

The Fall of the Bastille - July 14, 1789

By MAX SCHACHTMAN

ONE hundred and thirty-five years ago the people of France, enraged at the trickery and tired of the rule of the French nobility with King Louis XVI at its head, established its right to have a voice in the councils of the nation by forcing their king to recognize the "Third Estate," the most democratic body in France at that time.

Seeing that his soldiers would refuse to fire on the revolting masses of the Parisian people, the king planned to import some 30,000 soldiers to dissolve the Third Estate and imprison its leaders. And while the Assembly pleaded with Louis to withdraw the soldiery, the people, strong in the knowledge of their just demands, and well organized and armed, marched on the hideous symbol of tyranny, the Bastille, stormed it, achieved victory and thus on July 14, 1789, performed the first stroke that finally put an end to feudal

autocracy in France. The first French revolution had begun.

For scores of years the dungeon of the Bastille had been a convenient hole into which were thrown the enemies, large and small, of the kings of France. At the merest whim of the monarch, a *lettre de cachet* was produced which imprisoned a political or social antagonist. No trials were heard of. There was no recourse to the courts of justice. The thousands who fell into the hands of the kings of France had rolled up a list of names which stood as the accusing fingers of the damned. The Bastille stood for the perpetuation of autocracy, feudal crimes, oppression and murder of the people. With the fall of the Bastille began the crumbling to its roots of the feudal system of society.

Today, nearly seven score years after that memorable event in the history of the oppressed masses of the world, the Bastilles of Ameri-

ca's brutal capitalist masters are filled with the fighters of the working class.

At Walla Walla, Washington, members of the Industrial Workers of the World are suffering for their activity on the part of the American wage/slaves. At Repressa and San Quentin, California, there are dozens more. In Idaho, in Texas, the jails of capitalism hold other warriors of the working class. In Farrel, Pennsylvania, Communist workers are being sentenced for asserting their "constitutional rights" of free speech and assemblage. The cases of the Communists in Michigan still stand. Elsewhere in this glorious land of the free, in this refuge of the persecuted, workers stand in constant danger of being deported to certain death in the reactionary, white-guard ruled land of their birth.

In Europe, thousands of workers are the victims of "democracy" and Fascist rule. The flower of the working class is being jailed and murdered. The resistance of the workers is being met with wilder and wilder persecution. The onward march of the proletariat to revolution is being answered with bullets and dungeons.

Storm the Bastilles of the world today! Reply to the bloated lords of the capitalist world with renewed support to the fighters for working class freedom!

In this country the Labor Defense Council, the Defense Committee of the I. W. W., the National Prison Comfort Club of Milwaukee, stand in need of your moral and financial aid, especially the financial end of it. The International Workers' Relief section in this country is collecting money for the relief of the victims of capitalism all over the world.

Give! Give without stint! Support the prisoners of autocracy! Rally against the Bastilles!

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