Anti-Klan marchers hit Greensboro murders

City sabotage fails

GREENSBORO, N.C. — In 1960, a Black person here couldn't get a cup of coffee at the same lunch counter as a white. But on February 1, Joseph McNeill and three of his classmates from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College refused to move from the lunch counter at Woolworth's until they were served.

They started a movement that saw thousands of people “sitting-in” at public facilities throughout the South, at one point 10,000 in Greensboro alone. Up North, Yale, Harvard, Brandeis and MIT students demonstrated in support.

It took six months to integrate that Woolworth's lunch counter and five years to break legal segregation in the South.

Twenty years later, certain things haven't changed in Greensboro, N.C., among them the tight grip of racism.

On Nov. 3, five members of a leftist group organizing in Greensboro, the Communist Workers Party (CWP), were shot down in cold blood at a rally protesting renewed Ku Klux Klan activity. The city rushed to whitewash the murders.

Now, as then, people did what had to be done. On Feb. 2nd, the 20th anniversary of the Woolworth sit-in, 7,000 converged on Greensboro to protest the five murders and the resurgence of the Klan. From the new generation of North Carolina A & T students who

were prominent in the march, to the activists who came from cities across the country where the Klan presence is growing, there was a common sentiment among them as they marched past that Woolworth’s — “We will never go back.”

It was a victory that the march happened at all. The government was able to force the cancellation of the first planned protest of the Nov. 3 murders — an inter-religious service organized by three local Black ministers with an intention to red-balloting campaign.

The FBI launched an investigation, not of the Klan, but of anti-Klan organizers! Under the pressure of FBI and KKK calls and 11th hour meetings with the “Human Relations” Commission, not to mention newspaper headlines like “Leftists Plan War on Klan,” mini-stocks enforcing the service were forced to back down.

When questioned about the repression in Greensboro, North Carolina Governor James Hunt gave his whole-hearted backing, “I am much more concerned about what these groups might do than I am about the violation of their rights,” he said.

To which Virgil Griffin, a Kansas City Dragnet of the Klan sect that pulled the triggers on Nov. 3, commented, “He’s the best governor the state has ever had!”

ANTI-KLAN ORGANIZERS NOT DETECTED

Anti-Klan organizers were not deterred. They gathered in a national conference December 14-15 in Atlanta and laid plans for the Feb. 2 march.

The Greensboro City Council responded with a hearing on a new parade ordinance that would force demonstrators to post bond to cover costs for all but 45 police assigned to protect a march. If more than the estimated number of people came out, they would not be allowed to participate.

Meanwhile, City Manager Tom Osborne told the anti-Klan network that the Coliseum, where they asked to hold their rally, was booked for Feb. 2. The city was sponsoring a rhythm and blues festival that day, he announced.

Greenboro was not in the habit of sponsoring R&B concerts, so march organizers checked with performers supposedly scheduled to appear. They knew nothing about "Bill Ayers," the city’s finally managed to book out as soon as they learned of the situation.

From the Pulpit Forum, an organization of Black ministers, to local politicians, public opinion against the One of the 4 original lunch counter sit-in participants back at Woolworth's 20 years later on the day of the anti-Klan march.

city snowballed. The City Council tabled the proposed parade ordinance and city manager Osborne had to postpone the concert and grant the march organizers a permit for the Coliseum.

For its efforts, the city now faces a $500,000 damage suit.

When the government officials realized they couldn't stop the march, they did what they could to sabotage it. Organizers' homes were raided and hundreds of bus companies were contacted and told not to rent.

Governor Hunt actually declared a state of emergency for all of North Carolina on Feb. 21. Greensboro itself was shut down tight. Police blocked off the roads and cleared the areas along the march route.

7,000 MARCH

Nonetheless, 7,000 people made it to Greensboro Feb. 2, and in a three and a half mile march, made their point. In addition to the strong contingent of A&T students and others from North Carolina schools, there were busloads from across the South: Tidewater, Va., Atlanta, Ga., Chattanooga, Tenn., Florida and Mississippi.

(Continued on page 17)
Anti-Klan march

(Continued from page 9)

Buses also rolled in from D.C., Philadelphia, N.Y., Boston, Cincinnati, California. Buses also rolled in from D.C., included Rev. Joseph Terrorism from the right in Florida. The FBI has completed its investigation and withdrawn from the Klan. The list of the 23 speakers at the rally included Rev. Joseph H. Rogers, while handcuffed in prison.

KLAN TERROR

Skip Robinson, leader of the Klan, says that the Klan is on the rise, Southern Organizing Committee, Rev. Ben Charles, Anne Braden of the Southern Organizing Committee, Sip Robinhson of the United League of Mississippi, Rev., Fred Sherrard, Robert Clinton, KKK network, and Odia Hyde of the Southern Conference Educational Fund. The speakers saw the growth of the Klan as no freak accident, but a reflection of growing right-wing trends in the government and country.

As for the Klan itself, they emphasized, not by threats or rhetoric, but by an organized grass-roots effort. We got into the '80s, they said, resolved to struggle against the Klan.

OBLASTS TO UNITY

As hard as the government worked to prevent that scene in the Coliseum from happening, there were participants in the demonstration itself, most notably the CWP, who also threatened the success of the day. Publicizing the march under the slogan that it was better to die fighting the Klan than to live like slaves, they refused to go along with the coalition's decision to tell people not to carry arms. Only the night before the Klan rally, the Charles and the Clinton's home was attacked. At the rally itself, they boomed speakers who every day put their lives on the line to fight the Klan.

The CWP's behavior not only scared many people coming from Greensboro, but also made it difficult for organizations to put their names out in public as backers of the demonstra­tion. "It's a matter of principle," notes_times_10_000 lee, "that we try to unite the black people to stop the Klan, not just the handful that agree with the CWP down the line. The CWP's refusal to try to unite the broadest numbers was a thorn in the side of the coalition all along.

STOP THE WHITEWASH

The 7,000 demonstrators are gone from Greensboro, many back organizers in their local communities. But their presence there Feb. 2 will make it harder for the city to pretend that it's no whitewash of the Klan murders.

The FBI has completed its investigation and withdrawn from the site. It is the latest in a series of KKK cross-burnings, harassment and defacing of synagogues in New York and Connecticut, including 4 firebombings in Queens, Buffalo County, Ky. reported three times more KKK violence in August than all of 1976.

KLAN TERROR IN 1979

(Continued from page 9)

MAY

"Dear Mr. 150 club-swinger Klannos attacked a Southern Christian Conference Leadership march for blacks. 50 shots were fired, 3 Blacks and 2 Klannos are hurt, and the KKK vows "We’ll never leave our guns in the car again!" Two days later, KKKers storm City Hall, burn a cross and chant "White Power" to protest the arrest of KKK members after the demo.

"Fayetteville, Arkansas: KKK rebirth continues as Arkansas Klan holds first public meeting in years.

JUNE

"Okaloosa, Mississippi: 15-year-old Lee Carothers is fatally shot by Kenny Kline. Deputy Sheriff Hunt plans to charge Kline with manslaughter in prison. Skip Robinhson, leader of the United League of Northern Mississippi, says "The cops here wear blue by day, white by night."

"East Point, Georgia: Ken Chastain, a Lumbee Indian and shop steward at Pittsburgh Plate and Glass, Local 1901, is attacked at work by co-worker Roger Campbell, an admitted member of the United Klans of America. Chastain is being fired for "fighting to protect his job," according to the company.

"New Haven, Connecticut: Cross is burned in front of the mayoral campaign office of State Treasurer Henry Parker, the state’s highest ranking black official.

"China Grove, North Carolina: The Klan shows the racist film, Birth of A Nation, as part of recruiting drives. It is also shown in Winston-Salem and Charlotte, NC., and Stockton, California.

"Birmingham, Alabama: The KKK marches through downtown while police protect them from KKK rioters.

AUGUST

"Barnegat, New Jersey: 12 Klannos launch riot on climate change movement to protest the presence of the Central Park Zoo at the zoo.

"Valley Stream, Long Island, NY: A 3-foot cross is burned at home of black friend, one week after they moved into this black area, it