

The Negro People Are Aroused

By Claudia Jones

Much more than seething indignation against lynch terror and disgust with the do-nothing policies of the Administration exists today among the Negro people. Above all, it is evident that the Negro people are seeking fundamental answers to their oppression, and that there is a growing birth of pessimism and cynicism.

Even before the war's end, the Negro people were asking for guarantees at home as well as abroad; they were vigorously demanding an end to Jimcrow in an army which was fighting the fascists and their theories of "aryan superiority." But still their eyes were lifted to the hills. The Negro people hoped that by shedding their blood with those of other peoples to defeat a common fascist enemy—a greater share of democracy would be theirs.

WHAT PEOPLE THINK

What then, are the thoughts of a people who see their veteran sons being shot down in the swamps of Mississippi, Louisiana, Columbia, Tenn.; Monroe, Ga.; and Freeport, L. I.? They see men of the same fascist mentality whom a nation helped to defeat holding the trigger. They are dally comparing Bilboism with Nazism. And they are cynically asking "What is the difference between the lynchings of Negroes and the pogroms of the Jews in Germany?"

In recent weeks every single Negro newspaper posed these questions in one way or another. Some, like the *Afro-American* and the *Philadelphia Tribune* are beginning a serious campaign urging Negroes to leave the South; others are speaking in serious tones of reliance on their own (that is, the Negro's efforts). Still others express growing cynicism to the two-faced pro-war policies of America at home and abroad.

One Negro columnist put it this way:

"A war threatens because American fliers were shot down while flying over Yugoslavia. Secretary of State Byrnes had directed an ultimatum to Tito.

Due to the paper shortage our Letters to the Editor Column must be omitted. It will be resumed when the Daily Worker returns to normal size.

I don't know enough about the facts to say whether or not the fiery note to Yugoslavia is justified. Again I wonder why the U. S. is willing to go to war to protect its citizens flying over a foreign nation and yet will do nothing to assure the safety of its citizens in Georgia."

Of course the arrogant ultimatum to democratic Yugoslavia is of the same cloth as the contempt shown towards punishing the lynchers of American citizens. It is becoming more and more possible to singularly expose the two-faced role of American imperialism by its policies towards the Negro people at home. For the oppression of the Negro people at home is the big white lie of American "preachments" of democracy for other nations abroad.

Yes, the Negro people understand more and more the significance of these things. But we would have a mote in our eye if we didn't simultaneously recognize that they are concerned as never before with the lynch terror; they are wearying of the unpunished attackers; they are wondering why much more hasn't been done by the democratic American people who hate fascism.

A Southern Negro veteran recently conveyed to me the temper of the Negro people in the South—and elsewhere, by a single incident.

In a crowded southern railroad Jimcrow car a Negro man was being slurred and jostled about by the Jimcrow conductor. With obvious anger, the man took the jostling but straightened up

stating for all to hear: "PAY DAY IS COMIN'!" Every Negro in that car, my young Southern friend told me, knew what he meant.

Yes, payday is coming. But will it mean a payday based on heightened Negro-white unity; a payday based on a thunderous struggle—needed to stop lynch terror? One that can result in passage of a new anti-lynch bill; the impeachment of Bilbo and Rankin, federal punishment now by death for lynchers of Negro citizens?

Progressives, labor and, especially Communists, know that to reach that day involves cementing of the alliance of the Negro people and labor. Truly and justifiably, the Negro people are today measuring friends and allies in this wise—by those who come to their aid now. Underlying their concern at federal inaction against lynchings is also this factor.

Literally then, a crusade is needed to compel government action now. Such a crusade that can turn the tide is in the making. It is contained in the epic pilgrimage to Washington, D. C., Sept. 23, entitled "An American Crusade Against Lynchings." Headed by Paul Robeson and Dr. Albert Einstein, it coincides with the approximate anniversary of Lincoln's first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. Then—anti-slavery fervor reached new heights. Will 20th Century Americans match their fervor?

The times say we must. The date is Sept. 23, Washington, D. C. Reach the planners of the Crusade at 23 West 26 St.—today.

Worth Repeating

"The veteran's problem will more and more become a major issue. It will reach its climax when America is plunged into an inevitable economic crisis. The lesson of nazism in Germany teaches us that reaction can win large masses of disillusioned and demoralized veterans for its program if a united labor movement fails to develop a program and effective struggle for the needs of the veterans. . . .

"Labor must not fall into the trap of thinking that all is well with the veteran, that the veteran's problem is disappearing, and that it therefore need feel no concern with it. Labor must continue and extend its fight for the needs of the veteran, both inside and outside the unions, must develop further the alliance between the trade unions and the veterans through united action on the common issues confronting both." From an article in the August, 1946, issue of "Political Affairs," by John Gates, National Veterans Director, Communist Party.