

**The Negro Struggle**  
By ALBERT PARKER

**The Courier Conference**

The Pittsburgh Courier recognized, before the Hampton Institute conference was over, that nothing was going to come out of it that would be worth two beans in the struggle against Jim Crow in the army.

Evidently, then, at the last minute, the Courier, trying to salvage something out of the mess and to utilize the wide publicity the Hampton meeting got, decided to hold its own conference on the same subject, and there presumably take the steps rejected by Hampton. That was why this second conference, "called and sponsored" by the Courier, was called to order in Washington three days after the Hampton conference.

The overwhelming majority at Hampton seemed to be government job-holders and teachers or professors—that George Schuyler described as "soft-handed, well-groomed, cultured, income-tax-paying, pillars-of-society." This was a very fitting description—but it fits the composition of the Courier conference just as well.

The Who's Who in the Courier lists 41 names, and gives information about 31. Of these 31, 19 are either government job-holders, or teachers or professors. All "soft-handed," that is, not a worker in the crowd. In addition, most of them had also been at the Hampton conference.

Nor is the resolution of the second conference much better than that of the first. True, its language is sharper, more vigorous, more direct. Its position is less ambiguous, although it too does not name names or place the responsibility for the present state of things where it belongs. It also fails to take up the question of Roosevelt's "separate regiment" policy by name, only hinting at it.

It certainly is not a revolutionary solution. And yet there is signed to it the name of George Schuyler who, in criticizing the Hampton Conference, said that only a revolutionary approach can solve the Negro's problems. Instead of being revolutionary, as a matter of fact, it contains a section just as harmful to the Negro as anything pulled off at Hampton.

**Not a Pro-Labor Resolution**

That is the section dealing with labor, which calls on the government to investigate labor unions which by constitutional or ritualistic provisions bar Negroes from getting jobs. The Courier makes still clearer what is meant when it says, "we call upon the Attorney-General of the United States to prosecute these racketeering unions under the provisions of that (Sherman Anti-Trust) law."

That is, the conference called on the government to end Jim Crowism in the unions, the very same government that shows its approval of Jim Crowism as a principle by its handling of the Negro in the armed forces!

Let us see what the Courier's proposal would accomplish:

1. It will give the government (which dislikes both the unions and the Negroes) a handle to enter and break up the unions. Will this be in the interests of the Negro people—or in the interests of the ruling capitalist class ("the very people who keep race prejudice alive", as Schuyler put it)?

2. It will give reactionary, lily white trade union leaders a handle to incite white workers against the Negroes, for they will be able to say, "Do you see now why we want to keep Negroes out of our unions? Because they are our enemies and are calling on the government to prosecute us and break us up." Will this be in the interests of the Negro people—or in the interests of the reactionaries who want to keep Negroes out of the trade unions?

The one point that distinguished the Courier resolution at Hampton was the following:

"That Negroes in each community immediately proceed to the organization of a Defense Committee, composed of representatives of local organizations... to cooperate with the central committee in Washington, D.C., and with the local authorities." Said the Courier: "Once these organizations have united it is proposed that they hold huge defense mass meetings... Representatives from these united organizations would be selected to attend" another conference planned for Washington in January shortly after the next Congress opens.

This means that the Courier recognizes that action is necessary against the Jim Crow system in the army, and that action by the local organizations, that is, by the masses, is necessary. Insofar as the resolution draws attention to these things, it serves the interests of the Negro people.

But just because real action is necessary, the section of the resolution on the trade unions must be condemned, because it weakened it if it didn't destroy, the possibility of including the trade unions in the united front.

The main objection to be made against both the Courier and Hampton conferences, is that, while both ask for the correction of certain Jim Crow evils, they propose to leave the control of military training in the hands of the lily-white officer caste.

It is already a law that there shall be no discrimination in the armed forces—but since control of military training is in the hands of a military and governmental caste that wants to perpetuate Jim Crowism, discrimination goes on.

The National Defense Commission has already laid down the ruling that there must be no discrimination because of race or color in the factories getting war contracts, but because the bosses, who profit from racial division, control both the factories and the Defense Commission, discrimination goes on.

What is needed therefore is a system of trade union control of military training, to put control of it in the hands of the workers who have nothing to gain from discrimination. What is needed in addition is expropriation of the war industries and their operation under workers' control to put an end to discrimination in industry.

**Stalin Calls "Party" Conference**

Will, Like All Previous Ones, Be Preceded By Mass Purge

By JOHN G. WRIGHT

Stalin has summoned a Party Conference to convene on February 15, 1941 according to an Associated Press dispatch dated Moscow, December 20. The curtly worded dispatch states that the agenda of this, the Eighteenth Party Conference, will be limited to two points: 1) Discussion of the Party's "work in transport and industry"; 2) "Organizational questions."

The mere calling of a Party Conference would in and of itself constitute news of primary importance, and denote a major move on Stalin's part. It is the first Party Conference called in nine years. The preceding Conference—the Seventeenth—took place in January 1932. Coming as it does on the heels of recent Soviet developments, the significance of this call cannot be exaggerated.

If under Lenin the Party Conferences were milestones in the revolutionary history of the Bolshevik movement, then under Stalin every single one of the five Conferences already held was filled with a counter-revolutionary content.

In Lenin's lifetime twelve Party Conferences were convened—the Twelfth and last in August, 1922 when he was gravely ill. The most famous of them is the April Conference at which Lenin presented his "April Theses." Since Lenin died, five Conferences were called and held prior to the one scheduled for February, 1941. Each of them marked a new stage in the degeneration of the Russian Communist Party; each one of them served Stalin to consolidate power more and more firmly in his hands.

In the first four years after Lenin's death—1924-1927—three Party Conferences took place—the

against Trotskyism on an international scale. In February of the same year, Trotsky was officially deprived of Soviet citizenship. A logical consummation of the Seventeenth Party Conference (Trotsky).

Although in the interim two party Congresses have been held, Stalin has refrained from using the edged weapon of "Conferences." That he has exhumed it from his arsenal, coupled with the content of the agenda for the coming Conference, is ominously tell-tale.

Since the passage of the June 26 laws lengthening the work week and prohibiting the workers from leaving their places of employment, the party organizations have been under constant fire for their failure to enforce this or that ukase in the interminable series of ukases issued by the Kremlin in the last seven months. A silent purge of the party ranks has been going on for some time now, but has obviously proved inadequate. Hence a "discussion" is on the agenda of the Conference on the question of the party's role in the economic life of the country. The second point on the agenda, *The Organization Question*, implies that there are shortcomings in the existing organizational set-up which obstruct the party's work in transport and in industry—and therefore the party must be most certainly "renovated" organizationally.

Never has a Conference been held under Stalin not preceded by savage repressions and a large-

scale purge. Stalin will not break this precedent in the eight weeks assigned for the "preparation" of the 1941 Conference. A major surgical operation is now in progress.

**VITAL SECTION OF INDUSTRY MILITARIZED**

The Conference call was issued on the same day that Marshall Timoshenko, head of the Red Army and Voroshilov's successor, promulgated a sensational decree: The Red Army itself will run factories "which will produce articles needed by the soldiers and in this way ease the burden on industry as a whole. The soldiers themselves will manufacture the articles" (*Jewish Day*, December 20, 1940).

If this report is true—and there is no ground for impugning its veracity, although the news was apparently ignored by the big metropolitan dailies—it implies far more than an extension of the compulsory labor legislation to the soldiers in the Red Army.

Timoshenko's decree—by order of the Kremlin—militarizes a vital section of Soviet industry—the defense industry which has operated for years under a special Commissariat, and which produces all the "articles needed by soldiers" from boots to bombers. Whatever factories are taken over by the Army, these will then operate under military discipline, which in its turn has been recast under Timoshenko to conform with the discipline in bourgeois armies, Fascist or "democratic." There are millions of skilled and unskilled workers in the Ar-

my or in the reserve. In fact, practically every adult and able-bodied man in the Soviet Union is subject to military conscription. Furthermore, youngsters of 17 and even 16 are likewise liable to draft. In general, "running factories with soldiers" presents on paper no great difficulties. Millions can be conscripted on short order, subjected to a short but intensive acquaintance with the "new" army discipline, and then assigned to factories to produce "articles needed by soldiers" under military rules and regulations.

Even if the Army does not immediately take over so much as a single factory, even one that is being constructed, the decree would still mean that Stalin has taken the first and all-important step toward militarizing Soviet industry. The decisive point is that a juridical basis for such militarization has already been established: There is no line of demarcation between the war industries and "peace" industries, especially in the event of hostilities. Whether Stalin will succeed or not—that is another question.

The Conference call, plus the Timoshenko-December decree, plus all of the preceding ukases point incontrovertibly in one direction: The economic crisis in the Soviet Union instead of being mitigated has on the contrary been aggravated—and carries with it a direct threat of passing into a social and political crisis of Stalin's regime, and of the Soviet Union.

December 20, 1940

**A Midwesterner Is Flabbergasted By The New New York**

By ART PREIS

I've just sat through most of a two-day convention of the New York District of the Socialist Workers Party. I've come away with the impression that maybe I've had an attack of amnesia and accidentally wandered off to my old bailiwick out in the mid-west, where a party gathering has always meant a gathering of workers.

When I first entered the convention hall, I was struck by a glaring banner, "Beat Minneapolis in The Fund Drive: Quota \$1000 Each."

Now, I know the New York local from the old days, when a sign like that would have wound me up with taped ribs from laughing so hard. The idea of New York's dilettantes challenging Minneapolis teamsters to anything! But things have changed.

From start to finish this was a workers' convention. In its composition and in its serious concentration upon the problems of the working class this convention reflected the fact that the New York section of the party has at last overcome the poison of its petty-bourgeois past and is spreading deep roots into fertile proletarian soil.

Almost the entire two days were devoted to reports and discussion on trade union problems; to the recital of experiences in the organized labor movement; to planning the party's program for advancing the principles of militant class-struggle.

Active union fighters in the food, maritime, ship-building, electrical and radio, garment and other industries spoke. Their reports painted a graphic and living picture of the workers' struggles in the New York area, a picture made real because these delegates are a vital part of these struggles.

Gone are the phrase-mongers, bohemians, and fake intellectuals. Gone with the wind-bags, the petty-bourgeois splitters of last April. In their place are loyal and serious-minded workers striving to plunge themselves deeper and deeper into the task of organizing and leading the working class to the conquest of power.

**Who's Who Now In New York**

Over 50 percent of the New York party members are active trade unionists. 35 percent of the New York party members are concentrated in the three huge and vital industries, food, electrical manufacturing and marine transport.

An additional sizeable sector of the party are workers in trades and industries as yet unorganized. These, taken together with those in organized trades, make a party membership that is decisively proletarian in character. A complete reversal of the condition that existed just eight months ago under the domination of the petty-bourgeois play-boys!

A day and a half of listening to reports distilled from the daily experiences of the class struggle has convinced me that the old days of phoney gab-fests that passed for an SWP convention in New York are ended—but definitely!

One incident which occurred during the convention deserves special mention. Two former SWP members from Gloversville, N. Y., workers who had been misled temporarily into the ranks of the petty-bourgeois opposition at the time of the split, paid a visit to the convention. They had just come from a call on the so-called Workers Party.

"But we couldn't find any workers there," they explained. "So we've quit them."

A few hours in attendance at our convention revealed enough real live workers. They asked for re-admittance into the SWP and were immediately welcomed by vote of the convention.

**Watch Their Smoke, Minneapolis!**

Every phase of party activity came in for thorough discussion. A vigorous drive was made on the question of building the mass circulation of the party press. Real plans were outlined; and they won't be pigeon-holed either, like in the old days.

I might not have believed it, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. But I'm here to tell the Minneapolis comrades not to take lightly the New York challenge about beating them in the Trotsky Memorial Fund Drive. Stop reading last year's newspapers, Minneapolis. You're not confronting Bronx hill-billies. You're up against proletarian fighters. And they're not kidding!

**War Against Fascism**

Winston Churchill's broadcast to Italy on Monday shows exactly to what extent this is a "war against fascism." The fascist regime of Italy is in difficulties as a result of the defeats in Greece and Egypt; the masses do not want the war; they are beginning to resist the regime. Whereupon Churchill seizes the opportunity to... whitewash the Italian royal house, the Pope, the army officialdom, i.e., Mussolini's collaborators and accomplices during these last eighteen years.

Churchill blames Italian participation in the war on "one man," Mussolini. That has as much truth as saying that Churchill alone is responsible for British participation. If only Mussolini wanted the war, why didn't the royal house and the army general staff prevent it? If they can stop the war now, they could have prevented its beginning. Churchill appears to be talking nonsense.

But he isn't. He is saying: "Boys, if you'll leave Mussolini in the lurch and come over to my side, I'll help you maintain your rule—of which Mussolini was only the front man—and as a token of my help in keeping you in power, I am making this speech whitewashing you." And this is the war against fascism!

**Martinique: Two Negro Newspapers' Views**

They Differ Only In Their Choice Of Slavemasters For This Negro Colony

By ALBERT PARKER

The ruling class of this country is preparing to seize Martinique, the French-owned colony with a population of a quarter-million colored people.

The fate of Martinique should be of vital interest to every Negro and white worker, for the question of Negro freedom in the United States is very much connected with what happens to the Negro people everywhere—in Africa, the West Indies, etc.

That was why the Negroes here and everywhere were and are so concerned about the independence of Ethiopia. We know that the successful defeat of the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia would have been a blow at the bosses, the oppressors of the Negroes of all countries; that's why we of the Socialist Workers Party supported Ethiopia's fight for independence.

From this point of view, let us examine the editorials on Martinique which have been recently carried by two of the leading Negro newspapers of this country.

The Baltimore *Afro-American* editorial is entitled, "Let's Take Martinique." When the writer says let us, he means let the United States government take it. The arguments of the editorial are almost the same ones made by the American capitalists, who have had experience "taking" other colonial countries in the past:

"As long as France is tied to Hitler's apron-strings, it seems to us that the United States ought to step in and take over the island for the duration of the war.

"France couldn't object. It lies prostrate under Hitler's heel. After the war is over, it can have its island back.

"There is another reason why we should take Martinique. Its 250,000 people are poor and hungry. The British blockade has ruined the trade. 'Uncle Sam can do them a favor and get rid of a likely headache if he adopts these few French-speaking colored folks until peace comes.'"

In other words, says the *Afro-American*, Washington should take the island because it would be the best thing for its natives.

They are poor and hungry, says the *Afro-American*. But so are the people of the other countries Washington has "taken." Just look at Porto Rico! Its people were starved by Spain. Now they've been "taken" by the United States for more than 40 years and—the *Afro-American* would scarcely deny it—the people of Porto Rico have been poor and hungry throughout these years, and remain so.

And so far as "adopting" the island "until peace comes" is concerned, that is a childish joke. If that happened, it would be the first time in its history that Washington or London or Paris took over a small country and then willingly let it go. The bosses of this country don't take over col-

onies out of good nature or concern for their people's welfare—they take them to be able to exploit them, and Martinique is a rich prize which they will no more give up after the war than they gave up the Philippines 40 years ago.

**THE COURIER TAKES A DIFFERENT STAND**

The Pittsburgh *Courier* editorial takes a different position. After making clear that it has no sympathy for Petain or the Nazis, the editorial says: "We certainly view with alarm the projected grabbing of Martinique by the United States presumably to forestall Hitler..." It then explains that Martinique happens to be one of these few colonies where the natives do have some rights:

"There are 246,712 inhabitants of Martinique and all but a handful are Negroes or mulattoes. They vote, they have direct representation in the French parliament, they serve without discrimination or restriction in the French Army and Navy where many have risen to high rank. They have freely attended France's best universities and have good local schools.

"Not a single British colony or American dependency is as free as black Martinique, and we shudder when we contemplate what Negrophobic U. S. naval rule will mean to this little Eden.

"Under American rule, Martinique would have no representation in Congress, its sons and daughters would be barred from a large number of mainland universities, and its sons would be viciously discriminated against in the armed forces and defense industries."

"So," concludes the Pittsburgh *Courier*, "for the sake of Martinique's dark sons and daughters, we hope it will remain under French rule."

Let's pass over, without the refutation it deserves, the *Courier's* picture of "little Eden." It's true that France commits less formal discrimination against Negroes as Negroes; France mistreats all her colonials regardless of color!

Let's get to the main point. The *Afro-American* wants Martinique ruled by America; the *Courier* wants it ruled by France. The two opinions may seem different; at bottom, however, they are very much alike. They share in common the theory of "the lesser evil," since you've got to be a slave, you might as well pick yourself the "best" and "kindest" master. Both take it for granted that Martinique must "belong" to someone, i.e., someone other than the people of Martinique.

This attitude is not new to either paper. They both employed it quite consistently in the election campaign just concluded. Both had endorsed Roosevelt in 1936, and repudiated the Republican Party. Both became disgusted with Roosevelt this year,

and endorsed Wilkie. And thus they limit the struggle to being Jim Crowed under one boss party or Jim Crowed under another.

The capitalists and their press say that the colored people in the colonies are not fit to rule themselves; that is why the imperialists must run things for them. This is the same vicious lie that they use in this country to perpetuate segregation and discrimination against the Negro people.

What have the *Courier* and the *Afro* to say about this? Why do they reject this theory for the Negroes in the United States and accept it for the Negroes in the colonies? How can they accept "white supremacy" for the colonies and logically answer "the advocates of 'white supremacy' in this country? Why did they demand the independence of Ethiopia and why don't they demand the independence of Martinique? How can they logically demand it for one, and not for the other?

It seems to us that these papers which claim leadership in the fight for equal rights for the Negro people "in all spheres of life" have some explaining to do to their readers.

As for us of the Socialist Workers Party, we take a view entirely different from those of the *Courier* and the *Afro-American* on this question.

We are against the "white supremacy" theory everywhere, in this country and in the colonies.

We are against the "lesser evil" theory, we are against all kinds of slavery and discrimination, in this country and in the colonies.

We don't want France to get back "its island," as the *Afro-American* calls it, because they would keep the people in slavery and oppression.

We don't want the Nazis to get it, because they would keep its people in slavery and oppression.

We don't want the United States to "take" it, because they would keep its people in slavery and oppression.

Martinique should belong to the people of Martinique.

The chief feature in the Dec. 7 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* is the diary of a British staff officer during the Battle of France. The details he gives constitute an annihilating indictment of the French bourgeoisie and its general staff. Blind, fatuous, complacent, stupid, lacking intelligence and imagination, cowardly—the bourgeois "democracy" of France emerges from this officer's diary shorn of every claim to any stature.

But the picture is too damning. The bourgeois "democracy" of France was exactly the same kind of ruling class which still rules in Britain and the United States. Therefore the author—perhaps at the suggestion of his publisher—casts about to find a striking detail which will enable him to make the situation of the French rulers different from that in Britain and the United States. He cannot find it because it does not exist.

Whereupon he invents it. It appears out of a clear sky at the end of his article: "General Georges was asked point-blank why the promised counterattack had not been delivered. His liaison officer spoke for him and answered that the general could not give orders so far in advance of the inclinations of the division. This was an eye-opener, and it is only now that it is brought home to me that the formation of soldiers' committees, regularized in the French army in 1936 by Blum's regime, have

so far undermined discipline."

This is a lie made of whole cloth. Blum did not "regularize" soldiers' committees in 1936, or any other time. Not only Blum, but every party in the Popular Front—including the Stalinists—denounced the Trotskyists, who were the only party that demanded the formation of soldiers' committees. Still less were there soldiers' committees in May, 1940, when even the modest gains of the workers in the factories had been completely wiped out by the French government.

Soldiers' committees would mean the beginning of real democracy. France was not a democratic regime but a military dictatorship in 1940. Precisely because there was no real democracy, the morale of the French armies was soon shattered.

Gentlemen of the *Saturday Evening Post*: We brand you as publishers (and perhaps direct instigators) of a crude fabrication. You did it deliberately, in order to obscure the real lesson of France. You did it in order to blame the French working class for the fall of France, when everything else in that very diary which you publish shows conclusively that France fell because its rotten, degenerate bourgeois democracy was too impotent to defend France.

Had soldiers' committees existed in the French army, they would never have permitted the capitulation to Hitler. It was precisely in order to prevent the appearance of soldiers' committees and all

that they signify, that General Weygand insisted that the French government surrender. The government still had great resources at its disposal for military purposes. Paris could have been defended, as well as the south of France. And even if that fell, the armies could have retreated to North Africa and continued the war.

But Weygand and the rest of the general staff understood what continuation of the war under those conditions meant. After the terrible defeats in the North of France, the masses could see just what stuff their ruling class was made of. But at that point the ruling class would have to appeal to these masses. To continue the struggle required mobilizing these masses to build barricades and trenches on the outskirts of Paris, turn every house into a fortress, defend every street.

"It must not come to that," said General Weygand—as was authoritatively reported at the time, and has never been denied. Weygand likened the situation to that of Russia in 1917, and feared the coming of a workers' revolution if the war continued. "It must not come to that." Rather than that, he and the French "democracy" preferred to turn France over to Hitler.

Such are the indisputable facts. The crude bit of forgery in the *Saturday Evening Post* is deliberately designed to blur over these facts, which damn bourgeois democracy not only in France but wherever it exists.

**A Crude Lie About France In The Saturday Evening Post**

The chief feature in the Dec. 7 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* is the diary of a British staff officer during the Battle of France. The details he gives constitute an annihilating indictment of the French bourgeoisie and its general staff. Blind, fatuous, complacent, stupid, lacking intelligence and imagination, cowardly—the bourgeois "democracy" of France emerges from this officer's diary shorn of every claim to any stature.

But the picture is too damning. The bourgeois "democracy" of France was exactly the same kind of ruling class which still rules in Britain and the United States. Therefore the author—perhaps at the suggestion of his publisher—casts about to find a striking detail which will enable him to make the situation of the French rulers different from that in Britain and the United States. He cannot find it because it does not exist.

Whereupon he invents it. It appears out of a clear sky at the end of his article: "General Georges was asked point-blank why the promised counterattack had not been delivered. His liaison officer spoke for him and answered that the general could not give orders so far in advance of the inclinations of the division. This was an eye-opener, and it is only now that it is brought home to me that the formation of soldiers' committees, regularized in the French army in 1936 by Blum's regime, have

so far undermined discipline."

This is a lie made of whole cloth. Blum did not "regularize" soldiers' committees in 1936, or any other time. Not only Blum, but every party in the Popular Front—including the Stalinists—denounced the Trotskyists, who were the only party that demanded the formation of soldiers' committees. Still less were there soldiers' committees in May, 1940, when even the modest gains of the workers in the factories had been completely wiped out by the French government.

Soldiers' committees would mean the beginning of real democracy. France was not a democratic regime but a military dictatorship in 1940. Precisely because there was no real democracy, the morale of the French armies was soon shattered.

Gentlemen of the *Saturday Evening Post*: We brand you as publishers (and perhaps direct instigators) of a crude fabrication. You did it deliberately, in order to obscure the real lesson of France. You did it in order to blame the French working class for the fall of France, when everything else in that very diary which you publish shows conclusively that France fell because its rotten, degenerate bourgeois democracy was too impotent to defend France.

Had soldiers' committees existed in the French army, they would never have permitted the capitulation to Hitler. It was precisely in order to prevent the appearance of soldiers' committees and all

that they signify, that General Weygand insisted that the French government surrender. The government still had great resources at its disposal for military purposes. Paris could have been defended, as well as the south of France. And even if that fell, the armies could have retreated to North Africa and continued the war.

But Weygand and the rest of the general staff understood what continuation of the war under those conditions meant. After the terrible defeats in the North of France, the masses could see just what stuff their ruling class was made of. But at that point the ruling class would have to appeal to these masses. To continue the struggle required mobilizing these masses to build barricades and trenches on the outskirts of Paris, turn every house into a fortress, defend every street.

"It must not come to that," said General Weygand—as was authoritatively reported at the time, and has never been denied. Weygand likened the situation to that of Russia in 1917, and feared the coming of a workers' revolution if the war continued. "It must not come to that." Rather than that, he and the French "democracy" preferred to turn France over to Hitler.

Such are the indisputable facts. The crude bit of forgery in the *Saturday Evening Post* is deliberately designed to blur over these facts, which damn bourgeois democracy not only in France but wherever it exists.