

A 'Liberal' Outlook on Lynching

By CLAUDIA JONES

PM's editors recently asked Jennings Perry, editor of the Nashville Tennessean to do a "behind the scenes" story on the anti-Negro violence in Columbia, Tennessee.

Undoubtedly, this is in line with PM's taking up some issues affecting the Negro people. But since no editorial comment accompanied Mr. Perry's piece, it leads one to suspect that this is PM's "line" on this vital issue.

Perry complacently notes that there was nothing unusual for the Tennessee highway patrol to be rushed in to devastate and invade the Negro community. Of this Gestapo-like terror, he simply says that the same thing was being done "10 days ago" by the same state patrol "on the report that the Sheriff was being lynched" in another county where no Negroes live.

Here we have a typical bourgeois-liberal (acceptance of the status-quo) approach to the terror against the Negro people.

To put it another way: Mr. Perry is saying: "What is so bad anyway with the 'inexcusable nastiness' (his term for death and lynch terror against Negro citizens) on the part of the highway patrolmen and the government officials of Tennessee? They were only performing their duty."

AIDS WHITEWASH

This is nothing but an aid to the official whitewash of the lynchers of the Negro people in Tennessee, Freeport, Long Island, and elsewhere. It is an "equalization" of responsibility. It is a go-signal to the terrorist, pro-fascist hoodlums that they can expect protection from the powers-that-be in city and state governments.

Mr. Perry darn well knows that it is the Jimcrow conditions under which the Negro people live, that explains why, though in the nearby county, he so glibly mentions, there was no terror, there was terror against the Negro community in Columbia.

Mr. Perry's own comment further clinches this observation. He states: While it is true that all large cities in Tennessee "have their Harlems" a Negro "is seldom seen" in certain parts of Tennessee.

Well, why do we have "Har-

lems" in every city of the land? Is it because the Negro people want it so? It is because of Jimcrow and ghetto living conditions; of forcible exclusion (through written and unwritten laws) of Negroes from political, economic and social life. Hence, Mr. Perry's reference can be nothing more than a complete acquiescence and propping-up of the Jimcrow status of the Negro people.

'GOOD RELATIONS'

True, Mr. Perry takes pride in the ordinarily "good relations" between Negroes and whites in his state. He would not go so far as "the type of white politician" like U.S. Sen. Herman Ross who advocates "depriving the Negro of all civil rights till he can be sent back to Africa."

To say the least, it quite escapes Mr. Perry that Bilboism and imperialist propaganda are abetted by his "liberal" acceptance of the Jimcrow conditions under which the oppressed Negro people live. No wonder Mr. Perry can say "there is very little political discrimination . . . though Negroes never get elected to office."

It follows therefore that Perry's (and also PM's?) major conclusion is: there is really nothing to worry about in the spreading anti-Negro violence.

After all, Perry argues, the "race question has been here ever since the two races have." It is "an

ancient inherited problem." And what has "edged it?" The drive perhaps on the part of American imperialism to destroy the wartime gains of the Negro people and the working class? The use by American imperialists of the Hitlerite scapegoat tactic of lynch terror against the Negro people as they drive towards World War III?

No indeed! Perry considers "the worst fly in the ointment of race relations" the "departure of Negro women from the white kitchens" which has "stirred quite a white fury on the distaff side."

True, he says—and quite rightly—that Negro women "do not mean to go back if they can help it." But his whole polemic really grovels before the gods of imperialism and "white supremacy."

It is too late in history even for Perry, and PM to be making light of these incipient seeds of fascism in our own country. Instead of placing "equal blame" it is time to demand the speedy enforcement of official responsibility of the Deweys and others for punishing the lynchers of Freeport, Long Island and Columbia, Tennessee.

Let us remember the lesson of the German people: History will not excuse those who help fascism either by "liberal excuses" or by the conscious use of the ideological weapon of "Aryan supremacy."

Worth Repeating

In the article "Oust the Trotzkyites from the Labor Movement," Max Weiss writes: "In the developing strike movement, the Trotzkyites have exerted all their efforts to prevent labor from achieving a unified strategy and action, especially of the Big Three—steel, auto and electrical. Under cover of a super-militancy, the Trotzkyites try to make the trade unions easy victims of company provocation by advancing the theory that it makes no difference when and how strikes are called. This is a theory that plays directly into the hands of the corporations who try to provoke strikes at moments that are most favorable to the company and least favorable to the workers, whereas it is to the interests of the unions to choose the time for a strike in accordance with their own strategy and not with that of the employers." Political Affairs, February, 1946.