
Harry Gannes Dies:

Daily Worker Foreign Editor

Succumbs to Complications Following Operation for Brain Tumor, Was 40 Years Old

[event of Jan. 4, 1941]

Published in *Sunday Worker* [New York], vol. 6, no. 1 (Jan. 5, 1941), pp. 1-2.

Harry Gannes, foreign editor of *The Daily Worker*, died from a brain tumor last night at his home here after a 15 months' illness.

Gannes fought for his life to the end, saying he wanted to get back into the workers' struggle with his comrades. Physicians said that his unusually strong heart kept him alive during the last days, when his temperature reached a high of 107 degrees.

Gannes underwent a five-hour operation at the Jewish Hospital in Brooklyn on Dec. 16, 1939, receiving two blood transfusions at that time. He was stricken with pneumonia the next day. He was bedridden almost all the time since.

The *Daily Worker* foreign editor had spent most of his 40 years in the workers' movement.

He came to Marxism 23 years ago as a result of his struggle against the first imperialist world war, while a boy in his teens. A member of the left wing of the Young People's Socialist League in Chicago, he fought for peace supported the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.

Youth Leader.

Gannes was one of the founders of the Young Workers League, the predecessor of the Young Communist League, serving as its general secretary for a short time.

Fighting for peace again in 1939, Gannes became a target of the Roosevelt Administration's attack after the outbreak of the second imperialist war. Shortly after he was stricken with his fatal illness a federal grand jury in New York indicted him on a passport charge, similar to the charge brought against Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist party.

Despite physicians' warnings of the gravity of Gannes' illness, Lester G. Dunigan, assistant United States District Attorney, kept threatening to have the patient brought into court.

Gannes answered the Department of Justice threats on December 1, 1939, a day before he was taken to the Jewish Hospital in Brooklyn for an operation.

"This is an attack on The Daily Worker, not on me," he declared. "The Department of Justice is bringing this flimsy passport charge against me because I am a writer for the paper which they would like to suppress. They want to suppress The Daily Worker because it is giving effective aid to the fight against the war-mongers, who wish to involve the United States in the imperialist war."

Wrote on China.

The indictment was based on trips which Gannes made to China in the critical 1932-33 period and to Europe in 1938.

His Chinese trip gave him the background he needed for his penetrating volume, *When China Unites*, and enabled him to give some help to the Chinese people's movement.

His trip to Europe was made in the summer before the Munich pact [signed Sept. 30, 1938]. Returning he predicted the betrayal, and exposed the plot to seize Czechoslovakia a month before the Nazis occupied that country.

The Daily Worker editorially denounced the Gannes indictment, in its issue of Dec. 13, 1939, as "a case of political persecution and suppression from beginning to end."

Gannes was taken to the hospital in great pain the same day.

Recovering Dec. 26 from the attack of pneumonia that followed the operation he expressed his eagerness to answer his enemies, saying, "I want to confront my accusers on this ridiculous passport charge as soon as I am well."

Gannes kept repeating his desire to get back into the fight. His strength rose in the spring of 1940, but a relapse took place in June. Gannes, however, did not give up hope.

“There is much I want to do in the movement,” he told one of his nurses shortly before he died.

Asked About Browder Case.

At another time not long before his death he said that he wanted to live to be 90 like his grandfather to see the great social changes that were coming in the world.

Asking often about Earl Browder’s appeal he was told last Monday [Dec. 31, 1940] that the defense brief had been presented to the United States Supreme Court and he commented: “The reactionaries fear Browder; that’s why they persecute him.”

Gannes’ mind was clear to the last. He greeted members of his family and a *Daily Worker* staff member by name near the end.

Gannes’ indictment hung over his head during the entire illness. Every two weeks an assistant United States district attorney phoned Edward Kuntz’s, Gannes’ defense counsel, asking when his client could appear in court. The inquiries were routine, the assistant explained.

Death closes the case, an assistant district attorney said.

Gannes came to *The Daily Worker* 11 years ago as foreign editor after two years’ experience as secretary of the Anti-Imperialist League and a background of European travel and study. His factual and interpretive column on foreign affairs was once shown in a poll of more than 1,100 readers to be the most popular and useful department of the paper.

Explained Fascism.

Consistently Gannes explained fascism as a development of reactionary monopoly capitalism. And from the first intervention of Japan in Manchuria in 1931 he warned that the war would become worldwide unless the peoples of the world united against imperialist aggression.

Gannes was the author of two valuable books on foreign affairs. In collaboration with Theodore Repard [Theodore Draper] he wrote *Spain in Revolt* at the outbreak of the Spanish civil war in 1936. His

contract with Knopf required him to finish it in three weeks. The manuscript, ready in 17 days, gave the history of the fight led by the Communist and other Popular Front parties against the Spanish reactionaries since the 1931 Republican revolution.

When *China Unites*, written shortly before Chiang Kai-shek agreed to a united front with the Communists, predicted the immense growth of nationalist strength that such unity would bring the Chinese people.

Gannes was born in England in 1900. He is survived by his wife Pearl Roth Gannes, who stood by him bravely through his long fight, their three-year old son David; a daughter by a former marriage; his parents Barnett and Goldie Gannes of Los Angeles, California; a sister, Lillian Green, and three other sisters and a brother.

Funeral arrangements will be announced.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · March 2014 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.