

## (Book Review)

### A MIGHTY WEAPON IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GENOCIDE

By Harry Haywood

*We Charge Genocide*, editor-in-chief, William L. Patterson, Civil Rights Congress, \$1.50.

Among the many contradictions and fundamental difficulties confronting U.S. imperialism in pursuit of world domination through a new World War, of decisive importance is the contradiction between the vaunted "democratic American way of life" and the reality of the monstrous system of Negro oppression. American monopolists have long attempted to deny or conceal their imperialist essence behind a high sounding self-righteous moral pose. But within the very bowels of this assertion lies the most enormous suffering imaginable for a whole people, today numbering over 15,000,000. The Negro people are subjected to all of the notorious conditions of imperialist oppression.

U.S. imperialist apologists of the State Department shudder at any exposure of the national crime. For they must deal with outraged democratic world opinion everywhere which is increasingly pointing out the bestial cloven hoof protruding from the striped trousers of the diplomats.

"The existence of discrimination against minority groups in this country," Dean Acheson wrote on May 8, 1946, "has an adverse effect upon our relations with other countries. . . . Fre-

quently we find it next to impossible to formulate a satisfactory answer to our critics in other countries; the gap between the things we stand for in principle and the facts of the particular situation may be too wide to be bridged. . . ."

The enormity and barbarity of the crimes against the Negro people, which pillories the hypocrisy of the Wall Street imperialists and their small clique of servile agents among the Negro people is presented with challenging force by the petition of the Civil Rights Congress to the United Nations, charging the U.S. government with genocide against the Negro people. This petition, issued in a book of 240 pages, makes an historic contribution to the cause of Negro freedom and for world peace. The cumulative power of fact piled upon fact, irrefutably documenting the ruling class inspired and government directed oppression of the Negro people, is a devastating indictment from which, squirm as they may, the spokesmen of U.S. imperialism cannot escape.

This indictment is drawn up by Negro and white petitioners, North and South, including long standing fighters for Negro rights and democracy, as well as members of the families of the lynch victims.

The petition consists of the opening statement summarizing the indictment;

the substantiation of the Charge of Genocide as defined by the U.N.; and the specific evidence and proof of Genocide. The evidence covers only the post-war years, 1945 to date. It lists killings of Negroes, day by day, month by month, and year by year, as well as serious bodily and mental harm committed against Negroes. It describes conditions leading to physical destruction of the Negro people in whole or in part. It discusses K.K.K. terror, the role of the Dixiecrats and the guilt of government on every level in terms of legal and extra-legal participation in the oppression of the Negro people.

Unfortunately for Mr. Acheson, the facts in *We Charge Genocide* confirm his "suspicion" that the gap between the professed principles and actual facts of "The American Way of Life" is "too wide to be bridged." They cannot be bridged because these are not just "facts of a particular situation," that is, isolated, relatively unimportant incidents and excesses of irresponsible groups. The strident anti-Negro racism documented in this book is a basic ingredient of Anglo-Saxon racism, an unalterable plank in the credo of the white ruling class of the United States, an ingredient of the vaunted "American Way of Life" of the Wall Street billionaires for whom Mr. Acheson speaks.

We can imagine the dismay experienced by Mr. Acheson at the presentation of this indictment before the United Nations, especially since it so overwhelmingly demonstrates that not only has nothing been done about his pious complaint of 1946, but that rather the crimes have actually multiplied a thousandfold in the succeeding five years. They acquire new significance when related to the present course of U.S. imperialism.

But we do not have to rely on our imagination as regards the febrile efforts of Mr. Acheson's department to suppress this document and its great message that the oppression of the Negro people is not only a national but an international crime.

Anthony Leviero, in the *New York Times*, December 14, 1951, tells of the frantic efforts of the State Department to dispel this adverse publicity on the Negro question, which he labels "Soviet Propaganda." To cope with the criticism on this issue, the State Department has issued a pamphlet *The Negro in American Life*, which was "prepared on demand of many State Department field workers particularly those in Stockholm, Rome, Paris and New Delhi." According to Leviero, "about seven months was devoted to the preparation of it [the pamphlet], and it got the approval of Walter White, Secretary of the NAACP. It went abroad recently just a few weeks ahead of the issuance of *We Charge Genocide* by the Civil Rights Congress . . . a documented indictment of the government for murder through jim crow."

The *Afro-American* of December 8, 1951 reveals, in what appeared to be an intentional leak from the State Department to Drew Pearson, "that efforts were made by the Department to induce Walter White, Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to blast William Patterson's sensational book, *We Charge Genocide*," as a gross misrepresentation of fact. But the evidence is so irrefutable that even such a consummate apologist of U.S. imperialism as White commented on December 2, 1951: "The U.S. has been hit in its most vulnerable spot . . . 75 per cent or more of the charges are care-

fully documented ones, taken from non-Communist and anti-Communist sources."

The crux of the difficulties for Mr. Acheson, however, lies not merely in the incontestable accuracy of the facts in *We Charge Genocide*. It lies in something more important, namely, in the unmistakable connection between these facts and the Truman bi-partisan war policy of which he is one of the principal architects. It lies in the fact that the C.R.C. indictment constitutes a body blow to the criminal war course of U.S. imperialism which has provided the fertile ground for the multiplication of atrocities against the Negro people. It lies in the fact that war for world domination by American imperialism and the intensified racist drive against the Negro people go hand in glove, as part of the policy of the "pacification" of the rear. It lies in the inexorable conclusion that what we have been witnessing in the United States is a crime of government *bent on world conquest*, a government directed and sanctioned policy, not only national but international in import.

The connection between growing fascism and the preparation for war was clearly pointed out by Stalin who said in his political report to the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1927:

"To wage war it is not sufficient to accumulate armaments and it is not sufficient to organize new coalitions. *It also calls for strengthening the rear in the capitalist countries. Not a single capitalist country can wage a serious war, without first strengthening its own rear, without curbing "its" workers, without curbing "its" colonies. Hence,*

a gradual fascization of the policy of the bourgeois governments."\*

The relationship between the war drive and the increased genocidal attack against Negroes is dealt with in the document which states: "Increasing violence against the Negro people goes hand in hand with increased repression throughout American life" (pp. 26-27).

The connection between this genocide at home and the war now being waged by the U.S. white supremacists against the colored peoples of Asia is clearly set forth by the petition. It states:

"We Negro petitioners whose communities have been laid waste, whose homes have been burned and looted, whose children have been killed, whose women have been raped, have noted with peculiar horror that the genocidal doctrines and actions of the American white supremacists have already been exported to the colored peoples of Asia. We solemnly warn that a nation which practices genocide against its own nationals may not be long deterred, if it has the power, from genocide elsewhere. White supremacy at home makes for colored massacres abroad. Both reveal contempt for human life in a colored skin. Jellied gasoline in Korea and the lynchers' faggot at home are connected in more ways than that both result in death by fire. The lyncher and the atom bomber are related."

There have been important indictments presented to the U.N. before the present C.R.C. petition. There was the statement of the National Negro Congress in 1946, and "An Appeal to the World" by the N.A.A.C.P. in 1947. But the C.R.C. document does not only

\* J. Stalin, *Collected Works* (Russian edition). Vol. X, p. 282. Italics added.

continue and extend the evidence of these earlier indictments; it elevates the question to a new level by defining it in terms of U.N. law and by directing its main charge against the U.S. Government. The C.R.C. petition provides the question with new significance and a new impact. This new meaning and impact are dramatized in the term "genocide."

The petition, in addition, is more effective than its predecessors, because it reveals the economic realities upon which the system of genocide rests. Heretofore, pleas to UN have been largely based upon humanitarian grounds, but this document shows again and again the huge profits wrung from the super-exploitation of the Negro people.

This grounding of the indictment is unquestionably sound, since the U.N. Charter and the Genocide Convention are based on historical experience. The deadly parallel between the conditions described in the C.R.C. indictment and the barbarous practice developed and refined by German fascism is inescapable. Indeed, it is impossible properly to characterize the mounting barbarities against the Negro people during the post-war period as anything else than a manifestation of fascism. This is what gives an old, old story in the United States its new meaning.

In admitting that the facts of the C.R.C. indictment are generally correct, individuals like Yale law professor Raphael Lemkin and Walter White nevertheless attempted to minimize their significance by insisting that the concept of genocide only applies to the actual practice of wholesale extermination. By this weird logic, it would seem, we must wait until most Negroes are physically annihilated or the con-

ditions of Nazi Germany are fully enacted in the U.S. before charging genocide.

Actually, the document cites numerous cases of incitement to mass murder by public officials, as, for example, Governor Herman Talmadge of the State of Georgia, who stated in a radio broadcast: "We will fight them [the Negroes] in the counties and the cities. . . . We intend to fight hand to hand with all our weapons, and we will never submit to one inch of encroachment on our traditional pattern of segregation" (p. 16). The C.R.C. document rightly says, "The whole system of jim crow and segregation based on race is training for genocide."

But even aside from all this, the legal quibble involved in the above objection is anticipated and effectively answered by the document itself. It says: "*It is sometimes incorrectly thought that the definition of genocide is the complete and utter extinction by force and violence of a people or group. Article 2 of the Genocide Convention, however, defines the crime as meaning 'any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such: (a) killing members of the group, (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about such physical destruction in whole or in part (p. 32).*"

Nor will it do to attempt to evade this by claiming that the government is not involved. The answer to this, as given and documented by the C.R.C. petition, is irrefutable. In demonstrating the existence of "A conspiracy backed by reactionary interests in which are meshed all the organs of the ex-

allies, should be throwing their full democratic weight on the side of peace, democracy, and progress.

Here we face one of the decisive features of the C.R.C. document in relation to the world situation. The evidence, the argumentation, the line of this book, translated into a political act through its presentation to the U.N., provides a major weapon to all the forces of peace and democracy throughout the world.

For white Americans, the book can be a serious means of developing struggle against the whole white supremacist ideology and jim crow system which help to sustain the forces of fascism and imperialism war. The evidence of the book can aid in dispelling the ignorance and prejudices so assiduously cultivated among white masses by these forces, and thereby help to arouse them to struggle in defense of their own rights.

The working masses in particular cannot stand aside; to the extent that they remain silent, poisoned also by the fascist ideology of white chauvinism, to that extent will they remain impotent in defense of peace, welfare and progress which they so ardently desire. More than that, they condemn themselves to becoming silent partners of the racist criminals. The lesson of Hitler-Germany will forever remain as a standing reminder in this respect.

For the Negro people the book can be a most effective instrument for building the united Negro people's movement as a pivotal contingent of a nationwide coalition of the American people against fascism and for peace.

The white supremacist rulers have been forced more and more to employ twin measures of oppression and de-

ception. They attempt to veil their genocidal terror by tactical concessions. In this they have been driven increasingly to rely upon their agents among the Negro people to aid in accomplishing their aims. The widespread use by the imperialist war makers of these Right-Wing bourgeois reformist agents, and the sharp increase of their activities among Negro masses, is an important feature of the present period. They attempt to inflate the small concessions won by the struggle of the Negro masses and their white allies into a rosy picture of uninterrupted progress for the Negro people, trying to conceal thereby what life itself is increasingly revealing to the Negro masses and the whole world. *We Charge Genocide* makes it infinitely more difficult for this group to front for the organizers of fascism and war.

The liberation of the masses from the paralyzing influence of these elements is an essential part of the fight for the leading role of the Negro industrial workers—the most powerful, consistently revolutionary force in the Negro liberation movement—the only force that can give the movement sustained anti-imperialist direction and effect its unity with the mighty allies of the Negro people, the American working class and the world camp of peace, democracy and national liberation headed by the Soviet Union.

This book, *We Charge Genocide*, if properly used not only as an instrument of enlightenment, but also as an instrument of organization and mobilization, can play an historic role in the Negro liberation movement, comparable to the roles, in another era, of works like Douglass' autobiography and Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.