

EDITORIAL

The Lynching Wave

IN THE outbreak of lynchings that swept the country, striking at three widely separated sections with the fury of a hurricane, an old American custom was repeated with some new and distinctive features which are of exceptional significance.

Mob murder in itself is no novelty in the United States. In the South, as everybody knows, it is an established institution for the repression of the Negroes, operating all the time as an extra-legal supplement to the regular court procedure.

The frenzied lynching bees of the recent days, however, had their scene in the northern part of the country, or on its border; white men as well as Negroes were victims; there was not one single lynching but three, and those in rapid succession; and the happenings precipitated a hysterical public controversy over the issue, with Governor Rolph, of California, and other prominent people, including—God save the mark!—a New York preacher (who later recanted), openly condoning the bestial actions of the mob.

The three lynchings did not occur merely because of popular revulsion at some crime of a particularly shocking nature. The California kidnaping was the match that set off the explosions of unrestrained moronic hysteria and violence, but the explosive material itself for some kind of an eruption was already there.

All of this has been accumulating during the crisis years. It presses for outlet and may readily find it in strange, irrational and violent ways. The lynching hysteria which has swept the country derives from the same source as the fanatical million-headed following of Father Coughlin, the demagogue priest. The real author is the social devastation wrought by the crisis.

The material out of which Fascist gangs, anti-Semitism, religious frenzies and moronic lynching mobs all may be set in motion is at hand in the social tension which produced three lynchings within a week. The material for the rapid development of a revolutionary labor movement is there also in the bitter discontent of the workers but a leading force capable of organizing it is so far lacking.

The popular support received by Governor Rolph, in his stand as the champion of the mob, is a significant indication of the extent to which public opinion was stirred by the San Jose lynching, and even of the widespread vicarious participation in it. Rolph, a demagogue of the first water, appears in this instance more as the reflector of petty-bourgeois mass prejudice and hysteria than as the authentic spokesman of the decisive sections of the ruling class.

The inflammatory utterances of Governor Rolph aroused a storm of controversy and revealed a division of opinion. This division, and its nature, must be perceived and understood, not ignored. The lynching governor was "showered with telegrams of approval". But, on the other hand, the capitalist press, led by the New York Sun, and an imposing committee of "citizens", headed by ex-president Hoover, condemned him. The real present sentiment of the big capitalists was indubitably expressed by them. And for good reasons.

Unrestrained mob action is a dangerous fire to play with under the present conditions. The leading exploiters will not lightly instigate it. They do not feel the need of it yet. Mob hysteria might easily express itself in a different direction under the slightest incitement. As long as the rulers feel themselves secured by the legal processes of repression they will not deliberately encourage extra-legal mob actions. That is why the most authoritative representatives of capital frowned on Rolph's condoning of them.

The psychological factors for a rapid transformation of the social conflict out of the realm of legality and parliamentarism into that of open mass violence, and for the lightning-like emergence of a revolutionary movement on the one side and a fascist movement on the other, have an exceptional strength in America; they are rooted in the tradition of the country as well as in the conditions of the present. The American people of all classes, by and large, have very little regard for "law and order" when it stands in the way of something they really want to do.

American labor history has been written in struggle violent and bloody. Many a strike took the form of armed conflict; few pass without violent clashes. On the other hand, the American capitalists never hesitated to go outside the bounds of their own legality when the exigencies of the class struggle required it. Frank Little was killed by lynchers. So also was Wesley Everest and many other labor militants. The radical workers were dragged into support of the war or bludgeoned into silence by unofficial lynching mobs which supplemented the legal compulsion of the state authority. A good half or more of the brutal violence against the workers in strikes is the work of unofficial thugs and gunmen. When the two main classes in this country get ready to settle accounts, and long before they come to the final account, the "legal" framework of the struggle will have been shattered to bits.

The reservoir of mass violence in America is a huge one, and the events of the past week have demonstrated how easily it can be tapped, and with what unbridled fury it can rage. The mob of humans turned into wild beasts who mutilated and killed the two helpless prisoners at San Jose, and that far bigger mob of vicarious participants who applauded them from afar, have presented a spectacle of menacing implications to the labor movement.

The same mobs can be directed against the workers. They are the material out of which the murderous bands of Fascism can be organized when the big exploiters feel the need of them. The working class had every reason to take alarm at the spread of lynching and to raise a mighty protest against every official condoning of it. But the bare appeal from mob violence to ordered legal processes—the sum and substance of liberal and socialist agitation—does not touch the heart of the issue. The problem is rooted in the social conditions of the class society just as the whole oppressive system of class justice is. The same class forces which administer the "law" need only to sense a danger to their rule in order to organize and bribe the dregs of society and hurl them against the workers with unrestrained violence. To rely solely on capitalist legal procedure in the struggle against lynching and other forms of illegal mass violence is to clear the way for the latter. Under different circumstances the force behind each is the same.

The movement of Fascism does not come into existence at the command of the capitalists. It arises out of the conditions created by capitalism at a certain stage of its disintegration as a social and economic system. Its troops, for the greater part, are the petty bourgeois elements, ruined and driven to frenzy by the crisis. The movement is aimed, at its inception, against big capital as well as against the labor movement. The former take over the movement and hurl it against the workers if the latter do not show sufficient strength to crush the movement of Fascism and gain the support of the petty-bourgeois masses for their revolutionary program.

These fundamental considerations should be kept in mind in connection with the various manifestations of incipient Fascism in America. The revolutionary labor movement and the movement of Fascism both grow out of the same social conditions. The devastating crisis of American capitalism has prepared the soil for both. What is most alarming in the present developments is the increasing number of signs that the restless and dissatisfied petty bourgeois elements are finding expression in various ways which, taken together, lead in the direction of a Fascist movement. The lynching orgy of the past week was undoubtedly such a sign—one of many. Of the revolutionary counter-movement among the masses there is hardly a trace.

For this one-sided development, which is fraught with so much danger to the working class, the conditions themselves are not to blame. All the objective requisites for the speedy development of a revolutionary movement in the working class have been maturing under the enormous pressure of the crisis. What is lacking to organize it and set it on its feet is a revolutionary Communist party. The disintegration brought into the movement by Stalinism has taken a fearful toll. Stalinism has destroyed the Communist Party. We must build a new one without delay. This is the imperative warning sounded again in the events of the past week.

Mass Fight Needed in Scottsboro Case

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the way they have been kept alive thus far. That is the only way they can be snatched free from the blood lust of the bourgeois tiger. There is no other way. That is where the defense made a major strategical mistake. The mass movement which has kept the boys alive for almost three years has been allowed to die down. Here and there they get up a demonstration, but the militancy and the numbers of the early days of the movement are gone.

Playing Down Class Issue The policy of playing down the class nature of the case was carried out in the courtroom. There was no talk of the misery of the southern workers which drove the nine boys to roam the country on freight trains looking for work to supplement the pittance their mothers' drudgery eked out. No word was said of the frightful oppression of the negro masses. It was all a strictly legal question with the defense. At least that is how they fought it.

On the legal plane it is all in favor of the capitalists. It is their court, their law, their judge. Why are there on sufferance because of the hard fight we put up for two years on three continents to save these innocent boys from death or

life imprisonment. When we fail to bring that fight right into the courtroom we give the judge a chance to put on a show of a fair trial, we thereby say in effect that the capitalists are right, that justice is above the classes equal and impartial.

Change of Strategy Needed Without losing any more time we have got to change this strategy. If the boys are to be saved the workers must be mobilized. How? There are four million organized in the A. F. of L. There are a million in the railroad brotherhoods, several thousands more in the T. U. U. L. I. W. W., independent unions, Socialist Party, Communist Party, etc. There are a number of defense organizations. We think that all of these organizations should be asked to come together in one united front movement to fight for the immediate, unconditional and safe release of the Scottsboro boys.

When the united front conferences are organized we will be there to participate in the work. And we are going to insist on one thing; the first duty of the movement is the mobilization of the workers in mass meetings, demonstrations, parades, in every form of protest that is known to the working class. The banner of the working class

is stained with the blood of Sacco and Vanzetti, with the blood of hundreds and thousands of its sons and daughters, done to death under the wheels of the capitalist juggernaut. It is woven of the sufferings of thousands more, of Mooney and the historic though, so far, unsuccessful struggle to set him free.

If the working class will inscribe on its banner the immediate, unconditional and safe release of the Scottsboro boys, and organize to fight for their freedom they can be set free. —T. STAMM.

S. W. P. Workers Get Long Term Sentences

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brought in together and had to witness their comrades' torture, even being compelled to beat each other. "By these methods, in most cases, the desired 'confessions' were achieved. There was no difference in the treatment of the accused, whether they were young or old, men or women....

"This inhuman treatment was increased in some cases.... A 23-year-old toolsmith—Gerhard Schwenke—was arrested with others. After an unsuccessful attempt to escape he was beaten up until he broke down, streaming with blood. Then he was thrown into the cellar of the bar-

L. A. Needle Trades Strike

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adoption in order to "make it easier for our union members to do their work in the shops. Los Angeles has been so long unorganized we dressmakers must be content with whatever we can get" Which proposal the strike committee indignantly and unanimously voted against and demanded a strike immediately for the closed shop.

The season was almost over. Only a consistently militant strike would win. The leadership was forced to call a strike, and did so on October 12, after wasting three precious weeks, and laying plans in the meanwhile for the further carrying out of their class-collaboration policies.

Turn-Out of Strikers

From the first the turn-out of the workers was remarkable. Thousands of workers, unorganized, uneducated, 60% Mexican and 90% with no understanding of unionism whatsoever, responded to the strike call, with enthusiasm and militancy. The courage of the women strikers, for they composed the bulk of the strikers, is a story that marks a turn in the history of labor unionism in Los Angeles. Scabs in other industries will do well to remember the experiences of the scabs in this strike.

In the midst of such militancy and after about two weeks of striking, an invitation to arbitrate was sent to the union and the bosses by the NRA officials.

At this first call, the bosses refused—but not so the leadership of the strikers. In such haste were they to collaborate, they called together a hitherto non-existent executive committee of the strike and with only one dissenting vote, that of the Left wing leader of the cloakmakers, I. Lutsky, voted for arbitration. Of all the International Garment Workers' Union leadership, Lutsky is the only one who has consistently fought for a

militant policy with militant action and because of which was forced by the leadership to stay out of the dressmakers' strike and take care solely of the cloakmakers.

Workers Against Arbitration

At the strike committee meeting that night, it was clearly seen that the sentiment of the members of the strike committee was overwhelmingly against arbitration. It was pointed out by them that the only question to be arbitrated was the question of union recognition, inasmuch as the bosses conceded our other demands, and union recognition was the one point which should not have been arbitrated. On the basis of our militant struggle, our successful turn-out and our financial resources, as yet, we were in a position to demand union recognition and the closed shop. Add to that also, public opinion and the admission of the NKA Board that they were powerless to act on the hundreds of coded violations we had sent in. We resented placing our fate in their hands.

In the face of these arguments by the strike committee, Feinberg was forced to expose his hand. First, he explained that the acceptance was only a maneuver and that the arbitration would never come to anything because the bosses would never agree. He explained that this was only a tactic to win over public opinion and sympathy. But the strike committee was not so easily hoodwinked. Feinberg had to admit that no matter what the decision of the strike-committee was, he had orders from New York to submit to arbitration and that is what was going to be done. He attempted to calm the workers somewhat by urging them to be content to take a little at a time instead of stubbornly insisting for all their demands.

The Reactionaries' "Maneuver"

The stupidity of the bosses, fortunately for the leadership, saved

them that night. In the midst of the uproar which greeted Feinberg's announcement, the morning papers were brought in with the declaration of the bosses refusing to arbitrate, and Feinberg, and Pesotta and Berg were able to crow, "I told you so, our maneuvers were correct!", forgetting that the workers still remembered that it was no mere maneuver but a direct order from New York which sent them to the arbitration board.

Taking full advantage of the situation, realizing it was a matter of hours before the bosses accepted the arbitration, the leadership called a mass meeting of the strikers for the next afternoon. Allowing no one on the floor, they triumphantly came to the membership to prove the correctness of their "maneuvers" and to ask for a vote of confidence. All but 10 of these present voted confidence in the leadership. The strike committee was powerless to act on the question of arbitration when finally the bosses accepted and a group of "fair-minded citizens" were chosen to settle the burning question of union recognition.

Arbitration Dampens Militancy

From the day the Arbitration Board met, can be marked the decline of the militancy and the lowering of the morale of the strikers. They were ordered by the leadership not to yell "Scab!" and to be "peaceful". When you see scabs walking into your shops, escorted by police and taking your jobs and you are instructed to peacefully and meekly allow them to do so, your spirit is broken and with it came a breaking down of the picket-line and the vigilance of the strikers.

When after a week of arbitration, the strikers were again ordered to be militant, few strikers responded to the call for no one felt like going to jail when the strike was already out of their hands. What few were militant were sent to jail and the strikers became cowed.

After two weeks of arbitration, the dress code was received and on the basis of the code, a "truce" between bosses, represented by the Manufacturers' Association that participated in the Arbitration Board, and the Union was made. Approximately 60% of the strikers were affected. These 60% were to go back to the shops on the basis of the status quo existing 4 days before the strike and were to receive wages and conditions stipulated in the dress code. The rest of the independent shops continued on strike and the Arbitration Board was to continue meeting on the question of union recognition.

Disorganization of Union

When the workers came back, they were met with closed doors. The bosses pleading the slow season, refused to take the militant workers back into the shops. Workers were being discriminated against even more now than before the strike. They have lost time and wages and are rewarded with a disorganized union.

All during the strike the Industrial Union played their usual sectarian role. Instead of participating in the International as class-conscious workers, they came in blustering of their membership in the Industrial Union, contributed little militancy on the picket line, and antagonized the workers by their dualism.

The class-collaboration policies of the leaders, the hypocrisy and opportunism of the Lovestonettes, the dualist sectarianism of the Stalinists makes the problem of crystallizing a Left wing in the union with the object of the restoring of the morale of the members a difficult one. Yet the class-conscious members of the union must courageously set their compass in that direction. —F. W.

The Railroad Brotherhoods Craft Divisions of R.R. Workers

As is quite generally known, the railroad workers are divided into 21 separate and independent organizations, in other words, one organization for each craft employed in the industry. The Engineers were first to organize at Detroit, Michigan in 1863, the Conductors followed suit in 1868, the Firemen came next in 1873, and the Brakemen launched their union in 1883. As the other seventeen crafts employed on the railroads matured for organization the fell in line one after the other until the railroad workers found themselves with one union on their hands for each craft in the industry.

New Methods of Transportation

This form of organization was naturally a progressive force as long as it was able to function in the interest of its members, when the railroad corporations were small and each one putting up an independent struggle for its own existence. But things have changed considerably since 1863, when the first railroad union was organized. Locomotives have increased in size regularly about every ten years. Trains have been lengthened in about the same manner. Repair and maintenance work have been improved and modernized by a constant installation of labor saving machinery. The small railroads have been merged into gigantic systems. Their ownership and direct-ownership interlocked. Other modes of transportation, such as Motor and Air transport, came upon the scene, to say nothing about Pipe Lines and the Panama Canal.

However, amongst all this change and development in the field of

Transportation we find one notable exception to this general rule, and this is in the Railroad Unions themselves. Their leadership have so far been able to successfully resist every impulse on the part of the membership towards needed changes both as to program and structure of railroad unionism. Seventy years of constant change and development in the mode of transportation means nothing to a craft union official who is able to draw a salary of \$15,000 a year by keeping the railroad worker tied to the craft system.

First of Series of Articles

The above is but a prelude to a series of short articles, which we hope to contribute to the MILITANT, between our working hours, on the Railroad Brotherhoods. In future articles on this topic we will try to point out the several progressive minority movements which are taking on organized form inside of the railroad unions and contribute what we can towards coordinating the efforts of these minorities in the right direction of a proper program.

In concluding this introductory article "On the Railroad Brotherhoods" we urge other railroad workers to contribute articles through the columns of the MILITANT on the problems of the railroad workers and their solution. Our own Journals and Labor are closed to the ideas of the progressive minority. To print and distribute your own ideas is forbidden by gag laws. Brother "Ralls", we need a Minority Movement with a minority press in the Railroad Brotherhoods. Use the MILITANT to promote these ends. —A. E.

Statement on Montreal Anti-Fascist Conference

To All Organizations Affiliated to the Anti-Fascist and Free Speech Conference in Montreal, To All Working Class Organizations, Comrades:

At the 3rd session of the Anti-Fascist and Free Speech Conference the delegates of the Left Opposition and Spartacus Youth Club were expelled. This was brought about by the Stalinists who are in control of the conference and who from its beginning made every effort to hush the voice of the Left Opposition delegates going even to the extent of trying to throw them out bodily before the first session opened. This is the conduct of people whose policies have been proclaimed bankrupt by living experience itself, who having no argu-

ments at their disposal, are compelled to resort to such miserable measures to suppress a criticism they cannot bear.

It was these same Stalinists who in Germany before Hitler came to power proclaimed that there was no distinction at all between a capitalist, democratic regime and Fascism, that it was impossible to form a united front with the Social Democrats against Hitler, that the socialists were Fascists and he who questioned such wisdom was a Fascist himself. It was these same Stalinists whose senseless policies rendered Hitler the greatest service, who served him as a lever without the aid of which it would have been impossible for him to raise himself to power.

At present the conference is reduced to a Stalinist family gathering thanks to their strangulating hold on it. The three sessions held up to now have shown a sharp and progressive decline in attendance. The theories spun by the Stalinists to the effect that one must become a Communist before being able to fight Fascism are a rehashing of the Red United Front—that notorious united fronting with ourselves that led to the German catastrophe. If this is what the Stalinists want then they have succeeded. The conference is, at present, a hulk void of anything but Stalinist faith-

the time being, nevertheless, the Fascist threat remains. The internal consolidation of their ranks is taking place. Efforts are being made to organize a closely-knit party.

Against this many-sided attack upon the workers a genuine united front of the working class is needed with a program of united struggle for freedom of speech and organization and against Fascism, while guaranteeing the right of each organization to express its criticism in a constructive manner. We will fight for the formation of such a united front whether along the lines of reforming the present conference or if it should prove necessary by calling a second one.

The puny bureaucrats of Stalinism are far from all-powerful. Before an influx of working class bodies into the conference their stranglehold grip should be definitely broken. We call upon the Verdun Workers' Association to take alarm at the abuse of the conference called by them, on the part of the Stalinists. We call upon workers organizations of every description to enter the conference and fight.

Against Fascism! For Free Speech! For a Genuine United Front! For the Reinstatement of the Expelled Left Opposition Delegates

International Left Opposition (Montreal Branch) SPARTACUS YOUTH CLUB OF MONTREAL

Notes of the Week

LYNCHING IS once again occupying the center of public attention. The mob murder of the Clark kidnapers at San Jose and its public condemnation by California's Governor Rolph brought on its trail a wave of repercussions in mass sentiment. The spectacle of a "law and order" representative endorsing this highest expression of social lawlessness could not help bringing a new courage and new verve to the dregs of American society engaged in the barbarian pastime. Aside from the repetition in St. Joseph, Missouri and the liberation of the Maryland mobsters, there were just as serious reactions of a more general, wide-spread character.

The Atlanta, Georgia correspondent of the New York Times has the following to report on the subject: "When Rolph's praise of Lynching was printed, sentiments in line with the following utterances indicate the reaction of certain groups: 'California's my new address now', 'Let's send all the niggers to California', 'That California man oughter be President, etc.'"

The tragic heroes of most of the lynching bees in American history have been Negroes for the greater part. ("From 1880, when records of lynching began to be kept", says the N. Y. Herald-Tribune of last Sunday, "to 1932, 3,745 persons have been killed by mass violence....2,954 were Negroes"). The mob act has ever been a weapon of the white rulers of the South to strike terror into the doubly exploited masses of dark-skinned toilers. By his conduct of the "legal" trial of Heywood Patterson, ruling class Judge Callahan assured all his fellow barbarians that it will not be necessary for them to "Send all the Niggers to California" to be lynched.

THE TRIAL of Patterson and the rest of the Scottsboro boys dramatizes vividly and with striking clarity the social roots of the Lynch madness. The original framework is as well-known, took place at a time when the black share-croppers of Alabama were stirring in revolt. The boss class and its liberal agencies are well aware of the social basis of the mob-murder phenomenon. The Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching has made some interesting observations on the causes.

In its reports, the Commission investigates the circumstances that lead a crowd of people into the killer frenzy against the Negroes. Some hair-brained professors, it seems, explained "it all" as a sort of mid-summer madness. Lynchings do, to be sure, occur more often in the Summer than in the other seasons, the commission explains, but

"Working and living out of doors in warm weather, mid-summer unemployment, landlord-tenant relations in summer, and other factors greatly modify any all-weather explanation.... During the summer months, after cultivating is done and harvesting begins, there is little to occupy the time of Negro and white workers on Southern farms....Manhunts and lynchings—afford an avenue of emotional escape from a life so drab and unillumined that any alternative is welcomed."

The honorable Commission has, willy-nilly, hit the nail on the head: "landlord-tenant relations"—that is what makes the Negro share-cropper the butt of the Lynch organizers. "A life so drab that any alternative is welcomed"—that is what makes the poor whites, de-classed proletarians, the instrument in the hands of the landlord Lynch organizers. On the basis of this species of human rabies be abolished without abolishing the system of boss class dominance which nurtures it? Can the disgrace of Lynching be wiped out in this country without a working class movement to do away with a "life so drab that any alternative is welcomed"?

That is what every sincere fighter against Lynching must ask himself. The workers feel their part must make the organized mob protest against Lynch-expoent Rolph and Legal-Lynchcr Callahan a forefront task of their class battle. —G...A.

TERZANI TRIAL POSTPONED WHEN 'GENERAL' SMITH FAILS TO APPEAR

Trial of Athos Terzani, accused of killing his anti-Fascist comrade, Anthony Fierro, was postponed until Dec. 11 when the prosecution declared it was unable to produce its chief witness, Commander Art J. Smith of the Fascist Khaki Shirts of America. The court was told that a subpoena had been served on Smith in Baltimore but that he had refused to testify.

Dist. Atty Charles S. Colden asked Judge Thomas C. Kaden for time in which to get Smith to appear "by whatever means possible". Opposing this motion, Arthur Garfield Hays, chief of defense counsel, declared there was every reason to believe that Smith would never come to testify against Terzani. He asked Colden to agree to call for dismissal of the indictment if Smith is still missing when the case comes up again, but Colden refused to do this.