If Only Neshoba County Were In The Congo

If the U.S. felt as deeply about racist murders in Mississippi as it does about racist murders in the Congo, there is much it could do as a government and as a people. It would be up to the State Department to see that Negroes were treated decently. The laws attacked in the election controversy were one of the many things thatMississippi must submit a recommendation to the House. The laws must be reformed, though the circumstances have been an open secret in the community, where their killing was cold-bloodedly arranged. But the Federal government, the Congress and the better conscience of the country have immediate means to act against the system of white supremacy which these murders, like countless forgotten others in the years since Reconstruction, were meant to enforce by naked terror. This is what could be done:

The Crime of 1890

The right of Mississippi's five Congressmen to their seats could not be denied when Congress convenes next month until it has passed on the suits filed here a few days ago to contest their election. These suits call sharply to public attention for the first time in this generation that the State of Mississippi has been violating the conditions under which it was readmitted to the Union in 1870. One of those conditions was that the "Constitution of Mississippi shall never be amended or changed as to deprive any citizen or class of citizen of the United States of the right to vote who are entitled to vote by the constitution and laws as constituted and recognized". The House, in the year 1870, passed a resolution refusing to readmit Mississippi to the Union. The Constitution "herein recognized" was that of 1867 which granted the vote to all male inhabitants 21 or over who had resided in Mississippi six months and paid a tax not in excess of $60. Since 1890, when there were 70,000 more registered Negro voters than whites in Mississippi, the State has embarked on a series of discriminatory election law changes which have reduced the number of registered Negro voters from 189,884 in 1890 to 23,843 in 1960. There could not be a clearer case of electoral fraud and racial oppression. In three of the five Congressional districts, the seats are contested by three candidates of the Mississippi Freedom Party, Fannie Lou Hamer, Victoria Gray and Annie Deavens. They claim that the elections held by their party were the only ones which conform to the non-discriminatory standards established by Congress when Mississippi was readmitted to the Union. Four years ago, in the election contest of 1960, the House by resolution refused to allow Chambers, when the case of Rourke v. Chamber, the House by resolution refused to allow Chambers to take the oath of office through certified by the Indiana Secretary of State. Both men were given pay as Congressmen, office space and the privileges of the floor until the Subcommitte on Privileges and Elections reported and the House acted, when the House's resolution was passed. These could be no better rebuke to the racist atmosphere which condones the killings of the three brave Negro women the privilege of the floor until their challenges have been decided. The effect, the world over, would be electric as a symbol of America's determination to see racial justice done.

For 40 Days MFDP Counsel May Do What Justice Dept. Should Be Doing

Mississippi, who has information bearing on the alleged illegality of the elections. During that period volunteer teams of counsel do what the Department of Justice and the Civil Rights Commission ought to be doing. The challenges rest in part on acts of terror to discourage the vote registration drive. Many of these are alleged against Mississippi law enforcement officers themselves. Such acts are a clear violation of the Federal civil rights laws even as most narrowly construed, and the interrogations should lay the basis not only for a successful election contest but for Federal prosecutions. Wm. Kunstler and Arthur Kinoy, counsel for the MFDP, have already served notice on the Attorney General and the Civil Rights Commission of their plans and asked that observers be assigned to go with these teams of lawyers, to pave the way for prosecution where warranted. During those 40 days much can be accomplished if enough volunteers and funds can be mustered. A minimal fund to the Martyred Three is being established thus to attack the racially stacked electoral system they fought against at the expense of their lives. (The MFDP's Washington headquarters, for the memorial fund and volunteers, is at 1355 U Street, Northwest).

Those whose consciences are stirred may also by letter and otherwise bring pressure directly upon the White House (1) to make clear to the FBI and Civil Rights Commission the need for protection to the lawyer-teams in the election challenge and (2) speed up action under the new regulations for withholding Federal funds from communities which practice segregation. This is what Mississippi most fears.
SUPPORT THE CHALLENGE

THREE LADIES AGAINST A SYSTEM — THE FREEDOM CONGRESSWOMEN FROM MISSISSIPPI

Mrs. Gray

Mrs. Hamer

Mrs. Devine

WHY THE CHALLENGE IS NECESSARY TO LAW AND ORDER IN MISSISSIPPI

This is the Freedom House in Vicksburg, Mississippi after it was bombed last September. Fortunately no one was badly hurt although there were voter registration workers in the building at the time. No one has been arrested for this crime to date.

The Society Hill Baptist Church in McComb, Mississippi. Nine white men accused of this and numerous other bombings in McComb were given suspended sentences by a District Judge in McComb because "they had great provocation." All the accused are now free.