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# political affairs

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## **AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH**

**THE FAMILY FROM WHICH I CAME**

William L. Patterson

**BLACK WORKERS: BIRMINGHAM 1931**

Hosea Hudson

**SOUTHERNERS ON SOUTHERN HISTORY**

Herbert Aptheker

**"WE CHARGE GENOCIDE"**

Claude Lightfoot

**WILLIAM Z. FOSTER'S 90th BIRTHDAY**

Gus Hall

Art Shields

**INDOCHINA'S 25-YEAR STRUGGLE**

John Pittman

60¢

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## Indochina's 25-Year Struggle Against U.S. Imperialism

During the past quarter of a century of failure, defeat and deepening crisis, U.S. imperialism has waged criminal and barbarous aggression against the peoples of Indochina. In the first half of the 1945-1970 period, it failed to achieve its aims of subjugating Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia through perfidy and war by proxy. After the defeat of French imperialism at Dien Bien Phu in March, 1954, U.S. imperialism moved step by step to direct and open aggression. In a shameful but unsuccessful attempt to impose its own brand of colonialism on impoverished peasant peoples just beginning to lift themselves from a century of colonial bondage under French and Japanese imperialism, it hurled against Indochina the mightiest war machine of the capitalist world backed by the resources of the world's richest country.

### *Criminal Aggression, Deceit and Lies*

From mid-1945 to the present moment, U.S. governments headed by Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon have maintained the continuity of this aim, while varying the tactics for attaining it. As victory became more elusive, their aggression has grown more ferocious and malevolent. Without declaring war to this day, they have been deliberately and systematically destroying the cities, villages, forests, croplands, industries, dams, dikes, roads, schools, hospitals, churches, dwellings and possessions of the Indochinese peoples. For this purpose they have used aerial, artillery and naval bombardments. They have dropped bombs of types specially designed to kill civilians as well as napalm and phosphorus bombs (estimated to total 10 million tons, or equivalent to 500 Hiroshima-type atom bombs). They have sprayed toxic chemicals over the countryside and combat gases over the villages and hamlets. They have been massacring tens of thousands of men, women and children, maiming and wounding hundreds of thousands, imprisoning and torturing more hundreds of thousands, and driving millions into concentration camps. So enormous have been the atrocities and cruelties inflicted by U.S. imperialism on the Indochinese peoples that numerous observers from many countries, including the U.S.A., have been

unable to recall comparable horrors since Lidice and Auschwitz.

In their criminal aggression against the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the governments of U.S. imperialism have been committing crimes against the peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity no less heinous than those for which the Truman government, participating in the International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg in 1945-1948 and at Tokyo in 1946-1948, joined in convicting and sentencing to death leading members of the German and Japanese governments and industrial-military groups. The U.S. governments have violated the United States Constitution, the Charter of the United Nations, the Geneva Agreements on Indochina of 1954 and the Geneva Agreements on Laos of 1962. They have displayed total contempt for principles of international law and for international agreements prohibiting barbarous means of waging war.

Throughout the past quarter of a century, U.S. imperialism has attempted unsuccessfully to deceive world opinion and mislead the American people concerning the aims and character of its aggression. It has fabricated an entire system of pseudo-judicial instruments to provide a legalistic facade for its flagrant violations of international agreements and its trampling on the sovereignty and right to self-determination of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

With the willing assistance of the monopoly-controlled U.S. mass information media, the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon governments have shamelessly and continuously lied to the American people. They have elevated perfidy and demagoguery to the status of governmental principles, flouted the revolutionary and democratic traditions of the American people, and dishonored the name of the United States in the family of nations.

The consequences of this quarter of a century of aggression have been fateful and tragic also for the American people. At the end of 1970, more than 45,000 American youth had been herded to their deaths and more than 300,000 maimed and wounded in pursuit of the parasitic but unrealizable dream of U.S. monopolists to establish Indochina as a base from which to gain a monopoly over the markets, raw materials and investment opportunities in Southeast Asia. American wage and salaried workers are \$150 billion poorer because of the diversion of this sum to the Indochina aggression.

The sweeping militarization of the U.S. economy has been accompanied by an erosion of the people's liberties and living standards. The executive branch of the government has usurped the treaty-making and war-making prerogatives invested by the Constitution in Congress, and conducts its operations mainly through appointed committees and agencies unaccountable to the people. At the end of

1970, with the government spending \$100 million a day to subjugate Indochina, the U.S. unemployment rate neared 6 per cent, the dollar inflation rate approached 37 per cent (from a 1957-1959 base), the deterioration of housing, education, health care and city services reached appalling proportions, taxes confiscated approximately one-third of the working people's gross income, and at least 10 million Americans could not get enough to eat.

The other side of this disgraceful chapter in the sordid record of U.S. imperialism is the magnificently heroic struggle for independence, unity and freedom of small former colonial nations. Guided by their Communist and Workers' parties, the Vietnamese, Lao and Khmer peoples have battled victoriously against vastly more powerful military and technical forces. The Vietnamese, under the leadership of the wise and redoubtable Ho Chi Minh, have staved off the onslaughts against their land while completing projects of socialist construction.

The other side also is another victory for the liberating force of the international solidarity of the working people and oppressed nations of the world. This is reflected in the material and political aid rendered the Indochinese peoples by the socialist states, the Soviet Union especially, and in the support of their struggle from the liberation movements of the colonies and newly independent countries, and from the progressive and democratic forces in the imperialist countries, including the United States. Here, in the context of today's global revolutionary tide generated by the socialist world, the national liberation movements and the working classes, is the classic epic in contemporary dress, with a chronology derived from historical fact.

#### *Truman: The Second "Anti-Komintern" (1945-1953)*

Before the guns of the Second World War were silent, the U.S. government headed by the conservative Democrat, President Harry S. Truman, began to help the French imperialists reconquer the Indochinese colonies they had twice surrendered to Japanese imperialism. This was a reversal of the policy projected by President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin, both of whom opposed the restoration of French colonialism over Indochina. (*The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1944-45 vol., pp. 562-563; also Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin*, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 317.)

Only a few weeks after Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945, Truman was ready for an accommodation with the French in regard to Indochina. (Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina*, Stanford University Press, 1954, p. 44, also footnote.) He collaborated with Churchill, who was bent on the re-subjugation of Asian colonies seized by Japan. The collaboration bore fateful fruit on March 5, 1946, when

Churchill at Fulton, Missouri, outlined the blueprint for the Cold War, and again on March 12, 1947, in the Truman Doctrine's resurrection of what was essentially the "anti-Komintern" of the defeated Axis Powers. Under this blood-stained, bedraggled banner of anti-Communism, the Truman government launched the United States on the path to international outlawry and national crisis. (D. F. Fleming, *The Cold War and Its Origins*, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1962, Vol. II, pp. 348-357, 433-476.)

Until U.S. imperialism began its unsuccessful attempt forcibly to liquidate the Korean socialist state and unite Korea under its puppet Syngman Rhee, the Truman government's intervention in Indochina was furtive and perfidious. To the Vietnamese it professed sympathy for their struggle, while simultaneously helping the French attempt at reconquest. To the French it proffered military and economic assistance directly and through the Marshall Plan, while simultaneously scheming with France's Vietnamese puppets to cut the throat of its "free world" ally. It even tried to deal with Ho Chi Minh behind the backs and at the expense of the French.

In August and September, 1945, the Truman government sent three groups to Hanoi. One was assigned to attend to the needs of prisoners of war; a second was a military mission under a General Gallagher, who was soon to exercise a "mediating" role in affairs of the Bank of Indochina; the third was a contingent of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The OSS had already begun to set up a network in Laos and Cambodia, and maintained another headquarters in Saigon.

The Paris newspaper *Le Monde* reported on April 13-14, 1947 that OSS agents had proposed to Ho Chi Minh that economic interests with which General William Donovan, OSS chief, was associated, would assist construction efforts of the DRV government in exchange for economic concessions. When Ho rejected the proposal, the OSS sought other prospects, whom they found in abundance among the feudal and compradore strata of southern Vietnam. "Many Frenchmen," says Hammer (*op. cit.*, p. 130), "were obsessed by the bogey of American business infiltration into Indochina and of American strategic designs on the country; to them the OSS was the vanguard of a new imperialism."

Simultaneously, in a search for a puppet through whom French imperialism might partition Vietnam and crush the DRV, Truman in 1947 dispatched William C. Bullitt to Hong Kong to draft Bao Dai, the Annamese emperor who had faithfully served the French from 1925 to 1940 and the Japanese from 1940 to 1945, and seemed available to serve the U. S. imperialists with equal fidelity. The search

proved fruitful. After months of haggling over terms, Bao Dai in June, 1949 assumed office as chief of state of a "State of Vietnam" he agreed to set up within the French Empire.

With its quisling chief of state formally installed, the Truman government hastened to give Indochina "economic aid," the Trojan Horse of U. S. imperialism. It also prepared the legalistic rationale for more direct intervention—the readiness of Bao Dai "to invite" U.S. protection of his regime. On February 7, 1950, Truman "recognized" Bao Dai's puppet "State of Vietnam" which it henceforth designated as Vietnam. On June 27, 1950, two days after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, Truman ordered an increase of U. S. military support to the French and dispatched a U. S. military mission to help build the Vietnam army, that is, the armed forces of Bao Dai. On December 23, 1950, the Truman government signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with France and the puppet regimes of Bao Dai's Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. On September 7, 1951, Truman signed an agreement with Bao Dai for direct economic assistance. These instruments provided the basis for subsequent U. S. claims that its intervention in Indochina was "requested" by the governments of the Indochinese countries.

By January, 1952 more than 100,000 tons of arms and supplies had been delivered to Saigon by Truman. And U. S. workers were being taxed to pay the costs of the French colonial war to the tune of \$1 billion a year. (Fleming, *op. cit.*, p. 676.)

With aims no different from those motivating its intervention in Vietnam, the Truman government also financed and supplied the French effort to reconquer Cambodia and Laos. The financial and industrial rulers of America had their eyes on the whole of Indochina. A report in the *New York Times* of February 12, 1950 noted that "Indochina is a prize worth a large gamble. In the north are exportable tin, tungsten, zinc, manganese, coal, lumber and rice, and in the south are rice, rubber, tea, pepper, cattle and hides." And Eisenhower, speaking August 4, 1953 to the Conference of State Governors in Seattle, blurted out the real aims of Truman's "anti-Komintern" when he focussed attention on Indochina's importance as a rice-growing area and a land rich in critical raw materials, such as tungsten, tin, rubber and manganese. Indochina's potential as a market for exports, a source of raw materials and a fertile soil for lucrative investments remains uppermost in the schemes of U. S. imperialism.

In addition, just as French imperialism had viewed Indochina as a single whole for military and strategic reasons in the original conquest, it set about the reconquest in the same way, placing all operations under a single command, using Saigon to move back into Cambodia,

Laos to move against Hanoi, Cambodia and southern Vietnam to invade Laos. (Wilfred G. Burchett, *Mekong Upstream, Seven Seas*, Berlin, GDR, 1959, pp. 85-86.) Similar military and strategic calculations as well as economic aims moved U. S. imperialism to involve Laos and Cambodia in its aggression against Vietnam. U. S. interventions in Laos and Cambodia had nothing to do with "impending invasion by the Communist Chinese" and "North Vietnamese aggression" as U. S. governments have alleged but never been able to prove with credible evidence. Besides the strategic importance of Laos and Cambodia in relation to Vietnam and each other, Indochina offered strategic advantages to an aggressor with designs against the Chinese People's Republic and other Southeast Asian countries.

The U. S. military mission sent by Truman on June 27, 1950 to aid Bao Dai toured Laos and Cambodia as well as southern Vietnam, and recommended the recruitment and training of puppet armies in all three countries. On August 18, 1953, the U. S. State Department issued a pamphlet entitled *Indo-China: The War in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos*. The pamphlet reported: "Thus far we have supplied the French Union forces and the national armies of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam with more than 170 million rounds of small-arms ammunition; 16,000 transport vehicles and trailers; 850 combat vehicles; 350 military aircraft; 250 naval craft; 10,500 radio sets; 90,000 small-arms and automatic shells."

The foregoing summary includes but a few of the most relevant facts of how U. S. imperialist aggression against Indochina began. Other relevant data are available for the careful reader in numerous government documents, eye-witness accounts, and periodical and newspaper reports. (*Indochina and World Peace*, New Century Publishers, New York, 1954, a pamphlet by this writer under the pen-name of Richard Walker, contains additional material.)

This summary, although abbreviated, suffices to show that the many pretexts and excuses concocted by U. S. policy-makers to justify the aggression have been after-thoughts, the "Stop thief!" cries of the thief. A retired U. S. naval officer with long service in Asia has said: "Ever since the United States became involved in Vietnam in 1945, it seems that the majority of official reports on the situation there have been untrue. Reading over the twenty-three years' accumulation of misinformation is a staggering experience. False information has been used not only as a means of deceiving and persuading the public; it has also been the basis for foreign policy." (William J. Lederer, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1968, p. 30.)

It was Truman's fate, however, to witness the bankruptcy of

his "free world" crusade. The peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia had risen as one after the capitulation of Japan in August, 1945. Insurrections, long maturing through decades of rebellion against the French colonialists, swept Indochina. People's governments were set up throughout the peninsula. In Hanoi on September 2, 1945, proclaiming the establishment of the revolutionary national democratic state of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, President Ho Chi Minh declared: "The entire Vietnamese people are ready to mobilize all their moral and material force, to sacrifice their lives and possessions for the safeguarding of their freedom and independence."

How prophetic were these words was demonstrated throughout the seven years of the Truman government. Using methods as perfidious and ruthless as their U. S. patrons, the French managed to win many battles and set up a governmental apparatus in the major cities and towns. But resistance never ceased. Puppet after puppet was driven from power. The countryside became one vast tract of liberated areas governed by peasants and workers where arms were manufactured, supplies stored and fighters trained and directed against the aggressors. During the last two years of the Truman government, the people's armed forces were fighting pitched battles with the regular French armies. In the fall of 1952 French President Vincent Auriol announced that in the seven years of France's attempted reconquest, French losses of all kinds totaled more than 90,000.

But Truman was spared the duty of presiding over the finishing blow to his despicable project. That became the lot of his successor.

#### *Eisenhower: Steps to Open Aggression (1953-1961)*

The government of the middle-of-the-road Republican, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, had been in office less than 17 months before the surrender of the French at Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954 put an end to French imperialism's attempt to reconquer Indochina. The Eisenhower government, still waving the flag of anti-Communism, had striven with might and main to obtain a French victory. It paid the full bill for the war. It decided in April, 1954 to organize a joint force of U. S., British, Australian, New Zealand, Philippine and Thailand troops to invade Indochina, but dropped the plan when Britain balked. It sent 200 U. S. Airforce specialists to aid the French at Dien Bien Phu. And Admiral Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the support of the fanatical John Foster Dulles, demanded 500 planes to drop atomic bombs on the Vietnamese besieging Dien Bien Phu. Opposition of the American people and the British government, among other factors, again prevented this plunge off the brink. (Hanson Baldwin, *New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1954;

Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report*, Harper, New York, 1961, pp. 120-122. Both cited in David Horowitz, *The Free World Colossus*, Hill & Wang, New York, 1965, pp. 146-148.) But U. S. imperialism had already made the decision for direct and open aggression.

Besides this piece of infamy, the Eisenhower government "distinguished" itself by attempting to scuttle the Geneva Conference on Indochina, and when that failed, by flagrantly violating the Geneva Agreements in spite of Eisenhower's solemn word not to do so. On September 6, 1954, Dulles knocked together the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a war alliance of U. S. satellite and client regimes that promptly and unilaterally took Laos, Cambodia and Bao Dai's southern Vietnamese government under its "protection," thereby giving U. S. imperialism another pseudo-legalistic excuse for aggression.

Eisenhower's two terms from January 20, 1953 to January 20, 1961 were marked also by the launching of the "hidden war" against Laos, by blackmail and assassination plots against Cambodia's chief of state Norodom Sihanouk, and by the use of the mandarin family headed by Ngo Dinh Diem to block the 1956 elections required by the Geneva Agreements and to pacify the people of Vietnam south of the temporary 17th Parallel partition line set up under these Agreements.

Ngo Dinh Diem was a former civil servant of the French colonialists who had fled to the United States rather than join the resistance to the attempted French reconquest. In the United States he became a protege of Cardinal Spellman, the Maryknoll Fathers in New Jersey, the Right-wing Social Democrats around the *New Leader*, and the CIA-funded Michigan State University Mission in Saigon—all impeccable credits for his appointment by Bao Dai, at the behest of Dulles, as prime minister in Bao Dai's government. Within months, however, he kicked Bao Dai into exile and became chief of state.

During his eight years as Eisenhower's quisling in southern Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem and his avaricious family chalked up the inglorious record of having effected not one single reform and of having built not one factory or facility for the people. Of other accomplishments, however, he could and did boast: more than 100,000 people killed, 800,000 imprisoned and subjected to tortures, 8 million peasants herded into concentration camps cynically called "prosperity zones," "re-education centers," "agrovilles" and "strategic hamlets." Moreover, Ngo Dinh Diem could justly claim that these accomplishments had been effected under the supervision and with the participation of U.S. personnel.

Yet, Eisenhower's term also ended in failure. Norodom Sihanouk publicly denounced U.S. interference, the Pathet Lao liberated nearly

two-thirds of Laos, the people's resistance to Ngo Dinh Diem's program of "pacification" crystallized in December, 1960 in the establishment of the National Front for Liberation (NFL) and in 1961 in the organization of the People's Liberation Army Forces (PLAF).

*Kennedy: "Special War" (1961-1963)*

The government of the liberal Democrat, President John F. Kennedy, presided over the U.S.-organized assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem and his equally notorious brother on November 1, 1963; the suspension of Diem-type "pacification"; the escalation of the U.S. aggression and the use of rocket-carrying helicopters and chemical weapons; expansion of the "strategic hamlet" program; and the application of "special warfare" methods in Vietnam and in Laos as well, in violation of the 1962 Geneva Agreements signed by the Kennedy government.

Some 50,000 sorties over southern Vietnam were carried out by the U.S. Airforce in 1962 alone, destroying 1,400 villages and prompting Bertrand Russell to protest that "the war which is being waged is an atrocity. Napalm jelly gasoline is being used against whole villages, without warning. Chemical warfare is employed for the purpose of destroying crops and livestock and to starve the population."

Kennedy's "special warfare" also flaunted the flag of the "free world" against Communism. It was the creation of Kennedy himself, General Maxwell D. Taylor, Walt W. Rostow and the Stanford University economist Eugene Staley. It purported to apply the principle of "flexible response" in so-called counter-insurgency operations, making maximum use of Green Beret-commanded puppet troops and mercenaries. The Lao people, who became one of its principal targets, said it meant simply "kill all, burn all, destroy all." It combined military with economic, political and psychological warfare, striving to corrupt and deceive as well as to kill and repress.

The Kennedy government was also the first to take over full direction of the aggression, reducing Diem's officers to a subordinate role. Under Kennedy, the U.S. military threw off the mask of "advisers" and openly assumed command. The staff of General Paul D. Harkins, head of the U.S. forces in Vietnam, was increased to include more than 40 generals and colonels. In 1962 more than 10,000 U.S. officers, experts and servicemen were sent to Vietnam, 20,000 raids were carried out on villages and towns, including 20 large-scale campaigns. The U.S. Command claimed 30,000 "Vietcong"—meaning civilians, as well as PLAF fighters—had been killed in 1962 alone.

But Kennedy also lived to see defeat of his "special warfare." The people's resistance destroyed strategic hamlets almost as fast as they

were erected. By the end of 1962 the PLAF controlled 80 percent of the southern delta's population and 90 per cent of the area.

*Johnson: Americanization of the War (1963-1969)*

The first years of the government headed by the conservative Democrat, President Lyndon Baines Johnson, witnessed the collapse of the Eisenhower-Kennedy-Diem pacification program and the strategic hamlet experiment. It saw the petering out of "special warfare" and a "crisis of puppetry" during which ten successive governments tried to hold power in the 18 months following Diem's murder. The coup of June 11, 1965 marked the end of U.S. imperialism's hope of setting up a stable civilian puppet administration in Saigon and its resort to a military junta. Chosen to head the new Saigon government were Generals Nguyen Van Thieu and Nguyen Cao Ky, both former lackeys of the French imperialists who had participated in French punitive expeditions against the population. Nguyen Cao Ky had been a French air force lieutenant, had received training in the U.S., and on the night of April 2, 1964 (weeks before the French surrender at Dien Bien Phu) had dropped 60 tons of bombs on a village in Kontum. Once in power, Thieu and Ky instituted a reign of terror worthy of their predecessor, Ngo Dinh Diem, terror still continuing under the supervision and with the participation of U.S. personnel.

To salvage the wreckage of the policies of his predecessors, Johnson perpetrated on the American people a hoax comparable to the sinking of the battleship Maine in Havana harbor in 1898, which provided nascent U.S. imperialism its pretext for invading Cuba and seizing Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. Falsely claiming U.S. destroyers had been fired on by DRV torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin, Johnson invoked the "Communist aggression" syndrome to stampede Congress into giving him a free hand "to take all necessary measures" and "to prevent further aggression." (William R. Corson, *The Betrayal*, W. W. Norton, New York, 1968, pp. 62-65.) With this authorization Johnson ordered massive aerial and naval bombardment of the DRV and began the dispatch of U.S. troops to Vietnam that exceeded a total of 550,000 men before his term expired.

Replacing General Harkins with General William Westmoreland as U.S. Commander in Saigon, Johnson and his Defense Secretary Robert McNamara set out to destroy the PLAF and force the DRV to sue for peace. They brought in mercenaries from the satellite countries of Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan. They built up the puppet forces of Thieu and Ky to more than half a million men. They stepped up the bombardments from air, land, and sea, and increased the use of chemical

weapons, toxins, gases and napalm against the civilian population. In a massive counter-offensive from November, 1965 to April, 1966 they threw 700,000 men, with air, armored and artillery support, against the PLAF from the 17th Parallel to the Mekong delta.

At the same time, Johnson and his Secretary of State Dean Rusk opened a diplomatic offensive to allay the rising international and American people's protest against the aggression. To give Johnson the image of a peace-seeker, they made unacceptable overtures to Hanoi, such as demanding the withdrawal of the non-existent DRV troops from southern Vietnam as a condition for U.S. troop withdrawals.

While talking peace, Johnson launched another massive counter-offensive against the Vietnamese. In 1966-67 he hurled a combat force against the PLAF estimated to number 1.2 million U.S.-Saigon puppet and mercenary troops, supported by massive armor, artillery and aerial contingents.

The PLAF defeated both drives, fighting pitched battles and displaying a capability for position warfare that stunned the U.S. Command. At the end of January, 1968 the PLAF went over to the offensive. Within two days their Tet offensive had brought all the cities, urban centers and major U.S.-Saigon bases under attack. Saigon was invaded and the U.S. Embassy raided. Hue was captured and held for 25 days. The U.S.-Saigon aggression was dealt a decisive blow. It was also a shattering political blow for Johnson. In March he declared a limitation on the bombing of the DRV and announced his withdrawal from the Presidential race. Soon he announced the opening of preliminary peace talks in Paris with the DRV. Defeated in Indochina, by November Johnson had been forced by anti-war protests in the United States to declare a full bombing halt of the DRV. The campaign of repression pressed with insensate ferocity by Thieu and Ky had also failed. In mid-1967 the NFL and PLAF controlled 80 per cent of the territory south of the 17th Parallel.

*Nixon: "Vietnamization" (1969-)*

The government of the Right-wing Republican, Richard Milhous Nixon, assumed power on the crest of a wave of unprecedented anti-war activity by the American people. This circumstance determined the tactic required to continue the Indochina aggression in pursuit of U.S. imperialism's aims in Indochina and Southeast Asia. Nixon devised the tactic of "Vietnamization," the converse of Americanizing the aggression, or, as the U.S. Ambassador to Saigon put it, "changing the color of the casualties." At the same time Nixon struck a pose as a reasonable U.S. President sincerely desiring peace.

But repeatedly as Vice President in Eisenhower's government and as a private citizen, Nixon had called for prolongation of the war, opposing implementation of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Agreements, and supporting Radford and Dulles in their most fanatical projects. Moreover, Nixon's notoriety as an anti-Communist flag-waver was worldwide. He promptly stepped back into his former roles. He immediately downgraded the Paris peace talks, escalated the saturation bombardments of Laos and southern Vietnam, stepped up reconnaissance and bombing forays over the DRV, and clasped Thieu and Ky to his bosom with such fervor that Senator Fulbright was impelled to comment: "If they had anything like the same influence in Vietnam that they have had in Washington, Thieu and Ky would have beaten the Vietcong long ago."

With half of its term still to run, the Nixon government encountered defeat of its program. The calculation that the aggression could succeed by escalating the bombings and using Saigon puppet troops and Asian mercenaries for ground combat, while gradually withdrawing U.S. personnel to a level acceptable to the American people, was wrecked by the inability of Thieu and Ky to carry out their part of the operations. Hated and detested by the people, they were unable even to defend Saigon. By June, 1969, organs of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam were functioning in 31 provinces, 136 districts, four cities and 1,280 villages. Nixon advisers mournfully admitted the "Vietcong infrastructure" remained intact throughout southern Vietnam, notwithstanding the severe repression of Thieu and Ky and the assassination campaign of the U.S. Operation Phoenix. Moreover, the PLAF continued to give frequent demonstrations of its ability to strike whenever and wherever it chose.

Nixon ignored the Lao Patriotic Front's peace overture of March 12, 1969, which had proposed negotiations between all Lao parties on a political settlement provided the U.S. cease its bombings of Laos. Nixon's answer was to drop the equivalent of three Hiroshima bombs on Laos per month. Nixon ignored the peace plan of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, which agreed to a ceasefire after the U.S. submitted a schedule by mid-1971 of total and unconditional troop withdrawals. In its September 17, 1970 peace offer the PRG had also offered to negotiate a coalition government for South Vietnam which could include anyone but Thieu, Ky and the Saigon Premier Khiem. Nixon's response was a peace plan for an immediate standstill ceasefire that would have provided a breathing spell for the buildup of the Saigon puppet troops and a free hand for more repressive drives by Thieu and Ky.

With his peace posture shattered by these maneuvers, by his in-

vasion of Cambodia and expansion of the aggression to all Indochina, and by his bombing and raiding provocation against the DRV last November, Nixon's prospects for realizing the aim of U.S. imperialism in Indochina were no better than those of his predecessors. But neither the Nixon government nor the U.S. financial and corporate hierarchy it serves appeared to understand that aim is unrealizable, that imperialism's day is past, and that the long pent-up waves of revolution now sweeping away the decay of feudalism and the carrion-rot of colonialism from the greater part of the earth will not cease at the command of a contemporary Canute.

It was after examining this record of the aims and policies of U.S. imperialism in Indochina, as consistently fought for by the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon governments, that 350 lawyers from 55 different countries last July 15-19 condemned the U.S. aggression as "real biocide," intended "to wipe out life in general." Assembled in Helsinki at the Ninth Congress of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, they appealed to the legal profession in all countries to make a similar examination.

Likewise, delegates from 80 trade union organizations in 60 countries on all five continents last July 18-19 assembled in Versailles "strongly condemned American aggression which constitutes a threat to world peace." Moreover, they declared: "The just and sacred struggle of the Indochinese people is our struggle, the common cause of the international working class, of the whole world trade union movement, since the fight of the working class for democracy, peace and social progress is inseparable from the struggle for freedom and national independence of all the peoples of the world without exception. Imperialism, headed by the American imperialists, is the common enemy. Each blow dealt to them, each setback inflicted, contributes to the struggle and victory of all."

The erosion in the position of U.S. capitalism does not stop at the water's edge. There has been a further deterioration in the U.S. world position. . . . Most of the capitalist countries, to one extent or another, are taking steps of accommodation reflecting the new world realities. They are forced to bend because of the growing power of the world revolutionary process. More and more, U.S. imperialism is becoming the lone exception to this trend. Each step of adjustment to the new world realities by the other capitalist countries further isolates U.S. imperialism. Each step is a rejection of the policies of military aggression pursued by U.S. imperialism. (Gus Hall, *The Erosion of U.S. Imperialism in the 70's*, New Outlook Publishers, New York, 1971.)



## The Family From Which I Came\*

*(Editor's Note: In observance of Afro-American History Month we present chapters from the autobiographies of two Black Communist leaders: that below by the noted fighter for civil rights and Black liberation, William L. Patterson, and that which follows by Hosea Hudson, for many years a leader of working-class struggles in the South.)*

My mother often talked to us about her childhood on the Virginia plantation where she was born as a slave in 1850 and had lived until she was ten. It was in cotton lands not far from Norfolk—she knew that because her grandfather, who often drove to the “big city,” was seldom gone for long. Her father, William Galt, was a slave who belonged to the owner of an adjacent plantation, and as a child she saw very little of him. As coachman for his master—who was also his father—he drove back and forth on visits to the Turner plantation, where he met and later married my grandmother, Elizabeth Mary Turner.

The big house was set back from the magnolia-lined plantation road leading to the main highway to Norfolk. But my mother lived in the slave quarters, which were quite some distance back from the manor house. Here, separated from her mother and grandmother, she lived with older slave women who were part of the crew that served the master's immediate household.

My grandmother was personal maid to the white wife of her father and master; my great-grandmother was head of the house slaves and also her owner's slave woman (at that time the word “mistress” was not used in this sense). My mother had learned of her grandmother's role from gossip among the field hands, but it was beyond her to question the morality of this situation. Morality played no part in the relationship between white slaveowners and their slave women—the masters' morals were nonexistent in judging the slave system or their own personal relations with slaves.

According to the gossip, the great-grandmother first came to the notice of the big house through her ability as a cook. In line with the general mistreatment of field hands—rags for clothing, shacks for living quarters, cheap and primitive medication—they were never

well fed. When my mother's grandmother was living among the field slaves, she got the slaves who slaughtered and cut up the hogs and cattle to bring her the entrails, hooves, heads and other “throwaway” parts, along with similar leftovers from chicken killings. Somehow she had acquired great skill in the use of herbs for cooking as well as for healing. She converted the leftovers into such tasty dishes that she soon gained a reputation as the best cook on the plantation. Before long she was ordered into the big house to cook for the master's family. She was an attractive woman and, as the story goes, the master found more than her cooking to his taste. Eventually she gave birth to three of his children.

The field hands, according to my mother, said that Cap'n Turner's wife knew of the relationship—it would have been something in the nature of a miracle had she not known. But there was little or nothing she could do about it and, after all, the slave mother and her children were no economic threat to her.

Stable family relations were, obviously, almost impossible among slaves, and this enforced instability was conveniently put down as being inherently characteristic of Black people. The lie was useful and incredibly persistent—it became a substantial part of the myth of white superiority.

Slave conditions such as these dominated my mother's life until the tensions that were to explode into the Civil War began to build up toward a climax. Slave uprisings were launched with increasing frequency and, following their example, the Abolitionists strengthened and sharpened their activities, and John Brown launched his ill-starred attempt to seize Harpers Ferry, in October 1858.

Despite his slaveowner's morality, great-grandfather Turner revealed a sense of responsibility toward his families—both Black and white. He recognized the danger of war to his children, as did his friend Galt, and he believed in the right of a master to free his slaves. Before the war broke out, he managed to move his families away from the land that was destined to be drenched in blood. He sent his white family north to Bridgeport, Connecticut; the Black west to California. My grandfather Galt sent his son along with them.

My great-grandmother, then an old woman, stayed behind with the father of her children—they must have been deeply attached to one another. My grandmother was given the responsibility of settling her white relatives in New England. The trust reposed in her was not an uncommon thing. Her master obviously had great faith in his dark-skinned daughter's ability to take care of duties like these.

Those who were sent on the Westward trek went by way of Panama and from there across the Isthmus. The trip down the Atlantic Coast

\* This is the opening chapter of *The Man Who Cried Genocide: An Autobiography*, to be published by International Publishers this month. Copyright, 1971, by International Publishers. Published by permission.

may have been more or less routine but crossing the Isthmus along a narrow, single-track line must have been much more difficult. At Colon on the Pacific side, the freed men and women took a ship to San Francisco—a long and hazardous trip.

It is likely that the Black Galts and Turners were sent to California by way of Panama to avoid the overland trek through Indian territory as well as to escape the fugitive slave hunters who plied their lucrative trade beyond the Eastern seaboard.

Here was a small group of Black men, women and young people just out of slavery traveling thousands of miles to find what was to them dearer than life—freedom. The courage and ingenuity of these Black Americans was profoundly impressive, as was that of the thousands of Afro-Americans who helped build the “Underground Railroad” before the Civil War and managed to escape to Canada.

My mother, Mary Galt, was about five-feet-three in height. Her complexion was brownish yellow; her hair wavy, with streaks of gray as she grew older. Strong and energetic, she was a fighter when she knew what the fight was about. She was ten when her grandfather sent his liberated Black children west.

Originally there were four children in our immediate family. My sister Alberta was the child of my mother’s marriage to Charles Postles, who came west from North Carolina. He died shortly after Alberta was born, and my mother later married James Edward Patterson.

\* \* \*

My father was born in the British West Indies, in Kingston, capitol of the island of St. Vincent. His mother, he told us, was a Carib Indian; his father, a full-blooded African. Actually he knew little enough about either of his parents, at times referring to his mother as a kind of witch doctor. He said she was called Lady Stridge—probably the name of the British family for whom she worked. So far as he knew, his parents were never married; he often spoke bitterly of bastardy as if he were painfully affected by the thought of it.

At an early age my father left his birthplace. There was nothing for him in St. Vincent; the poverty of the mass of the people drove him to seek his fortune on the seven seas. He became an able-bodied seaman. Soon however he left the deck for a place in the galley, became a good cook, then a chef. In later years he was the first Black steward ever hired by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company.

As I knew him, father was a dark-skinned man, not more than five-feet-five inches tall; he could not have weighed more than 135 pounds. His face was ascetic and kindly and did not reveal the intense devotion he gave to his religious beliefs—nor the terrible temper that was aroused when he was crossed.

My father found his fortune on the Pacific Coast despite his color. As steward on a Chinese clipper, he was able to participate in the lucrative racket of smuggling Chinese into San Francisco. (This was after Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, later signed by President Chester A. Arthur, in 1882.)

With the money he had made from smuggling, my father bought a house on Mason Street in San Francisco. It was about then that he met and married my mother, a widow in her late thirties. My brothers and I were born in what was called “the smuggler’s house.” Although the San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed the official birth records, I believe my correct birth date is August 27, 1891.

When I was about five years old, my father became a Seventh Day Adventist. I do not know how or why this came about. He was not a citizen of the United States. He was a Black man in what must have seemed a white man’s world. Whether he sought a security beyond money; whether he found something in the Adventist practices and ideas of the hereafter with which he could identify, I have no idea.

I recall a story he often told about having been swept overboard in the Indian Ocean and having been carried back on board his ship by another huge wave. He attributed this miracle to God’s mercy. Perhaps the superstitions entertained by so many seafaring men had some effect upon him. At any rate, God was now elevated to the place that Queen Victoria had occupied in my father’s mind, and the life of our family underwent a drastic change.

The house on Mason Street was sold; all we possessed of worldly goods was turned into cash, and, along with these gifts, my father dedicated his life to the church. The uprooted family was moved across the bay to Oakland, on Myrtle Street near 23rd. My father became an Adventist missionary and went off to the island of Tahiti, with the family left to survive as best it could. Thereafter his missionary work carried him away for years at a time. My father quite naturally wanted his family to follow the road he had chosen; if they could not follow, he could not turn back. He took the Bible literally, studying it night and day. I was too young to understand him then, and even now I cannot criticize him. Undoubtedly, he found identity, atonement for his “sins” and hope for a place of refuge after death.

I can only regard him as a “loner,” made so by the dehumanizing racism of this society. I don’t recall his having Black friends, nor did any of his white Adventist acquaintances ever come to the house. Thus our social life was extremely limited, no doubt because of my father’s inflexible position—he wanted nothing to come between him and his God.

And yet my father was in some ways a remarkable man. He had

little formal education but his command of both Spanish and English was considerable, and he also spoke French and German.

If I never learned to love him, I didn't hate him either. The severity with which he beat us when he thought we had failed to observe some religious tenet was frightening. Indeed, in one of these outbursts, he permanently injured my sister because she had failed to say a prayer while the family was participating in one of his religious observances. I once saw my father whip my brother until the blood ran down his side, because he caught him mocking some religious rite.

These cruel punishments made an indelible impression upon my thinking and upon my attitude toward religion. Actually I had no knowledge of what my father did on his missionary treks. In his lifework of "soul saving" he may have been a very compassionate and exemplary man for all I know. But I found nothing in his work or his relations with our family with which I could identify. The hardship and suffering inflicted on my mother throughout their life together could not fail to affect me. Sometimes I saw him as a lost soul, "punchy" from the beating he was administering to himself.

I don't remember too much about life in California in those early days. I do know that Negroes, along with other nonwhites, Mexican Americans, Indians and Chinese met every kind of discrimination. I also know that my grandfather, William Galt, took an active part in the struggles initiated and led by Black men to secure citizenship rights for themselves and for Mexican Americans and Indians. A few years after he arrived in California, grandfather Galt organized a regiment of Negro volunteers known as the California Zouaves. Undoubtedly my grandfather feared the efforts of Confederate sympathizers to take California, a free-state, out of the Union and was determined to do anything to help prevent such a monstrous catastrophe. Governor Frederick P. Low of California honored him for his work in his regiment at a banquet in Sacramento, the capital, presenting him with a huge pewter platter and pitcher on which were inscribed the names of the governor and my grandfather. The set fell to our branch of the family and remained a cherished heirloom until we were forced to pawn it.

William Galt took part in other great liberation battles, prepared anti-racist conferences and conventions, helped fight civil rights cases through the state and federal courts in valiant efforts to make the Emancipation Proclamation and post-Civil War constitutional amendments instruments for freedom. It was of great political importance that California come into the Union as a free state, and Negroes, both escaped slaves and freed Black men, participated in that fight. There was a victory but not a complete one. The democracy preached to

Black men, Mexican Americans and Indians did not come with statehood, and few white Americans who fought for statehood were concerned with a fight for democracy for all the people.

\* \* \*

My formal schooling began in Oakland. My kindergarten days were spent at a little place run by a kindly white woman; about 20 girls and boys, of whom four were Black, attended. The first time I remember feeling a color difference, however, was at grammar school. It was at the Durant Grammar School that I first heard the word "nigger." The eastern side of the schoolyard was flanked by a large warehouse, the wall of which was used for playing handball. I was a good handball player and always rushed into the yard at recess to get a court, since there were not enough of them to meet the demand. On one occasion, when I got to the court first, I had no ball. One of the older white boys who had his ball claimed that the ball determined priority. He cursed me as a "nigger" who was trying to change the rules. I yielded to the superior fighting forces of the white boys who sided with my opponent but later carried the matter to the principal, Mr. Dunbar, a stately-looking man with a long white beard.

The old man hemmed and hawed, using his ubiquitous swagger stick as though he were brushing off his trousers. Finally he declared that he knew of no ruling that gave the courts to the first comer with a ball. But he argued that since I had given up the court, the matter should be dropped. I said I hadn't given up the court—it had been taken from me. Mr. Dunbar was obviously reluctant to make a decision against the white lad. It wasn't only the loss of the court that I resented—it was the name-calling. I felt that the boy should at least be reprimanded and made to apologize.

What kind of people were these? A deep resentment arose in me; this and subsequent incidents made me feel I was the object of color prejudice. I did not see fully then that the educational system was designed to develop in Black youth a feeling of inferiority, and in white youth the conviction that the world was theirs, a white world.

It was about this time that my father returned from one of his missionary trips and decided to move the family again, this time at the behest of his church leaders. He was to take the family to a Seventh Day Adventist Sanatorium, located near St. Helena in Napa County. Father had written a vegetarian cookbook for the Adventists, and they were going to introduce its recipes for about two years at the St. Helena Sanatorium.

We lived in a small house in a large vineyard located in the hills about two miles away from the sanatorium main buildings. About four miles away from our house was a one-room school which my

brother Walter and I were to attend. Our four-room house, surrounded by the rolling hills that shaped Napa Valley's many valleys, was in a beautiful, isolated spot. I am certain that my mother was hoping that we had settled down at last, but father attended an Adventist camp meeting and conference in San José in 1905 and returned to tell us he was off again to the South Sea Islands.

Mother seemed stunned by the announcement. My brother Walter had by that time disappeared. He had come to hate my father and, while the old man was away in San Jose, Walter packed and left. He could not stand dad's pious goings-on nor accept a penance that seemed likely to last forever. Walter left to avoid a fight with father that might well have ended in the death or serious injury of one or the other or both.

There was nothing to be done about my father's departure. Perhaps mother could have appealed to the church authorities against a decision that was to wreck a family. But father saw the matter as God's will. The family prepared to move back to Oakland. I remained with my mother; she got in touch with her sister, Anne Moody, who helped us find a vacant house on Grove Street between 22nd and 23rd.

\* \* \*

I shall never forget our stay in that community. A large and beautiful Catholic church stood nearby; its size and seeming majesty impressed me deeply. Its doors were often open during the day, and the sound of the organ music floated out to the street. But, of course, I never dared go in—it was a white church. White churches of nearly all denominations were then jimcrow, which fact set me to wondering how God would divide his heaven. I concluded that if this were the manner in which God instructed his children on earth, I wanted no part of his eternal abode.

While living in the Grove Street house, we suffered one of the several evictions we had experienced after leaving San Francisco. Having no state or federal aid, mother was always on the desperate edge of survival; the task of raising a family on the pinchpenny wage a domestic could earn was a superhuman one. The house we lived in was small and the rent was excessive. When there was an increase, we could not raise it.

At this time a new traction company ran a feeder line along 22nd Street to the San Francisco Bay ferry, plying from West Oakland to San Francisco. The station for our neighborhood would be a block away from our house; naturally, the landlord was determined to cash in on the improved situation. When mother told him she couldn't pay the increase, he said he was sorry but she would have to move. The due day came and we had found neither the rent nor a place to go.

The sheriff and his men drove up and put our furniture out onto the street.

The eviction of a family from what they have learned to call home must always be a tragedy. Neighbors, unless they are hostile, generally regard it the same way. There were no Negroes in that area but our white neighbors did come to express their sympathy. There was no reason here for them to take sides along racial grounds. And besides, landlords had few friends in a working-class community. I remember some of the white boys volunteered to help put the furniture into the "new" house, which was only two doors away. As a matter of fact, I believe we were really well liked by our neighbors. Here life came in conflict with my growing belief that all whites were prejudiced. I was perplexed.

The house we moved into had stood vacant for as long as we could remember—it was said that rats from the stable adjoining it made it unlivable. That was why my mother had bypassed it, but now she had no alternative. The sharpest memories I retain about our new home are about the rats. They were an ever present menace, but mother declared war on them at once. With indomitable courage and energy, she got rid of them and the pervasive odor they emitted.

Only much later did I come to appreciate fully the greater inner strength that helped my mother to carry on. She possessed an everlasting hope for something better. All poor mothers, regardless of their color or creed, have some of this unbounded spiritual strength, but the mothers of the Black poor are forced to draw upon it more constantly. When I reviewed my relations with my mother during childhood, I could see how the conditions of her life had created barriers between us so deep and wide that we could not bridge them. She could not understand this new, *free* world, its racial hatreds nor the terror and violence accompanying them. My mother could only respond to the hardships that poverty forced on her by increasing her sacrifices and her labors. I could not talk to her about freedom and what it meant to me. So I had to ponder alone on the educational system which concealed or distorted reality.

So there I was, living alone with my mother with whom I could hope for little rapprochement, despite our mutual love. It was many years before I was to see my brother Walter. My sister Alberta lived with a family named Morton in San Francisco and came home only for visits. Alberta got some schooling at the Mortons and eventually she became a masseuse.

In spite of the handicaps of poverty, I worked my way into the upper grades at Durant and finally graduated and moved on to Oakland High School. It was within walking distance of the house from

which mother had cleared the rats. I already had some thoughts about flight once I got a formal education. At that time I wanted to be a mining engineer.

As I grew older I began to question more seriously the course my father had followed. I could not learn to respect the point of view which accepted and endured hell on earth for himself and his family in exchange for an abode in heaven. Somewhat later, friends introduced me to the writings of Robert G. Ingersoll—not only one of the best known agnostics but a man who challenged racism and fought for the rational concepts of the French Revolution. I can still recapture some of the intellectual delight derived from reading the essays and lectures of this man who was scored by the established order as an infidel. The more I read, the more I thought about what my father had done, and the greater grew my abhorrence of his entire course.

I had begun to earn money in a small way after school hours by peddling the *Oakland Tribune*, then owned by Joseph R. Knowland, father of William F. Knowland who later became a U.S. Senator of unsavory, rightist reputation. I continued selling papers through grammar school and into high-school days, earning pocket money which my mother could not provide and contributing something to the family budget.

Just before I graduated from grammar school, I began to suffer from an eye ailment that forced me to stay out of school for more than a year. During that period I went to the nearby Emeryville race track and got a job exercising horses. It paid better than selling papers and was far more interesting. One of the people I met there was Andy Thomas, a first-rate Black jockey. His contract was later sold to a Russian nobleman and he became one of the great "race riders" of the Tsarist Empire.

I learned a lot on the race track—some things I will never forget. This was the sport of kings. The rich whites who sat in the grandstands and clubhouses could bet thousands of dollars and not worry about losing. The owners and trainers were white; the stable "boys"—some in their fifties or older—the exercise boys, swippers and ground men were almost always Black. Those of us who worked in the stables had to worry about every nickel and dime. My pay for the week was two dollars and fifty cents.

After I went back to high school, I ran elevators after school hours and Saturdays. Later, during summer vacations, or when my eyes were giving me trouble, I stayed out of school for weeks at a time. More than once I shipped on the local freighters as a dishwasher, fourth cook or third cook.

About this time my mother met a wealthy white woman whose name was Mrs. Georgia Martin. She owned a beautiful small cottage in the hills in Sausalito in Marin County. She asked my mother to come and cook for her and her daughter at Sylvan Dell, as the cottage was called. My mother agreed. It was a stay-in job and I went along. I transferred to a new school, Mt. Tamalpais High, where we were all housed in a shack.

The school sat in the valley at the foot of Mt. Tamalpais, in the midst of unsurpassed natural beauty. The climate was ideal and the environment was conducive to educational achievement. This is where I was introduced to progressive thinking through my contact with two members of the staff who were my close friends for many years. One was the head of the manual training department who seemed to recognize my sensitivity, and often talked to me about a form of society in which skin color would play no part. At that early stage of my life, he gave me a copy of Karl Marx's *Capital*. I tried to read and understand it but it was quite incomprehensible to me and I put it aside until later years.

The other teacher who became a lifelong friend and contributed to my intellectual development was Miss Elizabeth Keyser, who taught history. When I unburdened myself to her about the prejudice I encountered on the athletic field, she told me this was part of life's struggles and that one had to keep one's chin up and fight back. Her sympathy and solicitude buoyed up my morale in the face of the hostility of small groups of white boys. But while she could console me, she herself was completely unaware of the social source of racist behavior or how to fight it.

I now know that my friendship with these two individuals contributed to my ability to understand and critically evaluate my social environment. I came to know that there were and had been great white revolutionaries and dedicated progressive leaders among white people.

I graduated from Tamalpais High School in 1911 at the age of twenty. Up to this time I had lived with my mother and shared her privations and expenses. I now moved to San Francisco and lived by myself in a furnished room. I applied for admission and was accepted as a special student at the University of California. Despite my dreams of being a mining engineer, I took the usual introductory courses in the humanities.

When my eyes began to trouble me again, I left college and got a third cook's job on a Pacific Mail steamship running to Panama. On one of my trips I arrived two days after the Canal opened, in 1914—just in time to take part in the celebrations marking the completion

of the project.

The American builders of the Canal had made Panama one big ghetto. This marked American imperialism's first notable export of racism. I remember a location called Cocomanut Grove where they had even built a string of brothels for white employees only. The majority of the women were "colored."

When I got back to California, my eyes had improved. Since I had put aside a few dollars, I returned to the University. While there, I joined with six young Negro men, representing both town and campus, to form a group we called "The Blood Brothers." There was no political motivation—we simply pledged eternal friendship and proclaimed that if one of us got rich, he was to help the others. "The Blood Brothers" remained angry young men; I was the social rebel among them.

In the West our concepts of how to conduct the fight for equality were still primitive. Even in the East, where Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois had challenged Booker T. Washington's "separate but equal" theory, Negro struggles were developing on a more or less individual basis. Throughout the country and particularly in the West, Negroes were still marginal workers and had little influence on the country's political and industrial development. We had no understanding of how the apparatus of government was used to keep Negro and white divided, nor how it devised and spread the myths of white superiority.

In 1917 my college education came to a temporary halt because of a combination of factors. In the first place, I discovered I could not pay tuition for an engineering course and earn my living at the same time. There were no scholarships available to me. I also objected to the compulsory military training at Berkeley, for which I had neither time nor inclination. For that I was kicked out. Of the young Negroes on the West Coast, so far as I know, I was the only one to come out against World War I, and I did so on the erroneous basis that it was a white man's war.

I was reinstated in the University shortly afterward but I had not completed all the required subjects when I was again dropped because of my irregular attendance. I had to make a new start. Engineering was out of the question. I decided to study law.

We Communists say that capitalism must be eliminated to attain full freedom and equality. Capitalism is a system incapable of solving the basic problems facing the American working people—black or white. . . . Racism serves as a pillar of its existence. . . . That generation which sees capitalism's end and its replacement by socialism will be the first to have the tools necessary to eradicate racist oppression. (*New Program of the CPUSA.*)

## Black Workers and the Class Struggle: Birmingham 1931\*

One day a man I knew by sight, a Black worker, invited me to go somewhere with him. The time was about July, 1931.

I said: "Where you been? Ain't seen you round in a long time. Still in the shop?"

"I got fired."

"What for?"

He said he'd been taking part in the campaign for the Scottsboro Boys. The company had found out about it and fired him. He'd just got back from a conference in New York, where the Scottsboro case was discussed.

I asked him: "What they saying about us down there?"

Well, they wondered why we didn't organize; he had told the conference the southern Negroes felt they didn't have anything to fight with. Members of the conference asked him whether it was easier to organize or to fight, and he told them: "It's easier to organize."

### *I Join the Communist Party*

My friend met me again around September first. He asked me to come to a meeting on September 8 at the home of a fellow named Lee, who worked in the same shop. He said that at this meeting we would organize for action. I still remembered my grandmother saying the Yankees were coming back to finish the job of freeing the Negroes in the South. Every time there was an attack on my people I wondered when that day would come for the people to return from the North to free the Negroes. So when the Scottsboro case was exposed as a frameup, when telegrams started to pour in from New York and other northern states, and cables from all over Europe, then I thought this was the time somebody was coming to help us do something to free ourselves. So at the word *organize* I wanted to join up.

When I got to Lee's house I expected to see a crowded room, but I was shocked to see only those I had been seeing every day in the shop or around in the community. I knew everybody except two

\* The following is a chapter from an as yet unpublished autobiography, relating the author's experiences as a molder in a Birmingham, Alabama foundry in 1931.

from the Mack Wayne pipe shop. The rest were from the Stockham shop: about eight altogether. What kind of a meeting was it? He sat down and began to explain the Scottsboro case: first of all, what it meant to the complete freedom of the Black people. He discussed the jury system in the South, and linked it with the fact that these boys had been given a death sentence by an all-white jury.

He said we had to stop the "legal lynching" of the eight whom they had already sentenced to death. The ninth was a 12-year old who had been sentenced to the penitentiary till he was old enough to be tried for his life. The speaker explained that the Scottsboro case was a part of the overall oppression of our people.

"It's the system itself that brings about these frameups and lynchings," he said. "It's this system that breeds these evils, along with the evils of police brutality and oppression of the Negro people."

He said he wanted every one of us to understand that the system of society we lived under could no longer afford to give the masses of people a livelihood; that the only way to prevent the white and the masses of Black people from struggling together for a common cause was to keep the whites and Blacks divided. One of the most useful devices for keeping the Black and the white masses of workers from recognizing their common interests, he told us, was the concoction that every white woman was in danger of being raped by some Black man, although living evidence in Dixie, he said, proved it was just the other way around.

He gave us a little pamphlet with a map on the back. This map showed the whole area of the Black Belt—parts of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. He showed us that from the beginning of the development of this area by the slaveholders, with the raising of cotton mostly, but also hemp, the Black population outnumbered the white. The Blacks built not only the railroads and the factories; they built the whole South's material wealth with their toil, sweat and blood. And yet we Negroes, he reminded us, enjoyed practically none of the rights of American citizens guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

I said myself: "This man is a Communist!" I was in a Communist meeting and, though nothing exciting was happening at the moment, the idea itself was exciting.

The speaker began to show what he had been leading up to, but when he got to "self-determination" for the Negro in the Black Belt—well, I got lost. What was he talking about, "self-determination?" But I didn't stay lost on that particular point very long. First he went on to explain what he meant by Black Belt. It didn't have anything

to do with the blackness of the people populating that area; it referred, he said, to the rich black soil, which used to be so profitable to the slaveowners with their main crops of cotton. Then he explained that it was in this Black Belt region that the black population outnumbered the white. He told us to look at the map on the cover of our pamphlet. I looked and I could see how parts of the 13 states had been darkened to indicate the Black majority; and these darkened areas were joined from state to state.

He pointed out that in these areas people like us were kept from voting, from running for public office, and generally from taking part in the so-called self-government. It was in this area, I remember saying to myself, where my grandmother and my mother and my brother and I and so many more of us never did get a chance—though we never did quit hoping—to go to school. And where, right there in that depression period, we Blacks were the last being hired and the first being fired (sometimes because we never had a chance in the first place to qualify to hold a good-paying job even if one was offered). It was mostly the Blacks, already existing on the crumbling edge of starvation, the speaker said, that suffered the highest death rates. If they had had any medical care at all, it was just a whisper above being nothing.

When he said that not everybody could be a member of the Communist Party, I wondered if I could be or who among that gathering of eight Black men from the shop could be. To be members, he said, people have to be willing to sacrifice a part of their good times and a part of the energy they put into having a good time, and they have to give this extra time—this time they've sacrificed—to activity among workers who know something's wrong with this system, but don't know *what* is wrong with it. They'll learn from the Communists what's wrong with the system.

I recall that night, sitting there wondering if I would fit in, how I looked at the other fellows and realized not one of them could read and write. I myself had to spell out every word, even T-H-E, before I'd know what it was. The speaker went on to say Communists would spread the Party's message by distributing its leaflets and its newspaper. He said they would hold regular meetings, on time, and pay dues regularly. He emphasized that the Communist Party would expel members who got drunk or were loose in their moral conduct or family life or who were careless in handling finances.

After he had made all these points, all very calm, quiet, and convincing, he stopped. There wasn't much anybody didn't understand. So there wasn't much questioning or discussion—some, but not much. We all eight signed up, each paying 50 cents initiation fee and pledg-

ing 10 cents monthly dues, based on rate of pay. They elected me unit organizer. (I am the only member still living.)

### *We Win a Victory*

In our brief unit meeting that night we agreed our main task would be among the workers in our shop. We'd pick out individual workers to make friends with and, in this way, we said we hoped to be able to build the organization in the Stockham plant. Let me show you what was happening to us on the conveyor system and you'll understand a little better what we were up against.

When I told the foreman, before he put the work on the conveyor, that the price of that hard job we were doing ought not to be cut, he said: "I'm going to see. I'll let you know." Here's how he kept his word, and here is what happened as a result. When the speedup reached its peak, in 1931, they brought in a time-checker, or a time-watcher, and he was to make a report that our wage rates would be based on. I'll come back to him. Remember, we're on the machines now, where each man is capable of turning out triple or more the amount of work he used to do by hand. Are his wages tripled or even doubled? We'll see.

They took the molds off the piece rates at, say, four cents a mold, and instead gave the men a flat hourly wage of 32 cents. If we made more than the required number of molds an hour, each hour, say, for eight hours, we would get placed beside our molds we made that day the letter A. If we went, say, 50 molds above the required 400 in the eight hours' work we would get what was called a primed 30 cents, to be divided between the two or three men on the machines.

As I've said, all of us molders were Black; being Black, we were not recognized as molders by the Stockham Pipe and Fittings Company. It classed us as "machine-runners." Back in the late 1920's at Stockham's, when they had photos taken of the machines the big supers ordered us, the Black molders, to get back from our molding machines and they ordered the little straw bosses up there, like they were running them. I used to wonder what the hell it all meant, but I learned long ago.

I said I'd come back to the time-checkers. This man, with the watch in his hand and his eyes jumping from his watch to us and from us back to his watch, kept track for two days, by the second, of how long it took us to do everything, from going to the toilet or getting a drink of water, to getting back to our machines. On the basis of this two-day check he figured out a rate of so many molds an hour. If he said 25 molds an hour, that's how many we had to produce—I mean good ones—in order to stay out of the red.

But we also had to be at the machines at 6:30 in the morning, even though our time didn't start until seven o'clock.

We had to work until 3:00 P.M., after which we had to clean our machines. It would be 3:15 or 3:30 before we finished, even though our day ended (and our pay) at three o'clock.

We supposedly worked from seven to three, with a half hour for lunch. At No. 1 unit we'd knock off at 11:30 and go back at 12:00; at No. 2 unit they'd knock off at 12:00 and go back at 12:30. But, generally, by the time we'd knock off and run out and try to get a soft drink, before we turned around our 30 minutes was gone, and we'd have to gulp our food as best we could, even as we were hurrying back to the job.

We worked under these conditions, with the foremen cussing and rawhiding the men, until one cold day along about November. I remember it so well for two reasons: it looked like it was going to snow that day; and we held our weekly unit meeting and reported on the conditions in the shop.

A Party representative visited each meeting. This time he was responsible for making that occasion the beginning of a series of happenings I will remember as long as I live. He told us to sit down and write our complaints just like we were writing a letter, "the best you can, for the next meeting," he said. That was what this whole meeting was about.

At the next meeting we had that letter written, telling what the foreman said; how he cussed out John; how one man was doing two men's work; doing it and not getting paid for it; and so on. And we turned it over to the Party representative and he took it with him.

About two weeks later he brought it back printed in the *Southern Worker*, published in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with big headlines telling all about conditions at the Stockham Pipe and Fittings Company plant. Our pride and excitement increased when we found out the letter also appeared in the *Sunday Worker*, which was published in New York. As best we could we read all the papers. We had never before been able to express our anger like this, against these conditions, and we were hopeful that the people in the communities would get so indignant about the conditions in the shop that Stockham's would be compelled to do something about them.

The Party representative gave us all extra copies to distribute among the people and one to put where the company stoolpigeon would get to it—to drop it in his yard.

Another few days passed. One day the supers came worriedly into the shop. They said they didn't want anybody to leave for the bathhouse. "We are going to have a meeting this evening. Nobody changes



until after the meeting.”

I was on the right-hand side of the shop, out in the open, in a broad space near a brick wall and the fence. Everybody was out there, Black molders and white machinists. The assistant superintendent, the superintendent himself, and other supervisory personnel were there, including my boss, Mr. Nibley.

My boss got up and said that they wanted to tell “you men” that, “beginning tomorrow, we don’t want a man to put his hand on a machine before seven o’clock. “If we find a man working on a machine before seven, he’s fired. You all will stop work at 2:45 and clean up your machine by three o’clock and be ready to go to the bathhouse.” He went over that again and again.

I’ll never forget the way that worried boss ended his speech. I like to burst out laughing—did laugh to myself—when he said: “If any foreman cusses at any man here he won’t have any more job here . . . and the same goes for you fellows.” What made it funny, in a crazy sort of way (which meant it wasn’t funny at all), was his lumping “you fellows”—meaning John Bedell, me, and any number of other Black workers in the shop—in the same bag with the superintendents, assistant supers, and straw bosses. Suppose one of these white guys did get fired for cussing us—and chances stand a thousand to one against it—he’d have another job before sundown. But let one of us get fired for “standing up” to or “talking back” to a white “bossman” and we might as well decide to get clean out of the state, because we’d be blackballed at every factory gate for hundreds of miles around.

Anyhow, when the meeting was over the men all went out full of joy. We were saying among ourselves, some of us: “Them papers sure did stir things up!” And: “If they tell us to strike, man, I’m ready.”

Well, Black workers and white workers, naturally, all were openly talking about “this great victory”—talking to anybody and everybody that would listen. Among the first talkers were the Communists. The Party put out leaflets calling on workers to organize Blacks and whites together for higher wages and job security, and for unemployed and social insurance for all unemployed and part-time workers, which was fine. But the inexperienced Party leadership in the South didn’t know how to guard itself or warn us in the unit in the shop to watch out for the trap our enemy has set.

### *The Company Stoolpigeons*

Our information about the Stockham company’s stoolpigeons came from a non-Party friend, the wife of a foundry worker the company

picked for a stoolie, who explained the setup.

First, a trusted Stockham official had the job of supervising the flock of stoolpigeons, who were both white and Black and whose main job was to find out who was behind that “plot” to distribute leaflets on plant property wherever the “plotters” wanted to. Second, the setup consisted of a bunch of spies, our own fellow-workers and shopmates, mostly Black, who were paid \$5 apiece each week on the basis of a report each stoolie pushed through a slot in the pay-window in a sealed envelope. If the stoolie didn’t have anything to report he would write “No news” but would get paid just the same. The envelopes would all be opened by this trusted official.

One of the first eight of us to join the Party that night, I found out later, was the first guy to sign up with the boss to pigeon on us. When that first meeting ended—we recalled this later—and the unit members asked where we’d meet next time, the question was left hanging; nobody was quite sure. But this fellow came to me soon after and said he’d be glad if we held the meeting at his house.

That must have made everything easy for him. No sooner had we all cleared out than he could write his report while everything was fresh in his mind—all the names, who said this or that, who objected—and be ready to stick it in the window when he thought it was most convenient. At the time agreed on he would go to the pay-window, stand in line and get his five bucks.

Looking back on the struggle of those days in the Stockham plant, I can see that, with all its wealth and therefore all its ability to buy spies and stoolpigeons, we ordinary Black workers didn’t come off too badly. This is not the place—and maybe this is not the time—to try to do the kind of analysis that situation and other situations like that will eventually have to have, but I can point out here that our unit structure, in spite of our lack of experience, helped us function as long as we did. And as long as we functioned we were a training school for men that later helped make wonderful labor history down there in Alabama.

We set up throughout the Stockham Pipe and Fittings plants six Communist Party units, each unknown to the others, except to their leaders. My first unit was No. 1; I was organizer of Unit 1, which was responsible for leadership of Units 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. The reason for this kind of setup was simply to protect members from stoolpigeons. A pigeon in Unit 1, say, wouldn’t be able to stool on workers that had written and distributed a leaflet about a straw boss cussing out a worker in Unit 3.

As it happened, our policy paid off well. The one that stooled on us in Unit One caused some damage when he handed in all the

members' names, but that damage was confined to one unit. He didn't know anything about the other five. Though he did his dirty little job and got his five bucks reward, he didn't know that a non-Party acquaintance of his had exposed him to us before the next meeting. When he asked where it was being held, nobody seemed to have found out yet.

When Bedell was fired we workers in the shop were upset. What could we do to stop these firings? The shops were operating only two or three days a week during this blistery-cold January of 1932, with snow flurries whipping across Birmingham. Black molders on the conveyors were earning 30 cents an hour base pay.

I was authorized to get in touch with a Party section organizer from New York, a white comrade named Burns, and after he had heard the whole long series of happenings in the shop, he said we should call a meeting of Unit 1 for Saturday morning. He'd be there. In the meantime we notified the leaders of the five other units, so when he came on that cloudy, snowy Saturday morning, our whole leadership met him. We were able to give him all the facts—the names of the stoolpigeons, what jobs they worked on, where they lived—everything. Burns wrote all this information down.

Then we planned that Burns would write a leaflet and get it back to us, and that we would distribute it in our community that night. He got the leaflets back to us as he had promised. We waited until dark, and it being biting cold, we were not worried about running into any of our neighbors or acquaintances.

These hundreds of leaflets we clutched in our frostbitten fingers explained the company's stoolpigeon setup.

Another part of his leaflet which on that dark, cold night we put on everybody's porch in our community—including, particularly, the porches of the six stoolpigeons—told the name of each one of these six men, what department he worked in and the kind of job he worked on. And it gave his home address. After we had put them on all the porches and in the yards, we put them on the church steps and under the church doors.

It was one of the most satisfying leaflet distributions I'd ever had anything to do with.

## William Z. Foster: A Tribute

*(Editor's Note: February 25, 1971 marks the 90th anniversary of the birth of William Z. Foster, former Chairman of the Communist Party USA and noted working-class leader. This article and the one which follows pay tribute to Comrade Foster on this occasion.)*

William Z. Foster was the very best that the U.S. working class has produced. He was an American of a special mold. In many ways he was true to form as an average U.S. worker, but there was an important difference. He was very much part of his times but he was also very much ahead of his times. He was an American but he was also a world citizen. He was a militant fighter for reforms, but he was, above all, a revolutionary. He was a keen student of history but he left deep footprints in the sands of history. He was a worker but also an intellectual, an organizer but also a student and teacher.

Because Foster was of a special mold these were not contradictions in his life. In fact, he was of a special mold because he saw the unity, the interrelationship of these seemingly contradictory factors. Foster understood the opposites but he also saw the unity of the opposites in life. Because of this Foster was able to see clearly the elements of the future as they presented themselves in the present. He was able to see the revolutionary essence in the struggle for reforms. For Comrade Foster the United States was a very special entity but it was also only one feature of the world scene.

William Z. Foster was of a special mold because his thoughts were based on and guided by a science—a science of the revolutionary processes, the science of Marxism-Leninism. It was this science that made it possible for Foster to see the future as it was taking root in the present. In turn, this insight into the future gave him a deeper insight into the present of his time.

In most ways Foster was a typical worker—but he stood out in the crowd. He was a trade union leader in the struggle for reforms, but he was a leader with a difference, because he constantly probed the revolutionary essence of these struggles. He was a fighter for reform but he was no reformist.

Foster was a leader in the struggle for world peace but he was a leader with a difference, because he saw and understood the imperialist essence of U.S. foreign policy. He fought it because it was unjust. With the same determination he supported the struggles of

the oppressed peoples for liberation the world over.

Foster was a stubborn fighter against racism—but he was a fighter with a difference, because he understood that the roots of the racist policies and practices lay in the very essence of capitalism, in the system of exploitation for private profit.

Foster was of a special mold. His was a lifetime commitment to the working class struggles. His was a lifetime of dedication to the revolutionary movement. The struggle against capitalism and the struggle for socialism were the very meaning of his life.

Foster was a clear thinker, brilliant organizer and strike leader. Theory and practice were not separate compartments for Bill Foster. He was a resourceful Marxist-Leninist.

The turn of the century was a turning point for the United States as a nation. It marked a qualitative leap in its industrial development. It marked a new stage in its development as an imperialist power. In a sense it also marked a qualitative turning point in Foster's life. These two factors are interrelated. The change in Foster's life was a reaction to the challenge of the growth of monopoly capitalism and U.S. imperialism. He was a revolutionary product of the waves of radicalization that swept the ranks of the working class at that time. The radicalization of the working class was a reaction to the rising rate of its exploitation by monopoly capitalism. Foster's ideas were molded in the rising waves of militant mass struggles against the giant corporations and trusts, and against the new levels of exploitation that resulted from the growth of these industrial empires based on mass production. It was this new reality of huge trusts and mass production that convinced Foster of the need to organize militant mass industrial trade unions. He saw the need for unions to base their policies on the class struggle. He became the leader in the fight against all policies based on class collaboration. He was convinced early in life that one either followed a policy of struggle against the monopoly corporations or submitted in class collaboration.

Foster became the leading advocate of militant class policies. As the working class matured Foster grew with his class. He was a part of the class, but he marched at its head. It was not an accident of history. When Foster formally joined the organized ranks of the Marxists a rather large number of militant trade unionists joined the Communist Party with him. This gave the Party and Marxism-Leninism a solid working-class base. Thus Foster participated in and led the first breakthrough of Marxism-Leninism in the ranks of the U.S. workers.

Foster was a leader in the trade union movement, but he was a revolutionary. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first successful

breakthrough in establishing working-class power in a world totally dominated by capitalism was a landmark in Foster's life. This was one of those explosive historic events that molded the lives of tens of millions throughout the world overnight. It resulted in a qualitative leap in the revolutionary process of human thought. The radical, progressive and, of course, the revolutionary forces rejoiced at the birth of the first socialist state, the Soviet Union.

But for people like Foster it was more than an electrifying event. What interested Foster most were the struggles, the tactics, the strategic concepts, the slogans, the forms of struggle, all of the thousands of experiences that led to the revolutionary act of overthrowing the capitalist-feudal system and the setting up of a working-class power—a socialist state.

What interested Foster was the theory—the further development of the science of revolution. The answers to these questions Foster found in the contributions of the leader of the struggles that gave birth to the October revolution—in the writings and speeches of V. I. Lenin.

This was the second big turning point in Foster's life. From that point on he became a student, an advocate and a leading practitioner of Marxism-Leninism. Foster became one of the world's recognized Marxist-Leninist leaders.

Foster's vast experiences in struggle and his study of Marxism-Leninism convinced him of the need for a working-class revolutionary party. He joined the Communist Party. He remained a member until his death. He very quickly became one of its outstanding leaders. He was the National Chairman of the Party for many years.

Foster made many important contributions in the field of strategy, tactics and theory. His pamphlets on trade union organization and strikes remain brilliant and fully valid manuals for today's trade unions. His *Outline History of the World Trade Union Movement*, *The Negro People in American History*, *History of the Communist Party of the United States*, and *History of the Three Internationals* are important contributions and useful guides to the study of history.

There are many themes that run through Foster's life—his emphasis on a class approach, on internationalism—and many others. But if there is any one theme that stands out, I believe it would be his stubborn and consistent struggle against opportunism. This is a clear theme at all stages of his political and ideological development. Even his weaknesses or mistakes are very closely related to this theme.

Without doubt Foster could have emerged as the elected top leader of the U.S. trade union movement if he had closed his eyes to the opportunism that was destroying the trade unions as working-class organizations. But Foster made this opportunism an issue. While

fighting to build the trade unions he simultaneously took up the fight against the Right-wing opportunism of class collaboration. He nailed the collaborationist policies as policies of sellout and betrayal. He fought against the concept of "business unionism."

Right from the beginning, Foster and the Communists fought against the policy of trade unions supporting capitalism as a system. To support capitalism is to support the exploitation of workers. To endorse exploitation of workers is to endorse class collaboration. To endorse class collaboration is to sell out the workers' class interests.

The basis for the policies of opportunism was always to be found in the craft unions based on the skilled trades. Foster's struggle to organize the mass production workers into industrial unions was an effort to break the power of the corporations, but it was also an attempt to break the grip of the opportunist leaders of the craft unions on labor. It was a struggle against the base of opportunism.

The struggle against the influences of opportunism in the ranks of the trade union movement will remain with us till the end of capitalism. It is an important feature of the class struggle. The breeding of opportunism is the most effective capitalist class weapon. The effectiveness of trade unions can be measured by how the struggle against opportunism is conducted. Foster was an unremitting and inspiring leader in this struggle.

Some of the key factors in the struggle against opportunism in the trade union movement are: an active rank-and-file movement, the struggle against racism and for black and white class unity, and the basic class approach to all questions. Foster drew these conclusions from his early experiences. They became lifetime principles for him.

One could possibly have some differences with Foster's methods in the struggle against opportunism within the trade union movement. The problem is not that he conducted the struggle with great vigor, but is rather a possible weakness in tactics. There were moments when he did not give enough attention to presenting his views in such a way as to gain the support of larger numbers of the rank and file.

In later years, but with the same vigor, Foster took on the fight against opportunism as it was expressed in the Social Democratic movement. He sharply criticized the class collaborationist policies of such "socialists" as David Dubinsky and others who were leaders of trade unions. He condemned their slanderous anti-Sovietism, their splitting tactics and their refusal to join in united efforts against the forces of fascism and reaction. He criticized their non-revolutionary, reformist policies. It is possible that Foster did not always present his arguments in a manner that would convince the greatest numbers of followers of the Social Democrats. It is a fact that when the leaders of

the Socialist parties throughout the world refused to join in uniting the efforts of the working class and the people, this helped fascism. However, it was not necessary or helpful to label them as "social fascists." It was necessary to expose their divisive policies but to do so without such labels.

Foster continued his vigilance against opportunism within the Communist Party. Throughout his years in the leadership of the Communist Party Foster was always associated with the forces who fought the influences of opportunism. Here again it is possible to say that at times this led to some one-sidedness. But this is very much secondary to his correct fight against opportunism. His speech at the 16th Convention of the Communist Party, dealing with the revisionist assault at that time, is very much in this tradition. He said:

Thus, this Right tendency is a direct political descendant of the Lovestone opportunism of the boom 1920's and the Browder revisionism of the boom 1940's. The Right trend manifests itself by a softening of the Party's theory and fighting policies, and it points in the direction of class collaboration. It has worsened all the problems that the Party has had to contend with during the past period. *Its main outlook is for a minimum of class struggle; it seeks to emasculate Marxism-Leninism; it plays down the Negro question, and it makes the parliamentary road to socialism appear as a mild evolutionary advance, instead of the sharp class struggle that it will be. . . .*

The Right tendency in the Party, like that of Lovestone and Browder before it, tends to over-estimate the strength of American imperialism. It plays down the effects of the general crisis of world capitalism, so far as the United States is concerned. For the Right, too, the possibility of a serious American economic crisis is virtually excluded. The inevitable conclusion from such ideas is perspective of little class struggle. . . . (*Proceedings, 16th National Convention, Communist Party, U.S.A., New Century Publishers, New York, 1957, p. 64. Emphasis added.*)

History has given William Z. Foster a "certificate of meritorious service" to the working class and the revolutionary movement.

The Communist Party is extremely proud of Comrade William Z. Foster. He was the very best our working class has produced.

The teachings of William Z. Foster will continue to grow in significance, because he was a man not only of his time but also of the future. The future has unfolded very much as Foster saw it. The world revolutionary process has gathered ever new forces and momentum.

On this, his 90th birthday we declare that we will continue to struggle to live up to his high expectations. A socialist United States will be William Z. Foster's monument.

## A Great Working-Class Leader

*I've always remembered something that William Z. Foster once said: "If you hold fast to one thing you will never make the big mistakes. You may make little mistakes, but not the big ones. That thing is the class—our class—the working class."*

*Foster held fast to the working class and the class approach to all questions throughout his life. And that approach is guiding our party—the Communist Party—today.*

*I kept this in mind while in prison. One cannot be discouraged when he keeps his class in mind.*

*(Gus Hall in The Daily World, October 6, 1970)*

Many of us will be thinking of William Z. Foster on his ninetieth birthday on February 25. But we cannot think of Foster without thinking of the class—and the Party—to which he gave his life. Every fiber of Foster's being belonged to the working class. He trained himself to serve it. He became a great workers' organizer—perhaps America's best. He was on the front lines against imperialism all his party life. And he developed into an outstanding Marxist-Leninist writer, who fought against the Party's enemies outside its ranks and against revisionists within.

There was a sweep to Foster's mind. His outlook embraced the entire working class. And he concentrated his work on the men and women in the biggest plants and the biggest industries.

Foster was not only a splendid fighter. He was a splendid teacher as well. He trained an entire generation of trade union activists in the Communist Party. And the working class reaped a fine harvest. The young leaders, whom he trained, led the mass struggles that won social security during the great depression of the 1930's. They did the front-line organizing that built the new industrial unions in the steel mills, the automobile plants, the rubber factories, the big electrical equipment works, on the merchant ships and in other basic industries. They brought some democracy into the closed company towns of the big trusts. And I cannot think of the CIO and its millions of members without thinking of William Z. Foster and his pupils.

The entire American people owes a great debt to these men. They set back the fascists on American soil. They helped to unite American workers against Hitler in the Second World War. They changed American history at a most critical time.

Foster joined the Communist Party after three months in revolutionary Russia in 1921. He was then 40 years old and a notable labor leader. He had already led national struggles against the meat packing trust and the giant steel companies. But Foster was not a pure and simple trade unionist. His goal had been a working-class revolution since he became a Socialist at 19. And he went to the Russian workers to learn how they did it.

In Russia Foster found a land stricken by hunger, typhus and the wreckage of war and counter-revolution. But he also found victory. He saw where the workers and peasants were going under the guidance of the Communist Party. And that visit was a turning point in his life. He was profoundly impressed by Lenin, the great revolutionary leader. He discarded his syndicalist theories as he listened to Lenin and studied the Russian revolution. He found that he had erred in thinking that the trade unions could make a revolution by themselves. He discovered that victory was impossible without a revolutionary political party. And he returned to the United States to tell trade unionists what he had learned in many articles and speeches.

### *"Pages from a Worker's Life"*

Foster was born in Taunton, Mass., but grew up in Philadelphia in an Irish slum. He came from a fighting Irish family. His father, James Foster, was a member of the revolutionary Fenian Brotherhood, and he had joined the British army for the purpose of recruiting revolutionists among Irish soldiers. He fled to America when the plot failed, but was often unemployed. So young Bill began bringing in pennies as a newsboy at 7, was a full-time worker at 10 and worked in many basic industries in the next 26 years.

Foster tells about his industrial experiences in an autobiography that has become a proletarian literary classic. This is *Pages From a Worker's Life*. The 117 episodes in the book are told so simply that the art isn't evident at first. But these stories are finely carved gems, that glow with love for the writer's fellow workers and hatred for their enemies.

America had produced nothing like Foster's *Pages*. Its rich emotional quality and its precise but picturesque descriptions of life and work could only come from a Marxist, who had lived the life he was describing. In this book the man and the art are inseparable.

The future chairman of the Communist Party was studying life in the raw as he sailed the seas, rode the freights and toiled in almost every major industry. He studied racism, for example, in the Deep South, and revolted against it. And when he wrote his impressive book *The Negro People in American History* in his latter years he

was undoubtedly thinking of the following tragedy:

A young Black migratory worker had fallen under the wheels of a freight train in Jacksonville, Florida. One arm was gone. A leg hung by a shred. His life might have been saved. And one feels young Bill Foster's anger and grief when the white railroad watchman slammed the door of his shack as Foster tried to bring the victim in.

The scene shifts to a logging camp in the Florida backwoods where white and Black debt slaves felled trees together. And one night a band of drunken "night riders" galloped in with pistols blazing. They were hunting Black men. The Black workers fled to the forest, however, and the frustrated lynchers galloped away.

This was a peonage camp. Runaways were arrested and farmed out to contractors in the turpentine camps. And Foster was lucky in catching a freight train and getting away—without pay.

Young Bill Foster, meanwhile, was spending as much time with his books as 10- and 12-hour work days allowed. At 13 he had read a half dozen histories of the French revolution. In his later teens he lost all belief in the supernatural after reading Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man*. And at 20, as a deep-water sailor, he was devouring many literary and historical works.

Life was hard on the square-rigged sailing ships. The diet was the "salted horse and flinty bread" that John Masefield rhymed about in his Salt Water Ballads. Skippers were as flinty as the bread, and had to be tamed by job action sometimes. Bunks were awash in heavy seas. The rigging the men clung to was rotten sometimes. And Foster barely survived when a monster sea swept over the *Pegasus* as she was rounding Cape Horn in a storm. Ole, the Norwegian, and Frenchie, who were working beside Bill, were washed overboard and not seen again.

But Foster loved the sea none the less. One of his most poetic chapters—*The Lure of the Sea*—expresses his delight in the "glorious sunrises and sunsets," the "shimmering flying fish," the "playful porpoises," the "leaping tuna," the "majestic whale" and other wonders of the deep.

He was happiest, however, in "intimate bonds of friendship" with his shipmates. He admired their courage and their "craftsmen's pride" in their ships. He enjoyed the peoples he met in Africa, Asia, Australia and Latin America. And he would never have left the sea, he said, if the class struggle had not called him ashore.

The class struggle was bitter. The police were murderous. The unions were weak when the century was young. For years Foster got no salary or railroad fare on his organizing tours. He traveled on top of freight trains, on "the rods" beneath the cars or in the "blind

baggage" of passenger trains behind the coal tender. He had learned these arts at the risk of his life as a migratory worker. His descriptions of hobo travel in the *Pages* surpass those of Jack London. And they are full of sympathy for the men who fell under the wheels or were shot by railroad "bulls."

The Industrial Workers of the World—the I.W.W.—a Left syndicalist movement, was surging forward. In 1909 Foster broke with the Right-wing Socialist leaders, joined the I.W.W. and served two months in prison in Spokane, Washington, during a struggle for the right to hold street meetings. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and hundreds of other workers were imprisoned with him.

In 1910 Foster went to Paris as an unpaid correspondent for *Solidarity*, the I.W.W.'s national organ. He taught himself to write, he told me, to help his organizing work. And he multiplied his influence in later years by way of the printed word.

I have a file of this overseas correspondence. The high point was Foster's report of the 1910 strike against the Rothschild railroad and several other French lines. He admired the militancy of the French workers, but tells how the strike was broken by two hostile forces. One was the military power of Premier Aristide Briand. The other was a group of Right-wing labor leaders who kept half the railroads at work.

In Germany Foster saw the fighting quality of the unions decaying under the pressure of Karl Legien, the revisionist Socialist labor chief.

Foster came back to the United States in a year with a working knowledge of French and German. He also brought back an intimate knowledge of French and German workers. His sense of international solidarity was sharpened. And he now understood that revolutionists must work inside the mass conservative unions and not isolate themselves in small Leftist rival organizations as the I.W.W.'s were doing.

Foster got this constructive idea in France. But he also—to his future regret—was influenced in the wrong way by the syndicalists, who dominated much of the French labor movement. They confirmed him in the I.W.W. error that revolutionists do not need political parties.

#### *Organizing the Unorganized*

In 1912 Foster left the I.W.W. and began a long campaign to bring all progressive workers back into the established unions. To do this he organized the Syndicalist League of North America with the help of such revolutionary unionists as Jack Johnstone, his son-in-law Joe Manley, and Sam Hammersmark. And he traveled 6,000 miles by freight cars on a winter organizing tour in 1912-1913. The

League had some limited success, but lasted only two years. Foster continued his campaign, however, from his new base in Chicago, where he was a leading member of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen. He won the respect of the leaders of the Chicago Federation of Labor—then a progressive trade union council. And in 1917 he got the Federation's backing for a plan to unionize the nation's non-union meat packing industry.

The meat packing "jungle" of Chicago that Upton Sinclair had described was the first front attacked. Its Black and foreign-born workers were terribly exploited. But the situation was favorable. The First World War had begun. The meat industry was booming. And a stockyards council of a dozen unions was organized with Foster as secretary.

This council was a substitute for industrial unionism, which craft union bureaucrats wouldn't accept. It brought solidarity, however, and victory came quickly, to the surprise of President Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor. Workers swarmed into the unions in Chicago and elsewhere. Local strikes were beginning. And Foster was preparing for a national strike in wartime when the government set up arbitration machinery. The packers hoped to win, but the arbitrator didn't dare to sell out the workers. The 8-hour day was granted and 85 per cent of the unions' demands were won.

This victory inspired workers everywhere. Foster now determined to unionize the trustified steel industry. In this campaign the working class would take the offensive, in contrast to the defensive struggles that followed in other industries after the war.

Conditions were terrible in the steel towns where immigrant workers were policed by hired gunmen. Steel workers toiled 12 hours a day. Many had an 84-hour, seven-day week, with a 24-hour "turn" every other Sunday. Only a few thousand out of 500,000 men were union members. And Gompers thought nothing could be done.

But Foster knew the steel workers could win if they got enough backing. And he proceeded to organize the first national strike in steel. He has told the story of that struggle in a splendid report that is a model of simplicity and clarity. This was *The Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons*, a volume of 265 pages.

Foster got official sanction for the drive at the AFL convention in St. Paul in June, 1918. But the drive was delayed by Gompers and other sabotaging officials. A National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers was finally set up by 24 international unions. But sabotage continued when Foster was given only \$2,400—\$100 from each participating union—and a handful of organizers to start the drive.

This did not stop Foster. The chance to win a quick victory in wartime when steel demand was high was lost. But he started where he could. He had the Chicago Federation of Labor behind him. And his faith in the rank and file was justified when he began the drive in the Chicago area and thousands of steel workers "stormed into the unions."

Judge Elbert Gary, the chairman of U.S. Steel, then tried to confuse the workers by granting a "basic 8-hour day" and wage increase. Men would still toil 12 hours at furnaces and rolls, but they would get time and a half for the last four hours. This meant a wage rise of 16 2/3 per cent. This wage increase was "a testimonial to the power of the unions," said Foster.

The committee's campaign headquarters was now transferred to Pittsburgh, the great "Iron City." The strike began on September 22, 1919 after President Woodrow Wilson and Gompers tried to delay it. But delay was impossible. Thirty thousand union men had been fired and Gary had refused to negotiate. We will quote from what Mary Heaton Vorse said of the strike leader in her book, *Men and Steel*, after she visited Foster's small one-room headquarters in the Magee Building:

Foster . . . can work from morning to night, interrupt his work to receive a hundred people, and never turn a hair. He is composed, confident, unemphatic and imperishably unruffled. The waves of the strike break around him, there come to him the incessant news of arrests, there come daily multitudinous problems for decisions. All the minutiae of this strike flung over the surface of the whole country, involving the destinies of the men of a whole great industry come to him. Never for a moment does Foster hasten his tempo.

One of the reasons for this is that he seems completely without ego. Foster never thinks of Foster. . . . Absorbed completely in the ceaseless stream of detail which confronts him. A ceaseless stream whose sum spells the fate of 500,000 men, and those dependent upon them.

In Foster's strike report is the photo of a murdered grandmother—Fannie Sellins. Her skull was crushed flat by gun butts after she organized three mills in the Allegheny Valley. She was one of 22 martyred strikers and strike organizers. Hundreds were clubbed. Thousands were arrested. Foster himself was kidnaped and threatened with death. Strike meetings were forbidden. "Jesus Christ could not speak for the A. F. of L. in Duquesne," said Mayor Crawford, a banker. And tens of thousands of deputy sheriffs and 4,000 regular army troops patrolled the struck towns.

"Our great war leaders promised us the New Freedoms," wrote Foster. "They have given us the White Terror."

Worst of all was the treachery of Gompers and some other craft union leaders, who withheld funds. But the strike went on for three and a half months with the help of gifts from the needle trades unions and other labor bodies. Its strength was greatest among the unskilled workers from Eastern and Southern Europe. And Foster contended that the strike was not really lost. Gary was compelled to grant a real 8-hour day not long after. And the groundwork was laid for the CIO steel victory that came later.

I think no other strike leader ever accomplished so much under such enormous difficulties.

#### *Foster and the T.U.E.L.*

But Foster's most lasting work was in the Communist Party. He brought a complete working-class outlook—he had no other—into the Party. And he learned from Lenin the close relationship that exists between the working class and its vanguard party.

After Foster grasped the significance of the Party for the working class he never forgot it. This understanding guided all his party actions. And he gave immense service by turning the face of the Party to the workers in the big industrial enterprises. This was the policy of industrial concentration—a policy we cherish today.

Foster had much confidence in AFL militants. He could not have organized the packinghouse and steel workers without them. And a year before he entered the Party he established an organization to carry on their work inside the big unions. This was the Trade Union Educational League, which became a useful instrument in the Party's activities among industrial workers.

The T.U.E.L. was criticized at the beginning by many Left-wingers who opposed working in the AFL. But it got invaluable help from Lenin's booklet "*Left-Ling Communism, an Infantile Disorder*." In this classic Marxist work Lenin castigated revolutionists who refused to work inside conservative unions. This policy of infantile Leftism abandoned backward workers to the influence of the "agents of the bourgeoisie" in the labor movement, Lenin said.

Foster brought most of his T.U.E.L. comrades into the Party with him. Among them were Joe Manley, a structural iron worker, and Sam Hammersmark. Both had been key figures in the steel strike. Another recruit from the T.U.E.L. was Jack Johnstone, who was Foster's most effective organizer in the packinghouse campaign. These comrades helped the Party industrial work immensely with the aid of experienced unionists like Charles Krumbain who were

already in the Party.

The T.U.E.L. not only fought dual unionism. It also repudiated Gompers' policies of class collaboration. It advocated the amalgamation of related craft unions. It urged the building of a Labor Party and the organization of the unorganized. And it ardently called for recognition of Soviet Russia.

T.U.E.L. leaflets went to thousands of trade unionists. It had its own magazine, *The Labor Herald*. And it played a big role in the defensive AFL strikes that swept U.S. industry in the early 1920's.

I spent three months among the miners in the national coal strike of 1922. And I remember how the T.U.E.L. and its friends saved the United Mine Workers from defeat. President Frank Farrington of the Illinois district, an agent of the Peabody Coal Company, was about to order 70,000 workers back to work under a separate district agreement. This treachery would have wrecked the national strike. But Farrington's plot was foiled when Dan Slinger, N. Corbishley and other T.U.E.L. miners called big protest meetings. And in Western Pennsylvania I saw Tom Myerscough and other militants calling the unorganized steel company miners out on strike. These reinforcements saved the union. Myerscough joined the Party soon after.

The T.U.E.L. and the Party were fighting hard for 400,000 striking railroad shop workers that same year. Foster spoke at scores of meetings during a national tour. And he had barely settled in a hotel room in Denver when he was kidnaped by Colorado Rangers. The kidnapers were led by Pat Hamrock, a notorious thug, who took part in the Ludlow Massacre of women and children during a strike in the Rockefeller coal pits in 1914. The kidnapers drove Foster into Wyoming, dumped him out on a deserted plain, and threatened to kill him if he came back. But Foster came back—and held his Denver meeting.

Meanwhile the T.U.E.L., with Foster as secretary, was winning much labor support for its three main demands—amalgamation, a Labor Party and Soviet recognition. Foster reported that "more than 2,000,000 workers, or about half the organized trade union movement, responded to the T.U.E.L. amalgamation slogan."

Then President Harding's government hit back. Many delegates to the Party's 1922 convention in Bridgeman, Michigan, were arrested. Foster got a hung jury in the first trial that followed, but C. E. Ruthenberg, the Party's general secretary, was convicted.

Gompers and other AFL red baiters were attacking Foster and other Communist unionists at the same time. The expulsion of William F. Dunne, the delegate from Butte, Montana, and a well known Communist, was the chief business before the AFL conven-



tion in Portland, Oregon, which I covered in 1923. T.U.E.L. influence was evident, however, when five well-known labor leaders made speeches for Soviet recognition.

The red baiters and wreckers had some successes, however. John Fitzpatrick, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, had worked closely with Foster and other Communists in calling a convention to form a Labor Party. Gompers now moved in for the kill by threatening to cut off half the Chicago Federation's subsidy and to reorganize the Federation. Fitzpatrick surrendered. And when the convention met in Chicago in July, 1923, Fitzpatrick walked out. He later repudiated his former support of amalgamation and Soviet recognition.

A gunman fired three shots at Foster that year as he was speaking in Chicago's Carmen's Auditorium against the expulsion of Communists from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

This was a shameful era. The unions were losing hundreds of thousands of members as Right-wing leaders followed policies of gangsterism, class collaboration and retreat before the bosses' offensives. Officials were putting huge sums into labor banks and other forms of "Labor Capitalism" that soon failed. Foster exposed these class crimes in his book, *Misleaders of Labor*.

But the T.U.E.L., led by Foster, kept up the struggle on the industrial front. Twelve thousand furriers won the 40-hour week in a 17-week strike under Communist leaders. And the T.U.E.L. led a series of long strikes in textile mills that the AFL textile union ignored. Thus 15,000 woolen workers defeated a wage cut in a long strike in Passaic, New Jersey in 1926 and 1927. Twenty-five thousand cotton mill workers partly defeated a 10 per cent cut in a strike in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1928. And in 1929 the T.U.E.L.'s successor, the Trade Union Unity League, led a strike in Gastonia, North Carolina that inspired a series of strikes in other big Southern textile mills.

Foster wanted the Party to lead an all-Southern textile struggle by throwing all its field organizers into the fight. But Jay Lovestone, the future CIA agent, was general secretary of the Communist Party then and "scoffed at this proposal," said Foster. Gastonia was isolated. Its strike headquarters were raided by armed men. Chief of Police Aderholt was killed. Seven strike leaders got long prison terms and the strike was broken.

Lovestone—a congenital factionalist—was expelled from the Party later that year after a struggle led by Foster, who exposed his revisionist theory of "American exceptionalism." This false theory asserted that America's powerful capitalism would be immune to a serious

economic crisis, and that no sharpening of the class struggle was to be expected. America's greatest economic crisis began several months afterwards.

Foster always gave special attention to coal miners. In 1927 the Party's T.U.E.L. forces had launched a massive relief campaign in the coal fields, where the United Mine Workers union was being defeated in a long strike. The relief campaign helped to keep the miners' fighting spirit alive. And in 1931 Foster led a five months' strike of 30,000 miners in Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and the West Virginia panhandle. The strike was conducted under the banner of the Trade Union Unity League. And it was the hardest-fought strike in the depths of the great depression.

Joseph North, who reported the strike, described Foster's methods of work. Every morning at eight—and never a minute later—Foster called all organizers together. Each organizer was responsible for a mine, and excuses were not easily accepted. But Foster was pushing himself day and night after spending six months in prison.

Prison followed an unemployment demonstration of 110,000 workers—the biggest America had ever seen—held on New York City's Union Square on March 6, 1930. This was the beginning of the Party's great movement to organize the unemployed that eventually involved millions of people. And Foster, Robert Minor, Israel Amter and Harry Raymond were arrested after presenting demands at City Hall.

Foster has described his life on Welfare Island in dramatic chapters of *Pages from a Worker's Life*. They give a precise and colorful account of America's shocking prison conditions.

Foster needed rest after the unremitting strains of preceding years. Instead he plunged into the presidential campaign of 1932 as head of the Party's ticket. His running mate was James W. Ford, an outstanding Black Communist leader. And for the first time in American history, black and white faces appeared on the same presidential posters from coast to coast.

The Party's candidate was its best-known mass leader. He had spoken at hundreds of meetings during his previous presidential tours in 1924 and 1928. In these meetings he crusaded against the persecution of America's Black citizens. And I heard him lashing disfranchisement, lynchings and peonage in a hall in Atlanta, Ga., in 1928 while racist cops stood at the door.

#### *Theoretician and Writer*

Foster had spoken to about half a million people in three presidential tours when he was stricken by an almost fatal heart attack in Moline, Ill. This was in the fourth month of the 1932 campaign. He could

never make those night-after-night speaking tours again. But his usefulness didn't cease. I used to listen to him as he met with the CIO's Communist organizers when I was covering the steel drive in the Pittsburgh area in 1936. They were men he had trained. They loved and respected their teacher. They listened intently to his advice on strategy and tactics. They studied his pamphlets on organizing methods and put them into practice. And Foster must be regarded as one of the fathers of the CIO steel union.

He became chairman of the Party after recovering from his heart attack.

A host of newspaper articles, many pamphlets and a series of important books came from Foster's pen in his remaining 25 years. They teem with love for the working class and its vanguard party. And one can give special emphasis to his defense of the Party and Marxism-Leninism against a leading revisionist and liquidator in 1944 and 1945. That was General Secretary Earl Browder—later expelled—who was eventually to become the "Consultant on Communism" for the Fund for the Republic, a branch of the Ford Foundation. Foster also played a leading role in the defense of the Party against a group of revisionists and liquidators led by John Gates, in 1956.

"My life in the labor, Left-wing and Communist movement has been a very happy one," said Foster in one of his post-war books, *The Twilight of Capitalism*. He added:

... If I were starting out my life all over again, I would take the same course . . . ; but naturally I would try to bypass the many political mistakes that I have made.

One thing I would surely do, despite the press of practical work, would be to . . . indulge more . . . in the reading of the science and history that I love so much. This is one thing that the youth in the labor and Communist movement should most resolutely strive to accomplish—to combine the theoretical with the practical, to find time for lots of solid reading, notwithstanding the most urgent business of the day-to-day struggle.

Foster's reading was enormous, nevertheless. And his wide Marxist culture is reflected in the historical books he wrote after government doctors admitted that he was too ill to go on trial in 1949 with his eleven comrades under the fascist Smith Act. These books are *Outline Political History of the Americas*, *History of the Communist Party of the United States*, *History of the Three Internationals*, *Outline History of the World Labor Movement*, and *The Negro People in American History*. All these books were issued by International Publishers.

Foster suffered a stroke in 1957 and was made chairman emeritus at the Party's national convention in 1959.

His last months in a Moscow sanitarium are described in a moving chapter by two Soviet writers, Sergei Boldyrev and Alexei Grechukhin. It appears in *Lenin's Comrades-In-Arms*, (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969). On his eightieth birthday he was visited by Paul Robeson, General Semyon Budyonny, the hero of the Russian Civil War, Boris Polevoi, the writer, and other friends and admirers.

Foster still tried to write but his strength was failing. His last thoughts were for his Party. "I admire Gus Hall," he told friends who gathered around him. "It was right that he should have become the general secretary of our Party. Gus was a worker himself for many years and he knows the importance of unity."

Foster died on September 1, 1961. An immense crowd was present at memorial services on Red Square, which I attended. And his ashes were laid in Waldheim Cemetery, where the leaders of the struggle for the eight-hour day, who were martyred in 1887, are buried.

*Note:* The following books by William Z. Foster are currently in print and may be obtained at your local progressive bookshop or from International Publishers, 381 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10016:

*Pages From a Worker's Life*, cloth \$6.95, paper \$2.65.

*American Trade Unionism*, cloth \$6.95, paper \$2.25.

*The Negro People in American History*, cloth \$8.50, paper \$3.45.

In the present campaign to organize the steel industry, the C.I.O. organizers would do well to pay close attention to the lessons of trade union democracy that the 1919 strike has to teach. This is all the more necessary because one of the weaknesses of the C.I.O. leadership is a lack of trade union democracy in their unions.

... A whole series of rank-and-file committees, activities, etc., should be developed, which will actually draw in large masses of workers as practical organizers. . . . Such measures would increase the workers' confidence in the movement and would enable them to use their boundless energy and militancy for its upbuilding. (William Z. Foster, *Unionizing Steel*, Workers Library Publishers, New York, 1936.)

HERBERT APTHEKER

## Southerners on Southern History

The very epitome of The Myth is "the South." First, the South as homogeneous—allegedly Anglo-Saxon, with those whites having other national origins neglected and the Black people ignored; and the ignoring of the Afro-Americans as human beings, decisive to the South, was central to the content of the Myth. Second, having in mind now the white South, presenting it as monolithic; monolithic not only in terms of being Anglo-Saxon but also socially placid, non-antagonistic, united. Third, the South as paternalistic, and here the Black entered—as a half-formed child, as an object, as a "burden," as a "problem," best handled by those who "understood," who really "cared," his "best friends." Fourth, the South as chivalrous (again, of course, this ignored Black women) with a special regard for (white) women whose delicacy, "purity," selfless devotion and ethereal quality were not merely sublime but quite divine.

Afro-Americans for centuries have exposed the Myth for the fantastic lie it has been and is; without a peer in the massiveness and effectiveness of this effort was, of course, the late Dr. Du Bois. Southern whites, too, in significant numbers have developed a literature of exposure and condemnation; an anthology of such writings through the generations would have great value and an analytical and descriptive volume devoted to that literature is urgently needed.

In the present period we are witnessing the accumulation of perceptive, realistic and critical analyses of the Myth of the "South" from rather young white Southern men and women; since that Myth has been an important bulwark of the status quo, such dissent by such persons is yet another reflection, in an era filled with like evidence, of the disintegration of that status quo. In this essay, we wish to call attention to, and briefly examine, four examples of this now fairly considerable body of such literature.

### I.

W. McKee Evans, a North Carolinian, has produced a first-rate study of the realities of the Reconstruction era in one section of his own state; this is entitled, *Ballots and Fence Rails: Reconstruction on the Lower Cape Fear* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel

Hill, 1969, \$7.50), the latter being the extreme southeast corner where were centered rice, lumber and naval-stores production. It was, then, a section of very high slave population and a center of pro-Secessionist strength.

Evans dedicates his book to Levi Coffin (1789-1877), the white North Carolina born-and-raised Abolitionist, who was so active and effective in the underground railroad that he was widely known as its "President." Here we have, it would seem, the quite conscious continuation, by Evans, of that anti-Bourbon and pro-freedom strain that is so significant a feature of the (largely untaught) history of Southern white people.

Certainly, the book itself makes no mystery of its partisanship towards that facet of history. It commences with an account of the first and—in this section of North Carolina—quite radical effort at reconstruction of society. From January through June, 1865, the Military District of Wilmington, which included the Union-liberated Lower Cape Fear counties, was administered by the Abolitionist General Joseph R. Hawley (later a Governor of Connecticut). Evans says:

Under Hawley's command, the pendulum of political change swept forward towards a Radical solution to the problem of Reconstruction. Radical military courts dispensed color-blind justice. Hawley seized large plantations and settled them with freedmen. Squatters were tolerated and even assisted by the military government. The Freedmen's Bureau was vigorously supported in its welfare and educational projects. . . . Giant demonstrations marked the beginnings of a Negro political movement on the lower Cape Fear. A local Negro leadership began to emerge (p. 248).

With, however, the killing of Lincoln and the refusal by the federal government to really sustain the elimination of the plantation economy and to end the landlessness of the Black masses, Johnsonian Reconstruction took hold. In the Lower Cape Fear region the change was dramatic: Hawley was relieved, all the local government officials and militia officers who had served under the Confederacy were restored to their positions, and the *status quo ante bellum*—minus only formal chattel slavery—was restored.

Of great importance in Evans' work is his fairly detailed presentation of the resistance this reactionary policy met from the poorer and more democratic masses in the region and, in the first place, from the Afro-American population. Thus, in August, 1865, a concerted demonstration and actual attack by many Black people in Wilmington forced the resignation of the municipal government including the entire obnoxious police force, and it took Washington's intercession to alter this. Again, in February 1866 and in June 1868, massive as-

saults upon prisons forced the release of many Black people held in reality (there were all sorts of trumped-up charges, of course) as political hostages. Efforts to enforce reaction's rule through the use of the KKK was effectively terminated as of the Spring of 1868 through the counter-action of patrolling groups of armed Black men. Again, it took the full weight of the U.S. government to re-establish Bourbon domination in North Carolina; even with that, significant areas and forms of resistance persisted in that State, so that as late as 1901 a Black man, George H. White, was returned to Congress from the Wilmington area.\*

## II.

A very important publishing event is the issuance by the Louisiana State University Press of William I. Hair's *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (1970, \$7.95). Mr. Hair, a native of Winnsboro, Louisiana, was educated at Louisiana State, taught there for some time and now is on the faculty of Florida State University. His book is perhaps as significant as the earlier one—also published by Louisiana State University Press, over thirty years ago—by Roger Shugg;\*\* the latter's work closed with the end of Reconstruction, while Hair's concentrates on the post-Reconstruction generation.

Hair is quite right when he declares in his preface that "about the period of the late 19th century, as well as the early 20th, vital questions have remained unanswered, and indeed unasked." The requirements of the Myth have dictated the impermissible questions and delineated *verboden* answers. These all revolve around the realities of socio-economic life in the South and, especially, the actual thoughts and activities of the masses in the South. These form the concern of Hair's book; treating them with comprehension and digging deeply into sources, he has produced a consequential piece of scholarship.

Hair shows that it is with the 1876 election in Louisiana—burying Reconstruction—that the very term "bulldozing," meaning the forcible repression of popular political will, made its original appearance. Events took place in that state at that time, associated with reaction's triumph, which—as Hair quotes a contemporary—"would have dis-

\* The Afro-American scholar, Helen Grey Edmonds, produced a splendid study of this latter period in *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1895-1902*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1951.

\*\* Roger Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After*, Baton Rouge, 1939 (re-issued in paper in 1966). The present writer reviewed this book soon after it appeared, in *New Masses*, March 26, 1940.

graced Turks in Bulgaria."

In response, ideas of migration took hold and were acted upon by tens of thousands of Black men and women; Hair describes this Exodus (especially that of 1879) at some length but not with a full grasp of the sources and with decided unfairness to the role of Frederick Douglass. This is, therefore, the least successful chapter in the work. Historically, however, the basic response, certainly for the years until the 20th century, was to stay, to survive, and to fight back.

That fight-back, by Black and poorer white, in the generation prior to the 20th century, in Louisiana, is described more fully by Hair than has hitherto been done. Hair shows that the Bourbons—and he correctly insists upon the aptness of that term—"inclined toward reaction on every public question" and that "whenever other issues threatened to split the white vote, the Bourbons would see to it that race drifted into the political dialogue" (p. 24). What was at stake was the wealth of the South and the power adhering to those who possessed that wealth. Much of the fabulous resources of Louisiana passed into the hands of newly-founded corporations; most of these were Northern-owned, with a sprinkling of Bourbon participation. On the basis of this, a Northern monopoly-Southern Bourbon alliance was forged; to maintain it, a policy of blood and iron was instituted, a system of total and legalized jim crow was established and the ideology of racism systematically developed and inculcated.

As the years of Reconstruction came to a close, "At least half the newer proprietors [in Louisiana] were Northern men or men supported by Northern banks" (p. 39). And after 1876, "the monopolization of Louisiana land by lumber and other nonfarming interests accelerated." Thus, "between 1880 and 1888 the great majority of Louisiana land sold went to just fifty individuals or firms who purchased over 5,000 acres each. Of these, 41 were Northerners who obtained a total of 1,370,332 acres. Six were natives of the state. These latter purchased 99,278 acres" (p. 48).

Corruption played a prominent part in fueling this Great Barbecue—as knowing Southerners refer to this generation when their land was the sacrificial pig and financiers fattened upon it. For example, in 1881 the rights to a defunct railroad company were sold—for one dollar!—to a combine controlled by Jay Gould and Russell Sage; despite opposition, this transfer was approved by the Bourbon government and in 1885 the U.S. Government in turn approved a grant of 679,287 acres to that stolen railroad. And then there was just plain old-fashioned graft: thus, at one point, irregularities in the State Treasury to the tune of \$1,250,000 were discovered; as Hair writes, "No Reconstruction swindler had ever approached that figure"

(p. 141).

With Reconstruction defeated, the struggle against Bourbon domination persisted; in detailing that struggle, Hair makes a most important contribution. Thus, KKK-type vigilantes killed scores of Radicals—mostly Black—in the 1878 elections; *The Nation* magazine reported 75 Black men slaughtered in the single parish of Caddo.

The first post-Reconstruction reactionary Constitution (of 1879) favored the rich by reducing taxes on property and by exempting all manufacturing establishments from taxes for a ten-year period (renewed for another decade in 1888). That Constitution served, as Hair states, “as the anchor of a regime remarkably powerful, backward, and corrupt” (p. 107).

Trade unions and farmers’ organizations became centers of resistance; intense, prolonged struggles of a clearly class character became characteristic of the State’s history for a generation. Black and white unity was marked; this reached to highest levels of leadership and down deep into the rank and file. In the late 1880’s a general strike of sugar workers required ten companies of infantry and two batteries of artillery before it was suppressed; workingmen’s parties appeared and from time to time, despite terror and corruption, gained victories, such as the Knights of Labor slate winning the municipal elections in Morgan City in 1887.

The ruling class answer was terror—lynchings, said a Shreveport newspaper in 1896, are “beautiful”—and intensified racist propaganda; but, Hair points out: “The most rabid Negrophobes in the state were as consistently vehement in defense of upper class white privileges” (p. 188). Social welfare was the last concern of the State; thus, “no other state during the late 19th century permitted its public institutions to fall so low” and “the young [Black and white] of post-Reconstruction Louisiana came dangerously close to having no school system at all” (pp. 119, 123). As the Catholic Bishop of Natchitoches said, in 1899, there was in the State a “new form of slavery for both white and colored people” (p. 52).

The great fact is that increasingly both white and Black victims appreciated a common need for solidarity; “the most explicit plea for racist justice was voiced” by a leader of “the lower class whites” (p. 192). More and more, Black and white met together, campaigned together, went on strike together and began to vote together; “such un-Southern happenings surely frightened the Bourbon Democrats” (p. 238). Hence, as the *Texas Gazette* editorialized in 1896, “We can no longer depend upon the solidarity of the white race”; therefore what was needed was “either a limitation of the suffrage” or further resort to “strife, bloody riots, and the degradation of society.” In the

1896 elections, though murders were frequent and radical Black women were “unmercifully whipped” with barbed wire, the Populist-Fusion candidate for Governor, John N. Pharr, actually won the election and was simply counted out by those in power. The 1896 legislature then passed legislation disfranchising 90 per cent of the Blacks and tens of thousands of the poorer whites. Thus, with the conquest of the South, was the Wall Street-Washington-Bourbon alliance ready for its “liberating” mission in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and for the greater glories of the 20th century, hopefully called “The American Century” by a publicist of that alliance.

With the coming of that century, Professor Hair terminates his volume. He has produced a book that illuminates central aspects of the history of the preceding generation and therefore assists his readers in comprehending the realities of the times in which we live.

### III.

A subtler, more analytical and more sweeping work than that by Evans or Hair has come from Paul M. Gaston: *The New South Creed—A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Knopf, New York, 1970, \$7.95). The author was born in Fairhope, Alabama, educated at the University of North Carolina and now teaches at the University of Virginia.

Gaston’s book is a study of the idea of the “New South”—its origins, meanings and functions; as does Hair’s volume, it treats of the pre-twentieth century generation. He notes that the Radical, Albion W. Tourgee, had prophesied just as the Civil War ended, back in 1865, that the Confederacy’s ideas would achieve a “complete conquest” in the (white) nation by the end of the 1880’s. Gaston does not show how this was done—he has not written a socio-economic-political history at all—and his practical omission of these basic dimensions is a weakness. He shows, rather, what those ideas were, how they were molded to fit new conditions, and how they emerged triumphant in a nation whose ruling class and cohorts expounded racism the better to conduct exploitation.

As monopoly’s absorption of the South’s wealth required stable and acquiescing economic and political conditions, so it needed a gentlemanly, “civilized,” paternalistic facade or myth to rationalize the process. As Gaston points out, in this post-Civil War generation the railroads of the South came into Morgan’s hands, its steel, iron and coal into Carnegie’s and its mineral resources into those of the Mellons, du Ponts and Rockefellers; in direct charge were the Bourbons. To explain this lucrative arrangement—in the Union League Clubs, in the editorial pages of *The New York Times*, at Harvard and Yale convocations, before meetings of bankers—required the mellifluous

phrases of a Henry Grady, a Henry Watterson, a Walter Hines Page or a Richard Edmonds, not the blatant obscenities of some dime-a-dozen demagogue.

The explanation was the myth of the "New South"; it was grounded on racism—but a paternalistically phrased one; it affirmed unbounding good-will and generosity to the Black population—which it alone "understood" and therefore knew "how to handle"; and it guaranteed unrestrained profit-making opportunities among a contented and grateful working population, untarnished by notions of unions and impervious to the appeals of "agitators."

It was elitist to the core, suspicious of all education—except the training of "hands"—intensely male chauvinist, jingoist, Social Darwinist, and eager to sell the South so long as its propagators could remain as the overseers.

Gaston pays insufficient attention to the opposing views of such Southerners—white and Black—as George Washington Cable, Lewis H. Blair, J. C. Price and George H. White; he notes that Du Bois, living in the South in the 1890's, "produced an impressive literature of dissent" (p. 225), but does no more than note it.

Had Gaston paid more attention to the antagonists, he would have deepened his presentation of the New South mythologists; he also would not have made the mistake of referring to Booker T. Washington as "the most influential champion of Negro freedom of his generation" on one page (175) and then commenting on another (209) that Washington "accepted the Social Darwinism of his age" and served as an enormous source of strength for the New South propagandists.

The main point of the New South creed is made quite clear by Gaston and this is his book's greatest strength: "nearly every New South declaration of loyalty to the Union was also an appeal for Northern capital" and "a Northern hands-off policy was insurance for the safety of Northern capital in the South" (p. 95). He concludes persuasively: "The New South myth, fully articulated, offered a harmonizing and reassuring world view to conserve the essential features of the status quo" (p. 221). He sees irony, finally, in the fact that the nation as a whole now is more and more what the South was—doubtful of itself, frustrated, racist, immoral, with lost innocence, aware of poverty and beset with crisis. This is more than the working of irony in history; it is also the fact of retribution. The cancer, not having been excised, has overspread the body; only interring the corpse will make possible now truly a new nation—and a New South.

## IV.

The quartet we had in mind is completed by Anne F. Scott's *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970, \$5.95). The author, a Georgian, teaches at Duke University in North Carolina. She had been working for some time on the Progressive Movement in the South but in studying this material Professor Scott became more and more persuaded that a significant story of the activities of women in that region remained largely untold. She was right, of course, and happily decided to *begin* telling that story.

In doing this, she early became convinced "that southern women in the years before 1860 [and after, as her book shows] had been the subjects—perhaps the victims—of an image of women which was at odds with the reality of their lives." Her book sets for itself four tasks; in her own words:

. . . to describe the culturally defined image of the lady; to trace the effect this definition had on women's behavior; to describe the realities of women's lives which were often at odds with the image; to describe and characterize the struggle of women to free themselves from the confines of cultural expectation and find a way to self-determination.

Within rather severe limits—to be indicated later—this work accomplishes its announced purposes; no doubt the limits are partially explicable since the attempt is a pioneering one and represents work in manuscripts hitherto largely untouched; also the book is a brief one coming to perhaps 70,000 words.

Professor Scott demonstrates the profoundly male-supremacist character of dominant Southern society spanning the period from Andrew Jackson to Herbert Hoover and suggests, though she fails to affirm and demonstrate, its relationship to the racism poisoning the region. She does comment that "the most articulate spokesmen for slavery [among the men] were also eloquent exponents of the subordinate role of women" and she does point to the social-stabilizing effect of women's subordination in a society based upon chattel slavery, but she does not quite make the significant point that the reality of Afro-American slavery intensified the reality of oppression of all women.

The material she has studied makes her conclude that Southern white women detested the system of slavery; some remarked on the similarity of their own inferior status and the enslaved condition of Black people. Professor Scott also emphasizes that the sexual exploitation of Black women by the white male master class was especially hateful to the white women; as Mary Chestnut, of South Carolina,

said, "they hate slavery worse than Mrs. Stowe does." For, as the same Mrs. Chestnut wrote, they understood that the system of slavery made the white wife the chief mistress in a house of prostitution. One might add, and Professor Scott perhaps did not know this, that the wife of the fourth President of the United States said exactly the same thing.

While Mrs. Scott takes extended note of the sexual relationship between white men and slave women, she makes no mention at all of such relationships between Black men and white women though the evidence concerning this is quite abundant, and certainly is not unrelated—among other things—to women's resentment at the male "double standard." Further, in terms of the sources of the white women's hatred of slavery, Professor Scott omits the fear of the slaves' retribution that permeated their lives. The evidence concerning this is quite good; for example, though Professor Scott quotes the journal kept by the daughter of Frances Ann Kemble, she does not cite the better-known journal of the famed actress herself. In it, Mrs. Kemble—writing from a Georgia plantation—commented, ". . . every Southern woman to whom I have spoken on the subject has admitted to me that they live in terror of their slaves" (*italics in original*). Again, Mrs. Emily P. Burke, in her *Reminiscences of Georgia* (published in 1850), remarked that she had "known ladies that would not dare to go to sleep without one or two pistols under their pillows," and Mary Chestnut's *Diary* itself, several times referred to by Professor Scott, makes decided commentary upon the fear of the slaves.

In general, a serious weakness in this book is that on slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction it never rises beyond hoary Philippsian-Dunning mythology. On the latter period, for example, Professor Scott in touching very lightly upon the K.K.K., writes of "such capers as the Ku Klux Klan"—a strange description indeed, of wholesale murderers and arsonists in the service of counter-revolution.

But the book does show that many Southern upper-class white women performed roles and had ideas that were decidedly in conflict with the traditional mythology. It shows further that dissenting movements in the South, such as the Grange, the Farmers' Alliance and the Populist Movement, took positions favoring equality for women. Its description of the heroic efforts of Southern white women—like Julia Tutwiler of Alabama, Rebecca Felton of Georgia, Jessie D. Ames of Texas, Bertha Newell and Clara Cox of North Carolina—to overcome male supremacy and to advance other consequential social changes, including struggles against racism, represents an important contribution to American historical writing.

The limitations of the book are great and in view of its importance all the more lamentable. They are reflected in this introductory paragraph:

This book deals largely with women who left a mark on the historical record, which means for the most part women of educated or wealthy families. In antebellum times the wives of small farmers and the slave women lived, bore children, worked hard, and died, leaving little trace for the historian coming after. Such women were not much affected by role expectations. When they sweated in the fields or tore their hands digging in the ground no one lectured them on feminine delicacy or told them it was unladylike to work so long and hard. In more recent times, too, definitions of what was ladylike were reserved for women of the elite group, not for wives of mill workers or Negro maids.

No, this will not do. "The historical record" does not consist "for the most part" of the doings of the rich; *the record which historians in the largest majority, have hitherto concerned themselves with deals with that class*. Certainly it is true that it is much easier to find papers and diaries left by such people and that the newspapers were owned by them and treated them—alone—with respect. But if an historian brings eyes trained by knowledge of this overwhelming bias and a brain rebelling against it, then he or she will uncover much of the reality of the drawers of water and the hewers of wood—of the real creators and producers. Some of that is in the papers and letters of the rich themselves and some of it is in the records of the ruling class' machinery of control—in their court records and prison documents and treasurers' accounts—and some of it persists in the records which were kept by the oppressed, not least those who were Black. Thus, Professor Scott cites the writings of a white and wealthy woman from Memphis but there is the record of that remarkable Black woman out of Memphis—that one-woman crusade for justice, Mrs. Ida B. Wells-Barnett; and if one is examining the work of women's clubs, they were not all made up of white women, for there were dozens of organizations among Afro-American women.

Professor Scott has broken away—in her notable book—from the male-dominated preoccupation of American history-writing and this is a splendid achievement and helps open the door to very important future work; but that writing has been dominated, too, by a white, Anglo-Saxon and—above all—ruling-class orientation, and breaking away from that, in writing as in living, is the basically truth-revealing stance for the historian.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, it is clear that younger Southern white historians are rebelling against the Bourbon-made apologia that hitherto has served in the guise of a history of their region. This is a momentous forward step in the social sciences in the United States.

# BOOK REVIEWS

CLAUDE LIGHTFOOT

## "We Charge Genocide": An Historic Document

In 1951 a petition charging U.S. imperialism with genocide against the Black people in the United States was presented to the United Nations. Today, nineteen years later, the historic character of this document comes much more sharply into focus. It reads as if it were written yesterday. The problems it surveys, the evidence it presents, are in the main as pertinent today as when it first appeared. On reading the recently published new edition of this petition, one is led to feel that it will continue to be studied by generations to come.\*

*We Charge Genocide* carves a niche in history for William L. Patterson by the side of such greats as Frederick Douglass, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and others. Comrade Patterson has a long record of leading and initiating struggles on behalf of his oppressed people, but with the publication of this work he emerges also as a great theoretician.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once observed that it is given to many to dream dreams, but to only a

\* William L. Patterson, ed., *We Charge Genocide*, with a preface by Ossie Davis, International Publishers, New York, 1970, Cloth \$5.95, paper \$1.95.

few to see those dreams come true. Correspondingly it may be said that it is given to many to describe a situation well, even to outline roughly the shape of things to come, but it is given to few to foresee in detail not only the content of a new social problem but also the form it will take.

It is in this that the greatness of Patterson emerges. For he not only forecast the future process of genocide against the Black people in the United States; he also related it to all the social, economic and political problems on a world scale, then and now. Today the charge that he made nineteen years ago is levelled by large sections of the Black community and constitutes a key element in the present-day struggle for Black liberation.

The way in which Black Americans emerged on the stage of history has placed this people in a special historical mold. It has been possible in many instances to use their oppression as a yardstick by which to measure progress or regression of the American people as a whole and in some cases of the peoples of the world. That this is the role played by the struggle against genocide by Black Americans is sharply pointed up in the petition presented to the UN in 1951. It

## "WE CHARGE GENOCIDE"

states:

If our duty is unpleasant it is historically necessary both for the welfare of the American people and for the peace of the world. We petition as American patriots, sufficiently anxious to save our countrymen and all mankind from the horrors of war to shoulder a task as painful as it is important. We cannot forget Hitler's demonstration that genocide at home can become wider massacre abroad, that domestic genocide develops into the larger genocide that is predatory war. The wrongs of which we complain are so much the expression of predatory American reaction and its government that civilization cannot ignore them nor risk their continuance without courting its own destruction. We agree with those members of the General Assembly who declared that genocide is a matter of world concern because its practice imperils world safety. (P. 3.)

The full measure of what can be accomplished once the genocidal treatment of Black Americans is ended is also graphically portrayed in these words:

The end of genocide against the Negro people of the United States will mean returning this country to its people. It will mean a new growth of popular democracy and the forces of peace. It will mean an end to the threat of atomic war. It will mean peace for the world and all mankind. (P. 28.)

In his preface to the new edition, the noted Black playwright and actor Ossie Davis states in addition the consequences that will follow if the problem is not met. He writes:

Or will America, grown meaner

and more desperate as she confronts the just demands of her clamorous outcasts, choose genocide? America, of course is not an abstraction; America is people, America is you and me. America will choose in the final analysis as we choose: to build a world of racial and social justice for each and for all; or to try the fascist alternative—a deliberate policy on a mass scale, of practices she already knows too well, of murderous skills she sharpens each day in Vietnam, of genocide, and final, mutual death. (P. vi.)

There are those who fail to understand the nature of genocide and the means by which it is practiced against peoples. The popular conception is that genocide means the almost instant wiping out of a whole people, as in the destruction of six million Jews by Hitler or the decimation of the American Indians. But genocide takes place not only as an instant act; it also takes place as a process extending over a period of time. Sometimes it extends over a whole historical period. In either case, however, it is still genocide.

In drawing up its charter the United Nations took cognizance of this fact and placed the problem of genocide in its broadest form. The petition presented in 1951 used the United Nations definition as the basic yardstick by which it demonstrated that Black America is in fact in the process of being wiped out. The petition quotes the UN definition as follows (p. 32):

Article II of the Genocide Convention . . . defines the crime as meaning "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in



whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Article III of the Convention provides that "The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide."

Basing themselves on this definition the petitioners of 1951 amassed evidence in relation to every single item listed above. History offers few examples where such an abundance of evidence was gathered to prove a point. And now a new petition has been presented to the UN which seeks to update some of the propositions contained in the original.

Among the genocidal threats facing Black America is that in the economic sphere. This was raised in the original petition, but since then the economic problems have become much more aggravated. Automation and cybernation have created a new situ-

ation for the Black worker. Ossie Davis writes:

But a revolution of profoundest import is taking place in America. Every year our economy produces more and more goods and services with fewer and fewer men. Hard, unskilled work—the kind nobody else wanted, that made us so welcome in America, the kind of work that we "niggers" have always done—is fast disappearing. Even in the South—in Mississippi for example—95 per cent and more of the cotton is picked by machine. And in the North as I write this, more than 30 per cent of black teenage youth is unemployed.

The point I am getting to is that for the first time, black labor is expendable, the American economy does not need it any more. (Pp. v-vi.)

The most serious aspect of the problem is the plight of Black youth. Some years ago Dr. James B. Conant pointed out that in the Black communities as high as 70 per cent of all young people were unable to find jobs and that each year the problem was becoming greater. These young people, separated from the means of production, were in large part the cadre which helped ignite the explosions in the Black ghettos in recent years.

At the same time these young people, at the bottom rung of our social system, have come forward as one of the most militant sectors of progressive America. And because of this the ruling class has singled them out for the most ruthless forms of terror. Every day brings news of Black youths shot down by policemen.

### "WE CHARGE GENOCIDE"

In 1951 the brutality visited upon Black America was inflicted mainly through organized vigilante groups. True, they operated in most instances under the protective arm of the government, but even in the South the government always tried to hide its hand. Furthermore, most of the attacks on Black people occurred in the South. In 1945, of 16 cases only 4 took place in the North, and in 1946 only 7 out of 35.

But today a reign of terror exists all over the country. And in the great majority of cases the role of the government—federal, state or city—is openly displayed. Especially has this been true in regard to the Black Panther Party.

Not only is terror being employed. There are also other, more subtle forms of elimination of these youth from struggle and of covering up the failure to face up to their economic situation and offer meaningful programs to meet it. Among these is the problem of dope. It is estimated that in New York City alone there are more than 300,000—most of them youth—on one form of dope or another. Our prisons are filled mainly with Black youth.

In addition, the formation of gangs has been encouraged. The purpose of these gangs is not to go to the source of the problems of youth and to struggle against an oppressive ruling class. Rather, they are encouraged to prey upon the Black community and to kill one another off in gang fights. Indeed, in some instances their activities are supervised by or-

ganized crime. Here is another terrible form of genocide to which the petition calls our attention.

During this period of mounting unemployment among Black youth, the ruling class has encouraged their recruitment into the armed forces. In some instances they have been forced to choose between going to jail and entering the armed forces. But the genocide which stalks the land reaches out also to grab those who have joined the armed forces.

In 1951 we were engaged in the Korean War. The petition presented much evidence on the plight of Black youth in the armed forces. Among other things it stated:

Segregation and discrimination in the armed forces of the United States, a segregation which violates the Charter of the United Nations and results in genocide within the terms of the Genocide Convention, has long been the avowed policy of the Federal Government. Under the Constitution of the United States, the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. It is mandatory and basic that his orders be obeyed. Now and again he has issued equivocal "orders" to end discrimination and segregation in the armed forces. These "orders" have been so consistently flouted and with such immunity from discipline that it is generally thought the orders were not seriously meant to be obeyed. In fact, when the first such order was issued, Gen. Bradley, then Chief of Staff, openly announced it would mean "no change" in the Army. Negro soldiers are still seg-

regated into special units in the Army, units usually used for labor and trucking. In the Navy and Marines, Negroes are virtually always held to cooking and other menial tasks.

"... the records show," says the President's Committee on Civil Rights, "that the members of several minorities, fighting and dying for the survival of the nation in which they met bitter prejudice, found there was discrimination against them as they fell in battle." (P. 174.)

The President's Commission on Civil Rights also pointed out:

*Nothing could be more tragic for the future attitude of our people and for the unity of our nation, than a program in which our Federal Government forced our young manhood to live for a period of time in an atmosphere which emphasized or bred class or racial differences.* (P. 177. Emphasis in original.)

This statement was made over 24 years ago! One would expect that within that time things would have improved, but the contrary is the case. The situation of Black youth in the armed forces today is horrendous and cries out for solution.

It was my privilege this summer to visit some of the cities in West Germany where Black troops are stationed. I came away from that trip with a deep feeling that unless some relief were forthcoming soon, massive explosions would take place. I found that over 70 per cent of those in prison barracks are Black youth, whereas they constitute only 12 per cent of the occupational forces pre-

sented in Europe. The German press carried news almost daily about atrocities that were being committed against these youth. The situation was so bad that the American press had decided on a policy of silence, but more recently even the American press has been compelled to acknowledge the seriousness of this problem. And so the charges made in 1951 still remain a fundamental aspect of genocidal practices against the American Negro.

One of the great merits of the petition was its placement of the ideological problems which confronted the nation then, and confront it even more today. Racist ideology is the backbone of genocidal practices, and Black separatism is no solution. Indeed, all divisive influences pave the way for genocide. Comrade Patterson, in his foreword to the new edition, placed this question profoundly and sharply when he stated:

A nation divided against itself is at the mercy of demagogues and the enemies of freedom and of a democracy of the people, for the people and/or by them.

History dictates the cure: a people united in struggle for the peace of the world and their own security. This is written with the hope that it will help affect this unity. Our country has a multi-national population. It is up to the people to give it a democracy embracing all who stand for equality of rights and opportunities. In our unity in struggle lies the fate of our country and its people. In our country's future lies the peace and freedom of millions if the people control that fu-

ture. History calls for an end to genocidal relations at home and abroad. This Petition is called for by history and the people are its bearers. (P. xi.)

This ringing call to action must be brought to the attention of the masses of the American people. The submission of the petition to the United Nations in which world support is sought is a vital necessity. But of even greater importance is what takes place among the American people. Today the United States is moving dangerously down the path to fascism and the main ideological instrument through which this development proceeds is *racism*.

*We Charge Genocide* is a powerful weapon against this poisonous influence in American life. All Americans—Black and white, young and old—should avail themselves of this book, to study its content, and join the fight to halt genocide for Black America.

Whatever happens to Black America will determine which way the nation and the world will go in the years to come. If this problem of genocide is re-

solutely met we will live in a more democratic atmosphere in our country and more at peace with our neighbors. But if we fail, and if a fascist America emerges, genocide will be a problem not only for people of color, but for other wide strata of the American people.

Indeed, the fate of the world hangs in the balance. History has placed upon the American people an awesome responsibility. We are called upon to save America and thereby the world. Unlike the German people who failed to prevent a Hitler from coming to power, we the American people cannot fail. Then it was possible to destroy a Hitler by an array of massive military force. But if a Hitler should come to power in the U.S. it would lead to nuclear war which could well destroy mankind. Therefore we, the American people, cannot and must not fail in the mission imposed on us—to wipe out genocide against Black people and to protect the future of all mankind.

*We Charge Genocide* should be read by millions.

The power of private corporate wealth in the United States has throttled democracy and this was made possible by the color caste which followed Reconstruction after the Civil War. When the Negro was disfranchised in the South, the white South was and is owned increasingly by the industrial North. Thus, caste which deprived the mass of Negroes of political and Civil Rights and compelled them to accept the lowest wage, lay underneath the vast industrial profit of the years 1890 to 1900 when the greatest combinations of capital took place. (W. E. B. Du Bois, Speech at the All-Russian Peace Congress, Moscow, August 1949.)

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