

# Rescuing a Prisoner of Imperialism

By MANUEL GOMEZ.

The story of the two-weeks' campaign for the release of Julio Antonio Mella takes us from Cuba to the United States and from Mexico to Argentina. It is a story of international struggle in behalf of the victims of American imperialism with a U. S. ambassador placed directly in their service by the state department and a Latin-American president as their servile tool. The campaign was led jointly by the All-American Anti-Imperialist League and International Labor Defense. That it ended in victory is a tribute to the remarkable solidarity that is growing up among all the oppressed peoples of the American continent, together with the working class in the United States.

Mella was arrested at Havana,

Cuba, on December 5, on a framed-up charge which every newspaper in Cuba declared to be ridiculous. Eleven prominent Havana labor leaders were arrested with him. The charge was setting off a number of small bombs in front of factories and public buildings. Despite the fact that the men were arrested under a Cuban law at the orders of a Cuban president, they must and have been considered as American class-war prisoners. They are victims of American imperialism. Their real prosecutors are (for the eleven labor leaders are still in jail and Mella's case is by no means over) the American sugar trust, the National City Bank of New York and the imperialist government of Wall Street and Washington.



Julio A. Mella.

Cuba has been called "the sugar bowl of the world." The island produces three-fourths of all the cane sugar of the world. And the extremely lucrative sugar industry—and with it the entire structure of Cuban economic life—is owned from top to bottom by American capital. Nominally an independent republic, Cuba is in fact a protectorate of American imperialism. The so-called Platt amendment to Cuba's constitution, put there through a treaty forced upon the island by the United States, gives the U. S. government the "right" to interfere in Cuban affairs at will. 'Ambassador Crowder dictates every turn of governmental policy. President Machado, whose fraudulent election was secured with the help of the sugar interests, eagerly obeys.

Several months ago a reign of terror was initiated on the island. Foreigners and even native Cubans who had given expression to "anti-American sentiments" were rounded up and deported. Labor unions were destroyed. The National University, considered altogether too liberal, was threatened with being closed down.

The explanation of epidemics of this sort in Cuba is usually to be found in sugar, and the present one was no exception. An economic crisis was developing, caused by the low price of sugar, the burden of which the companies tried to shift upon the shoulders of the "colonos." The "colonos" accordingly refused to cut cane. A great strike broke out in which the military was called into play, many sugar workers being forced to labor at the point of the bayonet. Every attempt to organize

the sugar workers more effectively was hindered by the venal Machado government. No less than 44 orders of arrest were issued by President Machado at the dictation of the sugar interests in Havana alone. Only 12 of the 44 were apprehended however, chief among them being Julio Antonio Mella.

Bail was refused, President Machado declaring that the prisoners would be kept in jail in the face of all opposition. Mella immediately began his 19-day hunger strike in protest against American imperialist methods in Cuba.

The arrests caused an intensification of anti-imperialist feeling throughout Cuba. Protests were raised on all sides, particularly on the part of workers' and students' organizations. As soon as bail was denied the prisoners, the acting secretary of the Cuban section of the All-America Anti-Imperialist League cabled all details of the case to the central headquarters of the league. The league immediately cabled its protest to President Machado and to Ambassador Crowder, placing full blame upon the shoulders of American imperialism and demanding the release of the prisoners. Cables were also sent to labor and anti-imperialist organizations in all parts of Latin-America.

There was instant response. The struggle to free Mella aroused large sections of the population throughout Latin-America. The senate of Mexico adopted a resolution of protest. The city council of Buenos Aires did likewise. Meanwhile, in the home country of American imperialism itself, the U. S. section of the All-

America Anti-Imperialist League pursued the campaign, securing the important aid of International Labor Defense. International Labor Defense sent out telegrams to various centers. On a few days' notice anti-imperialist protest meetings, under the joint auspices of the All-America Anti-Imperialist League and International Labor Defense were arranged for all important cities of the country. In Chicago, a protest meeting was held at Northwest Hall on Dec. 13. In New York, 150 workers picketed the offices of the American Sugar Refining Co., with banners reading: "Wall Street Is Stifling the Cuban Labor Movement," "If Mella Dies on Wall Street Lies the Guilt," "The Sugar Trust is Keeping Cuban Workers Enslaved." By no means inconsiderable were the workers in this country who took up the issue, realizing that the anti-imperialist struggle is simply a phase of their own struggle against American capitalism.

The campaign to free Mella resulted in such pressure from all sides that President Machado, servant of Wall Street though he is, could no longer resist. An Associated Press dispatch declares that "requests for the release of Mella had been sent to President Machado from throughout Latin-America, the United States and Europe." Mella was released under \$1,000 bail, on Dec. 23.

However, the real battle is just beginning. The eleven others who were arrested with Mella are still behind prison bars, and the cases against all twelve will soon be coming up in the court.



Members of I. L. D. picketing offices of American Sugar Refining Co. in New York.