

Lynch Terror and the Party

By TOM JOHNSON.

"NOT satisfied with the Negro's death, the mob burned the body, set fire to a prominent building in the Negro section and threatened to destroy every Negro building in this city of 16,000 population. The torch was abandoned, however, in favor of physical destruction. . . . All efforts to stem the tide of destruction finally were abandoned and Sherman police directed traffic while the mob marched through the streets with the lifeless body bumping at the end of a chain." The roasting to death of George Hughes, Negro worker, at Sherman, Texas, on May 9, as reported in the Birmingham "News."

Such is the freedom of the Negro worker today. Such is the "protection" accorded him by the boss state power. . . . "the police directed traffic while the mob marched through the streets with the lifeless body bumping at the end of a chain." Four lynchings in the last six weeks, such is the bloody record of the Southern ruling class in April-May, 1930.

And lynching is only the high point in the whole damnable system of racial oppression of the Southern Negroes. In the shop the Negro worker draws the lowest pay, gets the worst jobs, is denied in most cases the right to learn a trade. Outside the shop he is discriminated against on every hand. Forced to pay high rent for miserable shacks in the slums of the cities. Jim-Crowed in the street cars and trains. Treated in general as a member of an inferior race. And when election time rolls around, he may vote in some places, providing he is a "good Nigger," owns property, and votes the straight democratic ticket.

In this elaborate system of racial oppression which is barely outlined here; in this fiendish lynch terrorism of boss-led mobs is clearly expressed the ever-present fear of the Southern ruling class of a revolt of the oppressed Negro race. And well may the Southern ruling class fear, for on the one hand the development of Southern industry is producing a Negro proletariat—is producing the one class capable of organizing and of leading the masses of Negro toilers into struggle for their demands. On the other hand this same development of Southern industry is destroying the class basis of the former mainstay of Southern reaction, the independent white farmer. By the thousands and the scores of thousand the white farmers are being forced off the land and into the mills and shops of the industrial towns and cities. There they learn the lessons of organization, the necessity of a united fighting front of both Negro and white against the boss. Many of them drift back again to the farms in the hopeless search for work and incidentally carry back with them the message of class solidarity.

"Divide and rule." This has been the slo-

gan of action of Southern capitalism for generations. And now the objective conditions for the bridging over of this division between black and white workers, for the unification of the ranks of the Southern working class, are rapidly maturing. Furthermore the Communist Party and the revolutionary unions under its leadership are in the South today consciously organizing and directing this process. The role of the Party in the ideological clarification of the Southern working class in this connection cannot be overestimated.

These then become the main immediate tasks of the Party in the South; the unification of the Negro and white sections of the working class and their mobilization for struggle under the fighting slogans of the Party, and the organization and direction of the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed Negro race.

The Party comes out as the one champion of the demands of the Negro race, from the most elementary immediate demands clear up to the demand of the right of self determination. And this not only abstractly in our thesis and articles, but must come out in action as the leader of the Negro masses in their every day struggle.

Acts of lynch terror such as the Sherman affair must not find the Party limiting its activity to a statement or two and the perfunctory organization of a protest meeting. Such acts must serve as the starting point for the mobilization of the widest possible sections of both white and Negro workers for actual aggressive struggle against the white terror and against capitalism. The organization of workers defense corps, which has been a paper decision for the past year or more must be put into actual practice. The Party must prove to the Negro workers in deeds and not in words that it is their Party.

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was willing to concede even to them, and Gandhi's arrest will have the effect now of making them still further moderate their terms in order to make a compromise possible.

But while Gandhi's arrest is likely to receive the approval of the above-mentioned classes and political groups, it is also likely to stimulate further acts of revolt, particularly among the youth and the intelligentsia. As far as the masses are concerned, there is a danger that Gandhi's lost influence will be partially resuscitated by his martyrdom at the hands of imperialism and the illusion created that he was fighting a revolutionary battle.

This danger is, however, not likely to affect the revolutionary movement among the workers or among the peasants, whose economic condition is driving them to organized revolu-

tionary action. The strike movement among the workers in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and other cities is developing rapidly and the unemployment that has already arisen by the closing down of a number of mills, and which will be further enhanced by the carrying out of the above-mentioned scheme of rationalization, the desperate condition of the transport workers, the miners, and indeed of all categories of workers, is bound to lead within the next few months to a serious sharpening of the struggle. The condition of the peasantry has grown extremely menacing owing to the very serious fall in the prices of all their agricultural products. It may therefore be confidently expected that the movement of the workers and the peasants will grow in intensity and be carried on under revolutionary slogans,