorists"—"arch-enemies of the state"—are haled before the military court, charged with having set fire to sugar cane. The military dictatorship, furious at having been deprived of one victim—the school-teacher Manuel Fonseca who was saved from the firing-squad by an international flood of protests—demands the death penalty for these prisoners. The "terrorists" are frightened and seem about to burst into tears.

They are Crecencio and Cecelio Rodriguez, five and nine years old respectively, sons of a poor peasant.

Havana After Midnight

In Havana—and in most Cuban cities—the silence of the streets is broken after midnight only by an occasional shot. Curfew has been declared. All those found on the streets after that hour are subject to military arrest—or to be shot down on sight.

Unemployed youths, adults and even whole families are arrested under the curfew law because they have no place to go at night—the street is their only home. In the daytime, they are arrested for going around without shirts, stockings, or hats. By a recent decree it is a criminal offense in Cuba to have no money to buy clothing!

"Defense" in Cuban Courts

The routine of Cuban "trials" has been reduced to its very simplest—and most barbarous—essentials. The only testimony is for the prosecution, by a soldier or a policeman. Civil witnesses are not used on either side.

Only the defense lawyers employed by the government are permitted to appear. If any other lawyer is so presumptuous

as to attempt to defend a worker, he soon appears in court in another role—that of prisoner; or perhaps he is simply disposed of by a few bullets.

Jesus Portocarrera, lawyer for the Union of Havana Bay Workers, was "guilty" of such a "crime." He was thrown into jail, where he waits with his clients for the time when he will be called before a "War Council." In Havana jail, Captain Coloma, military supervisor, has prohibited all interviews of defense lawyers with the prisoners.

Prisoners' Progress in Cuba

The travels of Jose Alvarez Rodriguez, sugar worker, and Ignacio Harvaz, painter's apprentice, arrested before the revolutionary strike broke out, through the courts gives a typical picture of the procedure.

When first arrested they were charged with killing Agripino Quintero, a strike-breaker. They were hailed first before the Urgency Court of Correction, which sentenced them to 100 days for use of arms. Next they were taken into another court and sentenced to six months more on another charge. Then this second court found it had acted unconstitutionally and voided its conviction.

This situation presented a problem to the police—but not one too great for them to solve. Rodriguez and Hervaz were taken before still another court, with less constitutional conscience, which sentenced them to 14 years in the penitentiary.

But the police were not through with them yet. They were dragged from the doors of the third court to the tribune of a fourth, where a new charge—arson—was manufactured, and an additional sentence of 8 years imposed, making a total of 22 years and 100 days.

Throughout all this procedure, there was only one witness against them, a policeman, whose remarkable talents of observation were displayed in his ability to furnish a new charge and new evidence upon a moment's notice, and were only

matched by his equally astonishing ability to have been everywhere, and seen everything, at all times.

How Many Prisoners?

Before the general revolutionary strike of March 11, it was estimated that there were some 3,000 political prisoners in Cuban jails—workers and their leaders who had dared to organize, to strike, to speak, to write, on behalf of their fellow-workers. Among them were the six editors of "Masas," jailed for having published in their anti-imperialist paper an editorial which condemned American domination of Cuba.

The total number of arrested during the strike is still not known. The government says 800. But it is known that in Havana alone more than 1,000 were arrested, including 86 women. In the interior, an even greater number are said to be held.

It is difficult to decide which is more terror-inspiring—the "Ley de Fuga," or the Cuban jails.

A Cuban Torture Castle

Let us take a look at Cabana Fortress in Havana. Significantly enough, it is the first sight that meets the traveller's eye as he enters Havana Bay. A statue of liberty stripped of its disguise, pride of the well-fed tourists—and a living hell for political prisoners. It was from the trap doors of that dark dungeon that the tyrant Machado fed union leaders to the sharks.

Cabana was built in the days of Spanish rule, to the taste of the inquisitors, and exactly fits the purposes of the Batista-Mendieta-Wall Street Government in 1935. It is now filled to overflowing with political prisoners, as is the equally notorious, equally ancient Castillo del Principe across the bay. The latter was built to hold 1,500 prisoners a la inquisition. It now holds 2,500 a la Batista.

Many of the dungeons of these prisons lie beneath the

level of the bay, from which water continually seeps through the stone walls. Airless, filthy, wet, infested with rats and vermin of semi-tropical proportions, these dungeons alone are sufficient to account for the terribly high rate of tuberculosis among Cuban revolutionaries.

All prisons are under military supervision. The underworld is combed for its lowest scum which is put in direct charge of the prisoners. As warden of Havana Jail, for example, serves Arsenio Coloma, a marijuana addict. The prisoners must submit to the whims of this dope-maddened brute.

As for sanitation, hospitals, medical supplies—don't make Batista laugh!

Mussolini's Medicine in Cuba

But if the jails lack hospitals, food and beds—and they do lack all these things completely—there is one article with which they are all well supplied—castor oil. Palmacristi (Christ's oil) is the Cuban name for Mussolini's favorite instrument of torture. The political prisoners know it well, as do the workers in the sugar plantations and mills, who are tortured with doses of castor oil for striking against starvation wages or for organizing their fellow-workers. Not so long ago a group of opposition journalists were submitted to the Palmacristi treatment for having written articles against the government.

Some Batista-Mendieta Tortures

What with the jails full, and the executioners so slow in torturing their prisoners to death, it isn't possible for everyone arrested to be imprisoned. You can't jail the whole population of Cuba. So sub-stations for torture have been established in the police stations and military barracks. When prisoners have gone through these mills, they are thrown out

on the streets. Some of them manage, through relatives, to get into the hospitals.

The hospital at Manzanillo has a big quota of these torture victims. Among them are the sugar workers Julio Fonseca and Juan Victoriano. The torture chieftains played only two simple games with them. They beat them with the flat side of a machete (a curved knife used for cutting cane), until they were a mass of bruises. Then they stripped them of what was left of their clothes and dipped them into hot tar.

Starvation, Twin to Batista's Terror

Twin to the terror is the hunger which stalks everywhere save in the lavish Presidential Palace and the rich Vedado section of Havana. On the outskirts of Havana is a city of huts—Havana's Rooseveltburg—where the more fortunate sections of the unemployed lives. In the shadow of a public building one can see an emaciated woman nursing a naked child. Everywhere there are beggars—the only resource of the jobless.

On a few plantations the eight-hour day has been established and the high wage of 80 cents won by strike. Under Machado it was 10 cents for a 12-14 hour day. But the harvest has been cut from 90 to 40 days, and after the harvest comes the dead season—325 days of it, with no possibility of employment for the sugar workers.

And the peasants, forced to cut their cane plantings and facing foreclosure on their lands by the banks, are no better off. Small merchants, professionals, students, all have felt the pinch of terrible want.

Caffery, Ambassador of Blood

The opening of the sugar grinding season on January 16 of this year was accomplished by the application of even more brutal measures. Launching Batista's slogan of last year's harvest—"Zafra (harvest) or blood!"—the government

prepared to guarantee the profits of Wall Street sugar barons at any cost. U.S. Ambassador Caffery returned to Cuba from a conference in Washington on January 15. The next day a new decree was issued fixing the death penalty for "sabotage" of the zafra and suspending constitutional guarantees for a ninety-day period.

But no sooner had the season begun than a series of strikes broke out in various parts of the island.

Three workers were sentenced to death in Havana for "sabotage." A united front workers' defense organization was set up, demonstrations were organized, protests poured in from every corner of the island. The executions were not carried out. The strike movement continued.

Early in February the strike of students and teachers began, spreading until it included more than 300,000. The students and teachers demanded an end to the military dictatorship, democratic rights for the people and larger appropriations for education (the funds for education are used to maintain the record-breaking army). The Government attempted to break the strike with its usual brutal methods. But the strikers held firm against the drastic measures of the Government, and in the first days of March were joined by a general strike of government employees.

General Strike

On March 11, in answer to the general strike call of the National Labor Federation of Cuba, organized labor walked out in a general revolutionary strike against the Government—the biggest revolutionary movement since the great strike that ousted Machado in August, 1933.

Street cars and taxis and other public utilities were manned by soldiers and police. Workers were held at their jobs at the point of bayonets. Others were rounded up in their homes by the soldiers and forced to return to work. Two hundred employees of the Department of Treasury were arrested in

one day. The Government, inviting slaughter, armed strike-breakers and announced that they would not be prosecuted for murdering workers whose jobs they had taken. The posts of striking public employees were filled with friends and relatives of soldiers as the Government undertook a drive to completely militarize all public departments and create a hidden army of 60,000.

An order was issued to shoot anyone caught taking pictures of the terror. Trade unions were outlawed and orders issued for the capture of all strike leaders.

The Medical Federation in Havana, house of science, was reduced to a shambles by the soldiers. The University of Havana, normal and commercial schools, and all technical institutions are closed. In Pinar del Rio the Normal School is a charred ruin. The Governor of the Province ordered it burned because it was a "nest of revolutionaries."

After the trade unions, all other organizations of workers, peasants, students and professionals were outlawed. Their funds and property were confiscated. More than two people meeting on the streets are guilty of a "conspiracy against the state" and placed under arrest.

The puppet Government of President Mendieta and Colonel Fulgencio Batista has launched a war against the Cuban people.

Who is Back of It?

What is the reason for this savage warfare against the Cuban people? It is not carried out simply as a bestial sport. Whom do Fulgencio Batista and President Mendieta represent? Certainly not the Cuban people, and yet no government can remain in power unless it is backed by someone.

To answer these questions it is necessary to ask another: "Who owns Cuba—whose plantations and mills is the terrorist government protecting?"

The answer to all the questions is—Wall Street, New York.

American imperialists have a billion and a half dollars invested in Cuba. They control the sugar industry—the main industry of the island—they own the public utilities, hold the government loans. To guard these enormous investments, exploit the Cuban market and maintain Cuba as a war base, they have established political domination over the island.

There is a popular proverb in Cuba to the effect that "Cubans own only two things—their national anthem and their flag."

In a special dispatch to the *New York Times* of March 19, Caffery was stated to have officially expressed himself as "well satisfied" with the bloody methods used by the Cuban government to put down the strike. Another dispatch to the *New York Times* of March 14, stated: "American Ambassador Jefferson Caffery was in excellent good humor today, seeing the end of difficulties for the Batista-Mendieta government and the probability of a cessation of general strike attempts." The same dispatch told of the murder of two oppositionists and was headed: "*Heavy Army Guard Keeps Cuba Tense.*"

Through a regime of terror that surpasses even that of the tyrant Machado, the Batista-Caffery-Mendieta regime has temporarily defeated the struggles in Cuba. But beneath the false calm one can hear the rumble of new storms brewing. The Cuban people were not defeated by the eight years of the Machado terror and since August, 1933, they have learned how to struggle better, have immensely strengthened their organizations, have moved much closer to unity of all anti-imperialist forces.

The I.L.D. of Cuba

Defensa Obrera Internacional, brother section of the American International Labor Defense, faced with the task of rallying defense and relief for the thousands of political prisoners and their families and of fighting against the terror, is continuing and enlarging its work illegally.

Even while the terror was at its greatest height, the Cuban I.L.D. organized demonstrations in the streets against the threatened execution of Manuel Fonseca and sent protest delegations to public officials. Fonseca was not executed.

The Cuban people are heroically fighting an uphill battle against the brutal terror and for liberation from the domination of Wall Street. They are in the front line of battle against fascist terror in Cuba and the United States as well, for Wall Street is their chief enemy. It is a hard fight, but faced with wholesale slaughter and unprecedented terror they are continuing undaunted.

The American toilers must join with the Cuban people in pitting their strength against the Wall Street fascist hounds who, if successful in smashing the struggles and wiping out the trade unions in Cuba, could turn their undivided attention to the work of increasing fascist terror in the United States and attacking the organizations of American workers.

Wall Street wants Cuba as a war base. What better answer can we give the war makers than to build a mass movement against the terror in Cuba?

The Cuban people are fighting part of our fight and we must come to their support with thunderous protests throughout the country against the barbarous terror, with mass actions of solidarity, with moral and material support for the terror victims and their families.

Fellow workers:

This pamphlet is only one of the many ways in which the INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE is trying to organize the workers against oppression and persecution. There is only one guarantee that the INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE will be in a position to carry out its working class task of organizing the defense of the workers and the support of the Political Prisoners and their families, and that is only if we will have a mass INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE of hundreds of thousands of workers and their friends, and supported by still larger numbers of workers.

THEREFORE if you want to help guarantee that the INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE will be able to defend all class war prisoners, and support the Political Prisoners and their families:

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE!

SUPPORT THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE!

Tear this stub off and fill out the other side of it and bring or send it to the nearest branch of the International Labor Defense or to International Labor Defense, 22 E. 17th Street, N. Y. C.

Tear This off and Keep at All Times

IF ARRESTED—REMEMBER THESE POINTS:

1. Give **no** information to officers. Only a name.
2. Plead **Not Guilty** and demand a jury trial.
3. Demand that the International Labor Defense defend you.
4. Insist that you be let out on your own recognizance; if they refuse this, demand that bail be set low.
5. Demand a copy of the complaint.
6. Do not sign anything.

Carry on your working-class fight in the jail and in court.

Read "What to Do When Under Arrest" which can be bought for one cent. It gives more information on what to do when under arrest.

Hold classes in your I.L.D. branch, organization, in small study groups of workers, on workers' defense.

I, the undersigned, would like to become a member of the International Labor Defense.

Name Date

Address City

Age Where do you work?

Union, political or fraternal affiliation

Unemployed initiation 5c plus 2c for the book.

Employed initiation 25c plus 2c for the book.

Employed dues—20c per month, unemployed 2c per month.

If you do not want to become a member of the International Labor Defense but wish to support it, write S. on this and check the following ways in which you are willing to support the I.L.D.

Monthly pledge to Political Prisoners Relief

Will buy the Labor Defender if it is delivered to me.....

Will donate to the various campaigns of the I.L.D.

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Official Organ of the I.L.D.

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