

# **JIM CROW MURDER**

of Mr. and Mrs.

## **HARRY T. MOORE**



**New Dangers and New Tasks  
Facing the Negro Struggle**

By **GEORGE BREITMAN**

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## About the Author

George Breitman was born in Newark, N. J., in 1916. He joined the revolutionary socialist movement in his teens, participated in the struggles of the unemployed in the Thirties, including the occupation of the Trenton State House in 1936, and served as State Organization Secretary of the Workers Alliance.

He was active in many fights for civil liberties, including the struggle against Jim Crow and Hagueism, and has helped to mobilize support in defense of James Kutcher, the legless veteran who was purged from the Newark Veterans Administration under the "loyalty" program.

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## The Murder of Mr. and Mrs. Harry T. Moore

Two days before Christmas, *Parade*, the Sunday picture magazine, devoted an entire page to a report from Key West, Fla., where President Truman had just completed another of his many vacations. It was the story of a 12-year old boy named Johnny Lawler, who had been encouraged by his parents to hang around for a chance to see Truman, and who finally succeeded and even shook Truman's hand and then was so thrilled that he did not wash his own hand for several days. Johnny was quoted as asking his father, "Say, how did Mr. Truman get to be President?" By working hard, his father replied, and then Johnny said, "I'll do the same because some day I want to be President."

There is something horrible in the thought that people are actually educating their children to emulate a man like Truman, the biggest strikebreaker in U.S. history, the one who ruthlessly gave the order to murder hundreds of thousands of helpless civilians with the atom bomb; the hypocrite who advocated civil rights laws to get elected and then dropped them like a hot potato; the initiator of a witch hunt that is destroying our civil liberties.

Truman worked hard, all right — he worked hard obeying the orders of a crooked machine politician named Pendergast, and he has been working hard since then obeying the orders of the capitalist class, up to and including

the order to intervene in a so-called police action that has already cost the U.S. over 100,000 admitted casualties in Korea.

Johnny Lawler would be far better off if he hitched his wagon to another star. And what a star there was in his own state — a Negro, unknown to almost everyone until his death, a man who never committed any crimes but who also became great by working hard. That was Harry T. Moore, a hard worker, but one who worked on the side of the people and not against them.

### **Harry Moore: A Truly Noble Man**

It seems a shame that we never heard of Harry T. Moore until after Christmas night, when his life and his wife's life were ended by a bomb that blew up their home in Mims, Florida. Because he was a truly great and noble human being, the kind of man we should look up to for guidance in how to live our lives, a man whose memory we should keep forever fresh and green.

He was a school principal, and better off than most Negroes in the South. But he was not content to think only of himself. He joined the fight to win equal salaries for Negro teachers, and for doing that was fired from his job. That would have silenced some people, as it has intimidated many teachers of liberal or radical views and others menaced or victimized by the witch hunt. But it did not frighten Harry T. Moore.

On the contrary, it increased his determination to fight for justice. He became more active than ever in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and in struggles to win and protect the right to vote for Negroes in his state. And when he was confronted with the Groveland "rape" frameup, he became a thorn in the flesh of the white supremacists and Ku Kluxers and their protectors in high office. He went around organizing and speaking at scores of meetings, fearlessly defending the

Groveland victims and boldly demanding that McCall, the lyncher with a sheriff's badge, should be tried for the murder of Samuel Shepherd.

### **He Knew What He Faced**

We know now that he was taking his life into his hands when he did these things. He must have known it too. But it did not stop him. His mother says that when she cautioned him to be more careful not long ago, he replied, "Every advancement comes by way of sacrifice, and if I sacrifice my life or my health I still think it is my duty for my race."

That is why it is correct to call Harry T. Moore a martyr of the Negro struggle and of the general struggle of the working people for a better world. He saw his duty and he did it, despite the costs it entailed. He wanted to live too and to be happy, but he could not be happy unless he offered his resistance to the misery and injustice around him. In other words, he was a really moral man, setting an example that should shine brightly for all time for the youth of all races. He was a true son of great predecessors — of people like Nat Turner and Harriet Tubman and John Brown and others who were ready to risk their lives in the fight against oppression. We would be ingrates, unworthy of the sacrifice he made, if we were content to merely mourn his passing and then forget about him instead of devoting ourselves to avenge his death and to complete the struggle he led so well.

### **Misleading Figures on Lynching**

*The Nation* (Jan. 5) was absolutely correct when it insisted that such crimes as the murder of Harry T. Moore "cannot be understood as senseless acts of depraved or prejudiced individuals. On the contrary, they were essentially political crimes, crimes deliberately committed for a purpose." And the purpose cannot be completely under-

stood without examination of a new trend that has appeared in the last few years.

At the end of 1951 the Tuskegee Institute, a Negro institution which issues annual lynching figures, announced that the total of lynchings last year was — one. This report was widely publicized here and abroad by the propagandists of capitalism; for them this constituted proof that lynchings are diminishing year by year, that America is more and more becoming the land of freedom and equality for the Negro people, and that one of these days we will wake up and find that they are treated just like other people.

They would be very happy if they could get the 15 million American Negroes and the colored people who form a majority of the earth's population to believe in this picture of progress that goes ever onward and upward until the arrival of the millenium. Because if what they said was true, it might not be necessary to *fight* to end the Jim Crow system — maybe people could just afford to sit back and wait for it to die a natural death.

### Why They Peddle the Lie

But it is a lie. The reason the capitalists and their political errand boys in Washington go to the trouble of peddling this lie is that they have set themselves the objective of dominating the whole world. Part of their program for achieving this depends on force — economic force through the dollars they are pumping into the dying capitalist system all over the world, military force through armament that they are trying to impose on unwilling countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. But part also depends on propaganda — the propaganda that the U.S. is the champion and paragon of democracy.

The colored people abroad find that hard to swallow. "If you are such lovers of democracy," they ask, "then how is it that you have become the partner of so many

lifelong bitter enemies of democracy like Chiang Kai-shek, Syngman Rhee, Franco, the Nazi and Japanese generals and most of the other dictators who are not behind the iron curtain?" Along with that question goes another: "If you love democracy so much, why do you treat Negroes as second-class citizens, deny most of them the right to vote, discriminate against them at the hiring gate or bar them from the better jobs when you do hire them, subject them to humility and brutality, segregate them in the armed forces and in so many parts of your educational system, deny them the protection of anti-lynching and anti-poll tax laws — why, if you love democracy so much and talk to us about it so much, don't you practice what you preach?"

This makes the U.S. ruling class, its politicians, diplomats and Voice of America squirm like fish on a hook. And needless to say, the representatives of the bureaucrats in the Kremlin never miss a chance, inside the United Nations and outside, to make them squirm some more. Many people, including some "radicals" who expect capitalism to end Jim Crow, wonder why the U.S. government does not rid itself of this embarrassment, disarm foreign suspicions and deprive the Kremlin of one of its most effective propaganda themes. All they would have to do is quit discriminating against Negroes and begin treating them the same way as other citizens. But they don't do it, for reasons to be discussed later. Instead, they seek to get around their embarrassment by juggling figures to show that lynching is diminishing and conditions are improving, etc.

When we say this is a lie, we do not mean to challenge the official lynching figures compiled every year. It is true that they have declined temporarily. What we mean is that lynching has assumed new forms. Everyone knows that lynchings are violence resulting in death committed by a mob, by more than a few people — if only one person

does the killing, it is listed by the Tuskegee Institute as a murder and not a lynching. (Harry T. Moore was not officially listed as a lynch victim, presumably because it has not been proved that more than one person killed him.) But there is another and more crucial aspect to lynching — its purpose. The purpose is not so much to take a life — that can just as easily be done by so-called legal procedure, in a Jim Crow court, that is, by "legal lynching." The purpose of a lynching is not so much to take a life as it is to frighten, terrorize, silence, demoralize other people who are permitted to go on living, but who are expected to cringe as long as they live and not dare to organize or vote or go to court — just to live and work like a mule for the benefit of others. That is the real aim of a lynching, and if it does not have that effect it is not considered a success.

### **New Trend in Anti-Negro Terror**

The point can be illustrated by the Groveland case. In Groveland, Lake County, Fla., a large number of Negroes were working and living under conditions of virtual peonage, a system about half-way between slave labor and wage labor. After the war the Negro workers began to complain about their conditions and talk about doing something to improve them. When their employers heard about this, they decided to do something drastic to throw the fear of god into their employees. That was the background of the Groveland case in 1949, and when a white woman yelled rape the employers had just what they wanted. They unloosed a reign of terror that lasted over a week; Negro homes were burned, Negroes were shot at if they ventured out of doors, and finally 400 Negro families had to flee out of the county. One Negro was shot dead by a posse, three others were almost lynched and later were convicted; one was given life imprisonment, two were sentenced to death; when the Supreme Court

ordered a new trial for the latter, a sheriff shot them in cold blood, murdering one and leaving the other for dead. But it was not these victims the ruling class was most concerned about — they wanted blood and some bodies burning in the electric chair so that they could point to them and remind the remaining, living Negroes of what they could expect if they tried to alter the wonderful American way of life as it is practiced in the South.

### **Real Aim: To Frighten the Living**

To frighten the living — that is the real aim of lynching. When that is understood, we can see that there may be less of the old-style type of lynchings, where mobs are used, but that lynchings have continued as much as before, only in new forms. Today, when they want to achieve the purpose of lynchings, they send out only two or three men to shoot down a Negro who will serve as an example to others, or they may even send out only one man, armed with a bomb, which he can throw under a house where people are sleeping at night. And in some cases they use the police instead. Because these people who are so brave about murdering sleeping men and women don't like to take any risks, and even small vigilante committees face a risk that their victim may resist. But with the police taking over the function of the lynch mob there is practically no risk. The police have always been noted for their brutality toward Negroes. Now, in addition, in ever-increasing numbers, they are killing Negroes too, in the North and the South.

It is estimated that in the city of Birmingham alone almost 100 Negroes have been shot or beaten to death on the streets or in the police stations during the last 2½ years alone. Nobody knows what the national total is, but it surely equals any annual total of "official" lynchings recorded in the U.S. since the early days of the Ku Klux Klan. It is not a matter of punishing individual Negroes

or of letting the police work off their sadistic frustrations — the main aim is to paralyze the members of the Negro community with fright, to make them shudder every time they see a cop, to keep the memory of broken and bloody bodies on their minds so that they will be afraid to talk back or stand up for their rights. In other words, the same aim as the old-style lynchings, only now committed under guise of law, now protected by the police badge and uniform, now masked as "resisting an officer" or "trying to escape."

That is one of the new trends in the struggle for Negro equality. The Negro people have been pressing forward — it is estimated that two million of them will go to the polls in the South this year as compared with about one million in 1948. Unable to sweet-talk them into accepting second-class citizenship, the ruling class and its political agents have decided to beat them into submission. It is impossible to exaggerate the dangers presented by the new forms of lynching. If they are not stopped where they are already being committed, then they will spread into every state and city where the ruling class wants to keep the Negro people down — that is, every state and city where Negroes live.

### **Danger Evident Not Only to Radicals**

Revolutionary socialists are not the only ones who understand what is happening. The Psychology Department of the City College of New York, 20 educators, sent a wire to Truman last November after the sheriff of Lake County took the two handcuffed Groveland defendants for a ride and shot them. They noted that the pattern for denying Negroes their constitutional rights has shifted from mob violence "to the more subtle forms of quasi-legal executions or violence at the hands of 'law enforcement' officers." The new pattern, they said, would give "the aura of official sanction to racial murders" and would expose

all the people to "the dangers of a capricious, jungle-like state." (This is an acute observation, because once the cops get such powers of life and death in their hands they will not confine their use to Negroes but will employ them against whites as well.) And they warned that "only the most immediate and strongest action of the federal government can prevent the legal murder of a great many more Negroes in the near future." Events have already begun to confirm this warning.

Another conservative source, Walter White, in his annual report for the NAACP, declared: "At times during the year justice and human rights in America seemed to be standing still or even moving backward . . . we saw in our country a resurgence of violence — rioting, home burning, bombings, police brutality and mockery of the revered American concept of 'equal justice under law.' Cicero, Martinsville, Groveland, Birmingham, Miami and Mims, the horror names of 1951, drove home more strongly than ever the continuing and increasing need for the NAACP."

### **Why No Action from Washington?**

The International Executive Board of the CIO Auto Workers — not one radical among them — protested the Groveland killing, the murder of an NAACP member who had filed suit for the right to vote in Louisiana and was shot down by a deputy sheriff, and the murder of a Negro steward at sea by a white captain. These crimes were designated as signs of "an intensification of terroristic aggression against Negroes by officers charged with upholding and enforcement of the law." Urging Attorney General McGrath to arrest, indict and try the killers for murder, the UAW Board wrote: "Failure to take such action subverts all of our lofty professions of democratic principles. The hour is late. Action now is imperative."

The hour certainly is late, but no action has been forthcoming, despite thousands of appeals to Truman for

the government to step into the picture and do something to stop the terrorism. Not one legal or semi-legal lyncher has been punished. Not one cop has been fired. Not one bomb-thrower has been apprehended. The strongest government in the world seems to be helpless, or else tries to give that impression. The mighty FBI has found nothing. The Department of Justice can't seem to get the wheels of justice moving. Are they really so inefficient?

The answer is that it all depends on whom they are hunting. When they want to catch a radical, nothing seems to stop them. The whole machinery of the government is thrown into high gear, thousands of cops and FBI agents labor ceaselessly, no financial expense is too high, they tap wires and open mail, they set up a stoolpigeon system extending across the whole country. And they get results — when they really want them. So when they don't get results we have good reason to believe they don't want them.

They arrest radicals and prosecute them and send them to jail, not for employing force and violence — there has not been a single case of this kind — but for allegedly conspiring to advocate force and violence, a frameup assault on the Bill of Rights. But when it comes to those who do not advocate but clearly commit force and violence, the government seems paralyzed, stumbling, impotent. They are great at hounding people whose only crime is that they express their opinions but a complete dud when it comes to catching and punishing fascistic elements who commit crimes in violation of all the federal, state and local laws. Liberals think this is accidental, but it is not. The truth is that the government is not really disturbed by fascistic elements while it is afraid of ideas and free speech and free press. This gives a better and sharper insight into the true character of the government and the capitalist ruling class than can be gotten in almost any other way.

## Our Warnings Confirmed

What is the government doing about the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Harry T. Moore? Look first of all at Truman, the so-called great civil libertarian and humanitarian. Not one word. He can't be bothered by such trifles. When U.S. airmen fly over Hungarian territory in violation of international law — you can imagine what would happen if a Soviet or Hungarian plane flew over U.S. territory without permission — and then are arrested and fined, there is a great hubbub, Truman demands restitution and firm action, and even after they are released he vindictively demands that the case be taken before the UN. But when people are murdered in his own country, in the state where he takes his vacations, Truman is silent (and no newspaper reporter questions him about it at his press conferences). Not that it would mean anything if he did say something about the Moore case because he has proved that his promises cannot be trusted anyhow. Action speaks louder than words. And the inaction of the Truman administration also speaks louder than words.

## The Way the Government Acts

Attorney General McGrath promises "the full facilities of the FBI." Eventually he sends down two (2) FBI agents, who, when added to those already stationed in Florida, make a grand total of nine (9). Which is less than one-tenth as many as he set into action like bloodhounds when four Stalinists convicted under the Smith Act jumped bail last summer. Evidently expressing opinions that Truman and McGrath do not like is a more heinous crime than murder. The FBI agents in Florida have achieved exactly nothing. The whole thing is a farce. Because even if they should arrest someone for "violating the federal civil rights" of Mr. and Mrs. Moore, the penalty — the maximum penalty — would be one year in prison and a

few thousand dollars in fine! (Provided a Southern jury could be found to convict the defendant.) That is the way the government acts, that is the way it intends to keep acting — unless and until it is compelled to do otherwise by the mass pressure of the American people.

When Harry T. Moore was murdered, the Socialist Workers Party immediately sounded the alarm. It warned that if his killers were not punished, they would feel free to spread their violence to maintain white supremacy and to extend their attacks to white workers and the labor movement. This warning was confirmed almost as soon as it was uttered. Recent issues of *The Militant*, by printing a number of small news items that are lost in the back pages of most papers, have shown that the bomb is joining TV and comic books as symbols of American capitalist culture (which is ironical when we recall that the favorite cartoon stereotype of a revolutionist used to be a man with a bomb in his hand).

A white evangelist in Florida is warned that he will get the "Mims treatment" if he does not stop preaching against sin so vigorously (Moore's home was in Mims). A crusader against vice in Alabama comes home to find his house in smoke and his son blown 30 feet through the air by a bomb, and he decides to move his family out of the state (why he sent them to Florida for protection from bombs is a mystery). The white sheriff of a North Carolina county complains that his deputies cannot do their job at night in the rural areas because the Klan has been flogging so many people that the residents have become jittery and start firing their shotguns as soon as they hear a noise outside; the sheriff says if this kind of thing goes on, why, it will not be possible for his deputies to preserve law and order much longer. The United Press reports a dynamite explosion near a Negro night club in Dallas, Tex., and calls it the third such "apparently pointless" bombing in less than a month. And now the scene shifts

North, to Chicago, where a black-powder bomb is exploded outside the new headquarters of the AFL Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen's Union, shattering 40 windows and rocking the whole area; the police began an investigation, of course — not of the labor haters, not of the anti-union racists or the White Circle League, but of the CIO United Packinghouse Workers Union!

### What Is Being Done?

What is being done by the groups that are directly affected by this new wave of terrorism? The NAACP, which is most vitally involved, denounced the outrage, offered a reward for the killers of Mr. and Mrs. Moore, held memorial meetings for them, and urged McGrath to appoint a special prosecutor and grand jury (which he refused to do). And then, two weeks after the bombing, it voted to consult the labor leaders for a nationwide work stoppage, something it had never done before and something which it did almost on the spur of the moment under the pressure of the mass indignation over the Moore case. All these measures were justified and progressive — but inadequate.

The leaders of the labor movement too know they are involved, and knew it before the bombing of the Chicago AFL union. They know that union organizers and members will be next on the death list, that the forces behind lynch terror are the same ones that seek to smash unions. But beyond sending a few telegrams of protest, they do nothing. An editorial in the Jan. 9 *AFL News-Reporter* concludes by "wondering" if maybe "reactionaries everywhere won't stop to think whether stirring up race hatred in order to win an election is worth the damage it helps to cause." This is not a summons for the people to fight the reactionaries but an appeal to the reactionaries to think over what they are doing and decide if the terrorism really





benefits them — as if the reactionaries do not know what they are doing.

The Socialist Workers Party takes an altogether different approach. Farrell Dobbs, National Chairman and presidential candidate of the SWP, wrote a letter to the NAACP, AFL and CIO and 22 other powerful national organizations scheduled to meet in Washington on Feb. 17-18 to lobby for a change in Senate rules that make it possible to filibuster all civil rights legislation to death. Speaking on behalf of the SWP, Dobbs urged them to revise the plans for their conference — to turn it into a broader affair, to summon a mass march on Washington by tens of thousands instead of staging a lobby with a few hundred polite representatives; to call mass meetings and demonstrations in cities all over the country at the same time; to endorse the proposal for a nationwide work stoppage; and to support the idea of forming defense guards to protect lives and homes and liberties which the authorities have failed to protect.

### **The Need for Defense Guards**

The proposal for defense guards originated in Florida, and not with the SWP. For several months in Miami bombs have been thrown or planted in Negro housing projects, Jewish synagogues, and a Catholic church. When the police failed to stop this, here is what happened, according to the Jan. 2 *New York Times*: "Members of the Jewish War Veterans recently suggested that 325 of their members be deputized to guard synagogues, but this was turned down after several rabbis had issued a statement declaring that to resort to 'vigilante action at this time is to succumb to hysteria and panic.'"

The subsequent killing of Mr. and Mrs. Moore, undoubtedly encouraged when the racists saw they could act with impunity in Miami, proves how blind those rabbis were to put their confidence in the police. In the

first place, defense guards need not be deputized; when needed, they can and should be formed without getting the recognition or approval of the police, who usually act in connivance with the lynchers anyhow. In the second place, formation of defense guards is not "vigilante action" but its very opposite — protection against vigilante action. And in the third place it is not panic or hysteria to protect your life when the police fail to do so — but good sense.

The bombers respect only those who can oppose them effectively; they will think twice about going out to take another life when they see Negroes and Jews and workers banding together and promising to resist. Even the police will think it over before clubbing a helpless victim if they know he has friends who will come to his aid. Without ever having heard of the Socialist Workers Party, the Jewish veterans in Miami sensed this; so did 18 whites who stood armed guard around the church of the preacher threatened with the Mims treatment in Jacksonville; and so did the Negroes who formed a guard around the home of a Negro farmer in North Carolina after a bomb had been exploded there.

### **What Impedes the Leaders?**

Farrell Dobbs' proposals were not answered by the labor, Negro, liberal and civic organizations. But they made it clear that they rejected them by changing the name of their lobbying conference in February to the "Leadership Conference on Civil Rights" — an obvious refusal to call for mass action. But what about the proposal for a nationwide work stoppage, which was made first by the NAACP itself? The NAACP authorized the setting up of a committee to consult the labor leaders. What happened? Was it set up, and if it was set up, why isn't it functioning? If it is functioning, why is the NAACP so silent about the whole thing, which was their idea and not ours? If the labor leaders refuse to go along with the

proposal, why doesn't the NAACP announce this so that the people can do something about it.\* Why, if they say this is a situation of crisis, don't they act accordingly? What are they waiting for?

The answer can be found by examining the new form of propaganda that both Negro and labor leaders have become very fond of in recent years. This has already been done in *The Militant*, but it bears repetition and amplification. Today this propaganda is being applied to just about every public issue that can be thought of. When Truman asks for another five billions in new taxes, he seeks to justify this unpopular demand by its necessity for the struggle against communism. But his Republican opponents say new taxes are out of the question for the same reason — they would hurt the economy and weaken the struggle against communism. When Philip Murray asks for a steel wage increase, he explains it is needed so the steel workers can contribute their maximum effort to the fight against Stalin. Fairless of U.S. Steel retorts that a wage increase would undermine the steel industry, which would please no one so much as Stalin. Of course the class struggle continues just the same. The steel workers are not impressed with Fairless' arguments, nor he with Murray's. This shows that propaganda has certain limits, and while it can mix things up it cannot change the realities of social life and struggle.

### **False Propaganda Paralyzes Action**

But it can mix things up, which is why it must be paid some attention when it is applied to the Negro question,

\* It became known in February that the top officers of the CIO, after getting a letter on the proposal from Walter White, decided that they, as "responsible" union leaders, could not participate. White, either because he changed his mind about a work stoppage or because he did not want to criticize the labor leaders in public, remained silent.

where the argument runs like this: Jim Crow, discrimination, segregation, bombings are all crimes because they help Stalin, and should be ended so that Negroes will be able and willing to go all-out in the crusade against communism. This was the theme sounded over and over by Philip Murray and Walter Reuther at the last CIO convention, and given a timely application by Walter White, secretary of the NAACP, when he said the murder of Harry T. Moore was "one of the greatest services that could have been performed for Joe Stalin."

The duty of leaders, labor or Negro, is to educate the people, teach them to know causes and effects — otherwise, no lasting progress is possible. Specifically, it is their job to teach the masses what causes Jim Crow oppression, who benefits from it, how all workers are harmed by it, why they should fight it, and how to fight it effectively. The basic cause is the profit system, and the beneficiaries are the capitalists who do everything they can to keep the workers divided along any lines possible — racial, geographic, religious, sexual, etc. Because the more the workers are divided, the easier it is for the employers to exploit them and squeeze the maximum profit out of their labor. The workers have to be shown that Jim Crow benefits the ruling class, and that anything that perpetuates Jim Crow is harmful to their own interests. It must be made plain that Jim Crow is not the product of Stalin. This is not said in defense of Stalin, but of a historically incontrovertible fact. Jim Crow is the product of capitalism, American capitalism; its seat is in Washington, not Moscow. Any propaganda that obscures this fact is harmful and not helpful to the Negroes and their white allies.

### **The Roots of Jim Crow**

The workers must be encouraged and taught to figure out their problems from the standpoint of how their problems affect the class and individual conditions and liberties

of the masses themselves. When the question of a strike comes up, workers should be conditioned to ask: "Will this strike help me and the other workers, or will it help the capitalists, who benefit from our losses and lose from our gains?" They should not be bamboozled into introducing extraneous questions, like: "Will this strike help Stalin, or hurt him?" Trying to figure out what is going on in Stalin's mind (something the masterminds in Washington have not done with perceptible success) can result only in confusion, lack of determination, demoralization and inactivity — which are of benefit only to the capitalists and the white supremacists.

The argument is not altogether new; only the form is. In World War II it had a slightly different wording, namely, will this or that action help Hitler? For some groups this became the sole and supreme criterion for everything. The Communist Party was most guilty of this. If workers wanted to resist speedup, or if Negroes wanted to march on Washington to protest Jim Crow, the Stalinists opposed and fought them on the grounds that such action was disruptive of "national unity" and therefore helpful to Hitler. The Stalinists became the most vicious and virulent opponents of labor and Negro struggles because their policy of considering everything from the viewpoint of how it allegedly affected Hitler led them to shut their eyes to how these things affected the workers and Negroes, and to subordinate and oppose every progressive struggle under the guise of fighting Hitler. Those who use this method in its new form will do the same and will play into the hands of the reactionary ruling class, which is already stressing the idea that there must be no more conflicts in this country because Stalin wants us to be fighting one another instead of him.

### **Who Really Benefits from Terrorism?**

But even if it is conceded for the sake of argument that the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Moore is a service for Stalin (in the sense that he makes use of it, not that he committed it) — so what? Is that all it is? On the contrary, it is also a service for the American ruling class — in fact, a much bigger service for them than for him. The purpose of Jim Crow terrorism, as we noted earlier, is to keep the Negro "in his place." That is where American capitalism has tried to keep him since 1876 when they made a deal with the Southern landlords, businessmen and Ku Kluxers at the expense of the Bill of Rights and the Negro people, and that is where they are trying to keep him today. Stalin may reap certain indirect propaganda benefits from Jim Crow terrorism, but American capitalism benefits from it directly, politically and economically, and in a big way. That is why they do nothing to stop it.

The Moore murders embarrass them in the United Nations. But not enough so that they want to end Jim Crow at home. For them it is cheaper to pay the price of being embarrassed than of having anything done to overthrow the Jim Crow system. So Walter White is telling only half the truth. The murder of Harry T. Moore is a service for Truman as well as for Stalin.

White, Murray and Reuther make a great deal of noise about how embarrassing Jim Crow is to American capitalism. The Truman administration, which would not be in power without the support of the South, knows all about this embarrassment, even better than its labor and Negro supporters. But that does not stop them from maintaining the Jim Crow system. Why this is so, why the ruling class retains the "embarrassment" of Jim Crow and desperately resists all efforts to end it — that is the question which White, Murray and Reuther never even think of asking. But it is the decisive question and must be answered.

### Why Washington Prefers "Embarrassment"

Abolishing Jim Crow is no easy thing. Even if they decided in Washington to do it, it would still not be easy. Because the ruling class in the South would not like the idea. That is putting it very mildly. They know that Truman's only interest is in getting Negro votes and not in threatening the South's sacred way of life, but they go wild with rage every time he utters a few innocuous words about poll taxes or FEPC. And if the government actually tried to end Jim Crow in the South, we would be confronted with the threat of another civil war.

In other words, the only way to abolish Jim Crow in this country is by making a revolution in the South, which is the powerhouse and breeding ground of the Jim Crow system. The present Southern ruling class would have to be thrown out of power, and that would be a revolution, a political revolution. But no matter how started, such a political revolution would inevitably tend to develop into a social and economic overturn, which in turn would upset the whole national structure. And that is why the capitalists who are running things will never consent to the abolition of the Jim Crow system. And nothing will shake them in this. They would much rather risk alienating the whole world than risk a revolution threatening their own profits and privileges at home.

The final note in the White-Murray propaganda is a plea to the ruling class to end their great "inconsistency." How, they ask, can you get ready to fight a war for democracy in Europe and Asia and continue to treat the Negro at home in the most undemocratic fashion? Can't you see that to be consistent you must give the Negro democracy in America too?

But since the capitalists know that they are not preparing for a war for democracy in any respect, this alleged inconsistency does not bother them at all. Their foreign policy and their domestic policy, despite what the labor

and Negro leaders say, are cut from the same cloth. They are not getting ready to bring the blessings of democracy to the people of Asia or Europe any more than they are getting ready to extend them to American Negroes. On the contrary, they intend to enslave the people both at home and abroad, and are proceeding to destroy civil liberties at home precisely so that nobody here will be able to interfere with their reactionary program abroad.

### Where There Is a Contradiction

Walter White and Philip Murray regard the war in Korea as a crusade for democracy, but millions of American Negroes, when they heard Truman give the order for U.S. intervention, which he called a "police action," must have thought to themselves: "I sure feel sorry for the Koreans if they get the same kind of 'police action' we've been getting." And they do — the police action against colonial masses in Korea is qualitatively the same thing as police action against minorities here at home, although on a bigger scale and with bigger weapons.

So there is a great contradiction, but it is with the labor and liberal leaders who act as apologists for the imperialists. They have got to make a choice themselves. If they keep on supporting capitalism and its foreign policy and its wars then they will have to subordinate labor and Negro struggles, shove them into the background the way the Stalinists did in World War II (and as the liberals are already half-doing by their timorous policy on the Moore case). Or else they will have to increase their opposition to Jim Crow, the wage freeze, high prices, big profits and the witch hunt, and break with the imperialist foreign policy that conflicts with every progressive movement and struggle in the world today.

That is their problem, and they will have to meet it. Revolutionary socialists have made their choice, and nothing will swerve them from it. They are and will remain

implacable opponents of capitalism and its Jim Crow, and nothing will persuade them to moderate or abandon that struggle for a single day, rain or shine, war or peace, Murray or White, Truman, Taft or Eisenhower. Because they understand that if the struggle is stopped, if the fight is weakened, then things will become even worse than they are now.

### **An Instructive Lesson from Jewish History**

Nothing could be more deadly for the Negro people than a fatalistic belief in progress — automatic, self-moving progress, the chief staple of liberalism and reformism. This is borne out by what happened to the Jews. Before the first world war, when he was still a Marxist, Karl Kautsky wrote a book which was revised after the war and translated into English under the title, *Are The Jews A Race?* This book is still worth reading as an example of the conceptions of the socialist movement about the Jewish question at that time. It contains some historical and anthropological material, an analysis of economic causes of anti-Semitism, etc. But its most interesting chapter is the one on the assimilation of the Jews, containing a number of tables of statistics showing that gradually the Jews were intermingling more and more with Christians and intermarrying with them at a really remarkable rate — in some European countries during the early part of the century, one out of every three or four Jews was marrying non-Jews and great numbers of them were being converted to Christianity.

All in all, there seemed good ground to accept the prevailing belief, shared even by the socialists, that the Jewish question was solving itself through the assimilation of the Jews. An appealing notion — but how appallingly false! It proves that history, and especially the history of oppressed groups, does not move forward in a straight line but that it zigs and zags, that conditions can arise which

will wipe out in a single decade all the gains that have been painfully accumulated in a century of strenuous effort. How empty and remote the statistics in Kautsky's book appear alongside of the single, lone statistic we became acquainted with after World War II — six million Jews exterminated under Hitler in a few brief years.

### **An Urgent Warning**

And so the Negro people must be warned: Remember what happened to the Jews. They too were told in assuring tones about how things were getting better day by day and all they had to do was wait and be patient with the "gradual" method and then the happy day of equality would dawn by itself. Remember what happened to the Jews in Europe and do not let anybody lull you with consoling statistics! The day may come in this country too when the ruling class, determined to conquer the whole world, will try to drown the Negro people in blood as an example and scapegoat for the other victims of capitalism.

The idea that the Negro question would solve itself, so to speak, seemed to have validity once upon a time. This capitalist system we live under was progressive in its youth. Less than a hundred years ago the capitalists united, although reluctantly at first, with Negroes and workers and farmers to wage a bloody civil war that ended in the smashing of the chattel slave system. There was reason then to think that under capitalism Negroes could eventually prosper or at least breathe the free air of equality. Then, after the Civil War, came the period of Reconstruction, whose first stages were the brightest chapter in the book of American history, when the capitalist government did not hesitate to suppress the former slaveholders and to keep them suppressed and to use federal troops and guns in support of the Negroes' struggle for freedom.

## Capitalism and the Negroes

But that was when capitalism was young and thriving and moving ahead. Today this profit system is old and decrepit, attacked by incurable diseases, demented by illusions of grandeur and vain hopes that it can succeed in the program of world conquest that Hitler failed to achieve. It's a different animal now. Since the betrayal of Reconstruction, which gave the reins of power in the South back to the former slaveowners, there has been no reason whatever to expect anything progressive from the capitalists. Besides, why should the Negro people expect that their capitalist oppressors are going to grant them more rights at a time when the capitalists are busily engaged in withdrawing rights from the white workers, staging a witch hunt to destroy freedom of speech and press and association for the white workers? Preparations for an imperialist world war do not portend the flowering of democracy for the Negro people — they signify an attempt, already under way, to wipe out the democratic rights of all the masses. Even without the evidence of new and spreading forms of lynching and terrorism, it does not take much vision to see that the prospects for things getting better by themselves are very slim, and are going to get slimmer unless they are resisted vigorously, militantly, in the spirit of Harry T. Moore.

## Moore Pointed to the Road

The solution is not easy, and anyone who thinks it is, is fooling himself. These are not easy times in which to make progress. Many people who know that the answer lies in struggle have been frightened by the witch hunt and have retired to the sidelines. But struggle is still the only answer, and no slick or cheap substitutes will do. Sending petitions to Truman will not bear any better results now than in the past. Proposals for a boycott of Florida citrus fruits and vacation centers are not harmful as such —

unless the idea is created that they are the answer. By themselves they do no harm, but they cannot do much good either. Struggle, backed up by the readiness to sacrifice that Harry T. Moore exhibited, remains the only answer.

The nature of the struggle is primarily political. If the government wants to, it can put an end to terrorism in the South, which is itself a political thing. Because the government does not really want to, the government must be changed. Not changed by shifting from control by one capitalist party to control by another capitalist party, but changed from a government representing the interests of the capitalist class to one representing the interests of the workers, Negroes, working farmers, housewives and youth — representing them, controlled by them, responsible to them and replaceable by them. If the government wants to, it can end discrimination in industry. Because it does not want to, it must be changed. And so it goes with all the other problems facing the labor and Negro movements — they are political problems, which can be solved only through political action and struggle. That is why it is necessary for workers and Negroes to fight for their organizations to break with the capitalist parties and form an independent labor party, challenging Big Business in a fundamental fashion and aiming to take power away from it.

We revolutionary socialists are not able by ourselves alone to set into motion our program for combatting terrorism. That is because we are still a small minority. But even a small minority, armed with a correct program, can exert a tremendous influence. The Abolitionists also started out small, a persecuted minority whose leaders were tarred and feathered and jailed and lynched, but within a few decades they ended up by seeing two-thirds of the nation take up arms to defend the anti-slavery principles they had stuck to so persistently during dark and troubled times.

## Future Belongs to Revolutionary Socialism

And revolutionary socialism will not remain a minority; because our ideas conform to reality and are right, they will attract the majority of the people, and they will triumph. Some have been scared off by the witch hunt, and others have been corrupted into compliance and apathy by "prosperity" — but the ruling class cannot stop ideas or their spread because it cannot do away with the reactionary conditions of life that produce those ideas and it cannot prevent the rise of new generations, young people on whom the future rests and who will not want the future to be like the past. Our confidence in the future is not the result of wishful thinking or of an ability to hop ourselves up, but the product of scientific study and understanding of society and history and the class struggle.

Some people think that it is visionary, hopelessly impractical and idealistic to continue a struggle to end capitalism against such seemingly great odds. The same view was held by most people 100 years ago when a minority suggested that it was advisable, necessary and possible to end the system of slavery. "The slave system is here to stay," they were told, "and only crazy fanatics will refuse to try to live with it, and maybe fix it up, patch it or reform it here or there." But from their own experience with the slave system, the majority of the American people were forced to the conclusion that slavery had to go, and they had to accept the program of the revolutionists whom they had derided as crackpots.

## What the People Are Learning

Experience with capitalism, especially with capitalism in its death agony, is going to have the same consequences in our own time. It is going to teach the people that if they want to live, capitalism must die, and that if they want peace and dignity they will first have to employ militancy in taking power away from the capitalists. It is

not the revolutionary socialists, primarily, who will teach these things, but capitalism itself. The Harlem paper, the *New York Age*, says: "The blast (that blew up Harry T. Moore's home) exploded all hopes that the fight for equality in politics, education, the courts and other spheres of life in the South could be won with little or no bloodshed."

We have said that too, but events say it better. We're educating all whom we can reach to the best of our ability — but capitalism is educating them too and in a way that will have deeper, more lasting, profound and revolutionary effects than any words we can speak or write.

The enemies of Jim Crow, war and thought control are still on the defensive. But that is no reason for despair. *The Nation* is correct when it observes that the Moore bombing "is likely to bring about an imponderable change in the political thinking of American Negroes" and when it notes that pressure for militant action is coming from "rank-and-file Negroes whose patience is utterly exhausted not only with Dixiecrat provocation but with the relaxed middle-class attitude of some of their leaders, who have been quite willing to issue further political bills of credit to Mr. Truman on the basis of his stale civil rights speeches of 1948 and the lesser evil premise." A similar process is certain to develop among the white workers. Whether it likes it or not, capitalism is forced to continue to produce all kinds of opportunities for awakening the masses and driving them into struggle against conditions as they are. If the politically advanced workers know how to stick to their guns and grab hold of all the opportunities offered them, then they will win to their side all the other workers whose needs are satisfied by the program of revolutionary socialism, and then it will be goodbye forever to capitalism, and all of its products like Jim Crow terrorism.



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