

# THE NEGRO MOVEMENT

## A New Wave of Terror against the American Negroes.

By I. A m t e r.

An incident which "shocked" the Negro petty-bourgeoisie has occurred in New York. The U.S. imperialist government, in the realisation that war is approaching, and wishing to create proper sentiment for the war, decided that American "Gold Star" mothers should be given an opportunity to visit the graves of their sons killed and buried in France.

A large contingent exclusively of white women made the trip, were feted, photographed and what not, and the capitalist papers could not pay enough tribute to these "brave mothers" for the sacrifices they had made. It was decided, however, that Negro "Gold Star" mothers should be sent **separately**. Not only were they to be **jimcrowed** and **segregated**, but they were to be sent on a ship with accommodations inferior to those accorded white mothers. More than 450 "Gold Star" Negro mothers decided to make the trip — but in May 55 of them, representing twenty-one states, petitioned Hoover to change the arrangements, insisting on no segregation, declaring it an "insult" to Negro mothers and stating that if discrimination

were persisted in, the petitioners would refuse to go to France, as much as they desired to visit the graves of their fallen sons.

What did Hoover do? It must not be expected that fascist Hoover was even sentimentally moved. On the contrary — this fascist who nominated for the U.S. Supreme Court Judge Parker, who is a bitter enemy of the Negroes, and who persisted in his nomination despite the protests of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, a petty-bourgeois organisation, headed by the intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, did not change the plans. Of the 450 Negro mothers only ninety-two have made the voyage. This is a healthy — though not yet a basic racial or class response — to these fascist manoeuvres.

A reception was held for the ninety-two Negro mothers at City Hall on July 11. F. Q. Morton, a Negro municipal civil service commissioner, told the audience **"not to allow your hearts to be embittered by the insult offered you by the government at Washington."** Aldermann Moore, a Negro alderman of N.Y. declared that "when our boys went to France they felt they were fighting for democracy. But that democracy lasted only a few days after the return of a "famous" regiment.

Secretary of War, Hurley, declared that his department was anxious **"not to disturb the normal contacts of individual pilgrims."** Thus the government:

This incident is merely symptomatic of the whole present situation. Lynching is increasing in the south. Only a few days ago a dispute between a Negro and a white storekeeper at Ernelle, Alabama, resulted in a shooting. Mob-spirit broke out, led by the sheriff of the county, an attack was made on the home of the Negro family. The escape of two of the family led to the governor of Alabama offering a reward of \$ 300 for the "niggers, dead or alive".

What is the cause of this growth of lynching, which for a few years has been on the decline? The immediate cause is the attempt of the capitalists to crush the growing radicalisation of the Negroes due to 1) the economic crisis; 2) the further pauperisation of the Negro masses; 3) the advent of the Communist Party and Trade Union Unity League in the south; 4) the growing consciousness of the Negro masses of the treachery of their various organisations under petty-bourgeois faker leadership; and 5) the growing support given to the Communist Party and Trade Union Unity League by the Negro workers.

After the last war when the industries of the north grew immensely, there was a scarcity of cheap labour. Immigration was practically cut off and the capitalists of the north drew in the tremendous reserves of Negro workers, tenant farmers and share croppers of the south. A mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Negroes from the south began. The Negro population of whole counties of the southern states disappeared and in certain localities in the south a scarcity of cheap labour power arose. For a time sheriffs, on orders of the manufacturers, prevented the moving of the Negroes to the north, but it was obvious that lynching, discrimination and jimcrowing were impelling the Negroes to leave, especially since jobs were assured in the north. Lynching, as a result, was consciously reduced, the white bourgeoisie recognising the need of easing conditions if the Negro workers were to be retained.

Now the economic crisis is on, affecting every part of the country, including the south, which has been greatly industrialised since the world war. The unemployment situation has become worse all over. Many Negroes who migrated to the north have returned south.

The oversupply of labour power has enabled, for instance, the Murray Body Co. of Memphis, Tennessee, which makes bodies for Ford cars, to discharge white workers who received \$ 4 to \$ 5 a day, and employ Negro workers at \$ 1.40 to \$ 1.55 a day.

This situation has pauperised the Negro masses, who have been affected more by the crisis. In order to maintain, or attempt to maintain peace during the crisis, the employers, as a rule, are discharging Negro workers and using white workers. In the same way, they are discharging non-citizens and keeping native or naturalised workers.

Into this situation in the south, the Communist Party and Trade Union Unity League have come, **organising and mobilising Negro and white workers on an equal plane.** This had been unknown in the south, for the A.F. of L. either refused

to organise Negro workers or if they admitted them placed them under white leadership, segregated them at union meetings in a manner quite in keeping with the aims and practices of the white bourgeoisie. White and coloured workers now began to fight shoulder to shoulder against their common enemy. White workers defended Negro organisers of the Party and Trade Union Unity League; Negro workers protected white organisers against the fascists and their hirelings.

This has aroused the government and fascist capitalists of the south and has led to the revival of the "insurrection law" by which six Communists and revolutionary workers face the electric chair in Atlanta, Georgia, for organising Negro workers; another was arrested for "sedition" in Baltimore for addressing a Negro meeting.

The petty-bourgeois Negro organisations — (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, Urban League, and the United Negro Improvement Association, Garvey movement) have shown their face in this crisis. The N.A.A.C.P. recently held its annual convention in Springfield, Mass., to which, contrary to custom, Hoover sent no message of greeting, which quite aggrieved these fakers. Using the same treacherous language — of Negroes not tolerating this or that, but proposing no effective measures for combating the present evils — the convention heard from the mouth of Walter White, acting secretary, the essence of their position:

**"We ask nothing more than that the rights of petition and protest be secure to the Negro, not as a Negro but as a citizen of our common country . . . Bludgeons do more harm to those who wield them than to those against whom they are wielded."** (Emphasis ours, I.A.)

This at a time when Negroes are being more and more discriminated against, when lynching is spreading with furious speed!

And what is the attitude of the social-fascists? Their position was exemplified in the presidential election campaign when Norman Thomas, candidate of the socialist party, toured the south and spoke **not to a single Negro group**, but only to the "lily" whites of the south. A. Philip Randolph, general organiser of the Pullmann Porter union, and a leading member of the socialist party, together with Green, sold out the porters in their fight for decent wages and hours — and then consented to putting the porters into the A.F. of L. **not as a national organisation**, but as a "federal" union, with only local rights!

The "World Tomorrow", Norman Thomas' monthly, proposes against lynching and discrimination the following: **"Enlightened religion and education must continue an unremitting warfare against such prejudice."**

No wonder that the treachery of the petty-bourgeois Negro leadership, the treachery and swindling schemes of Marcus Garvey ("back to Africa" movement, agreement with the Ku Klux Klan to make no claims on the United States, fraudulent business enterprises, etc.), the continued jimcrowing of the A.F. of L., the attitude of the social-fascists against the Negro masses, have shown the Negro workers and poor farmers that their only friends are the Communists and Trade Union Unity League, which not only talk social, political and economic equality and self-determination for the Negroes, but fight for them.

As a result, we witness a large growth of the Negro membership of the Party (more than 1000 in the recent recruiting campaign), where they are developing into real leaders. We find Negro delegates from Alabama at the National Unemployment Convention in Chicago, coming with 50 cents in their pockets and leaving with \$ 2 for a trip of 1000 miles! As a result we find thousands of Negro and white workers attending the funeral of Alfred Levy, a Negro member of the Communist Party, who was killed by the police and Garveyites in New York only recently, at a meeting to protest against lynching in the south.

All these facts reaching governmental expression in the ignoring of the petition of the Negro "Gold Star" mothers by Hoover, are helping to open the eyes of the Negro masses to the alignment against them as Negroes and as workers: „their own" government, the capitalists, the treacherous Negro petty-bourgeois, intellectual leaders, the fascist leaders of the A.F. of L., the social-fascist socialist party.

The Communist Party calls on the Negro and white workers to form Workers Defence Corps to protect the workers from the "bludgeons" of their enemies; it stands for full social, economic and political equality for the Negroes and their right of self-determination.

The struggle becomes sharper every day, accentuated by the crisis. This struggle can but strengthen the Communist Party and Trade Union Unity League and produce real Negro proletarian leadership not only for the Negroes but for the whole working class.