

# Latin-American Workers Toil Long Hours to Pay High Rents

## Network of Barbed-wire Fences Carefully Constructed by Exploiters

(This is the fifth of a series of articles appearing exclusively in the Daily Worker exposing the conditions under which workers in Harlem are forced to live. Previous articles described conditions in Negro Harlem. The present article continues the exposure of conditions in Lower Harlem, where many Latin-American workers live: A tenement at 1809 Third Ave. is now being discussed.)

By SOL ALPERBAUM.

ALL of the apartments in this building consist of either three or four very small rooms. The windows open into a narrow courtyard. There is a little more light in the front if you wish to suffer the inconvenience of not being able to hear yourself talk when an elevator train rushes by. The front rooms are the only ones which get sunlight—sunlight poisoned with noise and dirt.

There is electric light which is introduced by straight black wires stretching from the ceiling. The only source of heat for warmth and cooking is the single coal stove in the kitchen, which warms the whole room. In one of these apartments,

inhabited by Porto Ricans, the coal stove had burnt the whole apartment until it looked like the inside of a dead cat's furnace.

Children abound here. There is hardly room enough for them to sleep in many of these flats, let alone play. They must spend their waking hours in the street.

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### A Cuban Family.

A BEAUTIFUL little Cuban girl of no more than 12 years, cheerfully told me about her family over the pots and pans.

"I hate to let you in," she announced solemnly. "I have just come from school and I hate to see the place dirty. I got to get the supper ready for my mother is in the hospital and my sister is soon coming home from work."

She is one of three children. The young brother was playing around on the floor. Her sister is a laundry worker, who toils 12 hours a day and makes \$2.00 a day. Her mother has been in the hospital for a few weeks.

The girl visited the pots around in a business fashion, putting them politely to let us know that she was

(Continued on Page Three)

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## 12-Year-Old Girl Acts as Housewife

(Continued from Page One)

a very busy housewife and did not have very much time to spare.

"Oh, we are Spanish, you know. We come from Cuba. I used to know how to speak Spanish, but I have forgotten."

### Consumption.

They are not Spaniards, although they are called that because they speak the language. Most of the families here are native Cubans or Porto Ricans.

The body of the girl is very thin and you think that if she continues very much longer cleaning this unventilated flat and manipulating the pans after hours in school, and maybe later going to join her sister in the laundry, that she will be one of those many consumptives living in Harlem.

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**A**NOTHER worker living in this house has been unemployed for almost a year. He is a plumber, and had his leg broken when a sink fell on it. He was in the hospital for months and could not work after he came out. Now he finds an odd job here and there in the tenements. His wife is the wage-earner. She works at the Cathedral of St. John, the Divine, as a scrub woman, and when she works she gets \$4 a day for 12 hours of work. But she is only employed a few days a week. They pay \$27 for the 3 room apartment, for which a white family had previously paid \$15.

A Porto Rican, who has four children and pays \$26 for four rooms, works as a laborer for the city. His income is uncertain for he must depend upon the weather. During the last week, for instance, his total pay amounted to about \$10.

We cite these few cases—there are more like them in the building—just to show how the worker, doubly exploited both in industry and in the tenements because of his color, is completely at the mercy of that class of parasites who rule this country.

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### Some Figures.

**T**HE houses in this block are fairly representative of the other tenements in the section. In the survey made by the State Housing Commission it was found that 78.2 per cent of the tenants living in the block between 103rd and 104th and Second and Third Avenues, paid \$8 per room per month or below. The rents have increased about 70 per cent over February 1909, which is about the average rent increase for that period for all of New York City.

It was found that in January 1928, the average rent paid for apartments in this block was \$24.36.

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Continue to follow the Daily Worker in its exposure of housing conditions thruout the city.

Tenants are invited to write letters to the Daily Worker about their apartments.