

THE NEW SECESSION
—AND HOW TO SMASH IT

Riding



to



Freedom



Herbert Aptheker ★ James E. Jackson

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JAMES E. JACKSON has, since the early thirties, been a prominent figure in the democratic struggles of the workers and Negro people of the South. He was a militant student leader and organizer of the Southern youth movement, and later an organizer among the auto workers of Michigan. He is presently the Editor of *The Worker*.

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RIDING TO FREEDOM

By Herbert Aptheker

THE MONSTROUS ASSAULTS by cowardly gangsters and racists upon unarmed and non-resisting young men and women in Alabama late in May is the culminating act of a pre-concerted insurrectionary movement. Earlier scenes were played out in Florida, in Virginia, in Arkansas, in Mississippi, in Louisiana. Now, with the Alabama atrocities, one has a massive effort at nullification, and as these lines are written the Governors of Arkansas and Mississippi have expressed their support.

This is a New Secession, but coming a century after the Old Treason, its methods differ. This is secession without leaving the Union; it is an effort to nullify the laws of the land, to continue the racist oppression against which those laws were directed, and yet to remain part of the Nation. This is not a "breakdown of law and order"; this is a defiance of Federal law carried out by the highest authorities of States, who openly connive at and justify massive lynch law. All the evidence shows that the engineers of this counter-revolutionary movement—seeking to undo our nation's Second Revolution—as members and supporters of

the Ku Klux Klan, the White Citizens' Councils and the John Birch Society, are actual conspirators in exactly the same way as the Old Secessionists, with their Knights of the Golden Circle, and their White Camellia Societies, maliciously plotted the destruction of the Republic and the expansion of human slavery.

To compromise with these conspirators, to try to placate and appease them is wrong and fruitless. It was tried with their ideological ancestors a century ago and did nothing but make the final effort to thwart them that much more difficult and costly. Let them go in peace, it was urged; give them more land, for their hell-born "peculiar" institution; let us guarantee forever their undisturbed possession of human flesh. The appeasement failed then because short of abject surrender there was no appeasing the monster, and because the health of the nation, the will of millions of democratic-minded white people, the opinion of the world, and the determination of the Negro people to endure slavery no more, finally forced a stand, hurled back the treasonous attack, saved the nation and eliminated chattel slavery.

It is not compromise with evil that is needed, but positive action against evil; it is not the appeasement of racism that is needed, but its extirpation. And this is not an "impractical" idea; appeasement and compromise are the impractical ideas, simply because—if the object really is *social progress and democratic advance*—they do not work. Appeasing and compromising result in strengthening the evil and disheartening and weakening its foes. Early in the Civil War, the policy of "moderation" and compromise, carried over from the preceding years, was tried; conduct the war so as not to "offend" the traitors, was the idea. But without destroying the traitors there could be no peace and no country; to destroy them it was necessary to wage a principled contest and that meant a contest in which the deepest Negro-white alliance was forged and in which the stated and promised goal was Negro liberation.

You "could not do it"; it was "unthinkable"; the white people would never "stand for it"—these were the alarms raised by the "practical" ones who—somehow—always manage to ally themselves with reaction, albeit they often say, with a heavy heart. What, it was asked: Recognize Haiti and have Negro Ministers in Washington? Hang a captured slave-trader? Make soldiers of Negroes? Give Negro soldiers equal pay with whites? Have Negro soldiers, armed, and fighting side by side with

white soldiers, against white men? Each, it was solemnly affirmed, was absolutely impossible; to attempt each was madness and could only result in disaster. But Haiti was recognized and the capitol didn't fall down; the slave-trader was hanged, publicly, in New York City, and the Republic didn't collapse; Negroes were enlisted in the Army, and the only complaint that persisted was that there were not enough of them; Negro soldiers did fight with white soldiers against Confederate troops and they fought very well and without them, said Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, it was difficult to see how the Civil War would have ended with Union victory. The "practical" conservatives were, in fact, abettors of traitors; the "impractical" radicals were, in fact, decisive contributors to victory.

All experience not only shows that policies of "moderation" and "gradualism" and "patience" and appeasement do not work; all experience shows that when such policies were decisively rejected, and clear, vigorous policies were adopted without equivocation against racist practices, those practices were overcome. There is not only the whole experience of the Civil War period to attest to this; there is also the recent experiences of World War II. What, it was asked, incredulously, do you expect to train Negro and white men together, in the same camps, in the same tents, in the same class-rooms,

so that they could become competent officers in infantry and field artillery and engineering outfits—and do you expect to do this in Oklahoma, in Virginia, in Georgia? "Impossible." It wasn't impossible; not when the Government saw that it needed this program, and said that it wanted it, and *seriously undertook to carry it out*. There was some friction; there were some incidents; there was some difficulty. But it was far from "impossible"; it was done and done quickly—not "moderately"—and done completely. It worked with tens of thousands of men, of all colors and from every region of the country.

In the winter of 1944-45, the Germans broke through in Belgium and were advancing towards Antwerp. Reinforcements were desperately needed; a likely source, at hand, were Negro service troops. Would those men undergo intensive combat training and then be willing to go into the front-lines? They were asked and tens of thousands of them said "yes"; then, the question arose: would the white men fight alongside the Negro soldiers? They were asked and almost unanimously they said, "no, never." But the reinforcements were needed; and the United States government directed that the Negro men be trained for combat and that after such training they be sent in as reinforcements. This was done, and before the Negro men were assigned to their front-line outfits, the white

officers and men were told—clearly, and without any room for doubt—that if there were refusal to fight with the reinforcements, those who refused would be tried by general court-martial for desertion, in the face of the enemy—carrying the death penalty. Well, the men and officers who had said, almost unanimously, that the program was impossible and they themselves would not fight, did fight and the program was so far from impossible that it saved the day in Belgium, and a very cold series of days it was too. Then after the fighting and when it came time to go home, the white men were asked whether they wanted to return as they had come (i.e., as lily-white outfits) or did they want to go home the way they had fought (i.e., as "mixed" outfits). The same men who had voted almost 100% against having Negro soldiers fight with them, now voted almost 100% that they wanted to remain "mixed" and wanted to go home the way they had fought.

The idea of "impracticality" is especially ridiculous in the present era when the people of Nigeria have achieved independence and those of Kenya are on the verge of victory. One wonders whether U.S. ruling-class "patience" (for the other fellow) is to hold good until all Africa is free. Is the Negro citizen of the United States to get a democratic cup of coffee or a dignified ride on a bus only *after* every other human being

elsewhere in the world has achieved such elementary "rights"? Is this the vaunted leadership and pioneering and "new frontiering" of our country?

The devastating impact of the Alabama atrocity upon the U.S. diplomatic posture has been widely noted; it has been held to be as disastrous as the Cuban fiasco. The *New York Times* warns that Alabama casts doubt upon U.S. foreign policy insofar as that policy is alleged to be in favor of freedom, equality and democracy. How the record of American foreign policy for the past fifteen years could lead anyone—even a *New York Times* editor—to think that these are this country's foreign-policy aims is most difficult to understand. Probably, the editorial writer meant to convey the idea that it makes demagogic babbling about that foreign policy all the more transparent.

The U.S. government and its Attorney-General, in denouncing Alabama's disregard for law, certainly are in a difficult position, since, as 132 distinguished lawyers recently joined in pointing out, the United States violated half a dozen federal laws and half a dozen international commitments in directing the counter-revolutionary thrust against Cuba. Indeed, of that thrust, Mr. Arthur Larson, formerly director of the U.S. Information Agency, and currently with the Law School at Duke University, said: "It is the worst setback

to law in our international relations in this century" (*N. Y. Times*, May 22).

It is clear, then, that this Alabama crime, and the whole reality of U.S. racism, stands as a shattering indictment of U.S. diplomatic pretensions. The pretensions and the racism are inter-related; the struggle against them is inter-related, too. Certainly, world-wide influence is decisively and passionately behind the fighters for Negro liberation; possibly such considerations evoke certain signs of caution, if not sanity, from a Southern Senator like Sam J. Ervin, Jr., of North Carolina. Such considerations, also, make all the more urgent and realistic a forthright policy directed against KKK barbarism.

It is not that the enforcement of the federal laws against discrimination and segregation is "impractical"; it is that the will for such enforcement and the action to carry out that will have been missing.

Most of the press of the country, including the *New York Times*, which strongly condemns the rioters and their official instigators, adopts a position condemnatory of "both sides" in these outbreaks—the racists and the liberationists. The latter are condemned as "trouble-makers," as "provocative" and "impatient." Any position which tends to equate the gangsters with their victims is monstrous. Inequality has existed for three hundred years, and the Civil War was fought a century ago, and

the 14th Amendment was passed in 1866; how long is one to wait before he qualifies as "patient"? And for whom is one to wait—for Patterson of Alabama, and Barnett of Mississippi and Faubus of Arkansas and Eastland of Mississippi and McLellan of Alabama and the other Honorable Ones, whose eyes are ropes, whose limbs are faggots, whose hearts are dollars, and whose blood exudes racist poison? What these worthies need is impeachment and indictment, not moderation and appeasement.

When laws prohibiting discriminatory behavior and practices are passed, racists shout that segregation is a matter of "customs," and that laws can have and do have no impact upon such "customs"; on the other hand, these same racists are very careful to bulwark their vicious "customs" with an elaborate framework of laws. *If laws are irrelevant in opposition to jim crow, why are laws required for the maintenance of jim crow?* The answer is that laws are not irrelevant at all, and that jim crow is not natural but is artificial. Jim crow is man-made; it is class-made, to be exact, and the ruling class which has profited from the oppression of the Negro people, knows that laws have been required to bring about and to help sustain the foul racist system.

For this reason laws are needed to abolish jim crow; and not only are such laws needed, but their enforcement is required. Furthermore, in

the specific case of the Freedom Riders, they are seeking to test how well the law of the land is being enforced; they are not violating any laws, neither federal nor state, because all segregatory laws, as applied to interstate travel, have been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in several decisions, going back at least twenty years. They are, therefore, null and void. This is why, when the Southern racist authorities arrest the staunch Negro and white Riders, they charge them, not with violating laws dealing with matters of race, but rather hold them on the clearly fake charge of "breach of the peace." Already, in Mississippi alone, eighty-one Negro and white citizens—from the North and from the South—have been arrested and convicted for "breach of the peace," and the latest sentences have been quite savage, involving not only a fine (of \$200) but also four months imprisonment—and in Mississippi prisons!

Who shall help a nation that finds those who take seriously its finest laws to be provocateurs? Who shall help "statesmen" and "commentators" who have words like "trouble-makers" for such magnificent young men and women—Negro and white—who, after enduring the worst the mobsters can give, still clasp hands and say, "We've gone this far through hell; we can go a little farther," for Diane Nash—all of 22 years—"They've beat us, and we're stronger

than ever"? Such "statesmen" are as lost to humanity as Eichmann in his glass cage; waiting for them will bring us such a harvest as the latter statesman gathered.

It is the real practicality of smashing jim crow in our own day that has led the KKK traitors to desperate expedients of massive defiance of law and open resort to terror. This real practicality flows not only from the entire international situation; it flows also from the heightened militancy of the Negro people, who have deliberately and manifestly decided that they will not live with racism any more, no matter what the cost. It flows, too, from the fact that increasing millions of American white people—especially young people—are sick and tired and thoroughly ashamed of the jim crow barbarism.

Is it not remarkable how the "trouble-makers" never are the racists, the exploiters, the mobsters? Those who hold slaves do not make "trouble"; only those who would end slaveholding are "trouble-makers." Those who possess colonies are never "trouble-makers"; only those who would end colonialism are "trouble-makers." Those who fatten on poverty, who maintain illiteracy, who encourage wars are never "trouble-makers"; only those who would end poverty, eliminate illiteracy, and forever prevent wars are the "trouble makers." "Shall the millions for ever submit to robbery," asked Frederick

Douglass in 1856, "to murder, to ignorance, and every unnamed evil which an irresponsible tyranny can devise . . .?"

How many lessons does President Kennedy need in the futility of "moderation" and "compromise"? Did he not accept the endorsement of the Ku Kluxer, Governor Patterson? Did he not appoint Patterson's crony and fellow Ku Kluxer, Charles M. Meriwether as a Director of the Export-Import Bank (to help "reform" Latin America!)? Did he not drop in on Senator Byrd's birthday party, though the Senator had sent him only a printed invitation? Did he not accept Lyndon Johnson, and has he not pushed Johnson to the fore? Has he not reneged on his "firm" campaign promise about civil-rights legislation, and has he not failed to introduce such legislation? And did not the Alabama culmination of the Ku Klux Klan conspiracy against the United States government occur after all these manifestations of "moderation" were made? Did not, then, Alabama Governor Patterson show true Southern "courtesy" by refusing to accept a telephone call from the President of the United States?

The President has not shown "solemnity and steadfastness" in meeting this challenge, despite the *N. Y. Post's* editorial opinion (May 22). On the contrary, he himself has not said one word publicly, and announced, on May 23, that he had can-

celled all press conferences prior to his trip abroad. Marshals were sent—seven days after violence had broken out in Anniston—but these were handpicked from the Southern states—the largest batch were guards from Atlanta Penitentiary. No wonder that, though not unacquainted with the use of tear gas, they showed themselves so clumsy in using it in Montgomery that they distressed the threatened Negro men and women very much more than the besieging mob. No wonder that an automobile—belonging to the niece of Sir Winston Churchill!—could be bombed and consumed by flames, though it was within one block of the assembled marshals, and no wonder that no one was apprehended for this piece of jollity.

Steadfastness in this crisis requires more than phone calls—especially uncompleted calls!—and more than the dispatch of over-age marshals. The President in the past has talked of the need for moral leadership from his office; we could use some of that, too. But the people elected a President, not a preacher. The Presidential office is an Executive one, not a lecturing one. The President is endowed with more power than any other single person in the United States; let him use that power, and never mind the telephone. *He is commander-in-chief of the armed forces; let him use those forces. He is chief initiator of legislation, let him initiate needed legislation; he is*

the chief administrator of the law, let him administer the law. These are the duties he has sworn to perform; the lectures are extra-curricular.

The Governor of Alabama—a Ku Kluxer—has chosen to defy and violate United States law; in doing this he has assumed responsibility for dire injury to citizens. The Alabama police force, as is an open secret, is infested by Ku Kluxers. To expect this Governor and these police to enforce the federal laws, to protect the rights of American citizens, to act in support of human dignity and equality is as absurd as expecting mercy from nazis.

The United States Army—with fully integrated units—could and should restore the supremacy of United States law in Alabama and wherever else it is spat upon. The full majesty of the federal government should be on hand so long as its will is flouted, its citizens clubbed, and the Declaration of Independence—after all that does date back to 1776, and so meets all "patience" requirements,—and the Constitution of this country, including the 14th and 15th amendments are treated with contempt.

If this is done, then the democratic processes in this country will be kept open. If this is done, then the means for the achievement of peaceful change, through constitutional actions, remain viable. What the traitors to such processes desire is to

close these possibilities. They see world opinion and national opinion and—increasingly—Southern opinion, including white southern opinion, turning against them. If these traitors succeed forcibly in closing these possibilities, they will have dealt a severe blow to the whole Negro liberation movement; they will have dealt a crippling blow to the labor movement and its hopes for organizing the South; they will have set back for years any hope of achieving a significant political breakthrough in our country. If the democratic processes, if the mode of peaceful struggle for change, cannot be kept open on the Negro question, then it will be shut on all questions of popular significance.

In this connection, the June 5th decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court—reached on the basis of a 5 to 4 split—upholding sections of the so-called McCarran Act in effect illegalizing the Communist Party, and making membership in that Party a criminal offense, also demonstrate a determination on the part of ruling-class elements to outlaw democratic and peaceful methods of significant political struggle. By seeking to destroy the Bill of Rights and outlaw radical thinking, the reactionary majority of the Court would undercut the elementary rights of the American people as a whole, just as the KKK assault would destroy the elementary rights of the Negro people in particular.

The Ku Klux offensive must be beaten back, and this can be done only by increased boldness and struggle; compromise emboldens the traitors. What is needed is wave upon wave of freedom riders, massively organized—for instance by the United Mine Workers and the United Steel Workers and the United Auto Workers, as well as by student and civil rights and civil liberties groups. What is needed is vigorous federal actions to enforce the law and uphold its authority. What is needed is a determined campaign to force civil rights legislation through this Congress and to insist that the President vigorously use his great Executive powers. What is needed is protests from State legislatures against Alabama's violations of the rights of citizens—for instance, if the Governor of Mississippi can wire Governor Patterson words of praise why can't the Governors of New York and New Jersey and Illinois and Michigan and California wire him words of condemnation?

The voice of democratic America must make itself heard, individually and collectively and persistently. Only Americans who love democracy will save it and extend it. It is a time for great impatience, for action; our country's honor and fate depend upon it.

On Decoration Day in 1882, the honored speaker at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington was Frederick Douglass. (Has there ever

been a Negro speaker at such a ceremony in such a place since?) Douglass said, having the recently concluded Civil War in mind:

... if the American name is no longer a by-word and a hissing to a mocking earth, if the star-spangled banner floats only over free American citizens in every quarter of the land, and our country has before it a long and glorious career of justice, liberty, and civilization, we are indebted to the unselfish devotion of the noble army who rest in these honored graves all around us.

How ironic sounds Douglass' "if" in this centennial of that Civil War! One may say now, alas, that if our

nation's name is not to be a by-word and a hissing to a mocking earth, such weeks as those that just blood-stained Alabama must not recur. With justice and liberty they will not recur; to achieve both, they must be present for all, everywhere, else they are real for no one, anywhere. The basic testing ground is the Negro citizen in the South. Again, as so often in our past, the so-called Negro question—which is truly a question of whether or not we really mean democracy when we say it—is the central question of our country. If it is permitted to fester and deteriorate it can destroy us all; if it is finally faced and really resolved, it can save all of us.

WHAT MUST BE DONE

By James E. Jackson

ALABAMA mud, red with the blood of our youth, has been spattered in the eye of the nation by Gov. John Patterson's Ku Klux mobsters.

Heroic Negro youth, with courageous young white men and women by their side, are gloriously pushing the point of the developing general offensive of the Negro people and their white allies against the Southern segregation system with all of its barbarous dignity-destroying and life-destroying patterns of racist tyranny, unconscionable exploitation and human misery.

The fury of the mob reaction against those youths in Alabama, which was promoted by the Governor of Alabama himself, is the measure of the failure of President Kennedy, as of his predecessors, to use the powers of his office to secure to the Negro masses in the South their court-ordered and federal law-given rights of equality. The dispatch of a contingent of U.S. Marshals to Montgomery was a welcome but lusterless performance. A week of mob-rule terror followed, after the flesh-gouging and bone-crushing beatings suffered by James Peck and the CORE Freedom Riders in Annis-

ton, before Attorney General Robert Kennedy was finally moved to send U.S. marshals to stave off a threatened massacre of a church gathering of hundreds of Negroes joined by a number of white students protesting the continuing violation of their rights to unsegregated travel and bus terminal service.

How outrageous is the condition that prevails in our country! We behold a government boastful of its mighty powers, that flexes its military muscles and shouts in threatening tones before the world that it would order the lives of sovereign nations, from Cuba to Laos, yet has failed to secure the rights and defend the liberties of 19 million of its Negro citizens, 97 years after those rights were proclaimed. How fraudulent and mocking do the Government's "democratic free world" pretensions sound to world public opinion!

All the democratic-minded and justice-loving people of our nation owe a special debt of gratitude to these glorious young crusaders for our government's lost principles, for dramatizing the savage horror of the Southern way of life that is the commonplace daily reality of millions

of Negro citizens. Especially so because the rights they were trying to exercise are rights which have long since been established law, proclaimed by court decision and boasted about over the Voice of America.

They have revealed before the nation and the world that such elementary human and civil rights do not exist for the millions of Negroes in the South, and that to assert them is to risk life and limb. And, furthermore, that the Federal Government has taken no effective measures to secure and enforce compliance with Constitutional and human rights when the rights of the Negro people are concerned.

All decent-minded human beings must demand that the Administration, the Government power of the U.S., must take up this burden now borne on the shoulders of our valiant youth, and by Presidential Executive Order and supplementary urgently-enacted civil rights laws accomplish the total eradication of the Southern states' Jim Crow laws and segregation system. And put into effect at once a federally-policed system of controlled compliance with, and defense of, the rights of the Negro citizens in the Southern states.

In their irredeemable ignorance of the reality of the people's power in this age in which we live, Gov. Faubus of Arkansas and Gov. Barnett of Mississippi, and the neo-Confederate states' clique in Congress, have pledged all-out aid to the Gov-

ernor of Alabama in his impudent defiance of the laws of the nation.

In this Centennial anniversary years of the Civil War, the neo-fascist reactionaries see in this Ku Klux Klan gangster John Patterson a virtual Robert E. Lee "gallantly" fighting a rearguard action of the slave-owners' rebellion.

So be it! Not alone the rights of the Negro people, but the general welfare and interests of the nation demand that the battle at long last be joined and fought out, to the end that the insolent insurrectionary blackmailers of the nation, chieftains of white supremacy mobsters, and perpetrators of the criminal segregation system, are totally crushed. The Kennedy administration must know that nothing less than unconditional surrender of the segregation system is acceptable. There can be no compromise of this struggle.

* * *

Let there be no truce in the offensive against the segregation system. Jim Crow must go NOW!

Let there be full support to the Freedom Riders and all those who summon the masses to large-scale direct actions to put an end once and for all to the lawless segregation system.

Let hundreds and thousands now join in the anti-segregation "ride-ins" throughout the South. Let the students, trade unionists and church people organize such Freedom-Ride excursions throughout the South.

Let Washington see the presence of delegations and hear the messages of thousands of freedom-loving Americans demanding the strongest and most immediate enforcement of the rights of the Negro people in the South, and for the severest measures against the insurrectionary Dixiecrat leaders and mobsters.

Let the State Legislatures and city councils memorialize Congress and

the President for the enactment of full programs for enforcing the civil rights of the Negro people.

Let the students hold protest holidays, and workers picket, and the people—Negro and white—rally in great meetings of solidarity with the Southern Freedom Riders and the just cause of the Negro people to secure their civil rights.

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