

# JOURNAL OF THE QUARTER

## THE NEGRO REVOLUTION (continued)

*Will the strategy of non-violent resistance prove as successful for the Negro liberation movement in the future as it has in the past, or should it be replaced by new methods? If so, which methods?*

*Should the liberation movement try to play a more directly political role?*

*Should it press for Negro quotas in employment? Is such a demand a way of proposing a kind of Jim Crow in reverse, or is it the only way of getting a rough justice for Negroes in employment?*

*Should the Negro leadership insist upon transporting white children to predominantly Negro schools, even if this creates resentment among white parents?*

*Given the fact that in many cities the problem of discrimination soon reveals itself to be a problem in economic power and privilege, is the stress upon legal rights sufficient? How can the protest movement cope with the economic bases of discrimination?*

*Do street demonstrations retain the value they have had these past months, or will they reach a point of diminishing returns?*

*In short, where do we go from here?*

These are some of the questions that the leaders and active participants of the Negro liberation movement are now discussing. Some of them would phrase these questions differently; but no matter, the problems remain.

Mostly they are problems of initial success. Not for decades has any social movement in the U.S. been able to mobilize the kind of energy and en-

thusiasm that were shown at the March on Washington. Did it "change a single vote"? A foolish question—for the liberation of the Negroes is not going to occur in the legislative halls, it is going to be the work of the Negroes themselves. What the March did was to give the country a sharper awareness that we face a fundamental test, beyond evasion. And to the Negroes it gave a new sense of their

power. As Murray Kempton has remarked: "The children from Wilmington, North Carolina climbed back on their buses with the shining memory of a moment when they marched with all America—a memory to sustain them when they return to march alone."

Now the Negro movement faces a time of stock-taking, in which the lessons of the past will be measured and strategies for the future discussed. There are divisions of opinion, as there must be in any democratic movement. Faced with candor and good spirit, these could be valuable, for the Negro movement is not the property of any organization or ideology, it responds to a multitude of problems, and many paths can lead to the common goal of freedom.

There are certain dangers. Summer-patriots can be found in all movements: here they are the genteel Toms who want to make out for themselves, edging their way into middle-class respectability or political office, and leaving the masses of poor Negroes in the lurch. At the opposite extreme are those who would transform the Negro movement into an agency dramatizing their extreme alienation from American life and the progressive forces in our society. How pusillanimous the liberals can be, how inadequate the trade unions, how irrelevant the radical sectarians—all this we know. Yet the Negro movement would be making a mistake if, out of the understandable bitterness of some younger people, it were to be tempted to go it alone. We do not think it will make this mistake. The leaders are too experienced and hard-headed, the participants too numerous and deeply rooted in American life.

Some talk is heard these days about

abandoning "non-violence." When this comes from Marxistic ideologues and sects, it is profoundly irresponsible: they are hoping to impose a frayed blueprint on a living movement. When such talk comes from young Negro activists who have been tried beyond endurance, it is authentic: they have a right to speak their anguish. And when it comes, as it recently has since the Birmingham murders, from responsible Negro leaders, it should be taken with the utmost seriousness as a sign that even men who are in principle committed to non-violence can be pushed too far.

Which of us, seeing the dynamited body of his little girl on the street, would not find it hard to reaffirm non-violence? Yet cruel as it must seem to say so, the grief of a father, the anger of a community, is not finally at stake here. At stake is the course of a great social movement which has already scored major successes, both practical and moral, through the strategy of non-violence. It is a strategy that will surely lead to future victories as well. And what, in any case, could serve to replace it? To ask this question is to answer it: the Negro movement has worked out a course that in its essentials is both strong and good, powerful and right. Only a vir-

---

*THE HIGHER PHILOSOPHY:*

*Right Wing Dept.*

The demonstration in Washington is for ONTOLOGICAL reasons unruly. That is to say, the demonstration has no definite purpose. It was dreamed up before the civil rights bill; and although it is widely thought that its sole purpose is to build pressure for passage of that bill, in fact the March would take place even if the bill were passed tomorrow.—Emphasis added.—*The National Review*, August 27, 1963.

tual break-down of American social life could warrant any other course.

- For those of us who have been raised in the ambience of the labor movement, who in recent years have defended the unions even when we knew something was radically wrong with them, and who retain strong ties of solidarity and gratitude for the improvements they brought in the lives of our parents and ourselves over the last few decades—for us it was a black day when the AFL-CIO Executive Board refused to endorse the March.

The other week I attended a conference of labor people and was struck at how uneasy and defensive they are on this matter. I was repeatedly told that many unions played an important part in financing the March, that large individual contingents came from a number of major unions, that serious work is being done in many places by the unions to eradicate discrimination. The people who told me these things are serious people, and I believe them. Yet in their absorption with the daily life of the unions, they fail to recognize how deeply tarnished the idea of unionism has become even in liberal circles; they fail to recognize how utterly damaging was the decision, or lack of decision, taken by the AFL-CIO Executive Board. Imagine the response of a young Negro in Chicago or Birmingham upon hearing that George Meany could not find it in his heart to endorse the March! There are times in political life when it is precisely the gesture that speaks most clearly; and here the gesture of refusal has done enormous hurt to the labor movement. Whatever idealism is to be found these days among young people is directed toward two central issues: Negro rights and peace. When the vet-

eran union leaders bemoan their inability to recruit devoted young organizers, they might try to imagine themselves as young Americans in the sixties, without ideology or program, dubious about political systems, but believing passionately in fair play and decency for all human beings. Is George Meany and all he represents a figure likely to evoke their loyalties?

- Concerning the role of the Kennedy Administration, most of what we said in our last issue seems still to be true. It would be interesting if some political analyst who is close to Washington affairs would try to explain why it is that this Administration seems utterly unable to fight in domestic politics: is it that it really lacks serious convictions? Or that it believes above all else in avoiding public confrontations?

The fact remains that it has done very little publicly in behalf of the Civil Rights bill. The barnstorming tours that should have been held to rouse the country, the speeches, North and South, that the President and his Cabinet members should have been making in support of the bill—these have not occurred. Such efforts have an importance far beyond the imme-

---

#### BEYOND THE QUOTA

There is much talk these days about a "quota" of jobs, etc., for Negroes. Pres. Kennedy has even denounced the idea of such "quotas" as unAmerican. But there is one "quota" which is oversubscribed. Negroes form only ten per cent of the population, but according to Dr. Howard Rosen of the Manpower Office of the Department of Labor, "22 per cent of the unemployed workers in the U.S. are non-whites."

mediate legislative vote: they are necessary for stirring the country, for educating people, for keeping the issue alive.

Let us simply ask our liberal friends: Is it genuinely your conviction that the Kennedy Administration has done what it could and should in response to the Negro revolution? Is it genuinely your conviction that the Administration has responded to the cry for help coming from the Birmingham Negroes, responded in a way that satisfies the moral urgencies of this moment?

IRVING HOWE

P.S.—I wrote these lines before the news came of the murder of six Negro children in Birmingham. All the gov-

ernment of the U.S. could so far do, by way of response, was to send two white gentlemen as mediators to Birmingham, where they were met at the airport by other white gentlemen. Mediate between whom? The murderers and the murdered? The oppressive white power structure and the terrorized Negroes?

So I ask the question again, of the ADA and the Harvard liberals and UAW leadership and the liberal weeklies and all the other semi-demi-Kennedy supporters: *Is it seriously your contention that the Administration has responded to the Birmingham terror in a way that satisfies your conscience?*

What a country!

## OVERKILL AND UNDERSTATEMENT

Within five years, the United States will have hardened into a vast thermonuclear missile base. While an under-informed citizenry goes about its usual business, the military establishment has developed, and plans to continue developing, a strategic atomic force, the dimensions of which are beyond the arithmetical reckoning of the daily market place. This will be accomplished by using only a fraction of our armament production capacity; nor is the end in sight. Should the present trend continue, we shall, before the decade passes, have turned ourselves into a social dinosaur—grotesque, useless and stupid in our defensive posture.

This arsenal has been conceived without the consent, and without the

knowledge, of the American people; even the one-tenth of one percent of the public that is considered well informed has only recently become aware of the Pentagon's outrageous frame of reference. This information gap has been created by the overclassification and inaccessibility of information in a government which is spending half its domestic, and three-quarters of its international, energies on military or military-related undertakings. The information gap, exemplified in military matters but ramifying through all aspects of our polity, reflects the increasing bureaucratization of knowledge, and the further consolidation of a power elite. It raises the hackles to recall that long before the origin of formal political sociolo-