

Trial of 'Pacific Movement' Organizers Bares Fury of White Rulers at Any Negro Resistance

By Cyril Briggs

The explosive contradictions between the brutally oppressed Negro masses and American imperialism; the frantic war preparations of the rival American and Japanese imperialists, the maneuvers of Japanese imperialism to exploit in its own interests, in a war situation, the rising indignation of the Negro masses against Jim-Crow oppression—all were laid bare in the "sedition" trial in Pemiscot County, Missouri, on Sept. 12, of four Negro organizers of the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World.

The greatest ferocity and savagery of suppression, the most brutal assaults of the most elementary rights of the oppressed Negro people marked this trial in the Black Belt. The four organizers, one a woman, were savagely beaten in the open court room, then forced to stand, propped up by the officers of capitalist "law and order," to hear the maximum sentence pronounced. Their attorney was likewise beaten up and driven out of town.

The trial was both a measure of the "fairness" of the capitalist lynch courts where Negroes (and, for that matter, white workers, too) are involved, and of the raging fury and bloody suppression with which the lynch rulers meet the least sign of Negro resistance, no matter how weak or confused (as in this case).

The charges against the four Negro organizers throw a brilliant light on the semi-slave relations

existing between the Negro masses in the "Black Belt" and their oppressors—the same relations so loudly praised by William Pickens, George Schuyler, Charles Houston and other reformist apologists for Jim-Crow oppression and lynch law. In addition to the formal charge of pro-Japanese activities and sedition in connection with their attempts to organize the Negroes of Pemiscot County, the defendants were charged by the prosecutor and the loyal lynch press with "disloyalty and base ingratitude to their white benefactors," that is, of "disloyalty" to their oppressors, of "base ingratitude" to the lynch murderers of Negroes.

It did not take the Missouri Supreme Court long to realize that this infamous lynch verdict of the local court at Steele, Missouri, would serve further to weaken the illusions among the toiling population, both Negro and white, in the "fairness" and "impartial justice" of the capitalist courts. The State Supreme Court acted at once to nullify the verdict of the local court and order the release of the four defendants. The State Court thereby attempted to close the case and hush up the scandal attached to it. The experience of the lynch rulers with the Scottsboro case was no doubt a deciding factor for the State Court.

Lynchers' Fear of Negro Masses

The action of the lynchers and their court at Steele, Missouri, clearly reveals the fear of the lynch

lords in the presence of any movement to organize their Negro slaves. The Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, with its Negro petty-bourgeois leadership, does not directly threaten the rule of the lynch lords. In fact, its program of "race unity" as against working-class unity, objectively aids the lynch rulers in their policy of dividing their victims along lines of race and nationality. Why then was the concentrated fury of the lynch lords vented on its four organizers? Briefly stated, the chief reasons are:

(a) The movement provides a vehicle for Japanese imperialism to use the Negro question in the United States (the difficulties of its chief imperialist rival) in the interests of strengthening its own position for the armed conflict in the Pacific for which both powers are frantically arming.

(b) The movement, despite its reactionary leadership and the objective aid it furnishes to world imperialism, helps to kindle in one form or another the national self-consciousness of the Negro people.

In the present situation of the rapid sharpening of all the contradictions between the plundered Negro masses and their oppressors, even the reformist-controlled national movements tend to become a danger to U. S. imperialism, since the possibility always exists of the rank and file membership repudiating the misleaders and turning to the real struggle for Negro libera-

tion, in a relentless fight, in alliance with the revolutionary Negro and white workers, against the imperialist enemy, white and yellow. Bankruptcy of "Pacific Movement"

This fear found open expression in the admission of Justice of the Peace Kelly that the maximum sentence was imposed primarily "for the effect on other Negroes." That is, to terrorize the Negro masses into abject acceptance of their worsening conditions, mass starvation, increasing violent suppression of their rights.

The Missouri case reveals not only the fear and savage violence of the lynch rulers toward the Negro masses, but also the bankruptcy of the leaders of the Pacific Movement who thought by denying the national-revolutionary struggle for Negro freedom to avoid the attacks of the lynch rulers, and who betray that struggle by strengthening the Jim-Crow isolation of the Negro masses and refusing to see that Negro freedom can be achieved only by the closest unity and the relentless struggle of Negro and white toilers against the common enemy.

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