

# LABOR DEFENDER

Vol. 1—No. 4



April, 1926

Price 10 Cents



## *Bimba*

By J. LOUIS ENGDAHL

## *Zeigler*

By TOM BELL

## *Ed Combs*

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## *Bulgaria*

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# The Blow at Bimba Aimed at Labor

**B**ROCKTON is the leading shoe manufacturing center in Massachusetts. It leads Lynn, Haverhill, Marlboro, Boston and other cities that are known wherever shoes are worn.

Massachusetts turns out 45.1 per cent of the shoes manufactured in the whole nation; nearly one-half. In the closely related cotton industry, Massachusetts provides 28.19 per cent of the nation's production, while in worsted goods, three-tenths of the nation's yield comes from its mills.

"Open shop" conditions prevail in practically all the shoe factories and textile mills. Unbearable conditions are imposed on the workers. The task of the mill owners is how to keep the workers toiling continually at their machines in spite of the seething discontent everywhere apparent. One view of how this is done is revealed in the trial and conviction for sedition at Brockton, March 2, of Anthony Bimba, editor of *Laisve* (Freedom), the Lithuanian daily published at Brooklyn, New York.

## Case Involves All Labor.

In the 1923 strike of the Brockton shoe workers, the Lithuanians were among the best fighters. After the strike hundreds of Lithuanian families, their breadwinners blacklisted, were forced to migrate elsewhere. But the shoe bosses have never slackened in their ceaseless efforts to ferret out everywhere the more militant

## *Shoe Trust Interests Combined With Bigotry in Order to Try Bimba*

By J. Louis Engdahl



among the workers, especially the Lithuanian shoemakers.

Instead of involving merely a group of Brockton shoe workers however, this case concerns all labor in its long struggle to develop its unity against the employers' varied attacks, to battle for the civil liberties of speech, press and assemblage.

## Another Employers' Stool Pigeon.

Every labor case has its informer. In the Bimba case, that has been spread over the pages of the nation's press, the employers' stool pigeon is Anthony W. Eudaco, himself a Lithuanian. In fact all the witnesses produced against Bimba at his trial were both Lithuanians and shoe workers.

It is admitted that Bimba was the victim of another New England frame-up, such as nearly caught Joe Ettor and Arturo Giovanitti in its grip during the Lawrence strike, and now has its talons on Sacco and Vanzetti. Even the court that freed Bimba of the blasphemy charge and fined him \$100 on the sedition charge, takes this viewpoint.

Eudaco was the moving spirit in the Lithuanian Citizens' Club, that lined its treasury with contributions from officials of the William L. Douglas Shoe Co. and the Diamond Shoe Co.

Eudaco's task was a simple one. He knew that the radical elements among the Lithuanian workers belonged to the Lithuanian-American Workers' Literary and Educational Society and that Bimba had been announced as its speaker for the night of Jan. 26, 1926, at the Lithuanian Hall. Bimba was to talk on "The White Terror in Lithuania." But that made no difference. Eudaco prepared a set of catch questions, schooled his "loyal" Citizens' Club members how to ask them and then had them all present at the Bimba meeting to carry thru the frame-up.

It was brought out that Eudaco had gone to Brockton's city marshal to secure Bimba's arrest even before the meeting took place, but the marshal took the position that Bimba would have to say something in violation of some law before he could be taken into custody. It fell to the lot of an inconspicuous court clerk to discover the statute, 229 years old, under which a complaint was made out against Bimba the next day, charging him with blasphemy, while the sedition charge was based on one of those war-hysteria statutes, passed in 1919, that still exist in 35 states of the nation, altho the war has been over for more than seven years.



Above: Anthony Bimba.

Below: Addressing a protest meeting in Brockton Mass.

Bimba was charged not so much with denying the existence of god, in claiming that there is no god, as he was denounced for "contumeliously reproaching god," for defaming god in the eyes of believers. The sedition charge was based on the usual claim that the speaker, Bimba, "advocated the overthrow of the American capitalist government by force and violence."

The daily press immediately scented the sensation of a blasphemy trial based on a statute passed more than two centuries ago. This was to be another Tennessee "monkey trial" and the sedition phase of it was quite forgotten, except by the court and the prosecution. Bimba was perfectly willing, in fact eager to accept conviction under the hoary blasphemy statute and fight it thru the higher courts. But the court had no intention of permitting him to do this.

The court found its loophole in declaring that while Bimba had denied the existence of god, he had not defamed god. The law still stands, ready to be used against other speakers.

It is popularly believed that the devout Puritans who came over in the historic Mayflower and landed on Plymouth Rock of many legends in 1620, came here seeking religious liberty. They wanted the privilege to believe as they saw fit, but that included the right to inflict this belief on others. Thus the earliest statutes, especially one passed in 1646 provided death for all misbelievers.



Bimba and his attorneys, Irving and Harry Hoffman

Severe legislation was adopted very early against baptists (1645-1678), and the persecution of the Quakers (especially 1656-1662) partook of the brutality of the time including scourging, boring of tongues, cutting of ears and in some cases capital punishment.

It was while Roger Williams was being driven off to what is now Rhode Island, to seek religious liberty for himself, while other exiles drifted down the valleys of the Connecticut rivers to establish new settlements, while the Salem witchcraft scare was at its worst, with its burnings and hangings (1691-1697) that the blas-

phemy statute under which Bimba was tried came into existence in 1697.

Yet at Brockton, 1926, the protestants and Catholics, forgetting their age-old differences, united in the attack on the alleged blasphemer, Bimba, who came among the shoe and textile slaves speaking the Lithuanian language, urging them to educate themselves in this country, in order to help better their economic conditions, and to struggle against the clerical-nationalist-socialist regime in the old country, where church rule is imprisoning, torturing and putting to death workers and poor farmers suspected of radical sympathies.

If the employers can use the situation in Lithuania to divide Lithuanian shoe workers in Brockton, they can invoke the struggle in Italy to create divisions among the Italian mine workers in the anthracite coal fields; then can exploit the clash of forces in Hungary to divide Hungarian workers in America's steel mills, and continue by duplicating this undermining influence among practically all workers in all the industries.

Workers everywhere must help fight the Bimba case that is being carried thru the courts by the International Labor Defense. The blasphemy law must be torn from the Massachusetts statute books because it can and will be used only against the workers in their struggles to better their conditions. The so-called sedition act, under which Bimba was convicted, is used exclusively for the purpose of intimidating and crucifying labor. It must be abolished in Massachusetts, as well as in every other state where such legislation is to be found. The Bimba case is the concern of the whole working class.



Scott Nearing Arrested for Speaking in Boston



Henry Corbishley

# "The People VS. Henry Corbishley, et. al." \*

By Tom Bell

PERHAPS one of the most important and peculiar cases taken up by the International Labor Defense since its organization was the trial of thirteen coal miners in Benton, Ill., charged with assault on D. B. Cobb, on August 2, 1925.

It is important because the entire case grows out of a struggle against a Zeigler coal company to enforce correct weighing of the coal dug by the miners. It is peculiar because the charge against the defendants was laid, prosecution lawyers hired and the prosecution directed by Lon Fox and D. B. Cobb, president and vice-president of Sub-District No. 9, United Mine Workers to which the accused miners belong.

As is well known, the I. L. D. is a non-partisan defense organization devoted to the defense of workers irrespective of their political convictions or their affiliations in the trade unions. To the I. L. D. the important thing is that these miners were charged and put on trial on evidence which has all the earmarks of a frame-up. To enable them to have a trial the I. L. D. engaged lawyers and carried on a campaign of publicity to rally the workers to their defense.

It is utterly irrelevant to the I. L. D. that there is a fierce inter-union fight going on between the officials and the membership of the miners' union in Franklin county. What is important is that these miners needed aid in defending themselves in a capitalist court and the I. L. D. was in

\*The following article on the trial of the thirteen Zeigler miners charged with assault on D. B. Cobb deals only with the trial and conviction of eight of the defendants. For other facts of the case see articles in the January and February issues of this magazine and the publicity of International Labor Defense on the case.

duty bound to come to their assistance.

The most important factor in securing a conviction against eight of the defendants was the bitter anti-foreigner propaganda carried on by the three prosecution lawyers, State's attorney Roy Martin, Judge Neely and J. Smith. The jury was composed wholly of American-born farmers while all but three of the defendants and nearly all of the defense witnesses were foreign-born. The prosecution deliberately whipped up anti-foreign prejudices to secure a conviction.

The foreign names of defendants and witnesses were misspelled and mispronounced for the benefit of the jury. Judge Neely to show his high learning said to one witness: "Oh, you are a Croatian. The Croatians come from Crete." The assassination of Pres. McKinley by a "foreigner" was used to prove the menace of foreign-born miners to the lives of the people of Franklin county.

The evidence of the fourteen prosecution witnesses was very flimsy as the following shows:

Regarding Henry Corbishley seven prosecution witnesses said nothing against him. Only two said that he had been in the fight around Cobb. One said he had seen him with a chair in his hand. Four others said they had heard him shout something but all of them had different ver-

sions of the words shouted.

In rebuttal witnesses proved that he was not in the hall when the fight took place. Besides this Lon Fox who stated that he was standing close to Cobb during the fight could not say that Henry Corbishley had struck Cobb.

Eleven witnesses said nothing against Mike Karadich. One claimed he saw him with a chair, and only Cobb and Jess Alexander said he had struck Cobb. Karadich brot witnesses to prove that he had never been known as "Mike Krodich" the name under which he was indicted.

Six witnesses said nothing against Stanley Paurez, while eight claimed that he had shouted something in a foreign language at the end of the meeting. The frame-up was that Paurez had precipitated the attack on Cobb when he shouted something in a foreign language. Since Paurez is a Lithuanian and the audience was overwhelmingly Slav the problem arises how he could have conveyed anything to them in Lithuanian.

Only five of the fourteen prosecution witnesses said anything against Steve Meanovich, while nine of them had nothing to say against him.

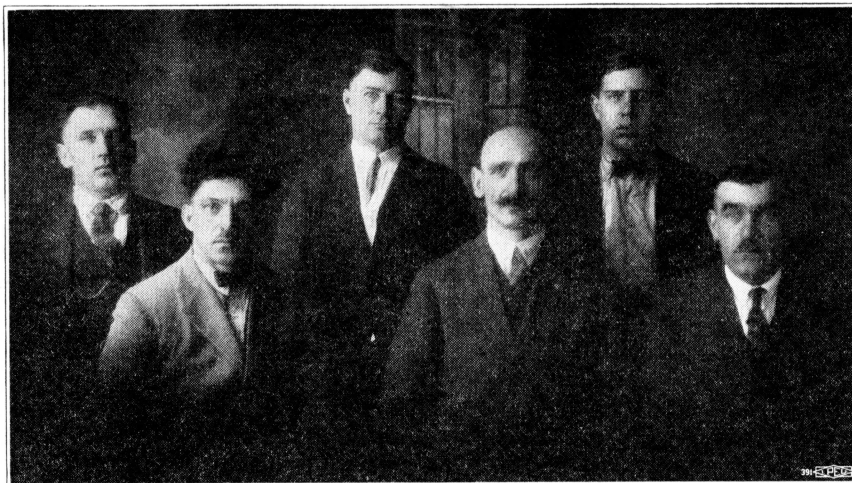
Cobb stated that Frank Corbishley was at the meeting and that he saw the print of a gun under his shirt. One other witness claimed that Frank Corbishley had shouted threats against Cobb. On this evidence he was convicted.

Ignatz Simich struck Cobb, said six witnesses, while eight said nothing against him.

Against Martin Simich eleven prosecution witnesses said nothing. Two claimed that he had kicked Cobb, and Cobb himself claimed he was struck by Simich. Against these three witnesses



Frank Corbishley



SIX OF THE CONVICTED MINERS

From left to right: Stanley Paurez, Steve Meanovich, Henry Corbishley, Mike Karadich, Eddie Maleski, Martin Simich



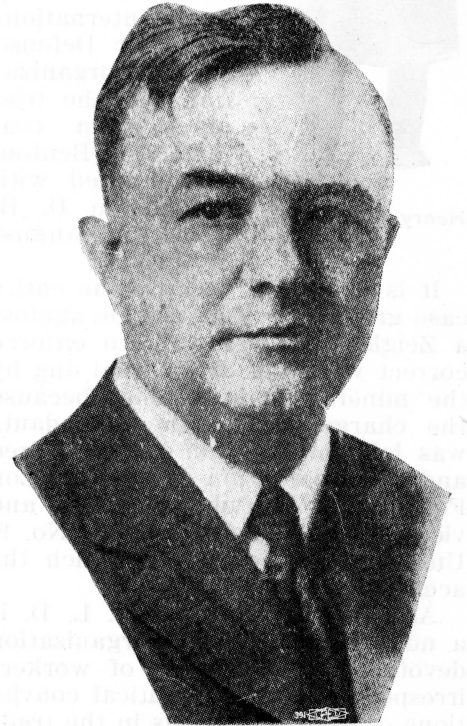
eight witnesses took the stand and proved that Martin Simich was at home all the night of the meeting. But these eight witnesses were the especial butt of the ridicule of the prosecution attorneys because they were foreigners.

Only one witness along with Cobb said anything against Eddie Maleski.

These eight miners were found guilty on the basis of the evidence as outlined above. The testimony of the forty-two defense witnesses may as well never have been given so far as the jury was concerned because most of them were foreign-born. Cobb, who claims that the first blow that struck him dazed him, is also the one man for the prosecution that claims to have seen and heard everything that went on. He alone was cool-headed and calm while at the same time he claims that twenty-six men (afterwards reduced to thirteen) were trying to murder him!

Those convicted are: Henry Corbishely, Mike Karadich, Stanley Paurez, Steve Meanovich, Frank Corb-

ishley, Ignatz Simich, Martin Simich and Eddie Maleski. As has been pointed out in other articles in the Labor Defender they were the leaders in the Zeigler miners' fight against the swindling of the coal company, against the Ku Klux Klan and for the interests of the miners. The workers of this country must rally to their defense because they are militant defenders of working class interests.



*Left: Alex Hargis, the man who is known to have shot and killed Mike Sarovich. Right: Roy Martin, State's attorney, who prosecuted the miners.*

## The Conviction of John Bruns

JOHN Bruns' case was the last conviction under the criminal syndicalism law of California in November, 1924, in Lassen County where the Westwood Lumber Company reigns supreme. Bruns was a lumber jack and was found with a pack sack full of wobbly literature which was sufficient to make a case. A special prosecutor, MacCarron, famous for his success in evading the Nevada law and winning a divorce for Mary

By Charlotte A. Whitney

Pickford, was brought from Reno and the stage was set with the usual witnesses who charge two hundred and fifty dollars a day for their perjured testimony.

The influence of the Westwood Lumber Company spelled victory for the prosecution and Bruns received the indeterminate sentence fixed in the law of from one to fourteen years.

Having served the minimum sentence of one year, the prison board, at its December, 1925, meeting, arbitrarily fixed the length of his sentence at four years. So worker Bruns has three years more to serve in the state penitentiary under a law that has ceased to function because juries have stopped convicting now that the sober common sense of the jurors has a chance to show itself and the nefarious character of the state's witnesses has become public property. But the prison board is still under the spell of reaction and big business and it hands down this outrageous sentence to a man for mere membership in an organization

that is openly functioning in the country and maintaining at least six headquarters in California.

Success to the International Labor Defense! Tho Ford is acquitted we need your help to release our many other class-war prisoners.

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# The Amnesty of M. Liaptchev

By Michael

**Z**ANKOV, the bloody butcher of the Bulgarian workers and farmers, has departed amid obloquy and almost universal hatred. He left a trail stained with the noblest red blood of his country. In his place has been set M. Liaptchev, a gentleman who assures the victims of his brutal terrorism that he has a profound feeling for them. And M. Liaptchev, who now heads the Bulgarian cabinet, is a suave man who thinks he knows how to remove from the escutcheon of his land the horrible marks left on it by his predecessor. What can serve better for this purpose than the introduction of a pious bill for a "broad amnesty" which will immediately earn him the title of a liberal and enable foreign capitalists to make a few loans which they dared not grant during Zankov's brazen massacres?

Who is set free by the so-called amnesty of M. Liaptchev? First and foremost, the speculators, the usurers, the war profiteers and criminals who were imprisoned under the peasant government of Stambulisky; and secondly—and finally—speculating police officials and sadistic fascists whose horrible crimes forced even Zankov to give them short terms in prison. And somewhere in a small section of the bill is a provision for the release of an absurdly insignificant number of political prisoners—those who are the least known and against whom there had been not even the slightest pretense of evidence to convict.



**COMMUNIST VICTIMS OF ZANKOV**  
 Top: Nicolas Genoff, on trial; Dorosiev Iakov, murdered. Center: Christo Kabakchiev, on trial. Bottom: Dimitrov, in exile; Minkoff, murdered.

The huge majority of the political prisoners of Bulgaria, whose sufferings in prison have aroused the horrified indignation of the world, are to remain behind stone walls and bars.

Of the more than 7,000 prisoners in Bulgaria, only about a fifth, that is 1,500, are to be favored by the amnesty. The rest are to stay because of the exceptions which are made in the bill. For instance, the paragraph according to which all offenses against the Law for the Protection of the state are allegedly amnestied,

provides alone for seven different exceptions! For instance all those who were sentenced to death and whose sentences were changed into hard labor for life are not amnestied, as well as all "leaders, organizers, instigators, executors" not only of the big organizations, but also from small groups of two and three people. This exception alone excludes more prisoners from the amnesty than are included in it.

Any doubts that may be entertained as to the nature of the Liaptchev rule will be dispelled when one reads this extract from an interview granted by this precious knave to the editor of a French paper: "We are very much satisfied with all police institutions, which have led the struggle against the elements of revolt. We thank them for it. And we ask them to continue their work."

The telegram of protest sent by American leaders of progressive thought and action in the name of the International Labor Defense must find an echo in the massed voices of the American workers. Nothing short of complete amnesty for all political prisoners—as a slight compensation for the Zankovist nightmares of terror—is the demand that must receive vehement expression!

## Remember the Class War Prisoners

The International Labor Defense sends greetings to the following class war prisoners on the anniversary of their birth days and we urge the workers on the outside not to forget them. Letters mean more to those victims of capitalism than those who have never had prison experience can realize. Drop them a word of encouragement and determine that you will do everything possible to get them out of jail.

### THEIR BIRTHDAYS.

- April 5—James Martin, Box 37636, San Quentin, Calif.
- " 8—Fred Bamman, Box 38531, San Quentin, Calif.
- " 10—Ivan C. Barnes, Box 38530, San Quentin, Calif.
- " 23—Nicola Sacco, Norfolk Co. Jail, Dedham, Mass.
- " 25—Joe Neil, Box 2, Lansing, Kansas.
- " 27—Bert Bland, Box 520-4911, Walla Walla, Wash.

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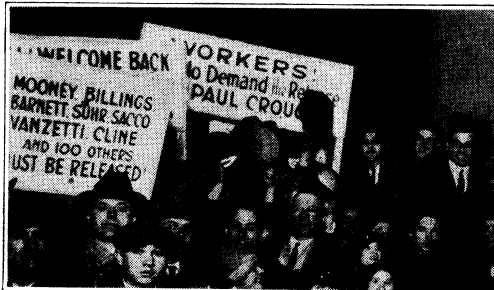
CABLED REPORT INFORMS US THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT REFUSES TO CARRY OUT PROMISE OF AMNESTY TO ALL IMPRISONED UNDER ZANKOFF AND GRANTS AMNESTY ONLY TO SELECT FEW WE DEMAND FULL AMNESTY AS PROMISED SHALL BE COMPELLED TO CARRY ON NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AMONG AMERICAN PEOPLE IF PROMISE IS NOT FULFILLED

CHARLOTTE ANITA WHITNEY  
 WILLIAM H HOLLY  
 ELIZABETH G FLYNN  
 ROBERT W DUNN  
 ELLEN HAYES  
 ROBERT WHITAKER  
 A T MCNAMARA  
 ALBERT E COYLE  
 H W L DANA

ROGER N BALDWIN  
 E C WENTWORTH  
 EUGENE V DEBS  
 RALPH CHAPLIN  
 ALICE STONE BLACKWELL  
 DAVID RHYS WILLIAMS  
 WILLIAM BOUCK  
 KATE CRANE GARTZ  
 JAMES P CANNON

# Chicago Greets Trumbull

**RIGHT:** An enthusiastic mass of four hundred workers eagerly welcomed Walter Trumbull as he stepped off the train at the Union Station in Chicago. A part of the workers' delegation is seen here with banners. **LEFT:** Outside of the station Trumbull was lifted on the shoulders of the crowd while lusty voices sang class songs.



## Now Let's Free Crouch!

THE mass meetings which are being held thruout the country to welcome Walter Trumbull, under the auspices of the International Labor Defense, are at the same time vigorous demonstrations for the release of Paul Crouch, the comrade of Trumbull, who still has almost two years to serve at Alcatraz Prison.

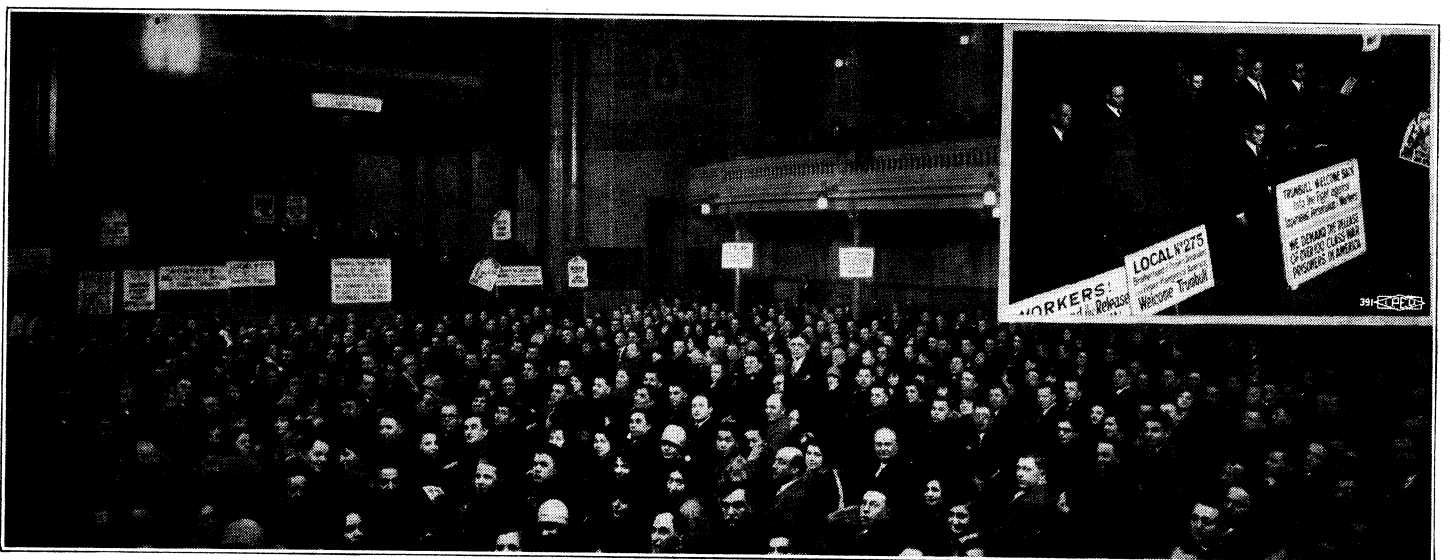
"Trumbull," said Paul Crouch to his comrade when the latter was leaving prison at the end of his term, "I am glad that you are going out, even tho it pains me and will leave me, in a sense, alone. But you will be of more use to the cause for which we have fought if you are free than you would be should you remain here. Tell our com-

rades I will not weaken in my stand and will not compromise myself in any manner to gain my liberty. I would rather continue to serve time in jail for the rest of my life than do anything that would be detrimental to the cause of the working class."

And Trumbull adds: "The working class has in Paul Crouch a champion that is worthy of their greatest effort for his release."

Now let us free Crouch! Demand his immediate and unconditional freedom!

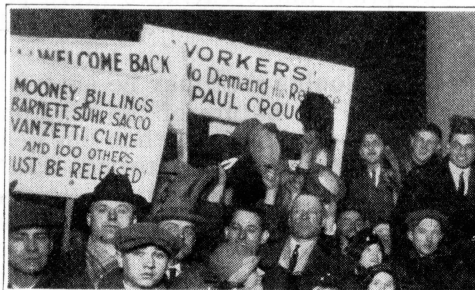
**ABOVE:** Walter M. Trumbull. **BELOW:** The mass meeting of welcome at the North Side Turner Hall. (Inset) The speakers: Scott Nearing, Robert Morss Lovett, Max Shachtman, Ralph Chaplin, Fred Mann, and Walter Trumbull in front.





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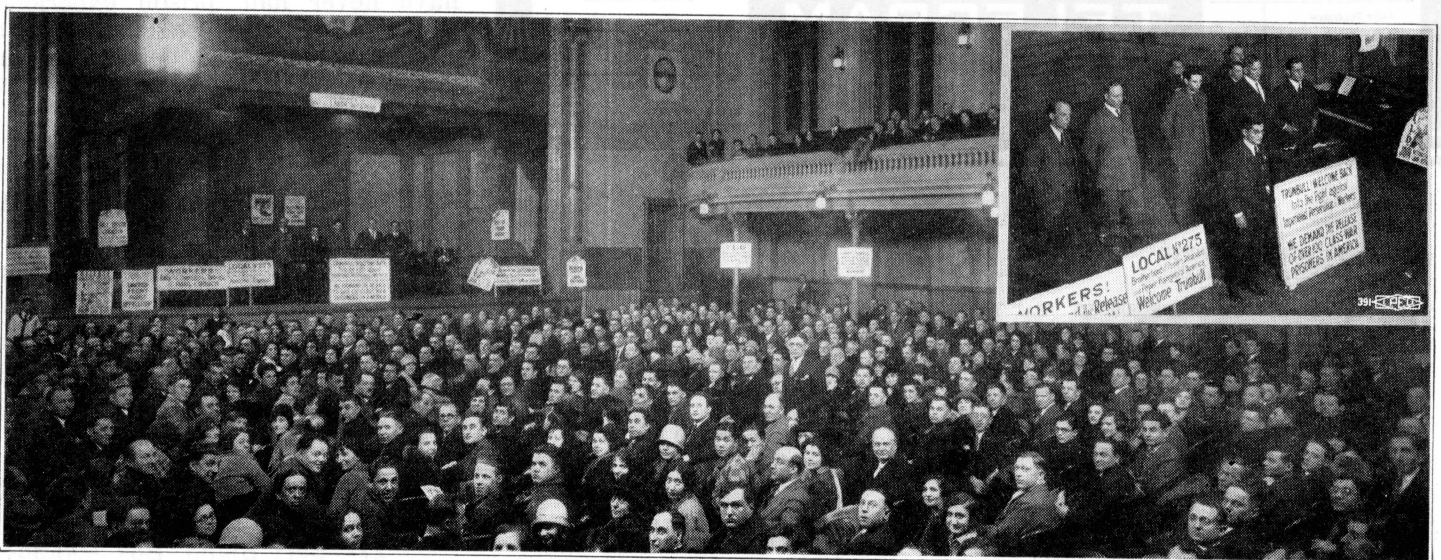
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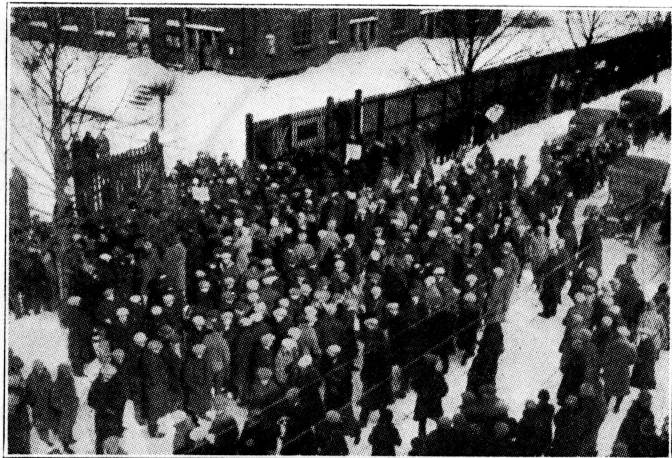
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# The Passaic Textile Strike Encounters The Courts



**T**HE cry for bread is mingled with the cry for justice in the struggle now going on in Passaic and neighboring municipalities in the state of New Jersey, known as the bitterest of the commonwealths in the class fight.

The strike in the textile industry is now well into the fourth week of the conflict, and during that time there have been continuous attacks upon the workers by the police and numerous brutal sentences imposed by the courts.

What is behind this almost spontaneous break by the workers in the textile mills? How did it happen that they decided to go out in mills that have been practically strike proof for decades?

Since the close of the war the slaves have been cut from time to time in a most conscienceless way. Now twenty per cent, now five per cent, then another cut and another, until it seemed that the bosses would not try to go any further.

But in November there was still another reduction of ten per cent, a thing so unexpected and so unreasonable that the workers could not stand it any longer.

Some of the more progressive workers in the Botany mill called a few of their fellows together to talk matters over. They decided to send a representative to the bosses and ask that the cut be given back. This was flatly refused, and in addition to that the leader, Gustav Deak, was fired and others suspected of being leaders lost their jobs one after the other.

A conference was held with the United Front Committee of Textile Workers and it was decided to call a strike. The first to come out were the Botany mill workers. After a week all were out and the mill tried to use scabs as usual, but the attempt proved so unsuccessful that after two weeks the plant shut down entirely and has been closed tight ever since.

By J. O. Bentall

The picket line kept growing from a few hundred until now it can call from two to three thousand workers into action. The slogan has been, "If you want to know what is going on get into the picket line." As a result the workers have attended to their business faithfully and when the press has shouted that the workers have gone back to the mill they laugh and tell their fellows, "We know that they are not back, because we have been on the picket line and watched the gates and none except a few white-collar slaves have entered."

Much unrest was felt in other mills. The Passaic Worsted and the New Jersey Worsted as well as the New Jersey Spinning soon went out. The Gera mill followed, when 1,000 of its workers came out one noon and joined the meetings held in the halls, where their cheering fellow workers welcomed them.

A big parade was held after the second week to test the strength of

the strikers, and it was estimated that about 20,000 took part in the gigantic demonstration. The authorities did not interfere and the parade came off in a most orderly manner, but it indicated the wide sympathy the population has with the strikers. This was a great surprise to the strikers themselves and a greater surprise to the bosses and the city officials.

Up to this time the demand of the strikers had been very mild. All that the committee, headed by Albert Weisbord, as organizer, asked was to get the wage cuts back. But after the parade the demands became more bold. The committee drew up and had published these demands as follows.

1. Not only the abolition of the wage cut but a 10 per cent increase in wages over the old wage scale.
2. The return of the money taken from us by the wage cuts.
3. Time and one-half for overtime.
4. A 44-hour week.
5. Decent and sanitary working conditions.



Twenty-six men, women, and children clubbed on the picket line



6. No discrimination against union workers.

7. Recognition of the union.

This policy spurred the workers on to greater solidarity, and all the mills affected became paralyzed, most of them shutting down.

The first clubbing by the police occurred when six pickets were sent to the nearby town of Clifton to prepare the ground for the picketing of the Forstmann-Huffmann mill. The six were beaten and told that they could not enter the city as there was no need of looking after the mill in question.

These six returned to headquarters and reported to Organizer Weisbord what had happened. He at once ordered out the entire line of nearly 3,000 pickets with instructions to proceed in orderly manner over the line to the Forstmann-Huffmann plant. They did, but were met on the Ackerman Ave. bridge by the police and beaten and clubbed and kicked till dozens were on the ground and had to be carried off by their fellows.

But the line proceeded. A wedge-like head was formed and waged forward. The police were busy on the lower side. On moved the wedge. The whole police force was shoved and finally pushed into the ditch below and the pickets went on singing and cheering, passing by the Forstmann-Huffmann plant where the workers looked at them thru the windows and in the doorways.

From that day on the Forstmann-Huffmann was doomed. It was only a matter of time, and that time came

*Above: The clubbings at Ackerman Bridge, where women were beaten to the ground.*

*Right: A typical textile worker's home.*



on Tuesday after Washington's birthday, when the three thousand workers in this, bitterest of the slavedriving mills, capitulated. The walkout was so complete that the bosses announced that the plant would be shut down as the Botany, the Gera and the other mills had done.

But the struggle was not to be fought without interference by the courts. First two were arrested. Then two or three more. Then six. Almost every day men and women were arrested.

Jack Rubenstein was given 90 days. Bela Varga 30 days. John Penarisi was given 6 months. Others have gotten suspended sentences and "warnings." J. O. Bentall was hauled before the judge for contempt of court. He was found guilty, but later discharged. The judge openly declared that "I have no sympathy with you," as he sentenced one of the pickets.

The judge has fixed bail at figures ranging from \$250 to \$1,000. The local attorneys under the direction of the International Labor Defense of

New York have done good work and have handled the cases with much skill and gotten bail reduced wherever possible.

This morning six more were arrested and the International Labor Defense is on the job taking care of them. The expense is heavy as the judge makes the trials as difficult as possible. Joseph Feder and Sigmund Unger are the local attorneys, while Joseph Brodsky of New York is directing the battle for the defense.

Much money has already been used and over a dozen cases are coming up during the next few days. If the International Labor Defense cannot fight these cases it means that many of the workers will remain in prison for long terms, for the crime of wanting to live. The International Labor Defense is doing more than fighting to keep these strikers out of jail. It is giving security and encouragement to the strikers and making them feel that they are not alone in the fierce fight against the brutal attack by the entire forces of the tyrannical ruling class.

# The Last Prisoner of the March



EDGAR Combs, the last class-war prisoner from the lost battleground of southern West Virginia, used to work along Georges Creek, the little yellow mine water stream that tumbles down the narrow valley that cuts like a rut thru the mountain of Logan County. The coal seams here are rich but the coal diggers are very poor and live in the most squalid company houses I have ever seen.

These little tarpapered boxes in the creek bottom, set on stilts over the puddles that gather after a rain—the children bare-legged in the winter cold—the murmur of mothers complaining that the store has cut off their credit and there is no food in the house the day before payday—the thugs loitering by on their masters' business—all these commonplaces of Logan County will aid the stranger to understand, perhaps, what moved Edgar Combs and several thousand comrades, in that historic week of the summer of 1921, to set forth in the armed march that was intended to end the tyranny in the open shop counties.

Edgar Combs is now No. 13381 at Moundsville. They sentenced him in the Logan courthouse, where Judge Bland ran the courtmartial for Don Chafin, to 99 years. Combs was denied the change of venue to another county granted other union men held on charges of murder and treason. The Logan authorities had

By Art Shields

it in for him especially because this prisoner of war used to be a Logan man, who might have been with them, but was against them. He had been, for a time, a boss worker, a contractor, and what business had he to fight the operators! He had even been offered a deputy's post, and graft,—and had scorned the offer. As Edgar Combs put it to me, talking thru the closely woven steel wire mesh that veils the prisoner from his friends in the reception room in



Edgar Combs, his wife, and Combs, Jr.

Moundsville: "Don tried to make a thug out of me, and he hates me because he couldn't do it."

"That was in 1919," said Combs. "I couldn't stand the way the miners were treated and I got up and made a speech to a bunch of them. I said they needed a union. It was the year the United Mine Workers was starting into Mingo and things were stirring everywhere. Don Chafin had a big army of thugs on the job all the time. I took my stand anyhow. They didn't go after me at first. Beat up a man who was with me, but tried another game with me. Moved me into a better house, rent free. Don thought he had bribed me. Had a talk and asked me to be one of his thugs.

"They couldn't do it, and they began making things hard for me. One Sunday—it was April 1, 1921—two deputies came to the house with half a gallon of whisky, planted it



"MONTANI SEMPER LIBRI"

The "free" mountaineer is now but a mine slave.

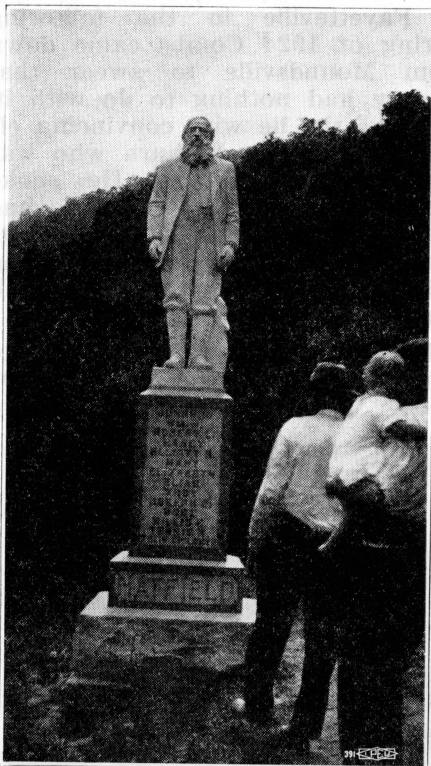
down and then arrested me for having it and started to beat me with the butts of their guns. I fought back. Got knocked down. One thug was bearing his gun down to shoot me when my wife knocked it out of his hand, and if the crowd hadn't grabbed her there would have been one less thug.

"That's my Fannie who works in the mill in Moundsville. She has always stood by me."

I had heard from the miners about Fannie Combs. She is a brave spirit. When Edgar was jailed she moved her six children from the southern end of the state to the penitentiary town in the northern panhandle, to be near her man. But the life is a hard one. There are six children, four girls and two boys. Lillian and Edith, 16 and 15, work and help, but little Edna is less than three and the mother has the household anxieties after her long day in the mill.

Edgar's voice lost some of its steadiness as he spoke of the folks outside. The boys say he has a most affectionate family life and imprisonment is doubly hard for that reason. The jailer says he sends every cent to his family, including the \$5.00 a month the International Labor Defense gives for tobacco and prison comforts. I did not know all this till later, but as he talked on I could feel the affectionate quality of the man. It came with his voice, thru the metal veil that obscured the body. His features were indistinguishable, for the tiny interstices allowed only the general outlines of jaw and skull over the striped suit of penitentiary denim to filter thru.

"I was with the marchers," he went on; "I never denied it. I did not fire the shot that killed John



"DEVIL ANSE" HATFIELD  
The famous feudist who died rich.



The remains of a thugs' machine gun nest in the hills, one of the many used during the armed march of the miners in 1921.

Gore, but I was in the party up Beech Creek."

The 813 murder indictments that followed the march were all for the death of this John Gore, who fell in the Beech Creek sector of the fighting. John Gore was one of the chief deputies, Don Chafin's right hand man. There were a good many other casualties in the 10-mile battle that lasted six days till the federal troops came in time to save the thugs but the coal operators lost no harder-boiled gunman than John Gore. His gat was notched with the lives of workingmen. He was a seasoned instrument of terror and when he passed out abruptly at the age of 45 there were none to regret his loss save his employers.

"Preacher Wilburn led our party up Beech Creek after the thugs started the fighting by shooting up Sharples," continued Combs. "Wilburn turned traitor later. He gave state's evidence for a pardon and promise of \$500 and told a lot of lies while he was doing it. We have his signed confession, he made in the penitentiary. It's in Charleston now. He's been conducting evangelistic services on Coal River since he got out, they tell me, and working in a nonunion mine. He's a Baptist. In the old days he was a union man; worked in the week at Blair and preached on Sundays. But that day on Beech Creek he said he'd laid down his Bible and taken his rifle and he didn't mean to take any prisoners."

Combs' name slipped thru the mesh that searched union counties for indictments in the earlier months after the battle. Coal operators, who were then breaking with the United Mine Workers Union, turned over to the Logan authorities, it is said, the list of union men whose

dues they had been checking off—and perhaps because Combs had been on Coal River such a short time his name escaped. Anyhow he was not among the first set of three hundred men fetched shackled into Logan courthouse to be arraigned before Don Chafin, with his three heavy guns at the waist; his cousin John, surnamed "Con," the prosecuting attorney, and their little lick-spittle Judge Bland. Combs was not arrested till early 1923. The old man Wilburn and his son John, faced with the need of implicating more men if they were to buy their freedom, named him, among others.

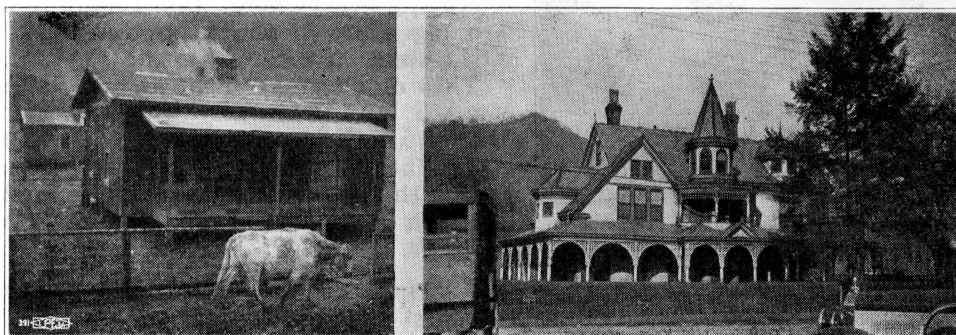
Logan was hungry for a victim. It had, by this time, failed to convict Bill Blizzard, who had gotten a change of venue. The outlook was not too hopeful for getting Frank Keeney. But here was Ed Combs, the fellow who had lived among them and turned against them. They'd fix him. And they did. He was triumphantly arrested, jailed and held in isolation six months as they worked up their case. No one was allowed to speak to him except his enemies, and his attorney, but the latter even could not confer except in the presence of deputies. Several times a week Sheriff Don Chafin or

some of his deputies would walk in, telling him he was sure to hang if he did not squeal. Chafin, a cousin of Don, since killed, used to flourish his revolver in Edgar's face and threaten to "knock him off," right there in the cell, a fate that happened to one of the men seized at the outbreak of the march.

One method they used in torturing the prisoner was original. They gave him only boiling water. The single spigot, day and night, ran scalding water only. If the prisoner wanted to drink he draw a cupful and set it aside till it was tepid enough to drink without injury, and he bathed by sponging from the cup with an end of garment. This from April to November, with nothing to eat but a slim ration of beans, with minute trimmings of butterless bread and sometimes a tiny portion of fat meat. No coffee, tea or fruit.

Time for trial. Word came down he was slated to hang. It was all fixed. The trial was to speed to the framed conclusion—the rope. . . . With this came a promise of freedom if he would betray his comrades. He laughed at them. Then at the last moment came the offer of life imprisonment if he would plead "guilty" personally to having taken part in the particular Beech Creek expedition that fell in with John Gore and his gang. Combs took this alternative. They thought then that he would tell who was with him—and get his freedom. But the miner took responsibility for himself alone and wouldn't help the state against the rest. In fact he helped to save the rest. At the trial of Frank Keeney in Fayetteville in the following Spring of 1924 Combs came down from Moundsville to swear that Keeney had nothing to do with it. He gave the lie with convincing effect to Preacher Wilburn who was starrng for the state. He spoke with the authority of one who had been in the war, and knew the facts about it, and who was not getting paid for his testimony as was Wilburn. And the jury believed him.

Edgar Combs went back to Moundsville to do the rest of his 99 years. But the boys outside were



THE CONTRAST: A miner's shack and the governor's mansion

agitating for his release and eventually, a short time ago, his sentence was commuted to 11 years. It is important now to increase this agitation. There is nothing but Logan logic in keeping him inside when the cases against the 813 others have been dropped. And he is needed outside. The open shop, for the time

being, has won a complete victory in southern West Virginia. Not only Logan, Mercer, Wyoming, McDowell and Mingo, the traditionally non-union gunman counties are in the enemies' hands, but Kanawha, Boone and all the others south of the Fairmont region. Every good union man is sorely needed in the fight that is

surely coming to win back this territory.

"What do you want the workers to do for you?" I asked him as we parted, thinking he would urge continued effort for his release.

"Send me books," he said, "books to educate me for the labor movement. I'm going back to it when I come out."

Roumania  
Bulgaria

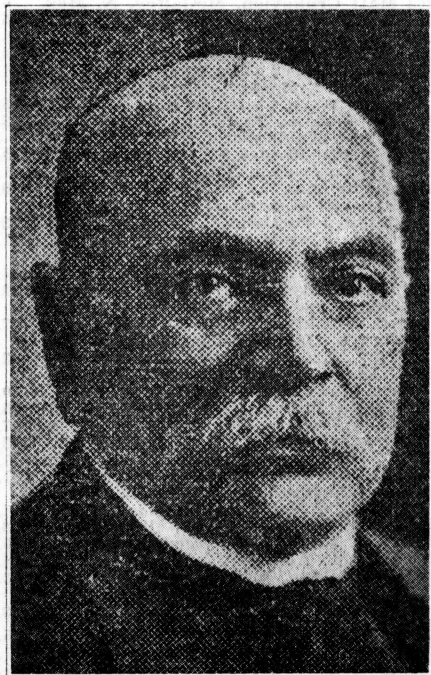
## IN OTHER LANDS

Germany  
Great Britain

### Roumania.

**T**HE escapades of Prince Carol of Rumania and his virtuous mother should not blind the workers to the fact that besides this eddy in the moral cesspool there is also considerable disturbance on the waters of Rumanian political life. While the capitalist papers serve up the sexual aberrations of the degenerate reigning family to a salaciously-hungry reading public, the wholesale persecution of the workers and peasants is forgotten. While the kept queen and her parasite brood are deluging the capitalist press with their unsavory antics, 88 Tatabunar peasants are serving long terms of imprisonment and a vicious campaign of repression is conducted against all elements who defend the right of the workers and peasants to fight for their interests.

The length to which the Roumanian reactionaries will go was again shown in the cowardly attack made on Attorney Costa Foru, chairman of the Roumanian section of the



COSTA FORU

League of Rights of Man. While returning from a congress of the minority press in Grosswardei he was assaulted and badly beaten up. Costa Foru is a bourgeois-minded individual who wants to remain true to the old ideals of the once oppressed bourgeoisie. Himself a descendant of an old Boyar family he defended the persecuted workers and peasants in almost every trial. The terror of the Roumanian bourgeoisie has been so brutal and the moral turpitude of the burglarious government so unabashed that large sections of the population are in a mood to depose the reactionaries. This government is supported in its illegal grabbing of Bessarabia by the league of nations.

### Bulgaria.

**T**HE new government of Bulgaria which succeeded the bloody regime of the notorious fascist Zankoff has not lived up to its promised amnesty for all political prisoners. Only reactionaries have been released. At the present time more than four hundred people await death sentences already sanctioned. Three thousand political prisoners are languishing in jails under terrible conditions. Another 73 cases with 1,242 accused are still to come before the courts martial. Political murders continue though the state of seige was raised October 28. Officers and Macedonian bands continue to burn villages with impunity the same as before. The life of Christo Kabaktchieff, prominent leader of the Communist Party is constantly in danger.

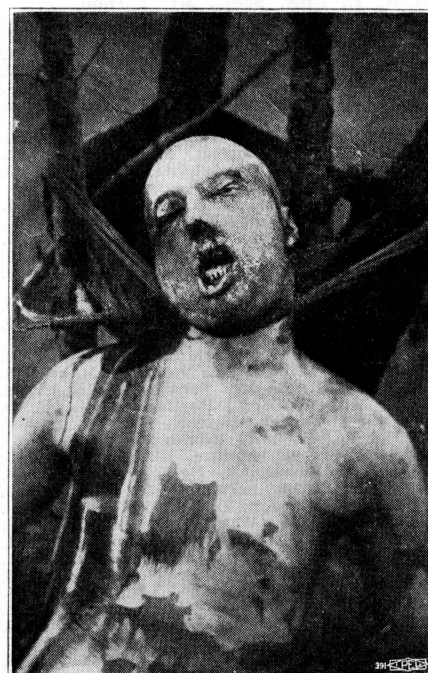
### Germany.

**F**ACED with the numerous revelations of the German radical press, the government was forced to arrest members of the fascist murder organizations. It is doubtful however if the courts will treat those murderers with the full severity of the law. Several of those brigands have already been released though revolutionary workers are kept in prison awaiting trial for many months and some even for years. A letter from Ludendorf was found in the pocket

of one of the arrested fascists. Bankrupt businessmen who escaped, leaving heavy debts were among the arrested fascists.

### Great Britain.

**A** GIANT movement for the release of the twelve members of the executive committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain is being organized. Several members of the parliamentary labor party and some of the most powerful figures in the trade union movement are among the leaders of the movement. Among them are: A. A. Purcell, M. P. and president of the International Federation of Trade Unions; A. J. Cook, secretary of the Miners' Union, which has a membership of one million and hundreds of others equally well known and influential. Side by side with the growing militancy on the part of the workers is an increase of fascist sentiment nourished by the government. Austen Chamberlain, foreign secretary, expressed his admiration for the fascist government of Italy.



A BESSARABIAN PEASANT  
A Victim of Roumanian "Culture and Humanity."

JANUARY, 1926. INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE. Cash Receipts Nos. 11987-

Table listing donors and amounts. Includes entries like '11987 Sam Fargastein, Galveston, Tex.' through '12295 M. J. Pacevich, Riverside, N. J.' and 'From the Amer. Lithuanian Workers Literary Soc.'

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