

World Press

Views Freedom Rides and the United States

THE SOUND AND FURY of 10 days' recurring Alabama violence against and Mississippi jailing of Freedom Riders last May echoed through the world's press and radio in outraged protest, angry sarcasms on democracy and grave warning of Communist gains in American loss.

There were, also, from Western Europe to Africa and the Far East, defenders of American position, statements that Deep South mobsters are a rabid few, mitigating explanations of federal-versus-state authority and general plaudits for the Kennedys' "firm stand" for civil rights and Negro protection.

Strong, picture-laden play of the Alabama story prevailed in most newspapers of the world and emotional comment dominated airways coverage. Some papers which did not editorialize ran Page One stories of the bus burning, riot and beatings of Freedom Riders, under frankly horrified headlines. Comment ranged from "horror and disgust" to anxious, friendly concern at Alabama's compromise and Mississippi's defiance of American prestige and policy. There was an occasional view of the violence as evidence that freedom is being extended in the United States.

Western European papers generally

damned the street fighters, deplored Mississippi penalties on Freedom Riders, praised Negro assertion of rights and sympathized with the Kennedy administration and majority American opinion for equal rights.

The London DAILY MIRROR, with the world's largest circulation, observed "President Kennedy is now facing . . . one of the supreme tests of his ability to lead America . . . he has the vast majority of Americans on his side (and) the good wishes of every sane citizen of Britain and . . . the Western World." The conservative Paris LE MONDE said the big American question is now "freedom for any . . . citizen to travel without discrimination" and that here "reality lags far behind the law."

"As long as Kennedy has not broken the defiance of race fanatics, every dollar for propaganda and development aid in Africa is thrown away," said the GENERAL ANZEIGER of Bonner, Germany. Rome's MESSAGGERO said, "Those who provoke disorders are not helping U. S. prestige when the new Asian and African countries are looking around to know their friends and foes."

The TIMES of London was among many papers which deplored the discrediting of American position by Ala-

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bama disorders and remarked that "some Americans are loath to accept the implications either of nationhood or of world leadership, and what foreigners think of the riots is a matter of almost total unconcern to the participants." INFORMATION of Copenhagen called the riots "no internal affair" and advised Europe to serve notice that it wants no truck "with certain American states." The London DAILY TELEGRAPH regretted that Russians and Chinese in their constant effort to "foster hatred" of America "have another opportunity on the eve of the President's meeting with Khrushchev." French comment feared that race conflict in the States will increase as American Negroes are roused by independence of new African states.

A friendly long view also appeared in the London TELEGRAPH, that Alabama troubles mean America is trying to extend freedom rather than limit it, that "The (Civil) war was won . . . but the struggle still goes on," and that "while it is tragic that it has to, we should be thankful that it does—and suspicious of those who exploit the tragedy." The London DAILY EXPRESS praised federal action which "proved to an anxious world that the Kennedy brothers are as ready to defend the ideals of individual liberties within . . . the United States as they are to act outside." The EXPRESS called the Kennedy protection of Freedom Riders "an incalculable contribution not only to American prestige but Western unity," on the eve of the Kennedy-Khrushchev "confrontation."

DER KURIER of Berlin proclaimed

Alabama disorders as "a sign of the federal government's and the popular majority's effort to expand the freedom of man." The BIRMINGHAM POST declared that Americans understand "the infinite harm in the eyes of the world . . . millions are as mournfully conscious of the shame as any outsider would be," and recalled that where Eisenhower took 22 days to move on Little Rock disorders, Kennedy "sent marshals in immediately."

In Belgium the Flemish-Nationalist STANDARD, deploring the street violence, was sanguine over Washington efforts to resolve race trouble "in a spirit of perfect equality of rights" and over "remarkable" advances in the States since the Civil War and, again, World War II. The Labor-Catholic LA CITE of Belgium bitterly chided the United States as a champion of liberty which can't protect legal rights of its own citizens and served notice that "world opinion will not tolerate this dichotomy much longer."

Belgian papers, as elsewhere in Europe, played the news straight and full and noted the American Nazi, Rockwell, and his "hate bus." The Socialist paper, LE PEUPLE, termed the bus stops "hideous demonstrations" which may awaken the majority of Americans to "view their compatriots of the Deep South as the French of France now view the French of Algeria: as sick people who ought to be operated on without delay."

Lisbon papers editorialized in headlines like "Shameful Wave of Racism in U. S.: Because They are Negroes or Friends of Negroes 27 Freedom Riders Appear Before Court in Capital of Mississippi." They also played up a Georgia bombing "against two defenseless Negro women," and featured the difficulties of colored diplomats in find-

ing houses, schools and beach accommodations in the States.

Latin American coverage of Alabama racial violence and Mississippi penalties on Freedom Riders was front page and moderate, but editorial comment indignant, especially against the recalcitrant two states. Mexico City's LA PRENSA deplored Southern racism and discoursed angrily on the John Birch Society. Havana television and radio editorialized on colored diplomats' difficulties in the States and Americans concerned for "imprisoned mercenaries" in Cuba, and said that Americans who restrict colored foreigners and demand release of Cuban prisoners are "the very same people who are not touched by the spectacle of beaten and mistreated men in Alabama." Havana RADIO CENTRO said "barbarity of organized, armed ruffians would not be possible without the tolerance or the complicity of U S. authorities."

NOTICIAS DE ULTIMA HORA at Santiago noted Alabama and Mississippi oppressions which "the pious Mr. Kennedy must solve . . . before he gets his country involved in adventures against countries which are organizing their own life to eradicate poverty, and where no . . . racial segregation exists." Mexico's conservative EXCELSIOR said Alabama whites "contradict civilization and behave like unleashed savages," to the damage of their country.

Newspapers in Near East and South Asia cities played the story extensively, many with graphic photos of street beatings of Freedom Riders, in a reaction generally shocked at racist rioters, approving of government efforts to protect and advance Riders' rights and sympathetic with majority American feeling for civil rights. But the total

sense of reaction in this part of the world was unfavorable, what with strong news play.

Some papers refrained from editorials. Others, notably pro-Arab League publications, voiced fierce anger in headlines and editorials against the United States. Beirut's AL AWAR declared. "The Struggle of the Americans is for the sake of preserving slavery and for enslaving their colored compatriots." "Racial discrimination is still practiced unshamedly in the U. S. . . . what a scandal, what a shame" exclaimed SAWT AL-URUBA of Beirut. A Madras daily, ANDHRA PATRIKA, headlined "White Racist Atrocities in Alabama." The Athens KATHIMERINI pointed to damaged "American prestige" at the hands of some Americans, and said the problem will continue until "Southerners are properly indoctrinated and rid themselves of their obsessions."

Israeli and Indian papers were more sympathetic and hopeful of American advances in race equality, and one Israeli paper even referred to Freedom Rides as "provocative" of trouble. The Athens ETHIKOS KYRIC noted the President's determination to "neutralize . . . remnants of racial discrimination which is incompatible with U. S. principles of freedom and equality," and decided "The American nation as a whole is on his side." The INDEPENDENT TRIBUNE of Ambalas said racial outbursts should not "obscure efforts which the American people are making to get rid of racial prejudice."

New Delhi's HINDUSTAN TIMES predicted that federal intervention and enlightened public opinion in the States "are bound to tell, even in these outposts of reaction" in the Deep South, and the New Delhi INDIAN EXPRESS said "Negroes have the satis-

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faction of knowing that everywhere reactionary elements are fighting with their backs to the wall." The Madras HINDU called Alabama violence "disgraceful" and praised Kennedy's moves to "quell" it. The Madras SWADESHI TRAN wrote: "In South Africa, the government itself assumed leadership for white bigots; but in America the government is bent on abolishing racial arrogance with an iron hand."

African press reaction ranged from grieved protest for oppressed Southern American Negroes and damaged Americans prestige to commendation of federal efforts. The government-directed DIARIO DE BUANDA of Angola however, deplored the "tragedy of Negro life in America," that there is no respected American scientist, politician or religious leader "who does not consider the Negro inferior to the white for this or that reason." When, said DIARIO, "an Adlai Stevenson . . . is obliged to shake hands with some Nkrumah he does it only under the strict political necessity of the disturbed world. . . . He is hypocritical and sells his soul to the devil The Nkrumahs, the Tubmans and the Toures know it well"

The GHANIAN TIMES said the Negro protest and the oppressed people of Africa and elsewhere are problems far more urgent than "the sending of a man to the moon." Morocco's AL FAIR said race rioting "is compromising to the U. S. position of world leadership," but expressed faith that the Kennedy administration will solve the trouble.

Kenya's DAILY NATION described the "often maligned government of the

U.S." as one of many "dedicated to the eradication of this evil by deed as well as precept." The United States, it added, "is continually thwarted by the obtuse prejudice of smaller men . . . in the South."

Official ETHIOPIAN HERALD applauded Kennedy's "firm stand on civil rights," rued American segregation for its damage to relations between colored peoples and the United States and pointed out that "Africans feel that any segregation against the Negro is simultaneously segregation against (Africans)." "(The American Negro) is either a citizen on an equal footing . . . or he is not a citizen at all," the HERALD continued, advising the federal government to "see to it" that Deep South states change their policies, or it will be "difficult for her (the United States) to sell to the outside world, especially the non-white world, that she stands for . . . equality of all men."

The ASHANTI PIONEER recalled 1958 troubles in Little Rock, hailed 1961 news that four Little Rock junior high schools will be desegregated this fall and noted "other revolutionary changes . . . on the way." The PIONEER called Freedom Ride violence "just one of the race troubles which are sorting themselves out slowly but surely," and concluded that race hostility is "a problem which many Americans are honestly and sincerely trying to solve."

Far East commentary was restrained. News play was detailed and extensive, attracting wide public interest. Editorials gave the federal government credit for firmness in coping with the Alabama trouble, lamented the paradox of American discrimination and brutality against Negroes and frequently praised the courage and dignity of protesting Negroes. Many

papers, like the Bangkok SARN SERI, termed the American race conflict the United States' "most serious internal problem." SARN SERI observed that "violation of human rights in the U. S." is "strange," with UN headquarters in the United States and the U. S. "the strongest supporter of its human rights proclamation."

The MANILA TIMES suggested that the United States should be more concerned with the treatment of American Negroes than with "the way Fidel Castro is handling war prisoners in Cuba," since "The war prisoners are rebels" and "The Negroes are only demanding their God-given rights."

French wire service reports provided wide and detailed coverage for Japanese papers, which carried little comment. A column in ASAHI AHIM-NUN noted the Civil War Centennial and that discrimination, "this blot," remains, "despite the passage of a hundred years." The column praised Kennedy moves in Alabama.

The STRAITS-TIMES of Singapore, an English language paper, said "America should be sooner judged by young men and women willing to mount a crusade for racial tolerance than by gaggles of foul-mouthed women and teen-age louts . . ." Indonesian and Burmese Journals, perhaps because of a newsprint shortage and demanding local news interest, offered no editorial comment and relatively little news space to the Freedom Rides. Surveys and grass-roots interviews, nevertheless, show that people there believe racial prejudice to be the biggest American fault, one which encourages and confirms anti-colonial and anti-Western feeling. Vietnamese papers gave the race violence heavy play and space, but no editorial comment.

After a slow start, Russian and Chi-

nese papers and radio broadcasts emphasized the impugning of American motives in world affairs, with statements that "racial atrocities have impaired the prestige of the U. S. in the eyes of the world," and charges that President Kennedy and other officials acted with "racial bias." Soviet and Red Chinese accounts and comment also stressed the injustice of jail sentences "for the one crime . . . that (Freedom Riders) had dared to flout the color barrier on a bus line," and of beatings and imprisonment for "reading an article from a national constitution aloud in the streets."

Moscow Radio said: "Scenes of bloodshed in Montgomery are . . . the worst examples of savagery . . . taking place in a country which has the boldness to declare that its way of life is an example for other people The question of the rights of the colored population, the running amok of racist barbarians . . . who the authorities have no wish to repress and who in many cases are certainly encouraged by the authorities, the brutal attacks on people (in) anti-segregation demonstrations, have aroused indignation throughout the world. They are particularly enlightening for . . . those countries where people of the Negro races and other colored people live. It would be more than naive to expect success for the maxim (suggested for Peace Corps workers), 'I hate Negroes at home, but I love them in Africa.'"

Chinese Communist wireless reports stressed the theme that rampant racism "exposed" the "savage nature of American freedom and democracy." Peking broadcasts played up the Rockwell Nazi "hate bus" and linked the Kennedys with Governors Patterson of Alabama and Barnett of Mississippi in "collusion" with violent mobs.