

TUNIS

Trade Union Movement

UNTIL 1924 the trade unions of Tunis were small bodies affiliated to the French C.G.T., and admitting almost only white workers, railwaymen, clerks, &c. After the dockers' strike at Bizerta during that year, when in spite of the rule of a democratic Herriot government, machine guns were employed in putting down the strike movement, some organisation of native workers began. By the end of the year the membership claimed was 10,000, organised in thirty-six unions. They were subjected to minor persecution throughout, but when in January, 1925, a big strike led by Tunis Trade Union Federation (C.G.T.T.) began in the cement works of Hammanlif and Potinville, the Governor intervened and arrested the six principal leaders, five natives and one Frenchman. After remaining in prison ten months they were charged with having tried to organise trade unions in Tunis—

following communist lines, but in keeping with national tendencies, in which, with few exceptions, Mohammedan workers alone took part. These trade unions were to be directed from the C.G.T.T., with headquarters in Tunis. Telephonic communication was to be established with the centre, whence the signal was to be given for a general strike, which in the opinion of the accused would provide occasion for a bloody upheaval . . .

The accused were sentenced to expulsion from Tunis for periods of five to fifteen years.