

**TURNING
POINT
IN
FREEDOM
ROAD**

**THE FIGHT
TO END
JIM CROW**

NOW

**By CLAUDE
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NEW CENTURY PUBLISHERS: *New York*

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TO THE READER

Claude Lightfoot, the author of this pamphlet is a leading Communist spokesman and an important voice among the Negro people. He was indicted, convicted, and later freed, in a federal trial for the "crime" of being a member of the Communist Party under the fascist-like provisions of the Smith Act.

Mr. Lightfoot's case drew wide support as a test of the doctrine of "guilt by association." But more than that, his defense was based on the American Bill of Rights, of the right of all Americans—Communists included—freely to think, speak, write and exchange their views and opinions in the public arena.

He is the author of *An American Looks at Russia: Can we Live in Peace?, Not guilty!*, and numerous articles and essays which have appeared in *Political Affairs* and other periodicals.

TURNING POINT IN FREEDOM ROAD

THE FIGHT TO END JIM CROW NOW

By Claude Lightfoot

January, 1963 marks the hundredth anniversary of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation; it is also nine years since the historic Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation. It is time for all forces dedicated to freedom's fight to make an inventory on how matters stand in this struggle.

Our country faces a national crisis. It is a crisis without precedent in our history. For sixteen years we have lived in a cold war atmosphere, and there is no relief in sight. Our economy, notwithstanding continuous cold war budgets, is ailing seriously. Automated industries are creating a permanent army of unemployed. Our civil liberties are being constantly invaded, and the danger to them becomes even greater with the emergence of a powerful pro-fascist, ultra-Right movement. In all areas of national life, as well as in civil rights struggles, the nation faces an impasse. We are in a sort of twilight zone in the fight to maintain world peace, broaden the base of popular liberties, improve the living standards of our people.

One of the major problems before the country is to define and to sharply point up the things that will be required to effect a fundamental change in the status of 18 million Negroes. Toward that end, it is necessary to review some of the developments which followed the Supreme Court rulings on school desegregation. Roughly, nine years have passed since that historic decision. What does the balance sheet show?

Balance Sheet on School Desegregation Ruling

The Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that the doctrine of "separate but equal" which had been established by the same court in 1898, in *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, was fallacious, and that all schools should

be integrated. This ruling had a deep-going effect upon the whole jim crow structure in American life. The decision itself represented an historic advance. Many hailed it as a second Emancipation Proclamation, and if all other things had been equal, this might have been true; but in the light of the situation which prevailed in the country, the Court decision by itself was inadequate to destroy the jim crow system. However, the Court's ruling enhanced the confidence of the Negro masses that freedom was within their grasp; and what followed were some of the most militant and broadly-based struggles we have witnessed since the almost-forgotten days of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Powerful assaults upon the jim crow system were made, especially in the South.

The murder of little Emmett Till, one year following the Court ruling, was one of the most brutal crimes the world has ever known. Compounded within this event and mirrored for all the world to see, was the lynch system of the South which, in a period of 75 years, had resulted in over 5,000 black bodies burned alive on public squares or back alleys of southern cities. This heinous crime set in motion forces all over the world in protest against southern "justice." More importantly, for the first time in many decades the initiative of Negro leadership shifted from the northern communities to the southern communities. Previously, the scope and tempo of the Negro freedom movement had rested largely upon initiatives taken by national Negro organizations with headquarters located in northern centers. Following the Court decisions this situation changed.

Emboldened by the new world relationship of forces which helped spur the Supreme Court ruling on desegregation, outraged by the brutality displayed in the Emmett Till case, the Negro masses began to assert themselves in a manner that shifted the center of gravity of leadership, not only from the North to the South, but also from the top social layers to the bottom.

We should take note of the fact that most Negro leaders, and especially of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, had entertained for a long time certain illusions as to what would be required to destroy the system of jim crow and segregation. Their over-preoccupation with the legal phase of

the struggle, their almost calculated non-participation in mass struggles, left them unprepared for the developments that followed the Supreme Court's decision. So leadership had to come from below.

Examples of Heroism

Out of the grass roots of Negro life have come some of the greatest protest struggles of our time. The most outstanding struggle in this respect, a struggle that future historians will undoubtedly record as one of the great turning points of the Negro liberation movement, was the Montgomery bus boycott. This epochal movement began on the initiative of a Negro working-class woman, Rosa Lee Parks. Negro women historically had been in the forefront of struggle. And while today we revere such names as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, the time will come when names such as Rosa Lee Parks, Autherine Lucy, Daisy Bates, and countless other Negro women whose names today are almost unknown, will shine brightly in the annals of human progress. The central role played by the masses is perhaps explained best by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was catapulted by this movement into a position of outstanding leadership. In his book *Strides Towards Freedom*, he notes that at one point they were wavering on the question of whether to continue the boycott. They finally agreed to let a mass meeting, which they called, determine their course of action. Referring to this incident, Rev. King wrote:

"It took fifteen minutes to push my way through to the pastor's study, where Dr. Wilson told me that the church had been packed since five o'clock. By now my doubts concerning the continued success of our venture were dispelled. The question of calling off the protest was now academic. The enthusiasm of these thousands of people swept everything along like an onrushing tidal wave."

The Montgomery bus boycott movement helped to stimulate struggles all over the South. Wherever the courts ordered a school desegregated, people went into struggle to enforce the order. And movements similar to the Montgomery boycott followed in Bir-

mingham, Tuskegee and other cities. Eventually, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed to coordinate and give direction to the common struggle. But it was not only organized efforts which resulted in great struggles; it was also the courage displayed by Negro individuals. The case of Autherine Lucy is a good example. Upon admission to the University of Alabama she was the object of jeering, hysterical, shameless mobs; in the face of such terror, she maintained her poise and dignity. In so doing she won the admiration of a watching world.

To implement the Supreme Court's decision and to hasten their own freedom, Negro children together with their parents, waged fierce struggles all over the South. The outstanding example was Little Rock, where nine Negro children withstood a jeering mob that included the police force of the city and state. They marched courageously into a school which had been decreed by the court as desegregated. The world stood up and applauded.

Sit-ins Sweep South

Between 1954 and 1960 numerous struggles were waged. In 1960, a new point was reached when a sit-in movement swept the Southern states like wildfire. The advent of the sit-ins witnessed the emergence of a new force — the Negro students. They began to play an outstanding role in challenging America's whole jim crow system. The nature of this movement was described by Louis E. Lomax in the June, 1960 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, he wrote:

"Negro leaders spent 75 years remodeling that structure, trying to make it more livable by removing such horrible reminders of the past of lynchings, denial of the ballot, restrictive covenants in housing, and inequalities of public facilities. Only after the intractable Deep South emasculated every move toward equalization did the Negro leadership class sue for school integration. Even then it was a segmented, room-by-room assault. But these student demonstrators have in effect put dynamite at the cornerstone of segregation and lit the fuse."

The sit-in movement forced many concessions. It was so potent

that the platform writers of both the Republican and Democratic parties in 1960 had to give it more than a passing nod. It was the most dynamic and compelling force to emerge on the American scene since the organization of the CIO in the mid-thirties. The entire Negro movement during this period organized actions and activities which made it the greatest social protest force in American life. On several occasions, segments of the Negro organizations as well as white supporters, joined together to mount some of the biggest actions of the last decade. The Prayer Pilgrimage of 1956 attracted some 27,000 people to the nation's capital; two youth marches to Washington likewise attracted tens of thousands of young people; and two demonstrations before the major party conventions in Chicago and Los Angeles, which also involved thousands, are indicative of the tremendous power displayed by the Negro liberation forces.

The Power of Negro Action

Conscious of its own role in world affairs, inspired by the world-wide sweep of freedom in Asia, Africa and other colonial areas of the world, the Negro movement placed on its banner the concept of "Freedom Now." Compromises and concessions which, in former years, would have been greeted with enthusiasm and with almost no criticism, are now appraised in the light of the vast changes that are taking place all over the world, and are found unsatisfactory.

In 1957, when the Senate passed, for the first time since the Reconstruction era, a watered-down civil rights bill, the Negro press was exceedingly critical of Negro leaders who had given their reluctant endorsement to the bill.

Another feature of historic importance to emerge in this period was the power of Negro action. The capacity of Negroes, independently of their actual and potential allies, to wage successful struggles, was demonstrated for the first time in the history of the Negro people in the United States. For, while the Negro movement broke with gradualism and increased the tempo of the struggle all along the line, its closest friends and allies, labor and liberals, have not yet grasped the revolutionary nature of the Negro people's

struggles, and many still cling to approaches of gradualism. This often results in friction between these powerful forces. Notwithstanding the lack of adequate support, progress has been made.

There are many factors which have contributed to this progress. Of prime importance is the present world situation, a situation in which the treatment of the Negro in America has been used as a measuring-rod by forces all over the world to determine what the true intentions of American foreign policy are. These struggles were mounted at a time when the power structure of the world had been greatly changed, and when forces struggling for freedom can win support all over the world. In this respect, the growing power of the Socialist sector of the world is of enormous advantage not only to colonial peoples struggling against imperialism, but to American Negroes as well.

The Communist Party of the U.S.A. during the period of the thirties, the forties, and the early fifties, made many notable contributions in the struggle for Negro rights. During most of the fifties, the Communist Party of the United States was the main target of American reactionary forces. Many of its members were driven from leadership positions in the labor movement and other mass organizations of the people. Hundreds of the Party's leaders were thrown in jail and subjected to all kinds of persecution. The Party during this period, despite intense persecution, despite the loss of many members and resources, succeeded in making invaluable contributions in aid to the modern Negro liberation movement, despite much Red-baiting within the movement itself.

Communists and the Negro Freedom Fight

If the international situation is in such large measure responsible for the capacity of Negroes to strike out — often alone — against jim crow, then in what way do American Communists fit into this picture,

It was American Communists who help the world movement, both the colonial and Socialist sectors, to understand the nature of the American Negro question, and, in so doing, helped rally them to support our struggles.

For example, the National Negro Congress in 1946 presented a petition to the United Nations documenting problems of Ameri-

can Negro citizens. This petition was not the product of Communists only, although Benjamin J. Davis, at that time City Councilman in New York and an outstanding spokesman for the Communist Party, was one of the authors who originated the petition. Or, to take another example, in 1949, '50 and '51, the Civil Rights Congress, under the leadership of an outstanding Negro Communist, William L. Patterson, took several actions which contributed to the enhancement of the general sensitivity of the world movement to these problems. The fight to save the Martinsville Seven from the electric chair in Virginia and the fight to save Willie McGee from the electric chair in Mississippi were carried throughout the length and breadth of the world, and in 1951, Mr. Patterson made a trip to the U.N. General Assembly in Paris, where he presented a petition charging genocide in the United States. Paul Robeson, a close personal friend of Benjamin J. Davis and William L. Patterson, a friend of the Soviet people, helped to arouse world opinion on the side of black Americans. And finally, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, who recently joined the Communist Party, by his utterances and trips abroad, contributed immensely to this development. Historians will some day make a startling contrast between the contributions made by these men and the dastardly Uncle Tom-ish role played by those Negro leaders who, for the sake of a few crumbs from the master's table, joined the U.S. State Department in attempting to lull the world to sleep by making it appear that we were making phenomenal gains against jim crowism in America.

Whatever the reasons — and however one views the role of American Communists — the fact remains that the Negro liberation movement has lifted itself largely by its own bootstraps. And now, after almost a decade of tremendous struggle, it is time to examine to what extent gains have been made. It is necessary to define the obstacles that still stand in the way, and to formulate a clear line of direction for the struggles ahead. For it is clear that we have reached the end of one period, and that a new period is in the process of taking shape. This new period will confront the movement with new challenges, and old methods of struggle will not suffice to meet the new problems and the new opportunities.

New Period — New Challenges

Let us review some of the gains made up to now.

When we speak of gains, we must speak of them not only in terms of concrete achievements, but also in terms of potential achievements. Thus, in respect to overcoming the deep, historically-ingrained ideology of white supremacy tremendous strides have been made. Americans have generally speaking been made more conscious and aware of the plight of the American Negro. Moral indignation among American whites at the most flagrant violations of human decency has risen to an all-time high. Here, one does not refer to the increased terror in both the North and the South, but rather to the general attitude, and in this respect most Americans are horrified about the brutal treatment of the Negro.

The building of this kind of a climate is in itself an achievement of no small dimensions. The area in which gains have been greatest has been through the legal branch of the government and through some legislative and administrative branches of government at a state and city level. In respect to the legal branch of government, the judiciary, the Supreme Court has made numerous decisions of a positive nature; and even if these decisions in all instances have not been implemented, the fact that such decisions were made is of great importance. For example, the Supreme Court's ruling on desegregation in 1954; its ruling a few months later to implement its previous decision, a ruling which called upon Federal judiciaries to act with "all deliberate speed"; and now, the Tennessee ruling that the gerrymandering process of the South is violative of the 14th Amendment and denies citizens equal protection under the law. While this judgment was rendered in a case that came before the Court from Tennessee, the Court ruling in the Tennessee case affects all other states. Thus, the Court's ruling is of historic significance for the progress of the whole nation.

Between these rulings, which go to the very heart of the Negro question in the United States, the Court has made other rulings which have helped bolster its general approach. But there have also been cases where the Supreme Court has made rulings contrary to its own general position.

At the State level, progress has been made not only through the judiciary, but also through the legislative and administrative branches of government. At the opening of the decade of the sixties, a total of 28 states and the District of Columbia presently have laws specifically prohibiting discrimination because of race, creed, color or national origin in one or more of these fields: public accommodations, employment, housing, education, health and welfare. There is considerable variation between states as to the areas presently covered by these anti-discrimination laws. Also, there is considerable variation in the laws within any given area, including some which are merely general statements of non-discriminatory policy. In many states these laws were legislated long before the period now under review. Nonetheless, in the areas of public housing and job discrimination there have been important gains and in a number of states and cities, governors and mayors have established commissions on human rights, some of which have made meaningful contributions. In this respect, at a conference held in April 1960, in the state of Wisconsin, over fifty organizations were invited to send delegates. The Governor's Commission on Human Rights, in planning for that conference, did an unusually effective job in preparing material upon which the delegates could make constructive proposals. Thus on the statute books in Wisconsin there are laws dealing with various aspects of discrimination including public accommodations — amended and strengthened in 1959 — civil service, national guard, teachers, public schools, veterans' housing authority, housing authorities, urban re-development, blighted area law, restrictive covenants, migrants camps, education for migrant children — adopted 1959 — and a non-discrimination state contracts, also 1959. Clearly, the State of Wisconsin strengthened both its administrative and legislative approaches to the civil rights question.

Progress in Fight Against Jim Crow

Another positive factor has been the progress in governmental patronage and in areas of employment through civil service.

The total of non-white workers in federal, state and local government rose from 214,000 in 1940 to 845,000 in 1959. This

almost four-fold increase compares with an increase of 43 per cent in total non-white employment during the same period. Negro percentage of government employees during this period rose from 5.6 per cent to 10.8 per cent.

Also of a positive nature is :1) The 1,300,000 Negro voters on the registration rolls of the South. 2) The fact that the armed forces have been almost completely integrated, along with public schools on army posts. 3) Segregation in interstate transportation and within a single state has been vetoed by the Supreme Court. But the implementation of this decision required "freedom riders" literally to fling their bodies upon the altar of Southern terror.

Generally speaking, Negroes are being integrated at one or another level in places where hitherto such intergration did not exist. Perhaps the most outstanding breakthrough was achieved in the realm of sports. Some major league baseball clubs abandoned the quota system, taking on players on the basis of talent. Clubs which did this, greatly strengthened themselves financially and otherwise. In fact, during this period, the National League emerged as the stronger of the two leagues, and the role of Negro athletes, combined with the abandonment of discriminatory policies, has been the primary factor.

Joe Reichlee and Allison Danzig, authors of a book entitled, *The History of Baseball*, wrote:

"Since Jackie Robinson entered the Majors in 1947, Negroes have won 9 of the 10 Most Valuable Player awards presented by the Baseball Writers Association.

"Since the inception of the National League rookie award, Negroes have won 7 out of the last 12 years. In 1960 of the ten top hitters in the National League, 5 were Negroes."

The gradual decline of the American League throughout the 1950's to a position of clear inferiority today points up the fact that the difference between the two leagues today is chiefly the difference between the number of talented Negroes in the two leagues — with a quota system existing in one league and the breakdown of the quota system in most clubs of the other league.

The quota system, commonly called "tokenism," is the stage our country is in today. There is a general broad acceptance of the necessity to give a face-lift to racial and minority problems, but there is little disposition to make fundamental changes. Outside the Negro movement and some Left-wing forces, gradualism or "tokenism" is still the order of the day.

A good example of this stage is illustrated by what has happened in regard to the desegregation of schools. The Supreme Court ruled that schools should be desegregated with "all deliberate speed." Nine years have passed since that decision. To what extent has progress been made. *Southern School News* recently made a survey of the situation. Its report shows that of the more than 3.2 million Negro pupils in Southern and border states, only 246,988 or 7.6 per cent are now in classes with white students. They covered 18 states and 3,047 school districts; of the 3,047 school districts, only 912 are integrated today. Three states — Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina — still have completely segregated schools.

These facts suffice to show that at the present rate of 7.6 per cent projected against the past 9-year period, it would require a hundred years to achieve the fulfillment of the 1954 Court decision.

However, desegregation of schools is not the worst example of tokenism, or the continuance of jim crow and segregation in American life. Many areas of life remain completely lily white; percentage-wise, they are at an even lower level than the desegregation of schools.

Jim Crow in Industry and Housing

Industrial figures are not so available or so reliable as schools. But if figures were available in regard to upgrading of Negro workers into the higher skills and supervisory jobs, the results would stagger the imagination. This is true despite the existence of the President's Committee on Contract Compliance. The Kennedy Administration, under mass pressure, put more teeth into its Committee than the Eisenhower Administration. Over a year ago, Vice President Johnson announced that agreements had been

reached with over a hundred firms who have defense contracts, to abolish discriminatory practices.

But it is obvious that there has been no major change in the Negro's industrial status. As of 1960, the wage gap between the average Negro and white worker showed that the white worker averaged \$4,569; the Negro worker \$2,652 — barely half as much as the former. In 1939, the average Negro worker received \$364 a year as against \$956 for a white worker—more than two-and-one-half times as much as the former. In twenty-one years only a slight percentage gain was made, which, based on present rates and tempo of development, a projection would also require almost a century to solve. But there is no guarantee that even these rates will be retained. Automated industries take their main toll among Negro workers, and in time of sharp decline in the economy, it is axiomatic that "the Negro is the last to be hired and the first to be fired." In the 1961 recession, A Phillip Randolph sounded the alarm when, preparing for a Washington job conference, he declared:

"It is now a matter of life and death for the Negro worker, who must awaken himself through a civil rights revolution . . . What appears as a recession for white workers is a depression for Negroes."

The truth of this statement is readily obvious. Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show that close to 70 percent of the current hard-core of unemployment is of non-white workers, over 95 percent of which are Negroes. The inability of big business to provide total employment for the American worker, plus widespread racism, account for a general breakdown of Negro family life. The chief recipients of relief, ADC and other welfare agencies in almost all large cities with large Negro populations are Negroes. The average age of young Negro couples at marriage is approximately 18 years. A current article in *Ebony* magazine pointed out that 78 percent of such marriages fail. John C. Conant, of Harvard University, points out that 47 percent of Negro high school graduates are unemployed.

What is true in regard to schools and industry is likewise true

in respect to discrimination in housing. Here, too, progress is very slow. Over ten years have passed since the Supreme Court made its ruling on restrictive covenants, and the ghettos of America still remain largely undisturbed.

Slum clearance programs or urban renewal result in most instances in the elimination of Negroes from communities on the road to integration. In some cases, such as the Hyde Park Urban Renewal development in Chicago, the plan is to establish token representation from among the Negro elite. No wonder a commission entitled "Residence and Race," established by the Fund for the Republic, reported recently that 27,000,000 Americans still suffer from housing discrimination. Of this number, 19 million are Negroes.

One could examine field after field and the picture would remain the same. Progress in all fields is relative, some more, some less, but in all of them there has been no fundamental change.

At the present rate of progress it would require another hundred years to end jim crowism in America life. This is the reality of the present situation as we prepare to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. This is the situation nine years after the historic Supreme Court ruling.

New Trends in Negro Liberation Movement

The lack of appreciable changes in the jim crow system, coupled with the advance of former colonial peoples to freedom, has provided the base for the emergence of new trends in the Negro liberation movement. Frustrated, desperately seeking solutions, many Negroes are turning to nationalist organizations of a separatist nature. These organizations, which in the '40s were reduced to mere sects, are now in the process of revival. The Black Muslims undeniably become a tremendous mass movement. Their temples are growing all over the country. They claim over 200,000 members and have a paper which has a circulation of 300,000 each edition. They have a parochial school system operating in several cities, and they are now reported to be purchasing their own radio

station. The danger of this movement lies in its divisive nature. It divides Negroes, as well as Negroes from whites. Its chief whipping boy among Negroes is Dr. Martin Luther King.

One could well suspect that it is financed by the reactionary Texas oil billionaires. These financial angels, who finance all that is reactionary in America, are stupid if they are not financing the Muslims because they preach the same doctrine — the separation of the races.

Nonetheless, whatever the motives of the leaders of the movement, the masses who follow them are sincere and dedicated people. Progressives and others should disassociate themselves from the dangerous separatist ideas spread by the Muslims. But at the same time, they should attempt to induce changes within the movement itself. Our approach to the rank and file should be friendly and efforts should be made to involve them in mass struggles.

Muslims and Negro Nationalism

Nationalism in the context of a people's struggle for freedom does not always take on a reactionary character. It is possible for a people's movement, a movement such as the Muslims, to play a progressive role. At present its role is reactionary, mainly because of its divisive character. Alliances for progress, not to be confused with the "OAS," have been the cornerstone upon which people have achieved freedom throughout human history. This has been done by all races, all classes and all nations. A coalition policy is the essence of world politics. The African nations, or the blacks within these nations, have built powerful nationalist movements. In most cases these movements have not been divisive. They have united their forces internally and sought aid from other forces, regardless of color. This was their method to win freedom. This is their method today in world politics. They do not "walk alone," and so they wield tremendous influence on world events.

Another current to emerge recently is the movement around Williams, in Monroe, North Carolina. It also reflects a current born of desperation. It is a reaction to the turn-the-cheek theory of Rev. King. Williams claims he is mainly interested that the

Negro masses be in a position to protect themselves when attacked, and that he is not an advocate of violence *per se*. Notwithstanding his protestations, the Williams' approach, carried to its logical conclusion, is suicidal and will not lead the Negro masses to freedom.

No partisan of Negro freedom will seriously argue if under some circumstances, the Negro may be forced to take arms in self defense. In fact, Rev. Martin Luther King at a recent press conference in Atlanta, stated: "Colored people are arming themselves for protection in case violence erupts. I had hoped this would not happen." There may be many such situations in the South, in which people may find it necessary to take arms in self defense. When and if they do, they should not be condemned; they should be supported.

But it should be pointed out that armed struggles will not lead to Negro freedom. On the contrary, it would retard the fight for freedom because it would leave the struggle up to Negroes alone. It is this tendency of "I'll walk alone" that underlies much of the confused direction the Williams' forces advocate. But who else in America is prepared to take up arms for a cause — any cause?

The main protection for Negroes in the South is to force the Federal Government to shoulder its responsibilities, as President Eisenhower was forced to do at Little Rock. This must be the direction.

In this kind of struggle, we can muster allies throughout the country and the world.

The Muslims and some of the forces around Williams have attacked Rev. King unmercifully. We Communists, while disagreeing with some of his philosophical outlook, and his concessions to Red-baiting, nonetheless regard the movements he leads or influences as the healthiest sign in the whole Negro struggle. Our approach to Rev. King was best expressed by James Jackson when he wrote in his review of King's book, *Strides Toward Freedom* (December, 1958 issue of *Political Affairs*):

"Rev. King's performance as an able leader at the head of deep Southern masses in struggle against jim crow laws

and oppression is far more profound and important to the cause of Negro freedom and social progress than are the philosophical elements of the King doctrine of neo-Ghandism garnished as it is with divisive prejudice of anti-communism."

Estimating Freedom Fight Gains

The question arises: How should gains in this period be assessed? Should we view them positively or negatively? This is a problem that cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. To exaggerate the gains would be to place a premium on gradualism. To deny the gains is to deprecate the necessity for struggle; for if, after nine years of the most intense and fiercest type of struggles, no gains have been made, then one must wonder what is the point in struggling at all.

Achievements must be weighed against the backdrop of world developments, world trends. They fall into proper historical perspective only when we note that in this same period most nations on the African continent have won or are in the process of winning their liberation from world imperialism. Our situation relative to what has happened in the world and what the situation in our country demands is still scandalous.

It is in respect to this latter point, by taking the present realities as our point of departure, that we must prepare to tackle the host of problems we still confront.

In view of the many militant struggles of the past decades, one would think the status of civil rights would be much further advanced than it is. What are some of the obstructions which have jammed the machinery and flow of progress?

Of no small significance is the fact that the monopolies, the ruling circles of our country, find themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, they see our prestige abroad being undermined by the second-class citizenship status of Negroes. On the other hand, they fear that any change in that status may mean they stand to lose billions of dollars, dollars which represent the extra surplus extracted from the super-exploitation of Negroes. The ruling monopoly circles and their main political representatives are therefore

oriented on a policy which calls for minor concessions whenever the pressure is strong, and at the same time the most stubborn resistance to any major changes.

Obstacles in Fight on Jim Crow

Another factor of no small consequence is the continuation of the cold war policy by the Kennedy Administration. This Administration which suggested in the 1960 campaign that it was going to improve America's image abroad by greater advances in the area of civil rights, has also been caught in a dilemma.

The Kennedy Administration, which made bold proclamations before taking office, has been tempered by cold war considerations. The Administration's failure to go beyond token integration is the price it pays the Dixiecrats of the South for support to its foreign policy, which is still geared to cold war aims and objectives. Continuation of cold war policies negates a major breakthrough in freedom's fight. Substantial gains are possible only under conditions of a foreign policy based on peace.

The truth of the dependent interrelation between the struggle for world peace and the struggle for Negro freedom, which the Communists stressed at their 17th Convention is even more true today. This relationship was stated as follows in the Resolution on the Negro question adopted by the 1959 Convention of the Communist Party, U.S.A.

"A central task of the progressive forces within the Negro people's movement is to aid in the promotion of a recognition of the inseparability of the struggle for world peace to the realization of necessary objective circumstances favorable to the triumph of the cause of Negro freedom. The foes of world peace and the oppressors of the Negro people have a common class root — monopoly capital, imperialism. A common bond of interest links the fighters for peace and the fighters for the democratic rights of the Negro people."

The structure of our form of government is a tremendous obstacle to any rapid advance. Our government is divided into three

power structures. They are 1) The Legislative branch which enacts the law; 2) The Judicial branch which interprets the law, but is also in a certain sense an enforcement agent; and 3) The Executive branch which is charged with the function of enforcing the law. All three branches have certain powers which enable a cancelling out process.

This so-called equal distribution of power is nothing more than a built-in safeguard for reactionary policies. There have been many instances in American history where reactionaries have used one branch of government to bludgeon another branch into line, that is, to cancel out gains made by the people through a different channel of government. But there has been nothing that compares with what we have witnessed in the last nine years.

Cynicism of Government

The failure of the Executive and Legislative branches of government to adopt policies for implementing the Court decisions has not only hurt our country, abroad, but has undermined the moral fibre of our whole society.

Youth especially are growing cynical about the sacredness of law and order as they witness local state government cancel out rulings from a higher body of government. The lawlessness which has reigned in the South in the last nine years has a direct bearing on juvenile delinquency which in itself is a major problem for the whole country.

One cannot tell youth to be solid law-abiding citizens, and expect their respect when they witness a whole section of our country defy the law of our land.

During this period of lawlessness, the Executive branch of government has hypocritically called on the Legislative branch of government for additional powers to meet the crisis. Yet, every school child who has studied the Constitution knows there are already sufficient grounds to halt the law-breakers of the South. There is a law for example, on the statute books, enacted in 1871 and which has never been repealed. It reads:

"Whenever insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combinations or conspiracies in any state so obstructs or hinders

the execution of the laws thereof, the United States, as to deprive any portion or class of the people of such state of any of the rights, privileges, or immunities or protection named in the Constitution and secured by the laws for the protection of such rights, privileges and immunities and the constitutional authorities of such state are unable to protect, or for any cause fail in or refuse protection of people in such rights, such facts shall be deemed a denial by such state of the equal protection of the laws to which they are entitled under the Constitution of the United States; or whenever any such insurrection, violence, unlawful combination or conspiracy, opposes or obstructs the laws of the United States or the due course of justice under the same, it shall be lawful for the President, and it shall be his duty to take such measures by the employment of the militia or the land and naval forces of the United States, or of either, or by any other means as he may deem necessary for the suppression of such insurrection, domestic violence or combination."

This law could be used tomorrow not only to halt terror in the South, and to force compliance with the Supreme Court decisions: it could also be used to destroy the whole jim crow system in our country. There never will be any significant change in the status of Negroes until two or more branches of government are working in harmony. The Judicial branch has acted on a number of matters. If the Executive branch or the Legislative branch, one or the other, would act in concert with either of the other, then major changes could be made.

Thus, one of the key questions that strategists of the Negro liberation movement should give attention to in the period ahead is how to compel the Executive and Legislative branches of government to change their policies. This is no easy task, but it is achievable.

Labor Trailing Negro Freedom Movement

Varying levels of development as between the Negro movement, labor and other pro-democratic strata has been decisive in pre-

venting a common front on the main issues. As we have indicated previously, the Negro movement has, by and large broken with gradualism, and seeks revolutionary solutions to its problems. But labor and other pro-civil rights forces are still contented to make changes gradually. This contradiction has caused friction among these great social forces. In some instances it has resulted in a parting of the ways. As a consequence, the Negro movement has often had to go it alone. Long before the Negro movement began to act in this way, Comrade Benjamin J. Davis provided the rationale for such actions. In 1950, at the 15th National Convention of the C.P.U.S.A., he said:

"The second main danger to assuring the fullest support of the Negro liberation movement by the working class, beginning with the Left unions and other peace forces, is a mechanical application of the sound Leninist theory that the working class lead the Negro liberation movement. In practice it has amounted to holding back the Negro liberation movement to the level of the most backward sections of the white workers. This has nothing in common with the Leninist concept of national and colonial liberation movements' tactical consideration. Leninism is at all times designed to advance national liberation, not hold it back."
(Emphasis mine — C. L.)

The power of Negro action has been a chief factor in wresting whatever civil rights concessions the Negro people have won in this period. But it is now demonstratively clear that no basic and fundamental change in the Negro's condition can be effected without unity of the Negro and labor movement and all other democratic forces, or in an atmosphere of rabid, hysterical, irrational, unchecked anti-communism.

Anti-Communism Hampers Freedom Fight

Anti-communism has hampered the ability of the most conscious forces among white Americans to wage the fight for Negro rights. It has helped to prevent an adequate mobilization of labor in the civil rights struggles.

During the '30s, with the birth of the CIO, white Communists played an outstanding role in mobilizing the working class to understand the special problems that the jim crow system has produced. Unions in the CIO, in which Communist leader were prominent, had the best records in the fight for Negro rights. They integrated Negroes in the top levels of union leadership, and even today the remnants of what was formerly called Left-led unions, have more Negroes at the top policy levels than all of the AFL and CIO put together.

The anti-communist views which resulted in Communists being purged from the trade unions did not aid Negro freedom, but on the contrary weakened that fight. If Communists had been as prominent in the 50's in the American labor movement as they were in the '30s and '40s, the picture in the fight for civil rights would have been much different. Historians will one day make a full assessment of this fact. During this period, when Communists were being purged from the trade unions, many Negro leaders joined the chorus under the slogan, "We cannot add to the burdens of being black, the burden of being red." This slogan was coined to buy immunity from reaction. But anti-communism did not buy immunity. It made little or no difference to the Bourbon South that the NAACP Red-baited, purged Communists from its ranks, and aided the isolation of the Left-led unions. As long as the NAACP even mildly fought for Negro rights, it was suspect and was considered a peddler of a dangerous foreign ideology, namely Negro freedom.

Time was when only Communists, or alleged "Communist fronts," were called on by governmental bodies to produce membership records. Time was when, under the Smith Act, only membership in the Communist Party was a crime. Notwithstanding the NAACP leadership's compliance with an anti-communist program, the Supreme Court decision and the struggle that followed stirred the wrath of Southern reaction to the point where the NAACP was labelled subversive and membership in several Southern states is regarded as a crime. Anti-communism has proven to be a costly burden to the Negro movement.

At this late date in history, there are still Negro leaders who engage in Red-baiting orgies. They do so in the hope of appeas-

ing the powers-that-be. But appeasement has never led anyone to freedom. The big monopolies and their Southern agents extract billions of dollars from the backs of black workers and they are not going to give this up without a life-and-death struggle. The chief result of anti-communism for the Negro movement was the demobilization of forces which could have helped to bring up reserves in the fight. Consequently the Negro movement oftentimes had to act alone, or with only feeble support from friendly forces.

If the power of Negro action became a basic requirement to make progress in the last nine years, then the next stage must witness the mobilization of labor and other liberal forces into the struggle on a higher level. This new level does not mean reducing the civil rights struggle to the tempo of the labor movement. It means raising the level of the labor movement to that of the Negro movement. These forces must coalesce on the same level in the civil rights fight, and also strive to bring about a realignment of political forces in the country. This is the key which will determine whether we are going to have FREEDOM NOW or later.

Is it possible to destroy the jim crow system within the framework of the capitalist system? We Communists answer categorically: *Yes!* But we must not equate the destruction of the jim crow system with Negro equality, although one leads to the other. The latter job can only be fully accomplished in a socialist America. The business before us now is not a socialist America. Nonetheless, the struggle that the working class and other lower strata must wage against the big monopolies who are the chief enemies of social progress is a struggle which will break the backbone of the jim crow system within the framework of capitalism. The system of jim crow and segregation is a negation of what is called in Marxist circles bourgeois-democratic rights. It consists of rights which are ordinarily achieved by revolutions such as the American Revolution of 1776, and 1861, or the French Revolution of 1789. Jim crow is therefore a mirror of feudalism and not modern capitalism. The rights we seek to establish for Negroes were in many instances in the past, established under the leadership of the capitalist class. But in our time, with the advent of socialism and the rise of the modern working class, only the forces who have

nothing to gain or conserve by a policy of jim crow and segregation are the forces that will fight consistently for fundamental or revolutionary changes. The big monopolies in Wall Street do not fall into this category; they have much to lose when jim crow goes.

We have stated that labor and the Negro movement must create a new alignment of political forces before jim crow can be destroyed. What is the process for achieving this goal?

The political system in the South is led by Dixiecrats, but economically speaking they are the agents of the big monopolies, and any program that is aimed at removing the Dixiecrats from power is basically an anti-monopoly program. It means moreover, striking at U.S. monopoly at the source of its weakest link.

Therefore, the first step toward the realization of an anti-monopoly coalition should be aimed at the removal of the Dixiecrats from power.

This is a task that will have to be accomplished before labor, pro-peace forces, civil liberties and civil rights fighters can solve the most immediate, burning problems before the country. It is a task that cannot be accomplished by the Negro movement alone. It is a task that requires that every effort be made to overcome divisive tendencies between labor, the Negro people and other pro-democratic social strata.

The forms through which the people's forces express their unity, or the political forms that may emerge, are of secondary consideration. The main thing at present is to understand the necessity for all of these forces to stand together against a common enemy, and to recognize who the enemy is.

Dixiecrat-Republican Coalition

It has long been common knowledge that the Dixiecrat and Republican coalition in the halls of Congress is the main force which blocks democratic advances in our country. And if we say that one of the preconditions for a breakthrough in freedom's fight is to get the Executive and Legislative branches of government into harmony with the Judicial, then it follows there should be a clear pattern of conduct to achieve this objective. The heart of such a program should be the ousting of the Dixiecrats from the halls of Congress. This is a task for the whole pro-democratic

movement in our country. The achievement of this goal will create conditions for gigantic leaps forward, not only for Negro rights, but for social advances in every field of endeavor. It will lay the basis for building a broad and pro-democratic and anti-monopoly coalition which alone will guarantee that America will travel the road of progress and not become the last outpost of world reaction.

What then is required to do the job? Obviously, such a gigantic task will require doing many things. But, at the present time we should look for the main links that can move the whole chain of events. Some of these links are: 1) Increase the size of the Negro electorate in the South. 2) Organize the un-organized in the South. 3) Compel the Executive branch of the government to take a bolder and more consistent position on civil rights. 4) Organize to defeat the Northern counterparts of the Dixiecrat bloc in the coming Congressional elections. 5) Prepare for the coming municipal elections. 6) Understand the need for a strong Communist Party.

Actions are already proceeding on the first of these propositions. For several months a drive to register Negro voters in the South has been taking place. The drive has been conducted without much fanfare but it is achieving results.

Fight to Register Negro Voters

The following organizations are cooperating in the drive: 1) The Southern Christian Leadership Conference. 2) The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. 3) The Congress of Racial Equality. 4) The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. 5) The National Student Association. 6) The Legal Defense and Education Fund.

U.S. News and World Report reported recently that the movement received large sums of money from various foundations and is receiving support from some Administration officials. The objective of the drive is to enroll 500,000 additional voters by 1964.

One hundred thousand voters have already been enrolled. If the objective of two million is reached by 1964, then one of the conditions will have been created for reflecting a change in the political system in the South. But it is important to understand that while the registration of Negro voters can produce substantial

results, it will not basically alter the political structure of the South. *U.S. News and World Report* states that a successful drive could put the Negro voters in the position of being the balance of power in a number of states. This is true.

Negro voters in the last presidential race were the balance of power in a few Southern states and this is what helped turn the tide for President Kennedy. An additional enrollment of several hundred thousand voters would make this possible in several additional states, a development which would have a profound influence on the politics of the North as well as the South. But here again, let us not overestimate what Negroes can do alone. The Negro vote can retire a number of diehard Dixiecrats. It can elect a number of pro-labor and pro-liberal candidates. But its main effect will be in the election of so-called moderates of the Lyndon Johnson type. While even such a development would represent progress, it would not create the conditions for a revolutionary change. To do that, other things are required.

No one has stated what is required more eloquently or more clearly than did James E. Jackson, outstanding Communist leader and Editor of *The Worker*, who wrote several years ago, in his pamphlet *The South's New Challenge*:*

"To seriously effect a serious political realignment in the South it will be necessary to greatly enlarge the size of the electorate, to swell its number with the six million potential Negro voters and the ten to fifteen million white toilers who are now disenfranchised. A nationwide campaign for full Negro suffrage rights in the South and a national campaign to organize the unorganized industrial and agricultural workers would result in such an increase in the percentage of Negroes and workers in the total electorate as would constitute the firm basis for substantial victories by the forces of democracy."

Organizing the Unorganized

Comrade Jackson advocates a two-pronged approach as the basis for affecting substantial change—a position projected over

* New Century Publishers, N. Y. Price 15 cents.

five years ago. Today, one prong of the attack is under way—the crusade to organize Negro voters. But the other prong, which can prove decisive, is not yet even in the talking stage. Organizing the unorganized in the South is the next great historic task the American labor movement must tackle. Its significance for this period is the same as was the organization of industrial unions a few decades ago. The entire labor movement must be given to understand that there can be no progress of major proportions for labor, North and South, or for Negroes and other minority groups, until powerful trade union organizations are built in the South. This is the main task we now confront.

This fall, we are going into a crucial election campaign. The Negro vote can prove decisive in affecting the outcome. The Negro vote is the balance of power in 31 key congressional districts of the North. This vote should help to retire all of the Right-wing and ultra-Right candidates who make up the Northern counterparts of the Dixiecrats. This should be done regardless of party label. The Negro movement, as well as the labor movement, should assist the voters by making known the records of these candidates and what they represent. Of key importance, even for races at the congressional level is what the Executive branch of government will do between now and election day. If the Kennedy Administration continues to half-heartedly tackle the civil rights issue, then many Negro voters are going to become disenchanted. The bulk of them will still vote the Democratic ticket, but a large percentage of them will stay at home. The voters who stay at home can be the difference between victory and defeat for many liberal-type candidates. But if the President undertakes bold steps before election day, then the fight to oust Northern reactionaries will be greatly enhanced.

The people's movements should press the President for action on the following problems:

1. An Executive Order abolishing discrimination in housing.
2. An Executive Order abolishing discrimination in all phases of governmental activity.
3. Action to illegalize all Dixiecrat state regimes and officials who are elected under conditions of disenfranchised Negroes and poor whites.
4. Action to proceed under the authority of the recent Supreme

Court decision in the Tennessee case, illegalizing state reapportionment plans and systems which discriminate against urban areas in favor of rural areas.

5. The appointment of a Negro to the Cabinet when a vacancy occurs, and the naming of a Negro to the Supreme Court.

Power of the Negro Voter

Actions along these lines by the President will help insure the election of a more liberal type of candidate at the congressional level.

Following the congressional races in 1962, municipal and state elections will take place in many of the major cities and states throughout the country.

In the industrial complexes of the North, especially in the Midwest, the Negro vote is already the balance of power. As a result of this situation some progress has been made, but nothing comparable to what is possible. Civil rights forces should begin now to formulate a program of action. Such a program should press upon state and city plans to end jim crow now. City and state commissions on human welfare should be urged to convene peoples' assemblies where such programs can be worked out. Programs from these conferences should combine problems of an immediate nature as well as long-range goals.

Overcoming the economic inequalities and plight of the black worker should be one of the main objects of such conferences. Armed with a comprehensive program to end jim crow on the city and state level, civil rights forces should canvass all aspirants for political office. Without regard to partisan considerations, all prospective candidates' position on these programs, as well as their previous records, should become the main criteria for support or rejection of candidates. Non-party and non-partisan organizations within Negro communities should unite their forces to educate Negro voters on how to effectively use their balance of power status. Actions along these lines can complement what is done at the federal level as well as in the South. They will help to lay the basis for a major breakthrough in the 1964 Presidential race, and hasten the process of ending the jim crow system now.

W. E. B. DuBois on Communism

The greatest living American scholar, the NAACP founder and peerless freedom fighter — Dr. W. E. B. DuBois—cited the indispensable necessity to struggle for the attainment of the lofty aims of the Communist Party if conditions are to be established in our country for the most complete realization of full equality and freedom for the Negro people. In his famous letter to Communist leader Gus Hall, upon the occasion of his joining the Communist Party on October 1, 1961, Dr. DuBois expressed the judgment of history when he wrote:

“Capitalism cannot reform itself; it is doomed to self-destruction. No universal selfishness can bring social good to all.

“Communism — the effort to give all men what they need and to ask of each the best they can contribute — this the only way of human life. It is a difficult and hard end to reach — it has and will make mistakes, but today it marches triumphantly on in education and science, in home and food, with increased freedom of thought and deliverance from dogma. In the end Communism will triumph. I want to help to bring that day.

“The path of the Communist Party of the United States is clear: It will provide the United States with a real Third Party and thus restore democracy to this land.”

The foregoing programs cannot reach their full potential with a weak Communist Party. One does not have to agree with the full program of the Party* to understand its special role in affecting changes within our society.

* Throughout its history the Communist Party has been a proud participant in the struggles of the Negro people for freedom, equality and justice. The Negro people, like all oppressed people and classes, are plundered by capitalism, or under the heel of imperialist domination. Increasingly they will become aware that their most cherished aspirations and needs are reflected in the program of the Communists, in their science of social emancipation, Marxism-Leninism and in their noble goal of replacing the reign of capitalists by a new social order—socialism and communism—which promises a truly just society without exploiting classes, a society of material abundance and cultural richness equally accessible to all.

Communists are expected to take their place in the front ranks of the fighters for the rights of the Negro people against their oppressors and racist defamers. The struggle for Negro rights requires a continuous and effective ideological campaign against racism, against every manifestation of “white supremacy” thinking and big nation chauvinism. It has been and remains the duty of Communists to patiently and persistently point out to the workers that anti-Negro racism is the ideology of the ruling class, that its purpose and effect is to wring super-profits out of the sweat of the doubly exploited Negro workers and to frustrate the demands of the trade union and all workers for a greater share of their production. It has been and remains our duty to point out, without ceasing, that the racist denial of political and social rights to the Negro people of the South is the shield behind which the Dixiecrat-

Regardless of how one views the Communist Party, the record shows that the contributions the Party has made to civil rights were indispensable. Without exaggerating the role of the Communist Party, one can safely say that as a political party, it has helped to produce in this period many of the forces comparable to the Abolitionists and the radical Republicans of the Civil War and Reconstruction period. The class forces are not the same. During that period, the capitalist class led the forces of the nation which eventually ended slavery. Today, a new class, the working class, must take command of the march of history.

The Negro People and the Communist Party

The Communist Party, a working class party, armed with the theoretical experience of all previous revolutionary changes, is best equipped to understand the nature of the forces that are required to travel down freedom's road. The Party, in its forty-three year history, has made mistakes in its estimates from time to time. But such mistakes have been of a tactical nature. An objective evaluation will show that this Party has a unique role to play in

mindful capitalists restrict the exercise of democratic rights by all Southerners and sustain the reactionary rule of monopoly in the country as a whole.

Particularly in light of the upsurge for colonial independence in the East, in light of the accomplishments of the Chinese People's Republic, the emergence of India as a potent world fact, the straining of the whole African continent against centuries-old shackles, it is our responsibility to convince all sections of the American masses that the cause of Negro freedom serves the cause of world peace.

Many among the staunchest and most farseeing sons and daughters of the Negro people join the Communist Party. The Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class and the Negro People's movements. It is the Party of Negro and white unity in the struggle for social justice and world peace.

The Communist is one with the people. Whether on the job, in the neighborhood or in a particular organization, the Communist seeks to help the people in their strivings to better their conditions. He helps the people to recognize and support those policies and programs which truly advance and serve their interests, and to fight most effectively against those programs, conditions, and forces which harm the people and hold back their progress.

The Communist has no interest alien to the best interests of the people. Their aspirations for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are his dearest commitment.

The source of the Communist's strength is in his membership in the Communist Party. Here he equips himself with the generalized experience of all who serve in good causes, of all those who struggle for the welfare of the people on a thousand fronts. He studies the laws of social development and change in order to serve the people better. He seeks to master the science of Marxism-Leninism. He exchanges experiences with his comrades and deepens his understanding of the problems of our times and how best to assist the people in working for their solution.

Early in its formative years the Communist Party put forward a program for full economic, political and social equality of the Negro people. It was the first political party in the United States to do so. This demand sloganizes its program today.

* From: *The 17th Convention Resolution on the Negro Question 1959.*

bringing to a successful climax a struggle that has been raging for over three centuries. A strong Communist party will help to prevent Negro Americans from having to wait another century before freedom can be realized. This is true mainly because Communists understand best the interrelation of interest of the workers and the freedom movement.

Communists understand that the Negro question is the best mirror of a brighter or darker tomorrow. And because its members have no stake in perpetuating the jim crow system and much to gain by its elimination, they will consequently always be found among the most advanced forces seeking to change it.

In conclusion, let me say that we Communists, despite persecution and efforts to isolate us, will continue to make major contributions. We will continue to assist the Negro liberation movement to fulfill its objectives. We will continue to help to mobilize labor and other democratic forces to break with gradualism. We will show that a revolutionary solution to the Negro question is in the best interest of the Nation as a whole.

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