

Negro Youth Are in Front Line Banks Against Hitler, Conference Proves

By Claudia Jones

"I can't see you, but I can feel your spirit."

In these simple words, W. C. Handy, expressed the feeling emanating from the entire nation towards the historic Conference of Negro youth, held Nov. 14-16, in the nation's capitol.

For Negro youth had come to state their case against Hitler and Hitlerism. And state it they did. For they made themselves heard nearly 1,000 strong—far beyond the confines of Metropolitan Baptist Church, on 11th and E. Streets, Washington—seat of the Conference.

They came from approximately 23 states, from north, south, east and west. There were Negro youth from packinghouse and steel, Negro youth from recently organized Ford plants, sharecroppers, miners, church youth and students, young businessmen, young housewives—a cross-section of Negro youth of America. They came by rail, in buses and cars, even by foot. They came to organize to fight against the great evil of Hitlerism which they declared threatens "all that we hope to be, all we seek to achieve."

The sessions were marked

throughout with the same conviction expressed in a statement unanimously adopted.

The anti-fascist ball started rolling with the keynote address by Miss Winifred Norman, attractive and alert young woman from the Rho Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

The delegates who spoke in the plenary session typified a similar spirit. Miss Ann Daniels, eloquent speaker from Fisk University Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People emphasized this sentiment, and declared that "it is the only way that we can have a new birth of freedom, and government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall TRULY GOVERN the earth!"

NEED FOR CLARITY

All of the delegates unequivocally went on record against Hitler. "Church youth, too," in the words of Rev. Joseph Haskins, young Washington minister, of Asbury Baptist Church, "are going to fight. We have the sense to know that as long as Hitlerism is rampant, the principles we stand for are in danger. We're going to fight Hitlerism in the church. We're going to keep on fighting."

Some differed in the manner in which the struggle of the Negro people at home should be placed in relationship to the total struggle. This was reflected by some delegates who called for a "practical democracy."

Such sentiment in face of an overwhelming stand by these very delegates against Hitler, flows from the fact that the immediate menace of Hitler to the nation was not seen fully. It emphasized the need to bring about a realization of the physical as well as ideological threat of Hitler to the nation. There is also a need to bring clarity to the Negro youth on the singleness of the struggle against Hitler and Hitlerism, abroad as well as at home.

The conference also did not sufficiently understand the relationship of the defense production to the economic struggle for jobs for Negroes. It is true that the jobs issue was prominently raised, but not in connection enough with the battle for production of the nation. This similarity flows from the same source, a lack of understanding that the industry of the nation today must be geared towards production of munitions, planes, guns, tanks and necessary equipment needed to defeat Hitler militarily.

Here too, the Negro youth must be made to realize that only with such understanding of the relationship of local struggles to the struggle against Hitler, can the alleviation of economic ills and the general struggles of the Negro people today be steered into proper channels and victory won.

NEGRO-WHITE UNITY

The conference was a tribute to Negro and white unity. The delegates cheered Earl Dickerson, of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, who in protesting the Ku Kluxism of Governor Talmadge, declared:

"Just as in our war against Hitler abroad, the white youth are realizing that the fight for equal rights of the Negro in America is their cause."

The conference adopted an action program, for uniting Negro youth in support of the President's foreign policy, and the Government's national defense effort to bring military defeat to Hitler.

The conference showed in life that a proper understanding of the fight against Hitler, and prosecuting that fight, is the only logical way to safeguard and extend the struggle for Negro emancipation.

The delegates urged also support of a firm stand in the Far East

against the Japanese militarists, and adopted a creed stating the faith of Negro youth in democracy, as well as a series of proposals for Negro youth's participation and in-Defense programs for contribution to war relief, participation in civilian protection and the mastering of industrial skills.

The Conference elected a Congregation in the defense program. These included support to Civilian tinuations Committee of 50 and five officers headed by Miss Winifred Norman, whose honorary chairman is Miss Dorothy Height of the Phillis Wheatley YWCA, in addition to 40 Negro youth leaders from every section of the country and many diverse organizations.

The eyes of the nation were fixed on this historic convention—the first of its kind in the history of the nation. The attention was well placed, because the Conference took its place on the side of the growing anti-Hitler forces of the world. There can be no doubt that the deliberations and discussion of this conference of Negro youth will go a long way towards contributing to the cause of the nation as well as to the cause of the Negro people. In the struggle to bring about the complete military annihilation of Hitler.