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ANOTHER KIND OF FREEDOM: THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT WITH ANTIRACISM AND ITS IMAGE AS A RACELESS SOCIETY, 1928-1936

VOLUME I

By

Meredith L. Roman

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ABSTRACT

ANOTHER KIND OF FREEDOM:
THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT WITH ANTIRACISM AND ITS IMAGE AS A RACELESS SOCIETY, 1928-1936

By

Meredith L. Roman

This study seeks to reconcile the place of race in the history of the Soviet Union during the interwar era with larger implications for the burgeoning of racism that has occurred throughout the Russian Federation, but especially in Moscow since the fall of Communism. Drawing on sources located in the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI), the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), and the U.S. National Archives, it explores one aspect of the Soviet project which heretofore has received little scholarly attention: the pursuit of antiracism in the making of a New Soviet Person. Soviet antiracism is defined to include the photographs, cartoons, film, newspaper articles, speeches, protest demonstrations, congresses, and court proceedings that Soviet authorities used from 1928-1936 to denounce the hypocrisy of American "freedom"; and to cultivate the image of the Soviet Union as a superior, more enlightened society than the U.S. whose citizens and authorities had transcended racism. The Comintern's declaration of African Americans a nation at the Sixth World Congress in 1928 constituted a necessary prerequisite for U.S. race relations to assume a priority status among Soviet propagandists in the years that followed. G. Alexandrov's 1936 film *Tsirk* (*Circus*) about a white American woman and her black son who find refuge from racism in the U.S.S.R. was the last major manifestation of interwar Soviet antiracism before it was completely eclipsed by antifascism.

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In loving memory of Michael J. Roman, 1972-1992

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Introduction

On 1 December 1958, amidst the Berlin Crisis, United States Senator Hubert H. Humphrey had an unprecedented eight-hour long meeting with Nikita Khrushchev in the Kremlin. Humphrey explained afterwards that at one point during their conversation the Soviet leader "tore off on a whole long lecture like I wish I could remember [because it would have been] the best speech I could ever make in my life on antiracialism. Boy, he really gave me a talk on that . . . ."[1] Although Humphrey's encounter with Khrushchev occurred beyond the temporal scope of this dissertation, it provokes key questions that underscore its main objective: why and how had Khrushchev become so well-versed in antiracism that he invoked the admiration of a U.S. Senator who insinuated that he himself could never articulate anything on the subject as eloquently or effortlessly? Was Khrushchev's polished antiracist rhetoric merely a product of recent Cold War politics and what scholars have described as the "internationalization of race" that characterized this era, or did it have precedence in an earlier period?[2]

This study addresses these inquiries by exploring one aspect of the Soviet experiment to which scholars have given little attention: the pursuit of antiracism during the decades between the wars.[3] It suggests that Humphrey perceived the language of

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[1] Quoted in William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), pp. 406-407.

[2] For the concept see, Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[3] In his 1986 *Russia and the Negro*, Allison Blakely thoroughly documents the history of peoples of African-descent in Russia from the tsarist through the late Soviet era. Kate Baldwin in her 2002 *Beyond the Color Line* examines how the experiences of Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois in the Soviet Union affected their identities as African Americans. In so doing both Blakely and Baldwin indirectly deal with Soviet antiracism. See *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1986); and *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron*

antiracism as coming naturally to Khrushchev in December 1958, because it had been instilled in him and many other party officials throughout the interwar era but most intensely from 1928-1936. This was when U.S. race relations were of strategic interest to Soviet leaders, and "speaking antiracism" became one form of "speaking Bolshevik."[4] In what follows, Soviet antiracism consists of the photographs, cartoons, film, newspaper articles, speeches, union-wide campaigns, congresses, court proceedings, and protest rallies that central authorities used to denounce the hypocrisy of American "freedom," especially as experienced by black American men; and to cultivate the image of the Soviet Union as a superior, more enlightened society whose citizens and leaders had transcended racism.[5] This study begins in 1928, contending that the Communist International's declaration of black Americans as a nation constituted a necessary prerequisite for Soviet antiracism to assume priority status in the years that followed. Grigorii Aleksandrov's 1936 musical comedy *Tsirk* (*Circus*) about the acceptance of a white American woman and her young black child in Soviet society marks it end arguing that the film constituted the last major manifestation of antiracism before being eclipsed completely by antifascism.

Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1963 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

[4] Khrushchev was in the capital during this period, first studying engineering at the Industrial Academy and then serving as its party secretary before becoming the General Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party in 1938. On "speaking Bolshevik," see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 198-237. Jochen Hellbeck posits that "thinking Soviet" in many contexts is more accurate than "speaking Bolshevik," in "Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia," *Kritika*, 1 (Winter 2000): 71-96.

[5] Moscow's interest in making it appear that Soviet citizens were committed to racial equality reflected the era of modern politics when mass mobilization or at least the appearance of such was paramount. See, for example, Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

Although African Americans play a prominent role in this narrative, this study is not about African Americans per se, but about Soviet leaders' exploitation of United States racism in order to (re)present their policies as enlightened and antiracist.[6] It does not, therefore, seek to delve into the hidden transcript to capture the lived experiences of black Americans in the U.S.S.R., or the genuine feelings that "ordinary" Soviet workers had towards them. Rather, its objective is to examine Soviet representations of the country's outrage against and opposition to American racial prejudice, and black Americans' public depictions of their encounters with this other kind of "'freedom'" in the first workers' state. The records of these representations, policies, and encounters are extremely rich and are available in a wide range of media including the holdings of the foreign posts of the U.S. Department of State; a Pittsburgh African-American newspaper; the files of the Central Committee of the Metal Workers Union (*Tsentral'nyi komitet vsesoiuznogo professional'nogo soiuza rabochikh-metallistov*); the journal of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers based in Hamburg, Germany; the collection of the International Organization for Assistance to Revolutionary Fighters (*Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii* or MOPR); the autobiography of a renown black American writer; and the files of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (*Kommunisticheskii universitet trudiashchikhsia Vostoka* or KUTV). The purpose of drawing upon and analyzing these diverse sources is not simply to document Soviet antiracism, but to present it as a discursive field in which its themes, images, and manifestations were glorified, redefined, and/or contested by

[6] Because this study defines the focus of Soviet state-sponsored antiracism during the interwar era as the condemnation of U.S. racism and the plight of black Americans it concentrates exclusively on the latter and makes only brief mention of Africans. See chapter five.

various individuals and organizations – for an array of reasons – but with the same ultimate objective: strengthening the Soviet Union's image as a society where racism was absent.

Contemporary Soviet, United States, and African American newspapers and journals constitute an integral component of this project's source base because they served as a critical arena where the image of the U.S.S.R. as a superior, raceless society was constructed, reformulated, and displayed from 1928 to 1936, but on a particularly consistent and unprecedented basis from 1930 to 1932.[7] As alluded to directly above, it also extensively employs the collections of several organizations located in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* or GARF), and especially the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (*Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'noi i Politicheskoi Istorii* or RGASPI) which contain the records of both the Party and Comintern. Because many of the collections upon which this study draws are those of international Communist and propaganda organizations, it was imperative to approach the materials found within them just as cautiously as Soviet newspapers; that is, appreciating them for what they represented and were designed to project rather than for their ability to describe or capture Soviet reality.[8] For example, this dissertation does not read the records of the Metal Workers Union, the Foreign Workers Bureau of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the

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[7] By "raceless society" this dissertation means a society where race did not limit an individual's access to rights. Throughout this document the terms "a society without racism," "a raceless society," "Soviet racelessness," and "Soviet racial equality" are used interchangeably. Soviet leaders never purported to have eliminated or transcended "race" but claimed that all races were equal, all individuals had equal access to rights regardless of their race, thereby making it an antiracist, raceless society. Racism had been transcended, in other words, but not "race."

[8] See, for example, Michele-Rolph Truillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1995).

International Committee of Revolutionary Metal Workers, or the Red International of Trade Unions as evidence that the U.S.S.R. was a raceless society, because of the outraged manner in which they "document" that authorities and workers "spontaneously" and "simultaneously" responded to an assault on a black worker in late July 1930. Instead, it interprets them as evidence that trade union leaders were "speaking antiracism," that is engaging in rhetoric and acting in a manner which authenticated the image of the Soviet Union as an enlightened society that had transcended racism, and portraying the workers under their jurisdiction accordingly.

I.

Restricting this study to 1928-1936 as a time when Soviet leaders devoted considerable attention to condemning U.S. race relations is not to imply that Soviet leaders previously had ignored them. On the contrary, the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 organized a Negro Bureau with Otto Huiswood as its head, and formulated a "Thesis on the Negro Question" that acknowledged the organization's commitment to the struggle for black equality, and support for all black liberation movements, which helped undermine capitalism and imperialism.[9] Following the Congress, Comintern authorities even commissioned Claude McKay to write a one hundred-page book regarding the status of *Negroes in America* (*Negry v Amerike*) [1923] that David Levering Lewis claims became required reading among high-ranking Soviet officials, as well as three

[9] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000; orig. pub. 1983), esp. pp. 220-222.

short stories entitled, *A Trial by Lynching: Stories about the Life of Negroes in North America* (*Sudom Lincha: Rasskazy o zhizni negrov v Severnoi Amerike*) [1925].[10]

Yet Soviet interest in exposing the contradictions in U.S. democracy's treatment of black Americans before 1928 can be considered more of a latent or soft-line policy.[11] Information in the all-union press regarding the plight of black Americans appeared sporadically and Moscow officials neither organized a union-wide campaign to explicitly condemn U.S. racism nor made a concerted effort to portray the Soviet populace as genuinely incensed by racial injustice in the "'free'" United States of America. Indicative of this situation, the number of black Americans who visited the U.S.S.R. prior to 1928 paled in comparison to those who traveled to the country thereafter. In fact, when W.E.B. Du Bois toured the Soviet Union for two months during the late summer 1926 (which included the celebration of International Youth Day in Moscow), he generated absolutely no fanfare, something which would become unfeasible merely a few years later, let alone following the Second World War.[12]

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[10] See Claude McKay, *Negroes in America*, trans. by Robert J. Winter (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1979), and *Trial by Lynching: Stories about Negro Life in North America,* trans. by Robert Winter (University of Myrose: The Centre for Commonwealth Literature and Research, 1977); and David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), p. 194. For a literary analysis of *Sudom Lincha* as well as McKay's speech at the Congress, see Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line*, pp. 59-80. For a cogent analysis of *Negry v Amerike*, see William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 71-93. Wayne Cooper also discusses *Negry v Amerike* but unlike Maxwell ignores his infusion of Marxist categories into black American history in *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987). There is no dearth of discussions about McKay's warm reception in the USSR. See the aforementioned secondary sources in this note and Tyrone Tillery's *Claude McKay: A Black Poet's Struggle for Identity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

[11] See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The 'Soft' Line on Culture and Its Enemies: Soviet Cultural Policy, 1922-1927," in the *Slavic Review* 33, no. 2 (June 1974): 267-287, or in Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 91-114. For the use of term together with "hard-line policy," see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 83, 122-123.

Soviet leaders' pursuit of antiracism as a "hard-line policy," or more specifically their treatment of it as a higher priority from 1928-1936, contrasts sharply with the racialism that influenced politics throughout Europe during this time (which will be outlined later in this introduction), and is intimately connected with two major shifts in domestic and Comintern policy. After abandoning the New Economic Policy (NEP) [1921-1927] which sought to attain socialism through capitalist practices, and embarking on a campaign to build socialism through rapid industrialization as outlined in the First (1928-1932) and Second (1933-1937) Five-Year Plans, central authorities sought various means to present the U.S.S.R. as a superior, unmistakably "non-capitalist society" amidst the rise of fascism and the growth of the Great Depression in the capitalist countries.[13] State-sponsored antiracism or Soviet leaders' efforts to depict themselves and their entire citizenry as inimically opposed to the racial hatred that U.S. capitalism engendered and the American government sanctioned, was clearly one manifestation of this agenda.

But the increased interest among officials in Moscow in condemning American racial discrimination also must be viewed in terms of the ascendancy of the Comintern's militant "Third Period" (1928-1935). Authorities of the Third International posited that the "gradual and partial stabilization" of capitalism characteristic of the "second period" was being replaced by an impending crisis in capitalism that would bring with it a

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[12] David Levering Lewis emphasizes the solitariness of Du Bois' trip, which he planned on short notice independent of the random conversations he had with Soviet citizens. Du Bois wanted to travel throughout the country during the fall 1936 after first visiting Nazi Germany and then continuing on to China and Japan, but he had to resign himself to taking the Trans-Siberian railway across the country to Manchuria. He had made the egregious mistake (on the advisement of William Burroughs a black American resident of Moscow) of writing to Karl Radek to help him secure his trip. Radek was of course arrested that fall and placed on trial for counter-revolutionary activity in January 1937. On Du Bois' 1926 and 1936 travels, see Lewis, *Fight for Equality and the American Century*, esp. pp. 199-205, 389-418. Kate Baldwin's *Beyond the Color Line* and Gerald Horne's *Black and Red: W.E.B Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1994-1993* (Albany: State University of New York, 1986) address Du Bois' engagement with the USSR following the Second World War.

proliferation of revolutionary opportunities. In order to fully capitalize on these opportunities, they ordered communist parties around the world to abandon their coalition policies with working-class parties, while they themselves seriously assessed the revolutionary potential of black Americans, which resulted in their aforementioned declaration of black Americans an oppressed nation with the right to self-determination at the Sixth Congress in 1928.[14] As will be addressed below, in conferring this status, Comintern leaders recognized African Americans as an "indispensable ally" to the international proletarian revolution and by implication to the continued existence of the first workers' state, thereby justifying the greater attention allotted to exposing the fallacy of "civilized" U.S. race relations after 1928.[15]

Largely because of the increased emphasis on antiracism that these two monumental policy shifts helped precipitate, the number of black Americans who visited Moscow for either a short- or long-term period reached its height between 1928-1936. The Comintern's emphasis on militant agitation and official recognition of black Americans' importance in the revolutionary order meant that a larger number of black Americans were admitted to KUTV and the International Lenin School (ILS) [*Mezhdunarodnaia leninskaia shkola*], and encouraged to attend the organization's international congresses than had previously been the case prior to 1928. The demands

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[13] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, esp. pp. 2, 152-153.

[14] The first period, which ended in 1923, was one of crisis and revolution. During the "Third Period," the Communist parties needed to pursue militancy rather than a "united front" in order to ensure that the impending economic upheaval would lead to general political upheaval. See the introduction in William J. Chase, *Enemy Within the Gates: The Comintern and the Stalinist Repression, 1934-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), as well as Jane Degras, ed., *The Communist International, 1919-1943 Documents*, vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), esp. pp. 98-99; and Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR and the Successor States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 293.

of the First Five-Year Plan created occupational opportunities in Soviet industry and agriculture, which the Great Depression in the U.S. made particularly attractive to black workers who were hit hardest by unemployment. Moreover, there were also black Americans who did not travel to the U.S.S.R. to study or participate in meetings as Communists, or to work as Communist or non-Communist laborers. Some simply wanted to examine in person the image of the U.S.S.R. as a superior, raceless society that Soviet state-sponsored antiracism deliberately generated. Contemporary records of these encounters with Soviet racial equality assume the form of entire autobiographies and chapters in them; contemporary journal articles; and a few quotations in Soviet and African American newspapers. Similar to the Soviet archival and newspaper sources mentioned earlier, this dissertation approaches these sources to assess the image of the Soviet Union that they sought to project rather than to determine the sincerity with which they were articulated or expressed.

This movement of black Americans between the United States and the U.S.S.R., like Soviet leaders' commitment to a more hard-line pursuit of antiracism had nearly dissipated by 1937. War seemed imminent on the continent, suspicion of all foreigners became more intense in the Soviet Union, and Moscow's attention became focused primarily on the danger that Nazi Germany to its near immediate west posed to the existence of the first workers' state. These developments made it more expedient for central authorities to pursue significantly less militant, Popular Front tactics, the effects of which had already started to be felt in the Soviet Union when the Comintern had made it official policy in 1935. This necessitated de-emphasizing their exploitation of U.S.

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[15] Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), esp. pp. 85-89.

race relations until it again became in their best interest to do so with the start of the Cold War. Yet while the condemnation of Nazism clearly assumed precedence over the condemnation of U.S. racism as dominant policy by the second half of the 1930s, Soviet leaders continued to reject and denounce as unenlightened and, by implication inferior, a society defined by race and racism.

II.

Soviet leaders' interest in portraying the Soviet Union as a superior, modern society by promoting the image that the country had transcended racism and achieved racial equality, seems all the more unique when placed within the context of a world that was witnessing the consolidation of racial theory and defining modernity and civilization increasingly in hierarchical racial terms.[16] The ascendancy of biological racism in Europe itself was fueled largely by anxieties on the Left and the Right about racial decline, degeneration, and reinvigoration. The boundaries of national communities throughout the continent, including the new nation states of Poland, Hungary and Romania, were being redrawn to include the members of one putatively homogenous ethnic or racial biological group, at the unabashed exclusion and discrimination of others.[17] Although antiracist movements emerged in response to the burgeoning of scientific racism, Soviet leaders alone promoted state-sponsored antiracism and posited that a superior society did not use race to categorize or identify its populace.

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[16] For a similar argument in regards to Cuba in the late nineteenth century, see Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[17] Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, pp. 117-119, 131-132; Mark Mazower, *The Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage, 2000 orig. pub. 1998), pp. 51-64; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Great Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 297-312.

Specifically, Francine Hirsch emphasizes that authorities prided themselves on the fact that they unlike Western imperialists used "nationality" rather than "race" in their censuses. Hirsch as well as Amir Weiner further claim that for similar reasons they based their excisionary policies (although by no means less violent than those of their European counterparts) on the categories of class and/or nationality at the explicit rejection of race.[18] In contrast, it was not until after the Second World War that a "new international antiracist consensus" emerged among state leaders, making Soviet officials ahead of their contemporaries by a few decades in recognizing the advantages in playing the "race card."[19]

While Soviet leaders sought to present the U.S.S.R. as the embodiment of modern enlightenment and champion of racial equality especially as it pertained to black Americans, the Nazi racial state which took to its extreme the biological racism prominent in European social thought of the time was based unapologetically on the "utterly repulsive ideology of race-hatred" against Jews, Africans, Indians, Gypsies, and Slavs, and openly postulated as impossibility the equality of races.[20] Yet Mark Mazower

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[18] See Francine Hirsch, "The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category *Nationality* in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 251-278 (esp. pp. 268, 272-275) and the discussion about "racial politics" in the Spring 2002 edition of the *Slavic Review* (pp. 1-53). The essays written by Francine Hirsch and Amir Weiner dispute Eric Weitz's lead article in which he claims that Soviet leaders' population politics were essentially "racial politics without the concept of race." Terry Martin argues that even at the height of Soviet ethnic cleansing, which targeted the country's ideologically unreliable diaspora nationalities, Soviet leaders relocated their national institutions intact and continued to encourage the officially-sponsored non-Russian nationalities to become even more nationally distinct; "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70 (1998): 813-861. For a comparison of Soviet leaders' use of nationality and class in their attempts at social engineering, see Peter Holquist "'Conduct Merciless Mass Terror': Decossackization on the Don, 1919," *Cahiers du monde russe* 39 (1998): 197-208.

[19] Mazower, pp. 102-103. See also the reference to Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights* in note 2.

[20] See Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (London: Arnold, 1993), pp. 3-4;

argues that the Nazis modeled their racial politics, as epitomized in the 1935 Nuremberg Laws which criminalized interracial sexual relations and codified Jews' exclusion from the racially-defined national community of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, after Western European colonial policies in Africa and Asia. Viewed from this perspective, the Nazi quest for a racial empire, as Mazower avers, constituted the "culmination of the process of European imperial expansion that began in the 1870s" and merely turned inward onto the continent itself.[21]

Although adherence to liberal universalism prevented British and French officials from openly promoting racial hatred and legislating racial inequality and exclusion as blatantly as the Nuremberg Laws, scholars have shown that a discourse of universalism contributed significantly to British and French conceptualizations of superior and inferior races.[22] Both governments increasingly introduced segregation and color bars in the colonies, made it extremely difficult for dark-skinned colonial subjects to receive full

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and Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[21] Mazower, *Dark Continent*, pp. 70-73, 99-103. Charles W. Mills makes a similar argument in *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press). On racial defilement, see Patricia Szobar, "Telling Sexual Stories in the Nazi Courts of Law: Race Defilement in Germany, 1933-1945," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 11, nos. 1-2 (January/April 2002): 131-163. Internal colonization movements that focused on uplifting European workers in a manner similar to that of the colonized had precedence in the nineteenth century. See, for example, Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[22] See Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992); Alice Conklin, "Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (April 1998): 419-442; Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Sue Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

citizenship, and showed even greater concern with preventing miscegenation.[23] More specifically, the British condemned interracial marriage as a threat to the racial, class, and gender boundaries that sustained imperial rule, and deprecated the children that such unions produced as a disruption to England's purported homogeneity and harmony.[24] The French moreover quickly repatriated the North African and Indochinese laborers in France at the end of the Great War as a result of escalating violence and anxieties surrounding miscegenation, and replaced them with Polish and Italian immigrant workers in order to restore the semblance of European, i.e. "white" order.[25] Thus, as reflected in British and French policies of the interwar era, the key to "racial survival" in the colonies and metropole was based on mutually reinforcing cultural and biological definitions of race, which required observing strict cultural and gender prescriptions while also limiting interracial sexual contact. [26]

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[23] Mazower, *Dark Continent*, pp. 56-61. On the coexistence of the principles of universiality and exclusionary citizenship laws, see Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 1-56; and Leslie Page Moch, "Foreign Workers in Western Europe: The 'Cheaper Hands' in Historical Perspective," in *European Integration in Social and Historical Perspective, 1850 to the Present*, eds. Jytte Klausen and Louise A. Tilly (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), pp. 103-116.

[24]Laura Tabili, "Women 'of a Very Low Type': Crossing Racial Boundaries in Imperial Britain," in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, eds. Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996): 165-190.

[25] Tyler Stovall, "The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (June 1998): 737-69, and "Colour-blind France? Colonial Workers During the First World War," *Race and Class* 35, no. 2 (1993): 35-55. The British barred most of the West Indies Regiment from Europe in order to avoid problems of miscegenation and violence. See Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 52-72. On preserving the racially homogenous identity of France, see also Yael Simpson Fletcher, "City, Nation, and Empire in Marseilles, 1919-1939," Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 1999.

[26] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Mazower, *Dark Continent*, pp. 74-75; Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Ann Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and

Despite the experiences of non-European colonial laborers in France during the First World War and the increasingly racial segregationist policies in the French colonies, the Soviet Union was second to France, and Paris in particular, as the most popular European "promised land" for many black Americans during the interwar era. There was certainly less personal risk and sacrifice involved in exploring firsthand the myth of French color-blindness. Making the journey to the U.S.S.R. meant stigmatization from the American government and necessitated at least a tolerance of atheism and communist ideology. The attractiveness of France was undoubtedly also enhanced by the testimony of black American soldiers who had served there during the war and claimed that the French had treated them with more respect and warmth than any group of white people previously. Tyler Stovall attributes the favor accorded black Americans to Parisians' obsession with blackness that was rooted in a crisis of European rationality and progress which the Great War helped precipitate. Stovall therefore stresses that the French in no way purported black peoples to be the equal of whites, but merely considered their primitivism (i.e. "lush naïve sensuality") and simplicity virtues rather than vices. [27]

III.

Soviet leaders' conceptualization of the category of nation as a signifier of a superior, advanced society, affected Comintern policy regarding black Americans. While the Second and Fourth Comintern Congresses had alluded to the notion that black Americans constituted an oppressed nation, it was the responsibility of the Sixth

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the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 286-322.

Congress (17 July – 1 September 1928) to make it official. Black Communist Harry Haywood, then a student at the International Lenin School (ILS), was one of its major proponents, and collaborated with N. Nasanov of the Communist Youth International prior to the Congress to draft a proposal that laid the basis for the final resolution. Unlike Haywood, most white and black American Communists including James Ford, Otto Hall, William Patterson, and Roy Mahoney rejected the idea, insisting that black Americans constituted an oppressed racial minority, not an oppressed nation, whose members sought inclusion in the larger American nation. Thus, they warned, black laborers would interpret advocacy of self-determination as segregation.

Jay Lovestone and his supporters objected to the proposal for a different reason articulating what Comintern authorities quickly denounced as a "right opportunist" argument. They contended that because "a second industrial revolution" would eliminate the "slave remnants in southern agriculture" a black liberation movement could only be "reactionary." Despite this initial opposition, as a result of the persistence of Comintern authorities like Otto Kuusinen, Boris Mikhailov (Williams), Max Goldfarb (D. Petrovsky), and Nasanov as well as the unwavering support of Harry Haywood and white American Alexander Bittelman, whose lead was eventually followed by his fellow constituents in the CPUSA's William Foster faction, the Sixth Congress declared black Americans a nation with the right to self-determination.[28]

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[27] Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), pp. 32, 53,81, 154-163, 323-324.

[28] The non-U.S. delegate who opposed the concept of black Americans as an oppressed nation was the Hungarian émigré, Andre Sik, an instructor of several black American students at KUTV. The documents regarding the meetings and debates surrounding this issue are located in three major files in the records of the Negro Bureau of the Eastern Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. See RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, dd. 56-58. Articles written by several of the debates' participants, the majority of which were published in the *Communist*, *International Press Correspondence* and *Die*

While the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) and the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) helped influence Comintern policy towards black Americans,[29] the Sixth Congress' decision should not be divorced from Soviet nationality policy. Having recognized in theory the right of the officially sponsored non-Russian nationalities to national self-determination, Soviet leaders encouraged their cultural development and established an ethnicity-based affirmative action system which privileged them over ethnic Russians in terms of hiring, admissions, and promotions. Terry Martin and Yuri Slezkine argue that even after 1933, when authorities in Moscow began systematically endorsing Russian language and culture, they neither abandoned affirmative action policies especially in regards to the nationalities of the Soviet "east" whom they deemed to have suffered the most from tsarist oppression, nor launched any concerted effort to eradicate their national identities.[30] Therefore by demanding that white American

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Kommunistische Internationale are located in dd. 59-60. Many of these articles and the Comintern's resolution which was not released until October 1928 were also reprinted in Philip S. Foner and James S. Allen, eds., *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1919-1929* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), pp. 163-200. For Haywood's lengthy recounting of the debates, see *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978), esp. pp. 218-281. For a meticulous historical account of these meetings, see Solomon's *The Cry Was Unity*, esp. pp. 68-91. According to Theodore Draper who overemphasizes Stalin's role in this decision, Otto Hall (who was Harry Haywood's brother) claimed that Stalin had advocated approaching the "Negro Question" as a "national question" in 1925 when Hall and four other black American KUTV students met with him. In response to the students' objection that it sounded "'like Jim Crow'" in revolutionary guise, Stalin supposedly argued that they would think differently after receiving theoretical instruction. See Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia: American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p. 334. Haywood makes no mention of his brother's reminiscence.

[29] Cedric Robinson emphasizes that it was Soviet rather than U.S. Communist authorities who recognized the usefulness of the precedent that the ABB and UNIA had set in *Black Marxism*, pp. 224-228. Haywood claims that Cyril Briggs had articulated the notion of black Americans as an oppressed nation as a member of the ABB in *Black Bolshevik*, pp. 124-125, 230. William Maxwell argues that McKay's *Negry v Amerike* influenced the Comintern's 1928 decision on the "Negro Question," a theory which Claude McKay would have quickly supported. See Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*, pp. 72, 80 89; and Claude McKay, *Long Way from Home* (New York: Lee Furman, 1937), pp. 179-189.

[30] See, for example, Francine Hirsch, "Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities," *Russian Review* 59 (2000): 201-206; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 125-126, 450-460; Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State

workers recognize the right of black Americans to national self-determination and place themselves in a disadvantaged position in relationship to them, Comintern officials were merely operating within the logic of the Soviet affirmative action empire. They were, in other words, holding white Americans as fellow members of an oppressing nation to the same standard as Russians.

Comintern leaders' insistence on black Americans' status as an oppressed nation must also be considered within the framework of Soviet definitions of the terms "race" and "nation" during this era. As Francine Hirsch details, Soviet anthropologists defined "race" as a phase of historical development which was replaced gradually by the "unification of peoples" into nascent "ethnohistorical units," or "nationalities" and "nations" which were founded upon a common language, culture, and consciousness.[31] According to this logic, if Soviet leaders classified black Americans as a "race" or even *narodnosti* (the lowest level of development within the process of nation formation), then they would have been characterizing them as behind in their historical development. This would have made them no better than U.S. officials and Western imperialists who purposefully denied the national character of black Americans and non-Europeans in order to justify their subjugation of them.[32] Placed within this perspective, it would have

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Promoted Ethnic Particularism," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 205-206; and Ronald G. Suny, *Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). See also the essays in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For the foundational study of the repressive paradigm, see Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997; orig. pub. 1954).

[31] Hirsch, "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," pp. 33-35. On Soviet distinctions within ethnoterritorial units, see Hirsch, "The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress," pp. 268, 272-275.

[32] Scholars have emphasized how European imperialists labeled their colonial subjects ahistorical in order to deny their claims to nationhood, thereby justifying their subjugation of them. See, for example, Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University

been highly unlikely for the Sixth Congress to declare black Americans anything other than a nation.

The Comintern's official recognition of black Americans as an historical people with a legitimate claim to nationhood encouraged black Communists to write short histories of black Americans. Like the Sixth Congress' declaration itself, these brief histories constitute a form of Soviet antiracism because their very composition challenged the fundamental basis of U.S. racism, which sought to embed blacks in the present in order to erase and deny them a legitimate past.[33] Unlike Claude McKay's lengthier *Negry v Amerike*, which was the first product of Soviet patronage of black American history, the shorter documents inspired by the Third Period's emphasis on black Americans' revolutionary potential were not so wedded to Marxist categories that they posited that black Americans' historical agency only began with their migration to northern cities. While they still focused on the transformation of black Americans from a predominantly agrarian to a growing urban people, at the same time they assigned African Americans agency from the first day that the "European slave capturers arrived in Africa."[34] James Ford's thirty-page *The Negro Industrial Proletariat of America* (1928), for instance, discusses in both statistical and narrative form the history of black

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of Chicago Press, 1995); Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[33] See Gilroy cited in note 32. Due to the important relationship between history and nation, the officially sponsored non-Russian nationalities were required to have national histories. The main commonality among them was that they were supposed to give the appropriate credit to their Russian "big brother" for leading them in the struggle against tsarism and the establishment of the Soviet Union. See, especially, Lowell Tillett, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

[34] Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*, pp. 77-79. Clarence Walker argues that a major preoccupation of early black history (1836-1935) was assigning historical agency to black Americans in *Deromanticizing Black History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), pp. 87-107.

American migration after the Civil War, touching on the initial movement into Kansas (1879-1880), a second stream into Texas and Arkansas (1888-1889), and finally making reference to the Great Migration the "most sensational and revolutionary in effect" from 1913-1923. Yet Ford also recounts specific examples of how black Americans and their African predecessors throughout history had opposed and rebelled against their oppressors. Although Ford and others identified this agency solely in terms of rebellions thereby completely overlooking what have become known as the strategies of everyday resistance, the importance of these brief historical pieces as a nascent mode of black empowerment cannot be denied. [35]

The Comintern's 1928 decision was of further significance to the status of black Americans because it established unequivocally that the struggle for black equality was not subordinate to the class question but was in itself integral to the revolutionary process. This officially made black Americans important allies of the working class rather than the "reserves of capitalist reaction" which was the degraded status that some U.S. Communists had assigned them.[36] By recognizing U.S. racism as a detriment to the revolutionary movement's success, the Sixth Congress' ruling had provided the justification for both Soviet antiracism and work among black Americans in the United States to become dominant policies. As Mark Naison has poignantly remarked, "by

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[35] Interestingly Ford compared and quoted simultaneously at some length the ideas of Karl Marx and Frederick Douglass about the U.S. Civil War. He also wrote a section on "Negro Artisans Before and After the Civil War" for which he relied heavily upon W.E.B. Du Bois' "Negro Artisan," one of a series of studies that Du Bois had conducted in 1902 while a professor at Atlanta University. See James W. Ford, *The Negro Industrial Proletariat of America* (Moscow: Red International of Labor Unions, 1928) in RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 46, ll. 32-65 (esp. ll. 35-40, 51-53, 60-62). In an article in the *Negro Worker* from 15 March 1930 Gilbert Lewis similarly discussed within a historical context a series of black revolutionary risings that had occurred since 1687 including the 1712 New York slave conspiracy, Gabriel Prosser's rebellion, the Camden, New Jersey insurgency, and Denmark Vessey's 1822 revolt. The editors strategically placed Lewis' essay immediately after a reprint of the October 1928 Comintern resolution declaring black Americans a nation. See RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 92, ll. 7-23.

defining blacks as an oppressed nation, even in this bizarre fashion, the Comintern had, within the Leninist lexicon of values, endowed the black struggle with unprecedented dignity and importance."[37]

While the conferment of nationhood on black Americans allowed them to benefit from their identity as "American Negroes" in the Soviet Union in the way that having an "Uzbek" or "Azeri" identity enabled national minorities to gain privileges and honors from the Soviet state during the 1930s,[38] the Comintern had difficulty convincing the CPUSA leadership of the imperative nature of treating black Americans as members of an oppressed nation rather than an inferior race. In the two years following the 1928 decision, the U.S. party had failed to make work among black Americans and the struggle against white chauvinism a priority and had done virtually nothing to popularize the program of black Americans' right to national self-determination.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) consequently issued a new resolution in October 1930 carefully clarifying and outlining the responsibilities of white American Communists in regards to black Americans. Written in large part by the Finnish Communist Otto Kuusinen, the resolution ordered U.S. leaders to actively recruit and fully incorporate black workers into the life of the trade unions; to educate and promote them to leadership positions; and to unite them with white laborers in common organizations in the North rather than establishing separate

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[36] Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, pp. 85-89.

[37] Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), p. 18.

[38] Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Accommodation after Collectivization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 454-455; Slezkine, "USSR as a Communal Apartment," pp. 207-208, 217-218, 226-227.

organizations for them.[39] It emphasized that national self-determination assumed precedence over the struggle for black equality in the South because only through its fulfillment was the true social equality of southern black Americans, who "are living in slavery in the literal sense of the word," possible. This required seizing "the landed property of the white masters," redistributing it to black tenant farmers to whom control of the governing bodies was to be entrusted as well, and granting white residents minority rights if the black majority exercised their right to political separation. The ECCI also used the resolution to admonish all white American Communists that in the "struggle for equal rights for Negroes" it was their Leninist duty, as members of the oppressing nation,

> to march *at the head* of this struggle. They must everywhere make a breach in the walls of segregation and 'Jim Crowism' which has been set up by bourgeois slave market morality. . . They, the white workers, must boldly jump at the throat of the 100 per cent bandits who strike a Negro in the face.

Due to the fact that it was written more clearly and was more effectively popularized than the original 1928 declaration, the October 1930 resolution, as will be shown in chapters two and five, became an integral component of Soviet antiracist cannon which black and white American Communists as well as Comintern officials subsequently used to condemn the conduct of members and authorities of the CPUSA who continued to underestimate the struggle against racism.[40]

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[39] See "For the Political Secretariat – Draft Letter to CPUSA," RGASPI, f. 495, op 155, d. 91, ll. 6-9. The Negro Section of the Comintern's Eastern Secretariat was particularly critical of John Ballam's continued opposition to black Americans' right to self-determination. They refuted nearly every aspect of his argument, which they characterized as putting him in league with the Lovestoneites and white liberals. See "Resolution of the Negro Section of the Eastern Secretariat re the Statement of Comrade Ballam," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 85, ll. 81-82. For Ballam's remarks, see RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 91, ll. 1-2.

[40] The resolution condemned U.S. Communists who advocated political separation or the establishment of a "Negro Soviet Republic" outright since this deprived black Americans of the right to choose their own political fate. It explained that the Comintern would only encourage southern black Americans not to separate if the proletarian revolution had been achieved in the larger U.S.; "Tezis po negritianskomu voprosu v Soedinennykh Shtatakh," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 94, ll. 26-36; Kuusinen, "Directives for

IV.

With the necessary groundwork laid for officials in Moscow to pursue Soviet antiracism as a priority or hard-line policy, the first major event that signaled its emergence as such was the trial of two white American workers who attacked a black American laborer, Robert Robinson at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi in late July 1930. As the first chapter demonstrates, Soviet trade union authorities and all-union editors used the near month-long campaign to bring the two assailants to "proletarian" justice to portray the Soviet Union as superior to the United States in terms of its intolerance of American racial prejudice. They depicted the Soviet and foreign workers who had been brought together in the same factories as a result of the demands of the First Five-Year Plan as an emerging international proletariat who were indignant at the racially-motivated assault on "our brother," and committed to making the new society that they were helping to inaugurate free of racism. The six-day trial that was extensively covered in the Soviet and U.S. press, and the court's decision to expel the white American racists dramatically conveyed that American technique and industrial knowledge were valued in the construction of this socialist society (as summarized in the adage "American technique yes!"), but American racial norms were not (captured in the corresponding adage "To hell with American racial prejudice").[41] Soviet officials' calculated depiction of Robert Robinson as a chief beneficiary of the virtues of Soviet antiracism and the "ideal black worker," which continued after the trial and reached its culmination in his election to the Moscow City Soviet in late December 1934, is instructive of how Moscow sought to

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the Thesis on the Negro Question in the United States," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 94, ll. 203-221 (esp. ll. 205-208, 212-216).

redefine "civilization" and "enlightenment" as distinctly Soviet rather than American, through the ostensible inclusion rather than exclusion of blackness.

Chapter two closely examines the discourse about U.S. race relations that the racially-motivated assault in Stalingrad generated, and the significant impetus that it received from its coincidence with the convening of the Fifth Congress of the Red International of Trade Unions (RILU) or Profintern in Moscow. For the first time in its ten-year history, Profintern leaders had invited a substantial number of black American delegates to participate and made one of its major objectives addressing the problem of racism within the revolutionary trade union movement. Photographs and sketches of these black American Communists as political actors in the capital of internationalism were juxtaposed in the pages of the central press against the images of black American lynch victims. Clearly, Soviet editors sought to promote the image that Soviet society was governed by the enlightened, modern law of the proletariat while U.S. society was governed by the barbaric, "medieval" law of lynch. As a result of the burgeoning of this Soviet antiracist discourse, two additional workers' trials against U.S. racism were organized, one at a Moscow needle factory and the other at a Harlem casino.

The third chapter looks at the impact that the American racial violence at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi had on local Soviet officials whom trade union leaders in Moscow held just as culpable for its occurrence as the white American workers who committed it. It illuminates how the center assigned local authorities the responsibility of organizing systematic "international education" among Soviet, American, and other foreign workers in order to inculcate them with antiracism, and thereby transform them

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[41] Henry Filmore Cabot, "'To Hell with American Race Prejudice!,'" *Liberator*, 4 November 1932, p. 5; Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, pp. 339-340.

into the truly internationally-minded proletariat that Soviet leaders were portraying them to be. Communist officials conceived of international education as the foundation of a new, antiracist "non-capitalist" society, and defined it in direct opposition to "capitalist education," which they condemned as the underlying basis for a racist one like the U.S. In theory, the union-wide campaign to strengthen international education promised to eradicate any remnants of racism. More practically, however, Soviet authorities merely needed it to prevent any future slippage of the hidden transcript into the public transcript or to put it differently, to prevent another flagrant violation of the image of the Soviet Union as a society without racism. The organization of the Scottsboro protest during the spring 1931 was without a doubt intended to provide reassurance that the public transcript of Soviet racial harmony had been reestablished at the local level.

The Soviet campaign from 1931 to 1932 to liberate nine young black male prisoners in Scottsboro, Alabama, which is the focus of chapter four, constitutes the other major component of interwar Soviet state-sponsored antiracism. Whereas Soviet trade union authorities and all-union editors had portrayed the majority of Russian and foreign workers as genuinely outraged by the racist conduct of the two white Americans who assaulted a black worker in Stalingrad, with the Scottsboro legal lynching, the central press and MOPR authorities depicted the mobilization as extending far beyond workers in the urban Russian centers to include intellectuals, kolkhozniks, laborers, and youth in both the Russian and non-Russian union republics. They cultivated the impression that the Soviet populace was inundated with information about the specific plight of the nine black captives and about U.S. racism in general in the form of banners, placards, pamphlets, lectures, protest meetings, as well as songs, poems, photographs, political

cartoons, and articles in Soviet newspapers. The appearance that all ends of the Soviet Union were enthusiastically participating in the Scottsboro protest served as evidence that the vast country was unified on the basis of its citizens' spirited rejection of American racial prejudice and acute consciousness that their fate as citizens of the first workers' state was connected intimately with that of nine young black American men in Alabama.

The fifth and final chapter explores the experiences of the first group of U.S. students in the ILS that was integrated beyond two or three black Americans between 1931 and 1932. Besides highlighting the lesson that Comintern leaders gained in the subtleties and deep-rooted nature of U.S. racism by attempting to resolves hostilities among this experimental group, it also interrogates the ways in which black American ILS students, as well as a few black American Communists who attended KUTV in 1933, shrewdly used Soviet antiracism or the image of Soviet racial equality which it deliberately propagated to empower themselves. More specifically, when their experiences failed to correspond with that image whether it be at the hands of white American Communists or in their encounters with certain aspects of Soviet society, several black American students strategically invoked it, and its two foundational elements (the Stalingrad trial and the Scottsboro protest) to criticize the disparity not only as "racist" but more importantly as "anti-Soviet." Soviet antiracism therefore allowed them to demand that specific changes be made which would both improve their personal existence in the capital while simultaneously strengthening the Soviet Union's image as the only society that had discovered the cure for racism.

V.

Many black Americans who appear in this dissertation (of both Communist and non-Communist backgrounds), and visited or lived in the USSR during the interwar era had a history of prior migration. That is to say, they had either moved from the Caribbean to the northern U.S. (primarily to New York) as part of the flow of some 88,000 migrants to the country from 1900 to 1932,[42] or were part of the Great Migration of black Americans, an exodus of roughly 1,750,000 people from 1910 to 1940, who moved largely although not exclusively from southern regions of the U.S. to northern cities.[43] For example, both Robert Robinson, the heroic worker in the Stalingrad trial, and George Padmore (Malcolm Meredith Nurse), a major figure in the Fifth Profintern Congress, belonged to the first group. According to Winston James the overrepresentation of Caribbean migrants in U.S. radical movements like communism were due to numerous factors including their previous political and organizational experience; majority consciousness; educational and occupational accomplishments; previous travel experience; weaker attachment to Christian churches; and for those from the British Caribbean, a politically protected status in the U.S. [44]

Robinson, who never joined the Communist Party but obviously lacked any trepidation about working in the first country governed by one, was born in Jamaica

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[42] Winston James argues that economic distress, natural disaster, and colonial policy helped precipitate migration to the U.S. in *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, pp. 7-8, 12-20, 32-35, 38-41.

[43] Scholarship on the first Great Migration is vast. See, for example, Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997); James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 197); and Joe William Trotter, Jr., ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

around 1907, grew up in Cuba, worked in Brazil, and later migrated to Harlem in 1923. He relocated to Detroit in 1927 before journeying to Stalingrad in 1930.[45] George Padmore who became a Party member in 1927 was born in Trinidad in 1902 and migrated to the U.S. in late 1924 to study law at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. He moved to New York City in 1926 from where he traveled back and forth to Howard University's School of Law in Washington, D.C. before leaving the U.S. permanently by the decade's end.[46]

James Ford and Harry Haywood were representatives of the second group. That is to say, they had participated in the massive internal migration of black Americans of the early twentieth century, which ultimately landed both men in Chicago before each ultimately made their way to Moscow for extended stays. Ford, who served as a de facto spokesman and figurehead for black American Communists in Moscow and was appointed a member of the Profintern's executive committee, was born in Pratt City, Alabama in 1893 but later migrated to Chicago where he became active in the postal workers' union, the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC), and the Communist Party in 1926.[47] Harry Haywood, who was the first black American student admitted to the

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[44] James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, pp. 1-6, 50-51, 69-89.

[45] Robert Robinson, *Black on Red: My 44 Years Inside the Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books Ltd., 1988), pp. 19-26. By James' account, the migration of Robinson's family from Jamaica to Cuba was typical of the era; *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, pp. 26-30.

[46] James R. Hooker, *Black Revolutionary: George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), esp. pp. 2-16.

[47] According to James Ford's official biography that was circulated when he was the CPUSA's vice presidential candidate in the 1932 U.S. elections, Ford's grandfather had been lynched in Gainesville, Georgia for the alleged "crime" of "'getting fresh with a white woman." The biography goes on to state that Ford's father, Lymon Forsch worked at the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company in Pratt City, Alabama where one day when he received his pay check his last name was spelled as "Ford." Upon notifying the white foreman of the error, the latter supposedly remarked "'Keep that name. It don't matter

ILS in 1927 and played a pivotal role, as noted above, in the Sixth Congress' declaration of black Americans an oppressed nation, was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1898. Haywood's family moved to Minneapolis and later Chicago where he became involved in the ABB, the Communist Youth League, and then like his brother Otto Hall, the Party.[48] In addition to the fact that these two men had joined the Communist movement after migrating to Chicago, Ford and Haywood had also served as soldiers during the First World War.[49] The obscene racism that they undoubtedly confronted in the U.S. armed forces, white Americans' insistence on maintaining the racial status quo after the war, and the racial tensions that they encountered in the northern "promised land" which experienced a major race riot during the "Red Summer" of 1919, must have proved critical in piquing their interest in the Communist Party's promises of complete social equality.[50]

In regards to gender, Soviet antiracism was largely a masculine discourse in terms of its primary focus, content, and contributors. Even though it condemned all forms of U.S. racism, the specific sufferings of black men received the bulk of attention. Black

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about a nigger's name nohow.'" See "Negro Worker Nominated for Vice President," 2 *Negro Worker* (June 1932): 25-26.

[48] Haywood's parents were originally from Tennessee and Missouri. He stressed that his mother moved "up to the north by stages" before reaching Omaha, Nebraska; *Black Bolshevik*, pp. 5-14.

[49] In 1930-1931, the CPUSA contained only 1000 black American members, half of whom lived in Chicago. Communist membership among black Americans increased throughout the decade along with the entire party's constituency. Thus, by 1936 black Americans numbered 3895 or 9.5 percent of the party. See Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), esp. pp. 331-333, 338-339, 347-348.

[50] For the premier study on the first Great Migration to Chicago, see Grossman's *Land of Hope* and for the 1919 race riot, see William M. Tuttle, Jr.'s *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1970). For a thorough discussion of black Americans in the First World War, see Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldier: Black American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974). Winston James emphasizes that the virulently racist treatment that members of the British West Indies Regiment faced during the Great War played a profound role in

American men, were also more prominent than their female counterparts in furthering Soviet antiracism. No black American woman (or white woman), for example, participated in the debates to declare black Americans a nation at the Sixth Comintern Congress even though Maude White was then a student at KUTV, as were some of her black American male colleagues who did participate.[51] This arrangement clearly replicated the historical representation of men as the active political and economic agents of a nation whose masculine accomplishments were responsible for its foundation and continued defense.[52]

As presaged in their exclusion from its foundational moment, the following chapters bear witness that black women constituted peripheral figures in Soviet antiracism: Soviet leaders celebrated Robert Robinson as the representative black worker; Helen McClain, the only black American woman to attend the Profintern's Fifth Congress in August 1930, unlike the black American male delegates, never addressed the assembly; the Scottsboro protest centered around gaining the liberation of nine young black American men the mothers of whom were not as important to the Soviet campaign

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radicalizing them, some of whom migrated to the U.S. See James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, esp. pp. 52-72.

[51] Harry Haywood and Otto Hall picked up Maude White from the train station when she first arrived in Moscow on a bitterly cold December day in 1927. White, only nineteen years old upon her arrival was a schoolteacher who stayed at KUTV for three years. See, Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, p. 217. White's article in the *Daily Worker* in early 1931 about repeated acts of white chauvinism in the Philadelphia Needle Trade Unions (of which she had been given a leadership position upon her return to the U.S.) arguably helped influence U.S. Party leaders' decision to take action against the racist conduct of August Yokinen in Harlem (see chapter two).

[52] See, for example, Paul Gilroy, "One Nation under a Groove: The Cultural Politics of 'Race' and Racism in Britain," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 352-370; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 352-388; and Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 61-82.

as they were in other countries[53]; the photographs and cartoons of lynch victims that were printed in Soviet publications were of black men; and the black American ILS and KUTV students who strategically used the discourse of Soviet antiracism to make certain demands and criticisms were predominately male.

Clearly, the predominant image of U.S. racism that Soviet interwar antiracism promoted cast black American men as its primary victims. Its masculine focus can be seen in part as reflecting an era when the opportunities for black American women (and women in general) to assume positions of authority in political movements like U.S. Communism were limited, and when their male counterparts were more likely to travel abroad by themselves in search of industrial labor or for political purposes. To put it differently, the greater number of black American men in the Soviet Union, the CPUSA, and the industrial workforce during this era may help to explain the silences of Soviet antiracism in regards to black American women. Perhaps also contributing to these silences is the fact that black American men were the main targets of physical and legal lynching, the visual and written depictions of which were much more assessable to Soviet authorities than those concerning the violent racial discrimination perpetrated against African American females.[54] Yet, at the same time, Soviet leaders' own biases against and general ambivalence in regards to women most likely contributed to the gender

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[53] Yet even if this image had been prominent in the Soviet Union, then it would have been problematic since although these women were acting in somewhat political roles their primary identities and primary appeal were as mothers.

[54] See especially, Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, eds. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 292-297.

imbalance of Soviet antiracism as well.[55] Rape, the primary form of racial violence used by white men to terrorize black women,[56] was not consistently treated as a serious crime in Soviet society. This was made particularly evident when the primary American defendant in the Stalingrad trial was charged with raping a Russian cleaning woman. Authorities dismissed it as an apolitical offense that warranted a less severe punishment than white chauvinism.[57]

Moreover, the fact that Soviet men rather than women were presented as the main contributors to and supporters of the campaigns against American racism should not be overlooked in interrogating how Soviet antiracism was gendered. The letters and resolutions printed in the all-union press during the Scottsboro protest and the campaign against Robinson's white American male assailants were attributed largely to male workers, kolkhozniks, students, and intellectuals. Only two female laborers compared to seven men were appointed public prosecutors in the Stalingrad trial, and two women in contrast to fourteen men served on the Defense Committee that was credited for helping to organize the Soviet Scottsboro campaign. Figuratively speaking, Soviet antiracism was essentially about Soviet men leading the struggle with black American men against U.S. racism which was often though not exclusively shown as being perpetrated by white

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[55] See especially, Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters Under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 64-123; Barbara Alpern Engel, "Engendering Russia's History: Women in Post-Emancipation Russia and the Soviet Union," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 309-321; and Susan E. Reid, "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 133-174.

[56] See note 54 and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'The Mind That Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, eds. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983): 328-349.

[57] Eric Naiman notes that with the exception of the Chubarov Alley gang rape that occurred in Leningrad in 1926, rape cases (including those perpetrated by groups of men) were typically given minimal, brief mention in the Soviet press and offenders on average given minimal prison sentences. See *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 250-288.

American males. Thus, the disproportionate attention given to black American men at the near omission of black American women is not the deliberate intention of this dissertation, but rather a reflection of the reality that Soviet leaders cast black Americans, like the non-Russian nationalities, as "brothers" rather than "sisters" in class.[58]

As a final note, this study in no way contends that the U.S.S.R. was the society free of racism that Soviet leaders claimed it to be during the 1930s. However, it argues that it is equally problematic to go to the opposite extreme and portray it as riddled by virulent racism. Such a one-dimensional analysis makes the black Americans who visited and/or lived in the Soviet Union and testified to benefiting from the "fruits" of Soviet antiracism appear as mere dupes of the Soviet Potemkin village. At the same time, it completely discounts what scholars have emphasized was Soviet authorities' sincere commitment to creating an enlightened New Soviet Person, and their pursuit of antiracism as part of that objective.[59] Although this endeavor failed to eradicate racism as it purported to do, it did mean that the racism black Americans experienced in the U.S.S.R. during the 1920s and 1930s in the form of "sociological racism" (or racism "from below") was not reinforced *systematically* by "official racism" (or racism "from above") as it was in the U.S.[60] The current situation in the post-Communist Russian

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[58] Terry Martin argues that prior to 1933, the Soviet Union was imagined as a "Brotherhood of the Peoples," reflecting the classic conceptualization of international proletarian unity as a brotherhood. Although the "Friendship of Peoples" eclipsed this paradigm by 1935, the inequality that "unofficially" existed between the Russians and non-Russian nationalities was still euphemized in terms of a brotherhood, which elevated the former to the role of "big brother" and relegated the latter to that of "little brothers." See Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 432-437, 452-460; Slezkine, "USSR as a Communal Apartment," p. 227; and Robert Conquest, *Soviet Nationality Policy in Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1967), pp. 91, 94.

[59] See especially, David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 3-4, 45-54; and Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 71-75.

Federation is illustrative of the significant difference that "official racism," especially as represented in the authority of law enforcement officials, as opposed to "official *anti*racism" can have on the growth of sociological racism and in making the life of a person of color in Moscow unbearable.[61] This project seeks to establish a middle ground between these two extreme portrayals. It attempts to show that the Soviet Union during the decades between the wars was more complex and more nuanced than such black and white portrayals allow,[62] and that the black Americans who contributed to the country's image as a society without racism were politically astute in recognizing the agency with which it invested them.[63]

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[60] Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1988).

[61] See, for example, Meredith L. Roman, "Making Caucasians Black: Moscow Since the Fall of Communism and the Racialization of Non-Russians," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 18 (June 2002): 1-27. For the critical role of law enforcement officials as conduits of official racism, see Ellis Cashmore and Eugene McLaughlin, eds., *Out of Order? Policing Black People* (London: Routledge, 1991); Leo Lucassen, "'Harmful tramps': Police professionalization and gypsies in Germany, 1700-1945," *Crime, History & Societies* 1, no. 1 (1997): 29-50; and D. Waddington and C. Critcher, eds., *Policing Public Order: Theoretical and Practical Issues* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996).

[62] In this regard, this dissertation has drawn much of its inspiration from the recent studies of Soviet nationality policy, alluded to above. These scholars have overturned the paradigm of repression by showing that it was actually advantageous to "look non-Russian" during the 1930s. Their intention is not to argue that the Soviet Union existed as a friendship of peoples but to complicate our understanding of the relationship between the first workers' state and Soviet national minorities. See note 30.

[63] This study has benefited significantly from Mark Naison's *Communists in Harlem*, Robin D.G. Kelley's *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), Mark Solomon's *The Cry Was Unity*, and William Maxwell's *New Negro, Old Left* which emphasize that black Communists strategically used communism to their advantage and exercised influence on Comintern policy, thereby challenging the paradigm set by Draper's *American Communism and Soviet Russia* and Wilson Record's *The Negro and the Communist Party* (New York: Atheneum, 1971) which depicted black Americans who embraced communism as subordinating their autonomy to Moscow. Maxwell argues (pp. 69-71) that this paradigm in regards to the CPUSA has been somewhat resuscitated in Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov's *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), and Klehr, Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson's *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Chapter 1

Racism in a "Raceless" Society: Racial Violence, Proletarian Justice, and the Heroic Black Worker

In an entry to his diary labeled "Stalingrad, August 1930," William Henry Chamberlin, the Moscow correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* from 1922-1932, recorded that he and his wife traveled to "the newly built Stalingrad tractor factory in order to attend the trial of two American mechanics." He wrote that the two men "Mr. Lewis" and "Mr. Brown" were charged with "'racial chauvinism' for having become involved in a brawl with the sole Negro employed at the works."[1] This chapter uses the 1930 trial to which Chamberlin alludes to demonstrate that at a time when Soviet leaders were forced to admit the country's industrial inferiority and recruited a substantial number of American (and other foreign) workers to help build socialism, they also sought to present the Soviet Union as superior to the United States in terms of its treatment of black or "dark-skinned" peoples.[2] Placing American racism on trial in Stalingrad constituted one means by which they sought to cultivate this image of a superior, "raceless" Soviet society, where "race" did not limit an individual's access to rights.

Soviet trade union leaders, however, did not want the trial to appear merely as the result of their own efforts. Rather, in order to lend greater credibility to the image of the

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[1] William Henry Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1934), pp. 362-364 (quotation p. 362). Chamberlin (1897-1969) composed a two-volume history of *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1965; orig. pub. 1935).

[2] Stephen Kotkin argues that Communist authorities sought to portray the U.S.S.R. as a superior example of a modern society amidst the rise of fascism and the Great Depression, in *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a civilization* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995). For Soviet leaders' pride in their nationality policy as distinguishing them as superior to the Western powers, see, for example, Francine Hirsch, "The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category *Nationality* in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses," *Slavic Review*, 56 (Summer 1997): 251-278; and Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Soviet Union as a country free of racism, they depicted the campaign against the two white American offenders as the product of the widespread, spontaneous indignation of the foreign and Soviet laborers who had been brought together at Soviet industrial giants like the Stalingrad Traktorostroi, Magnitogorsk, Moscow Elektrozavod, and Nizhni-Novgorod avtozavod as a result of the demands of the First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932).[3] Throughout the month of August 1930, all-union editors systematically reported that workers of these and other enterprises were enthusiastically attending meetings to protest the racially-motivated assault on "our brother," electing worker representatives to serve as public prosecutors at the trial, and incessantly demanding in the form of letters and protest resolutions that the assailants be expelled from the country. As will be shown, the image of Soviet and foreign laborers that deliberately emerged from these frequently published reports and the court proceedings themselves was as a nascent international proletariat staunchly opposed to American racism and committed to inaugurating a new socialist society where racial prejudice was absent.[4]

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[3] Foreign workers played an extremely important role in the development of Soviet industry in the early 1930s. Soviet officials estimated that the number of American workers in the country in 1930 was one thousand. See "Predvaritel'nye dannye o chisle inostrannykh rabochikh, rabotaiushchikh v SSSR i ispol'zovanie zagranichnogo tekhnicheskogo opyta i znanii inostrannykh spetsialistov," *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'noi i Politicheskoi Istorii* (RGASPI), fond 495, opis' 30, delo 648, list l.33. According to Sergei Zhuravlev in his study of the Elektrozavod foreign-working community, during the most intensive phase of the industrialization campaign, nearly 35,000 foreign workers, specialists, and their families were living in the Soviet Union, the largest contingent of which was Germans followed by Americans. See *'Malen'kie liudi' i 'bol'shaia istoria': inostrantsy moskovskogo Elektrozavoda v sovetskom obshchestve 1920-kh-1930-kh gg.* (Moskva: Rosspen, 2000), pp. 29-31. Besides John Scott (*Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel*), the most notable American to work in a socialist giant was Walter Reuther who before he became president of the United Auto Workers for over thirty years in 1936, had worked with his brother in the Nizhni-Novgorod avtozavod from roughly 1933 - 1935. See Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

[4] For the importance of print-capitalism and especially newspapers to facilitating the development of a "horizontal comradeship," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). For a cogent analysis of the role of the Soviet press during the New Economic Policy (NEP) and First Five-Year Plan, see Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Of all the central newspapers, *Trud*, the official organ of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS), played the leading role in the campaign to bring the American culprits to "proletarian" justice. In 1923 Stalin, citing an article Lenin had written in 1901, argued that in addition to exposing wrongdoing and agitating workers, the press needed to converse with, rather than just "speak to" them and periodically hold meetings with them where they could exchange their experiences.[5] *Trud* was the first central paper to expose the "wrongdoing" that had occurred in Stalingrad; and informed readers almost daily about developments in the case until early September by printing on average four articles and/or protest resolutions primarily on the front page. Consistently, its editors encouraged workers to discuss the case at factory meetings, to send their statements of opposition, and to assist in organizing the trial. They, in other words, depicted themselves as fulfilling the role of "the press as a collective organizer" by making an internationally-minded proletarian community appear to be a momentary, almost tangible reality in spite of the persistence of national animosity and anti-Semitism in the country.[6]

Although the major Soviet and even U.S. newspapers presented the efforts to bring the two laborers to account for their racist conduct as receiving the "unabated interest" of the entire Soviet working community, hitherto, historians have given it very

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[5] See Stalin, "Pechat' kak kollektivnyi organizator," in *Sochineniia*, 5 (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1950), pp. 281-285.

[6] See, for example, Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 82-90, 135-137; David Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 124-125; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 31-74, 148-154; and Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 42-43, 71-72, 259-267, 364, 369-370.

little attention.[7] In his 1986 *Russia and the Negro*, which ambitiously examines the history of peoples of African descent in Russia from the tsarist through the late Soviet periods, Allison Blakely devotes only two paragraphs to the trial yet assigns it tremendous importance in helping to explain the sympathy that Russians afforded black Americans in the Soviet Union during the 1930s.[8] Woodford McClellan, the only other scholar who mentions the court proceedings, briefly cites them in his 1993 essay "Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools" as one of the few instances in which Soviet leaders acknowledged the existence of discrimination within their borders.[9]

What transpired among the three American workers in "Stalingrad, August 1930" that inspired Chamberlin and his wife to travel to the newly constructed tractor plant, and provided Soviet leaders with an unprecedented opportunity to further propagate the claim that inhabitants of the Soviet Union refused to permit U.S. racial discrimination within their borders? The following analysis endeavors to tell this story and, in turn, begin a discussion that will continue throughout this study, which shows that Soviet strategic interest in American race relations as a source of counter-identity for the country actually predated the Cold War and the rise of the U.S. Civil Rights movement. By illuminating one of Soviet leaders' most public indictments of interwar "racial politics" and their conception of it as a signifier of Soviet enlightenment, it builds upon Francine Hirsch and

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[7] See, for example, "Delo ob izbienii tov. Robinsona," *Pravda*, 24 August 1930, p. 3; "Rabochii sud nad amerikantsami, izbivshimi negra," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 24 August 1930, p. 4; and "Liuis i Braun vysylaiutsia iz SSSR," *Pravda*, 31 August 1930, p. 7. U.S. papers similarly stressed the widespread interest the court proceedings roused among laborers in the Soviet Union. See, for example, "Attack on Negro Red Still Stirs Moscow," *New York Times*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; "Moscow Stirred by Attack on Negro," *Daily Worker*, 13 August 1930, p. 2; "Russia Acts to Halt Racial Prejudice," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), 23 August 1930, p. 1; and "Moscow Stirred by Attack on Negro," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 August 1930, p. 1.

[8] Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1986), p. 101.

Amir Weiner's contention that authorities in Moscow were by no means more humane in implementing their population politics in the decades between the wars, but were distinct from and believed themselves to be superior to their European and American contemporaries because they based them on the categories of class or nationality at the explicit rejection of race.[10]

I.

On 24 July 1930, a Thursday, about six o'clock in the evening at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory, black American worker Robert Robinson was walking away from the cafeteria towards the shores of the Volga River when two white American men, Lemuel Lewis and William Brown, confronted him.[11] All three Americans were in Stalingrad on

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[9] Woodford McClellan, "Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925-1934," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26 (1993): 371-390 (quotation p. 376).

[10] See Francine Hirsch, "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," and Amir Weiner, "Nothing But Certainty," in *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 30-43, 44-53. See also Hirsch, 'The Soviet Union as a work-in-progress," esp. pp. 268, 272-275. As Terry Martin emphasizes, at the height of Soviet ethnic cleansing, which targeted ideologically unreliable diaspora nationalities, leaders did not completely relinquish the principles of Soviet nationality policy so that they relocated the group's national institutions in tact and still encouraged them to become even more nationally distinct; "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70 (1998): 813-861.

[11] Robinson was a naturalized American citizen born in Jamaica. See note 50. The Soviet press never referred to the two Americans by their first names, while U.S. papers as diverse as the *New York Times*, *Daily Worker*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, and New York *Amsterdam News* consistently identified Lewis as "Lemuel." The fact that a "Lemuel H. Lewis" was listed in the Detroit City Directory from 1929-1930 as an "autoworker" living at 217 Continental Avenue, and that Soviet records claim Lewis was living in Detroit and working for the Ford Motor Factory before coming to the Soviet Union in May 1930, suggests that the U.S. press was accurate. "Lemuel H. Lewis" of Detroit is listed in neither the 1920 or 1930 U.S. Census records but this is most likely because Lewis, whom Soviet records and the press indicate was originally from the South, had not migrated to Detroit for the 1920 census and had departed for Stalingrad before the 1930 census. The trial summary identifies Lewis by an alias, "Herbert Gulem." See "Obvinitel'noe zakliuchenie po delu izbieniia rabochego negra na Stalingradskom Traktornom Zavode," *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (GARF), f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 15-19 (esp. ll. 18-19); and *Polk's City Directory, 1929-1930; People's Wayne Country Bank Serving Detroit, Highland Park, Hamtramck, Dearborn, River Rouge, Ecorse*, (Detroit: A. L. Polk and Co. Publishers, n. d.), p. 1316. For U.S. papers, see "To Deport Americans For Attack on Negro," *New York Times*, 31 August 1930, p. 10; "American Worker Who Attacked Negro Now Regrets His Act," *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1930, p. 2; "Detroit and Toledo Race-Haters Must Return to America," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 September 1930, p. 1; and "Prejudiced Americans in Russia to Be Deported," *Amsterdam News*, 3 September 1930, p. 3. Only

this particular evening because they had been recruited from the Detroit Ford Motor Company by Amtorg, the Soviet trading agency based in New York, to help in the construction and operation of what Soviet leaders prized as one of the country's giants of the new socialist industry, the Stalingrad Tractor Factory named for Felix Dzerzhinskii.[12] Lewis and Brown had arrived together, in May, with the majority of the other American workers at the Traktorostroi, which then numbered around three hundred seventy, while Robinson had arrived on the twentieth of July, just four days before the confrontation.[13]

When the two intoxicated white Americans, saw Robinson walking in their direction, Brown teased Lewis remarking, "Look, here comes your brother!" Lewis responded by contemptuously asking Robinson, "Where did you come from?" Because Robinson answered him with sarcasm, Lewis admonished his fellow worker not to forget that he was black and needed to answer him, a white man, with deference. Brown similarly reminded Robinson to "not forget your place" and threatened that if "you do not leave here in three days we will drown you in the Volga." Lewis then called Robinson a "black dog" as well as some other names, which the local procurator described as unprintable. When Robinson responded by calling Lewis a "bastard," he and Brown

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the *Pittsburgh Courier* (6 September 1930) gave Brown a first name, "William," which is the one that will be used here instead of the alias listed in the court records, "Victor Michael." The *Afro-American* (23 August 1930) identified him as "M. Brown," but did not even mention Lewis, thereby seriously calling into question its accuracy. U.S. papers and Soviet records agree Brown was from Toledo, Ohio.

[12] Kurt Schultz asserts that "the giant of socialist industry" was a "useful element in Moscow's propaganda campaign abroad"; "The American Factor in Soviet Industrialization: Fordism and the First Five-Year Plan, 1928-1932," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1992), esp. pp. 136-148 (quotation p. 143).

[13] For arrivals, see GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 15-17; and the report of V. Vaksov an official of the All-Union Auto-Tractor Association (VATO) dated 13 August 1930, "Opyt massovogo primeneniia truda amerikanskikh rabochikh i tekhnikov na Stalingradskom Traktornom Zavode," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, ll. 120-126. For population total, see "Zasedanie Sekretariata TsK VSRM ot 17 avgusta 1930 g.," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 4. This figure was also published in "Kak byl izbit tovarishch Robinson," *Trud*, 18 August 1930, p. 4. The U.S. government correctly estimated that the number of Americans in

lunged at the black worker waving their fists. In self-defense, as witnesses for both the defense and prosecution testified, Robinson picked up a stone from the ground, which initially forced Lewis to retreat, and then continued on his way.[14]

According to a Russian worker who was watching from the cafeteria, Lewis and Brown again pursued Robinson. Lewis, who caught up with Robinson first, punched the black worker twice in the face, knocking his glasses on the ground. When Robinson tried to grab Lewis, both men fell down, and in another attempt to free himself, Robinson clenched his teeth around Lewis' neck. At several points during this altercation, Brown supposedly held Robinson's arms so that he could not retaliate. In a rather fortuitous turn of events for Soviet officials, it was not until some Russian workers arrived on the scene that the three men were pulled apart, and Robinson was "liberated" from the grip of his white assailants. Meanwhile, a group of white American workers had been looking on the entire time and laughing.[15] Local police questioned and released both Lewis and Robinson that evening and conducted no investigations in the weeks that followed until *Trud* exposed news of the assault to the country on 9 August 1930.[16]

Stalingrad was three hundred fifty in 1930; *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union, 1930-1939*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions (Reel 37).

[14] Miroshnikov, a worker at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi delivered a speech during the second meeting of the Fifth International Conference of Metal Workers on 2 September 1930 in which he explained that "Comrade Robinson was beat for this, that he responded to Mr. Lewis calling him a black dog by calling Lewis a bastard." Miroshnikov's knowledge of this detail reveals that he had either attended the trial or listened to it over the intercom since this information was never divulged in the press; "Tov. Miroshnikov (SSSR STZ)," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 23, l. 191.

[15] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 15-18. Even though Robert Robinson had become severely disillusioned with the Soviet project by the time he recorded his version of the assault some fifty years later in his autobiography, it does not deviate much from this account. He still claimed that Russian workers in Stalingrad had treated him with nothing but respect if not friendliness, and were the ones who had come to his aid that evening in *Black on Red: My 44 Years Inside the Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1988), pp. 65-73.

[16] *Pravda* provided the most detailed description of the altercation that corresponded most closely to that found in the trial records. See "19 avgusta – sud nad amerikanskimi rabochimi, izbivshimi negra," *Pravda*,

Though several central newspapers portrayed workers throughout the union as quickly and simultaneously responding to the initial reports and near daily front-page coverage of the altercation in Stalingrad, for clearly strategic purposes, the foreign and Soviet laborers of Moscow Elektrozavod were shown to be the most active. As Sergei Zhuravlev argues in his study of its foreign-working community, during and after the First Five-Year Plan Elektrozavod was of high priority to Soviet leaders and came to symbolize socialism.[17] Thus it only makes sense that all-union editors presented workers from this particular giant of socialist industry as paragons of proletarian enlightenment who were at the forefront of the campaign to denounce as unequivocally impermissible in a socialist society the conduct of white American racists. According to the Soviet press, they organized a mass protest meeting at which they asked James Ford, a prominent black American Communist, to speak. They further displayed their "enlightened" outlook on race by inviting the victim, Robert Robinson, to work at their factory, and by later issuing a reassurance to him that "we are all on his side."[18] More importantly, the papers credited members of the Elektrozavod working community with suggesting that *Trud*'s editors, with the assistance of the Central Committee of the Metal Workers Union

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17 August 1930, p. 5. U.S. papers continued to report that Lewis had expelled Robinson from the cafeteria even after Soviet investigations had proved differently. See, for example, Walter Duranty, "Americans Essay Color Bar in Soviet," *New York Times*, 10 August 1930, p. 9; "More Americans Face Accusations in Soviet," *ibid.*, 30 August 1930, p. 5; "Russ Workers Won't Stand US Prejudice," *Afro-American*, 16 August 1930, p. 4; "Americans to Be Tried in Russia; Evicted Worker," *Amsterdam News*, 20 August 1930, p. 1; "Russians to Deport Prejudiced American," *Chicago Defender*, 23 August 1930, p. 3; and "Faces Expulsion from the USS.R., American Who Struck Negro Up on Charges," *Daily Worker*, 16 August 1930, p. 1. Like U.S. papers, the *Times* of London claimed that Americans ejected "'a Negro workman'" from the common dining area. See "Soviet and Colour Prejudice," *Times*, 13 August 1930, p. 9.

[17] See Zhuravlev, *'Malen'kie liudi'*, esp. pp. 47, 143-145.

[18] "Pozornyi fakt na Traktornom vskryl slabost' internatsional'noi raboty profsoiuzov Stalingrada," *Trud*, 10 August 1930, p. 1; "'Ia ostaius' na Traktornom,'" *ibid.*, 12 August 1930, p. 1; "My vsetselo na storone tov. Robinsona," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 1. James Ford was in Moscow at this time to participate in the Fifth Congress of the Profintern. See chapter two.

(VSRM), form an international workers' brigade which would consist of nine to ten Soviet and foreign workers from the country's major industrial centers to serve as community prosecutors at the trial. *Trud*'s editors of course promptly approved the "workers' proposal" and contacted representatives of the Metal Workers Union in Leningrad, Khar'kov, Rostov-on-Don, and Tula, requesting that they immediately hold meetings to appoint either a Soviet or foreign laborer to represent them and, by implication, the entire international proletarian community in condemning the two white American assailants of a black worker.[19]

The trial opened in one of the main halls of the Stalingrad Traktorostroi on Friday evening 22 August 1930, almost a month after the assault had occurred but only two weeks after *Trud* had exposed news of it.[20] The seven male and two female members of the international workers' brigade had arrived as community prosecutors in Stalingrad four days earlier. They were introduced in the press as: Ozerov of *Trud*'s editorial board; Kirillov of the CC VSRM; Becker, whom trade union officials described as a member of the "conscious" portion of the Stalingrad American colony; Erast, a Latvian from the Khar'kov State electric factory who had worked previously in Berlin; Gavrilov of the Central Committee of the International Organization for Assistance to Revolutionary Fighters (*Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii* or MOPR);

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[19] "Pis'mo rabochikh Elektrozavoda gazete 'Trud,'" *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 1; "'Trud' prinial predlozhenie Elektrozavoda," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 1.

[20] The trial had been scheduled to begin as early as 19 August 1930. See "Stalingrad, Moskva TsEKAMETALLSOIUZ," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 11. The militsia forgot to deliver Lewis to one of the morning sessions on 23 August, and the proceedings were suspended for a day on 28 August 1930 because of the illness of a member of the court. The proceedings resumed and the court finally issued their verdict late on 29 August 1930. See "Protsess ob izbienii negra tov. Robinsona otlozhen do 22 avgusta," *Pravda*, 21 August 1930, p. 5; "Segodnia Luis b'et negra, zavtra budet lomat' stanki'," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 26 August 1930, p. 4; and "Prigovor eshche ne vynesen," *Trud*, 30 August 1930, p. 1.

Kondrat'ev of the Khar'kov Traktorostroi; Blaich a Czech worker of Sel'mashstroi in Rostov-on-don; Rodzinskaia a Polish emigrant of Elektrozavod in Moscow; and Ferdinand Knut, a German concrete worker of Leningrad.[21] Large photographs of the latter two brigade members were published on the front page of *Trud*, a few days before the start of the trial, in which they appear more as film stars than representatives of the international proletariat. Knut is depicted with a pipe in his mouth and wearing a double-breasted suit and tie while Rodzinskaia, a young woman with short, bobbed blond hair, is featured wearing a patterned jumper and looking coyly at the camera.

The main objective of Knut, Rodzinskaia, and other members of the international workers' brigade was to prove that Lewis and Brown attacked Robinson only because he was black. Lewis initially apologized to the Soviet proletariat, not to Robinson, for committing a racially-motivated assault and insisted that he himself was a "victim" of the U.S. capitalists who had inculcated him with racial hatred. William Chamberlin who claimed to have seen the original copy of the apology argued that Lewis released it in an attempt to be given a more lenient sentence by the workers' court. When Chamberlin supposedly asked one of the leaders of the American colony why one of the lines in it was heavily scribbled out, the latter, whom he described as a middle-aged mechanic, faithful Republican, and proud member of the Methodist church explained, "'That was a

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[21] For Ozerov, see "'Trud' prinial predlozhenie Elektrozavoda," p. 1. For Knut, see "Inostrannye rabochie Leningrada posylaiut obshchestvennogo obvinitelia na Stalingradskii protsess," *Trud*, 17 August 1930, p. 2. For Becker, see "Kak byl izbit tovarishch Robinson," p. 4. By using the term "conscious," trade union authorities meant the Americans in Stalingrad who were sympathetic to Communist ideology if not Party members. See GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 3-4. For Kirillov, see "Zavkom Traktornogo budet dosrochno pereizbran," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 18 August 1930, p. 6. For Rodzinskaia, see "Internatsional'naia rabochaia brigada 'Truda' vchera vyekhala na Stalingradskii protsess," *Trud*, 19 August 1930, p. 1. For Erast and Blaich, see "Inostrannye rabochie Khar'kova i Rostova poslali obshchestvennykh obvinitelei na Stalingradskii protsess," *ibid.*, 20 August 1930, p. 1. For Kondrat'ev and Gavrilov, see "Luis i Braun pytalis' perenesti na sovetskuiu pochvu fashistskie nravy," *ibid.*, 28 August 1930, p. 1.

direct apology to the nigger. *We crossed that out!*"[22] In light of Chamberlin's testimony, it comes as little surprise that when Lewis reached the witness stand the following day he revoked the public apology and denied the racial character of the altercation altogether. Instead, he insisted that it was merely a scuffle between two workers, that Robinson had been the aggressor, and that his drunkenness had made him unaware of what he was doing.[23]

The community prosecutors had a vested interest in refuting Lewis' claims. From a practical perspective, the charge of white chauvinism was a counter-revolutionary offense and carried a harsher penalty than physical assault. Symbolically speaking, such a charge meant placing at the defendants' bench and condemning "the entire capitalist system and social-fascist trade unions" that had deliberately imbued Lewis and Brown, and all white workers with racism.[24] *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors encapsulated this

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[22] Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age*, p. 364. For Lewis' original apology which was published in several Soviet and U.S. papers, see "Zaiavlenie Nuisa korrespondentu 'Truda,'" *Trud*, 21 August 1930, p. 1; "Protsess ob izbienii negra tov. Robinsona," p. 5; "'Nikogda bol'she ne budu storonnikom natsional'noi rozni,'" *Izvestiia*, 22 August 1930, p. 2; "'Nikogda bol'she ne budu storonnikom rozni ras i natsii,'" *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 22 August 1930, p. 6; "Apologizes to Russians," *New York Times*, 22 August 1930, p. 4; and "American Worker," p. 2. The *Daily Worker* reprinted the apology over two weeks later (8 September 1930, p. 3), not acknowledging that Lewis had long retracted it.

[23] While he consistently denied the racial motivation of the altercation during the trial, Lewis changed his story several times regarding whether he had been the aggressor. See GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 17.

[24] For this interpretation, see "V SSSR net mesta rasovoi vrazhdebnosti," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; William Wilson (Patterson), "Why did the American workers in Stalingrad assault the Negro worker?", RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 89, l. 51 (19 August 1930); Ferdinand Knut, "Rasovaia nenavist'," *Trud*, 19 August 1930, p. 1; "Strana sovetov-otechestvo vsekh trudiashchikhsia," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 20 August 1930, p. 6; and "Segodnia v Stalingrade nachinaetsia protsess ob izbienii negra tov. Robinsona," *Trud*, 20 August 1930, p. 1. It should be noted that during the campaign against Lewis and Brown, the press and government officials sometimes used the term national hatred (*natsional'naia nenavist'*) or national enmity (*natsional'naia vrazhda*) to describe what the American assailants exhibited in their altercation with Robinson. However, as indicated from the titles of the articles cited in this footnote and throughout the chapter, they more often invoked the terms racial hatred (*rasovaia nenavist'*) and racial enmity (*rasovaia vrazhda*). Occasionally, they covered their bases by protesting both "national and racial hatred." The exception was the official trial summary which in accordance with the Comintern's 1928 decision classified Robinson as "by nationality a Negro" and only used the terms "national enmity," "national dissension," and "national hatred." The sole instance in this court document when the term

objective in a front-page cartoon, which showed the extremely large shadow of a capitalist lurking behind a man who was designed to be Lewis under interrogation in a makeshift courtroom. The headline identified the shadowy figure as, "The principal defendant who will sooner or later appear before a proletarian court." The caption further elucidated: "The American worker at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory assaulted the Negro-worker. The hand of the worker served American capitalism, which spreads racial enmity to further its own interests."[25]

Before a crowd of one thousand workers, and a larger audience listening to the trial broadcast in the dormitories and barracks, female brigadier Rodzinskaia proclaimed that it was absurd that Lewis "who today calls Russian workers red scum, and tomorrow Negroes black dogs," attacked Robinson independent of any racial prejudice.[26] Knut similarly stressed that chauvinism and racial hatred were clearly "the motives of this crime." Ozerov, who was equally adamant, put it another way: standing at the defendants' bench are "not simply workers, but 'white men' and they did not merely beat a worker, but a Negro." They attacked Robinson because in America "attacking a Negro

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"racial hatred" appeared was in a direct quotation from a protest resolution attributed to Dinamo workers; GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 15-16, 18.

[25] *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 22 August 1930, p. 1. Significantly, the figure of the lurking capitalist (by K. Rotov) is donning a top hat but is not the obese, round-faced, top-hatted capitalist that was standard in Soviet iconography during the civil war and which was used to depict the American bourgeois capitalist in Soviet cartoons during the Scottsboro protest (see chapter four). The capitalist shown behind Lewis in contrast bore what could be considered anti-Semitic features: a long, curved nose and large pointed chin. *Put' MOPR'a* (nos. 23-24, August 1930, p. 13) published a cartoon together with articles concerning the Stalingrad trial, which portrayed a U.S. capitalist (the image mirrored that in *Rabochaia Gazeta*) using racism to divide workers.

[26] *Pravda* and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* set the number in attendance at one thousand, with the entire American colony in attendance, while *Rabochaia Gazeta* claimed it to be near two thousand; "Delo ob izbienii," p. 3; "Nachalsia sud nad L'iuisom i Braunom," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 24 August 1930, p. 4. Chamberlin noted in his diary that he and his wife heard the proceedings over a loudspeaker as they approached the factory; *Russia's Iron Age*, pp. 362-363.

is not considered a crime." In addressing the claim of intoxication, Rodzinskaia emphasized that the two white Americans committed their crime in a state of full consciousness and sardonically asked, "If Lewis and Brown were really in such a drunken state, why did they not beat each other?"[27]

Most of the witnesses questioned on the stand during the evening sessions of 23-24 August 1930 confirmed the "undoubted" racism of the two accused Americans. H. D. Chechel, for example, testified to the racial hostility that Lewis and Brown as well as the larger Stalingrad Traktorostroi American community exhibited towards Robinson. Chechel attributed their animosity to the U.S. government's failure to punish individuals who committed violence against black workers, thereby encouraging their murder, assault, and mockery. Peter Pavlovich Parch, identified as an American worker whom the defense had called as a witness explained that, "feelings of national enmity and hatred towards Negroes which are especially strong in the southern states of the U.S.A. played a principal role here as Lewis is a native of these southern states." Parch further claimed that Lewis' frequent drinking exacerbated his hostility towards black Americans.[28]

In addition to the testimony of witnesses, the two defendants themselves made the prosecutors' job easier by often undermining their own argument that they had become involved in an altercation with a worker who just happened to be black. For example,

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[27] "Vyslat' amerikanskikh fashistov iz predelov SSSR," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 27 August 1930, p. 6; "Luis i Braun pytalis' perenesti na sovetskuiu pochvu fashistskie nravy," p. 1; Ferdinand Knut, "Pered sudom vsia sistema kapitalizma," *Trud*, 29 August 1930, p. 1; "Prikhvostniam fashizma ne mesto v sovetskoi strane! Luis i Braun – agenty amerikanskogo fashizma," *ibid.*, 29 August 1930, p. 1; and "V Ameriku, k organizatoram sudov Lincha!," *ibid.*, 30 August 1930, p. 1.

[28] The questioning of the prosecution's witnesses primarily took place on 23 August while those of the defense on the evening of 24 August 1930; GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 16-19; "Posledovateli lincha na Traktornom zavode," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 26 August 1930, p. 4; "Segodnia Luis b'et negra," p. 4; "Amerikanets Nuis ne tol'ko khuligan, no i fashist," *Trud*, 25 August 1930, p. 1; "Sud nad L'iuisom i Braunom: Amerikantsam na Traktornom 'ne nraviatsia negry,'" *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 25 August 1930, p. 6.

when placed on the witness stand Lewis claimed that he was unaware that participating in conversations with fellow members of the American colony "about the need to remove the Negro from the factory" was wrong and violated Soviet law. And in regard to the actual assault, he explained: "I did not think that I would be brought to trial. In America, incidents with Negroes – this is considered simply street fighting." Brown corroborated Lewis' statement commenting that, "in America, this would be treated as a joke." Furthermore, when asked to elucidate upon the source of white animosity towards black Americans in the United States, as Lewis posited, it was because they were neither "clean" nor educated, while Brown, whom the prosecution repeatedly stressed was a member of the American Federation of Labor, shamelessly stated that "Negroes were slaves, and should remain slaves."[29] There can be little doubt that editors of the all-union press printed these inflammatory comments with great eagerness because they epitomized the explicitly racist thinking of "civilized" America that the new socialist society, as represented in the trial itself, had supposedly obliterated and rendered impermissible among inhabitants of the U.S.S.R.

II.

In 1941 George Padmore, who was living in Moscow in 1930 when Lewis and Brown were placed on trial, recalled that "the men admitted the assault and offered to apologize to the Negro, but the Russian workers were so indignant at white men treating a fellow-worker in that fashion simply because of his race, that they demanded their

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Komsomol'skaia Pravda's reports regarding the testimony of the defense's witnesses were in some ways inconsistent with the trial summary.

[29] "Nachalsia sud nad L'iuisom i Braunom," p. 4; "Sud nad L'iuisom i Braunom,'" p. 6.

immediate expulsion from the Soviet Union."[30] Notwithstanding its inaccuracies, Padmore's reminiscence inadvertently testifies to Soviet authorities' success in framing the campaign against the two white Americans in a discourse of workers' indignation and incessant demands that Robinson's attackers be swiftly expelled. Indignation, in other words, was the only proper, "proletarian" way for Soviet and foreign laborers to have responded publicly to this manifestation of American racism in Stalingrad – an acknowledgment which the accused himself had even made in an attempt to be given a more lenient sentence.[31] "Proletarianness" and the code of conduct associated with the enlightened New Soviet Man and Woman entailed therefore more than just punctuality, a readiness to fulfill or exceed work assignments, maintenance of a clean home, and refraining from spitting on the floor, but also required at least an ostensible disdain for American racism.[32] Articulating indignation at the racially-motivated assault, then, whether it be individually or collectively, through a letter or resolution of protest, became

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[30] Although Padmore had become severely disillusioned with Communism by 1941 (having been expelled from the Comintern in 1934), he continued to cite the Stalingrad trial as evidence that the Soviet Union had eliminated racism. See George Padmore, "The Socialist Attitude to the Invasion of the USSR," *Left* 60 (September 1941): 193-199 (quotation p. 196). For Padmore's expulsion from the Comintern, see James R. Hooker, *Black Revolutionary: George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism* (New York: Praeger, 1967); and Mark Solomon, *The Cry was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), pp. 177-183. Padmore's memory was somewhat faulty since Lewis and Brown never offered to apologize to Robinson.

[31] Lewis stated that "the act, which I committed on July 24, unsurprisingly roused the great indignation of all Soviet workers"; "Zaiavlenie Nuisa," p. 1. See note 22.

[32] For the attributes typically associated with proletarianness and the New Soviet Man, see especially, Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 78-83; Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: celebrations in the time of Stalin* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000), pp.1-5, 11-3, 66-9, 125; David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 45-56; and Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "The Shaping of Soviet Workers' Leisure: Workers' Clubs and Palaces of Culture in the 1930s," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 56 (Fall 1999): 78-92. By the mid-1930s, Stakhanovites were held up as representatives of the New Soviet Man. See Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. pp. 210-233.

a means for a worker to assert his/her proletarianness or membership in the nascent international proletarian community that was portrayed as emerging in the pages of the all-union press.

When *Trud*'s editors first broke the story, they reported that the attack on a black worker at the Traktorostroi had provoked tremendous indignation (*vozmushchenie*) among the laborers there.[33] In the days that followed, as the central press reported, the workers in Moscow factories such as Dinamo and Elektrozavod, as well as members of the city and oblast sections of MOPR, had discussed the manifestation of racial bigotry and also expressed their anger.[34] The protest statements of groups of foreign workers in Kiev, Khar'kov, and Rostov-on-Don appeared in the press, in which they proclaimed that Lewis' "vile" (*gnusnoe*) behavior can only arouse "profound indignation."[35] Indignation was also shown to have affected the young international proletariat throughout the country as participants at an international Pioneers Conference and the workers and employees of the Siberian publishing house and the Siberian youth newspaper, *Molodoi Rabochii*, articulated their outrage at the assault.[36] All-union editors frequently complimented these specific protest statements with general assertions that the

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[33] "My ne dopustim v SSSR nravov burzhuaznoi Ameriki," *Trud*, 9 August 1930, p. 1.

[34] "My obrashchaemsia k amerikanskim rabochim," *ibid.*, 10 August 1930, p. 1; "'Okruzhim negra Robinsona samym druzhestvennym vnimaniem,'" *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 15 August 1930, p. 6. The Moscow MOPR reportedly called on the other divisions to organize emergency meetings to issue similar statements: "Pozor khuliganam s Traktorostroia, izbivshim negra Robinsona, MOPR zaiavliaet reshitel'nyi protest," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 6.

[35] See, for example, "'Protestuem protiv zverinogo natsionalizma,'" *Trud*, 11 August 1930, p. 1; "Amerikanskie rabochie osuzhdaiut izdevatel'stvo nad rabochim-negrom na Traktorostroe," *Izvestiia*, 18 August 1930, p.3; "Rabochie amerikantsy osuzhdaiut nedevatel'stvo nad rabochim-negrom," *ibid.*, 18 August 1930, p. 4; "Stalingradskaia prokuratura zamalchivaet delo amerikantsa Luisa," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 17 August 1930, p. 6; and "Inostrannye rabochie Khar'kova i Rostova," p. 1.

[36] "Nuzhen vsesoiuznyi smotr internatsional'nogo vospitaniia," *Trud*, 28 August 1930, p. 1; "Pionery Ameriki, Anglii, Bel'gii, Ukrainy o Stalingradskom dele," *ibid.*, 20 August 1930, p. 1.

Americans' racist conduct had "understandably" and justifiably provoked indignation throughout the entire union.[37] The only instance in which they questioned the sincerity of the anger that a particular group expressed and by implication their claims to proletarian status was when the notorious American committee of the Stalingrad Traktorostroi finally issued a protest resolution just before Lewis and Brown's trial opened. [38]

As George Padmore's earlier comment indicates, this widespread outpouring of indignation on the part of the toiling masses was paired with what the press made to appear as the equally universal and unanimous appeal that Robinson's two assailants be given the harshest punishment – expulsion from the proletarian brotherhood of the Soviet Union. This demand was presented as coming from over two hundred foreign laborers of Leningrad, workers of Krasnyi Putilovets, Ruhr miners working in the lower Moscow basin, workers of the AMO factory in Moscow, laborers of Sel'mashstroi in Rostov-on-Don, the "conscious" American workers at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi, *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors, and American laborers of the Nizhni-Novgorod automobile factory.[39] During the trial, the press reported that community prosecutors like Ferdinand Knut

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[37] "Delo ob izbienii rabochego-negra," *Izvestiia*, 18 August 1930, p. 2; "Usilit' internatsional'nuiu rabotu," *Put' MOPR'a*, nos. 23-24 (August 1930): 1; "Obshchestvennyi sud nad grazhdaninom Tsiprusom," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 18 August 1930, p. 4. The CC VSRM deemed "justified" the "indignation" of Soviet and "conscious" American workers; GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 15.

[38] "Amerikanskie rabochie dolzhny osudit' postupok Nuisa," *Trud*, 20 August 1930, p. 2. Leaders of the Stalingrad American colony known as the American committee were rumored to have formed an informal branch of the Ku Klux Klan which harassed American workers when they refused to commemorate the Fourth of July. See chapter three and Bill Dunne, "Detroit Racketeers on the Volga," *New Masses* (September 1931): 10-12.

[39] See "Takie ne mogut nazyvat'sia rabochimi" *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4. For the above statements, see "Amovtsy trebuiut vysylki vinovnikov iz predelov SSSR," *Trud*, 13 August 1930, p. 1; "Na Traktornom pobezhdaet solidarnost' proletariata," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 1; "Postavit' izbivshikh negra pod ugrozy boikota," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 15 August 1930, p. 6.; "Stalingradskaia prokuratura," p. 6; Knut, "Rasovaia nenavist'," p. 1; "Protest amerikanskikh rabochikh avtozavoda," *Trud*, 19 August 1930, p. 1; "Inostrannye rabochie Khar'kova i Rostova," p. 1; "Voina Shovinizmy," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 20 August 1930, p. 4. The letter of the Nizhni-Novgorod American workers was reprinted in the *Daily Worker* nearly

voiced this popular appeal by declaring that, "in the name of the Leningrad proletariat and in particular the foreign workers working in Leningrad, I demand the severest punishment, their expulsion from the USSR." As Gavrilov likewise averred, "we together with the Russian proletariat request that the community court rule to punish the criminals severely, to banish them from the borders of the Soviet Union, because they contaminated the territory of the socialist republic."[40]

Why did authorities encourage workers to insist on deportation as the most appropriate, harshest punishment for Lewis and Brown rather than imprisonment? Apart from the practical reason that deportation meant a return to the vast unemployment and hunger of the depression-ridden United States, the paramount symbolic reason was that they sought to convey a strong message to the large number of (non-Communist) American workers who were in the country helping to build socialism that racists belonged in a racist society. In the numerous protest resolutions and statements printed in the all-union newspapers, authorities and workers were thus portrayed repeatedly reminding Lewis and Brown that they were in a country "building socialism" – the tempo of which was made possible only by upholding "the equality of all people."[41] The press specifically presented Stalingrad Traktorostroi laborers and members of the international workers' brigade as emphasizing that by practicing racism – that is, trying to "transfer to

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a month later; "American Workers in Soviet Union Condemn Race Discrimination," *Daily Worker*, 8 September 1930, p. 2.

[40] "Vyslat' amerikanskikh fashistov," p. 6; "Prikhvostniam fashizma ne mesto v sovetskoi strane," p. 1; Ferdinand Knut, "Prigovor proletariata," *Trud*, 31 August 1930, p. 1; and Knut, "Pered sudom vsia sistema kapitalizma," p. 1.

[41] See "Rabochie fabriki 'Moskvoshvei' No. 5 reshitel'no osuzhdaiut amerikanskikh khuliganov," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4. A front page editorial declared Soviet workers "correct to consider the Americans Lewis and Brown's chauvinistic act as a strike directly against our great construction"; "Moskva, 31 avgusta," *Trud*, 31 August 1930, p. 1.

Soviet soil the fascist ways of America" – Lewis and Brown were "fascists" and "counterrevolutionaries" who had threatened to inhibit the construction of socialism.[42] By casually attacking a black worker and thinking they would get away with it, Lewis and Brown revealed that they considered the Soviet commitment to racial equality to be mere propaganda. How else, then, if the image of the Soviet Union as a society free of racism was to be maintained, could the Soviet working community be expected to respond to these racists, but with indignation? And what other verdict short of expulsion could the proletariat of a "raceless" society demand for them?

After six days of testimony from witnesses and various speeches of the defense and prosecution, the court issued its verdict on 29 August 1930 at ten o'clock in the evening. Lewis and Brown were found guilty of white chauvinism, and sentenced to two years imprisonment under paragraph fifty-nine of the Soviet Criminal Code regarding "national chauvinism." Almost immediately thereafter, however, their sentence was commuted to ten years banishment from the Soviet Union since they had been raised under the American capitalist system, which in the court's opinion deliberately inculcates its workers with racial hatred.[43] By acknowledging the role that American capitalists had played in imbuing Lewis and Brown with racism yet still holding the two men

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[42] See "Izbienie negra Robinsona – kontr-revoliutsionnyi vypad," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 15 August 1930, p. 6; "Amerikanets Nuis ne tol'ko khuligan, no i fashist," p. 1; "Vylazka kontr-revoliutsionerov," *Trud*, 29 August 1930, p. 1; "Luis i Braun pytalis' perenesti na sovetskuiu pochvu fashistskie nravy," p. 1; and "V Ameriku, k organizatoram sudov Lincha!," p. 1. *Rabochaia Gazeta* quoted the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court of the RSFSR as explaining that the Soviet criminal code defined counterrevolutionary acts as manifestations of hostility on the grounds of religion, race, or nationality; "V SSSR net mesta rasovoi vrazhdebnosti," p. 4.

[43] "Sud nad L'iuisom i Braunom," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 29 August 1930, p. 6; "Posledovateli lincha v Stalingrade Liuis i Braun dolzhny byt' osuzhdeny," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 30 August 1930, p. 1; "Fashist Luis vysylaetsia iz SSSR," *Trud*, 31 August 1930, p. 1; "Prigovor po delu ob izbienii negra Robinsona," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 31 August 1930, p. 2; "Liuis i Braun vysylaiutsia iz SSSR," p. 7; and "To Deport Americans," p. 10.

accountable for their actions, the workers' court in Stalingrad sent a clear message. Any individual raised in the Soviet Union would be held to a higher standard and given a harsher punishment if they ever dared to raise a hand to a black worker, while even workers who had lived in a capitalist society and were the bourgeoisie's "victims," as Lewis had earlier claimed, would not be given a free pass.

Since the all-union press had portrayed Soviet and foreign workers as calling for the expulsion of the two Americans en masse, the formal court proceedings appear merely as a theatrical fulfillment of their demand. In one sense, this was not unusual. The outcomes of the Soviet show trials of the 1920s and 1930s were often determined beforehand, making their objective proving the "legitimacy, correctness, or validity of the predetermined decisions."[44] Similarly, members of the international workers' brigade did not simply reiterate the appeal of workers that the men be deported. Instead, they concentrated on proving its "legitimacy, correctness, and validity" by demonstrating that Lewis and Brown had acted out of racial hatred. Herein lies the uniqueness of the Stalingrad trial: the court proceedings proved "correct" what was constructed as the predetermined decision of foreign and Soviet laborers rather than that of just communist officials.

III.

Who was Robert Robinson, whom Chamberlin had described only as "the sole Negro employed at the [Stalingrad tractor] works"? Or, more significantly, how did Soviet authorities and workers present him? Robinson was produced as heroic black

[44] See, for example, Robert Argenbright, "Marking NEP's Slippery Path: The Krasnoshchekov Show Trial," *The Russian Review*, 61 (April 2002): 249-275; and J. Arch Getty, "*Samokritika* Rituals in the Stalinist Central Committee, 1933-38," *ibid.*, 58 (January 1999): 49-70.

worker, and to some degree, as oppressed black victim during the near month long campaign to bring his white American attackers to justice. Personal information was necessarily omitted and replaced by constant assertions of Robinson's blackness and innocence. While, on the one hand, this emphasis nearly eliminated Robinson the individual, on the other, it sought to overturn the historical Western, and in this case particularly, American dichotomy that paired blackness with guilt or immorality.[45]

For two days the victim's name remained unknown to the country so that he was identified only as "the Negro comrade who was attacked by a group of backward American workers." When *Trud* and *Rabochaia Gazeta* first identified the "Negro comrade" as Robert Robinson on 11 August 1930, they reported that Stalingrad Traktorostroi workers characterized him "as a highly skilled, conscientious worker" and "great comrade." Readers were also informed that Robinson had defied the order of a group of Americans to leave the cafeteria during dinner.[46] According to *Rabochaia Gazeta* and *Put' MOPR'a*, Robinson specifically told his antagonists that he was not in bourgeois America but in the Soviet Union, so he did not have to listen to them. As Mikhail Danilov emphasized in an editorial, there was something very positive if not exhilarating in all this "kulak violence": "THE NEGRO ROBINSON REFUSED TO SUBMIT TO THE SAVAGE DEMAND OF HIS WHITE COUNTRYMEN."

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[45] For the equation of blackness with the absence of purity and morality, see, for example, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), esp. pp. 447-449, 452-464; and Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. pp. 5-7, 56-60. Erol Lawrence argues that race has its own "autonomous effectivity" which renders every dark-skinned individual "a priori a suspect," in "'Just Plain Common Sense: the "Roots" of Racism,'" in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in '70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), p. 31. Francine Hirsch posits that Soviet anthropologists challenged Western scientific claims that cultural and behavioral characteristics were indelibly linked to racial traits; "Race without the Practice of Racial Politics," pp. 33-36.

Therefore, "the Negro Robinson already understands, what the American Newis [Lewis] does not; that in the country of Soviets there is no and there can be no racial inequality."[47]

On 12 August 1930 *Trud*'s editors printed a sketch of Robinson's profile on their front page in which he was shown wearing glasses and a shirt and tie – clothing typically not associated with the male worker.[48] Robinson signed his name at the bottom of the sketch along with the message written in English, "Best wishes for your success," which must have been addressed to Elektrozavod laborers who had invited him to join their "worker family" in Moscow. In a very short interview, Robinson explicitly thanked them, but insisted that he must remain at the Traktorostroi because if he left, then he would only be giving the "American slaveowners" there what they wanted. Although some American workers and interpreters had begun to treat him with even greater contempt since the attack, Robinson explained, the "Russian workers as usual have remained my friends." He also requested that the Elektrozavod workers maintain correspondence with him.[49]

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[46] "SSSR-otechestvo dlia chernykh, zheltykh i belykh ras," *Trud*, 11 August 1930, p. 1; "Gazeta 'Bor'ba' zamazyvaet fakt antiproletarskoi vykhodki," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4.

[47] Mikhail Danilov, "Nuis i Robinson," *ibid.*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; "V Stalingrade gruppoi amerikanskikh rabochikh izbit negra," *Put' MOPR'a*, nos. 23-24 (August 1930): 13. The factory committee's chairman also informed the CC VSRM that Robinson had told the Americans that they had no right to tell him to leave the factory; GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 1.

[48] For the ideal worker in Soviet iconography, see Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 20-46; and Stephen White, *The Bolshevik Poster* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

[49] "O chem govorit sluchai na Traktornom zavode," *Trud*, 12 August 1930, p. 1; "'Ia ostaius' na Traktornom,'" p. 1; and "Pozornyi fakt na Traktornom," p. 1.

Printed biographical information about Robinson was limited to the brief mention, made in passing that he had worked in Cuba, the West Indies, Brazil and Detroit.[50] Thus, only two points about him were clear from the published statements of editors, authorities, and workers: Robinson was black and he was innocent. Variations of the phrases, "only because he is black, not white" or "only because he is a Negro" became standard. From the campaign's outset, *Trud*'s editors stressed that the "Negro-worker" was attacked "ONLY BECAUSE, he is – a Negro."[51] *Rabochaia Gazeta* too reported that the white American "beat up the Negro Robinson only for this, that he is BLACK." *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* explained that, "a group of American workers beat the Negro-worker Robert Robinson, only for this, that he is black and a Negro." As deputy chairman of the Supreme Court of the RSFSR, Nakhimson, put it, the two "reactionary" Americans thought they were in a type of "capitalist paradise where they could raise a hand to a Negro worker, only because, he is a Negro." Foreign workers of Elektrozavod followed the example of editors and authorities by declaring that the fact that Robinson was assaulted "only because he is a Negro, not white" was humiliating for the entire proletariat.[52] A group of over twenty American specialists at the First State Clock

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[50] Soviet editors clearly missed a prime opportunity to bolster his image as the ideal international black worker by elaborating on the Marxist labor activity in these regions during this era, thereby disclosing their own biases. See, for example, Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998). Despite his exposure to Marxism most of his life, Robinson insists that his Christian beliefs placed him at odds with it and claims his decision to work in the U.S.S.R. was motivated by the greater opportunities and higher salary it afforded him. See Robinson, *Black on Red*, pp. 95-111.

[51] "My ne dopustim v SSSR," p. 1; "Amerikantsy ne byvali na rabochikh sobraniiakh," *Trud*, 13 August 1930, p. 1. See also, "O chem govorit sluchai," p. 1; and "Pionery Ameriki, Anglii, Bel'gii, Ukrainy, " p. 1.

[52] Danilov, "Nuis i Robinson," p. 4; "Obshchestvennyi sud nad grazhdaninom Tsiprusom," p. 4; "V SSSR net mesta rasovoi vrazhdebnosti," p. 4; "My vsetselo na storone tov. Robinsona," p. 1.

Factory in Moscow similarly denounced Lewis and Brown for attacking Robinson "only because he is black."[53]

Robinson emerged from all these articles, letters, and resolutions of protest as a heroic black worker who stood up to the American racists by asserting his rights as a black worker in the fatherland of all workers. He, in other words, unlike Lewis and Brown, did not treat as mere propaganda Soviet claims that the U.S.S.R. was intolerant of racial animosity. After the assault, Robinson declared that he would remain at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi because he refused to acquiesce to the designs of the American racists. Workers wrote Robinson letters of support, co-workers attested to his skill and diligence, while Robinson himself testified to the friendliness and by implication enlightened thinking of the Russian laborers with whom he worked. Very strategically, the Robinson whom authorities constructed was easy to support if not like.[54]

Rather deliberately, readers were never provided with the complete description of the altercation between Robinson and the two American workers, as narrated at the beginning of this chapter. This means that they were unaware that Robinson fought back not only verbally but also physically. Although the Stalingrad procurator repeatedly emphasized and witnesses for the defense even confirmed that Robinson completely acted out of self-defense, editors of the all-union papers or higher-ranking authorities above them had obviously deemed this information inappropriate for the construction of the heroic black worker. Undoubtedly, information that Robinson physically retaliated

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[53] "V redaktsiiu zhurnala 'Metallist,'" GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, ll. 84-85. In 1931, the *Workers News* reported that most of these men had left the factory upon the expiration of their contracts; "American Specialists Leave First State Watch Factory," *Workers News*, 26 July 1931, p. 2.

[54] "Posledovateli lincha na Traktornom zavode," p. 4; "Prikhvostniam fashizma ne mesto v sovetskoi strane," p. 1. *Izvestiia* described Robinson as an "extremely well-qualified" worker in "Pokazatel'nyi sud nad 'tsivilizovannymi' amerikantsami," *Izvestiia*, 18 August 1930, p. 3.

against his attackers would have rendered more problematic the simultaneous efforts to produce him as a victim, a victim of racial injustice (representing the racially oppressed of the world) who was viciously assaulted by two American fascists and who needed Soviet workers to defend him. A member of the international workers' brigade captured this objective the best when he emphasized in his closing remarks that the evidence presented during the trial confirmed that Robinson was "an honest, exemplary worker" whom "we must defend from racial prejudice." In a sense, then, Soviet officials perpetuated the stereotype of black males as defenseless "Sambos" in need of white protection for their survival. The caretakers of Robinson's attack, in other words, reinforced the racist ideology they ostensibly sought to destroy, thereby illuminating their own lack of understanding of the race question.

Yet another glaring omission in the creation of Robinson as heroic black worker was any mention of the specific type of work in which he engaged. Although this can be guessed at from considering his place of employment, the Stalingrad Traktorostroi, it was still never clear exactly what his occupational specialty was there (keeping in mind that the all-union press never reported that his last employer was the Ford Motor Company). This particular omission supports the argument that what was most important about Robinson was that he was black and innocent. In addition to his work specialization, any other personal information about Robinson, such as his age, marital status, family life, or educational level would have made it harder for him to stand in for and symbolize all black workers.

Such an erasure of Robinson the individual also facilitated the efforts of the all-union press to transform the confrontation between he and the two white Americans into

an "event" that the working community and Soviet officials could organize meetings around, discuss, and condemn. In several articles concerning the attack, Robinson's name was not even mentioned but was replaced by phrases like "the Stalingrad incident," "the incident in Stalingrad," and "the Stalingrad affair." Therefore, although authorities brought his white American assailants to justice, because their major concern was with proving that the Soviet Union was a country where racism was not tolerated, they rendered Robinson the person irrelevant to their story.[55]

In the years following the Stalingrad trial, Soviet and African-American newspapers and journals perpetuated Robert Robinson's image as the ideal black worker by printing articles attesting to his continued labor diligence and equal status in Soviet society. George Padmore, as editor of the *Negro Worker* and leader of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) emphasized in two letters to Robinson in April 1932 just how important his image was to black workers around the world. In light of his status as beneficiary of Soviet antiracism, Padmore requested that he write an article for the journal about his experiences in the U.S.S.R.. Padmore implored Robinson to realize that black manual and intellectual laborers especially in Africa and the West Indies wanted to hear from him, since he constituted "most convincing proof of the fact that any honest worker, whatever his nationality, race, etc. is welcome in the Soviet Union to participate in the great task of carrying out the Five-Year Plan."[56] Padmore's letters suggest that the image of Robinson as the ideal black worker, which Soviet authorities created in order to perpetuate the image of the Soviet Union as a

[55] Robinson claims in his autobiography that he was uncomfortable about being transformed into a hero as a result of the attack but complied because he recognized its propaganda for Soviet leaders and wanted to avoid deportation to the depression-ridden U.S.; *Black on Red*, pp. 69-73.

superior, "raceless" society was in some ways of equal importance to black Communists and non-Communists.

In August 1931, the *Workers News*, a recently established English-language Soviet newspaper, reported that this "honest worker" was named secretary of the Workers Correspondents Bureau, which the American Cultural-Technical Society had organized at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory.[57] In a letter to the paper which Robinson and the five other Americans who comprised the committee signed, they explained that their objectives were first, to "make the work of the Americans in the Stalingrad plant one of the brightest spots in the success of the third, decisive year of the Five-Year Plan," and second, to develop communication with other English-speaking laborers working in the Soviet Union as well as with workers in the United States and England.[58] In September 1931, the *Liberator*, the official organ of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR) furthered the image of Soviet racial equality by publishing a story informing readers that Robinson was vacationing in Paris where he had "the highest praise for the treatment of Negro workers by the Soviet workers and officials."[59]

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[56] RGASPI, f. 534, op. 3, d. 755, l. 5 (2 April 1932); and l. 27.

[57] For the establishment of the American Cultural-Technical Society and the *Workers News*, both of which were indirect products of the assault on Robinson, see chapter three.

[58] "Organize Worker Correspondents," *Workers News*, 25 August 1931, p. 5. With Robinson as its secretary, the bureau's chairman was H.M. Halsey, and the four members were Alex Sherrit, James Glass, L. Robbins, and Victor Meyer. The U.S. government identified "Alex Sherrit" and "Leverne Halsey" among those Stalingrad Americans (which also included E. Hoffman, Raskin, Frank Honey, J. L. Martens, R. Jackson, Sarkins, Kominsky, Monstrosky, David Neechauk, and William Shearer) "working in the interests of the Soviet Government" which meant that they participated in local elections. See *Records of the Department of State*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions (Reel 37). This information was fairly accurate. The *Industrial Spark*, the Traktorostroi factory newspaper, reported that Raskin and Sherrit had been voted delegates to the city soviet, with Sarkins as a substitute, while Kouzminskaya, Holsey, Honey, and Jakson had been elected delegates to the District Soviet with Monastyrsky and Martins as substitutes; "Most Class Conscious Workers Were Elected," *Workers News*, 9 February 1931, p. 2.

[59] "American Negro Praises Soviets," *Liberator*, 19 September 1931, p. 3.

In March 1932, Robinson's construction as the ideal black worker continued "as the Stalingrad Negro specialist" issued an appeal in the *Workers News* to the workers of the world encouraging them to join the Soviet protest to gain the liberation of the nine young black American workers in Scottsboro, Alabama. That same month, Robinson also wrote an article for the paper in which he discussed the "Wonderful Achievements at Stalingrad." Although he identified sections of the factory that needed improvement and emphasized the importance of recreation to increased production, Robinson insisted that, "the thousands of raw recruits from the farms have done well in mastering technique, and learning the highly developed art of tool making." He further posited that, "the tremendous plan to transform an agrarian country into an industrial agrarian one is already bearing fruit."[60] Then, in November, as the *Liberator* reported, Robinson was honored as a hero of labor for contributing over twenty inventions as a worker at the First State Ball-Bearing Plant in Moscow where he had been transferred. The paper emphasized that for the commemoration of the October Revolution's fifteenth anniversary, a portrait of the black American laborer hung in the Hall of Columns in the Palace of Trade Unions among images of the other heroes of labor – "those workers who have made outstanding contributions to the building of a new society of the Soviet Union, without classes and without race differences."[61]

The following year, the editors of the other Soviet English-language newspaper, the *Moscow Daily News* and John Becker, chairman of the foreign rationalization brigade

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[60] "Save the Scottsboro Negro Boys: Appeal of Stalingrad Negro Specialist," *Workers News*, 12 March 1932, p. 3; R. Robinson, "Wonderful Achievements at Stalingrad," *ibid.*, 26 March 1932, p. 3. With the Scottsboro appeal, the paper printed a small head shot photograph of Robinson.

[61] "Honor American Negro in Moscow as Hero of Labor," *Liberator*, 19 November 1932, p. 2.

contributed to Robinson's "super black worker" identity by praising him in a series of stories as one of the few foreign laborers at the Moscow plant who effectively submitted and then pushed through to realization his suggestions and inventions. The paper explained that the former employee of the Stalingrad Tractor Factory was one of three workers at a meeting of foreign workers who criticized and offered suggestions to improve the inefficiency and disorganization of the Ball Bearing Plant, especially in the gauge department. Robinson, who in these newspaper reports appeared highly active and vocal at his new factory home in Moscow claimed that, "in all, I've turned in 23 suggestions during the time I've been working at this plant."[62]

In December 1934, Robinson's construction as the ideal black worker that had begun four years earlier in August 1930 came to completion when the workers at the State Ball-Bearing Plant elected him deputy to the Moscow city soviet. Sergei Zhuravlev argues that Robinson's election as well as that of several German workers during the early 1930s, was Soviet leaders way of demonstrating to the world that the U.S.S.R. had put into practice proletarian internationalism and had become "'the homeland of the workers of all lands.'"[63] Thus, yet again, Robinson as a black American worker played a

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[62] John Becker and the unnamed newspaper representative had conducted a two-day investigation into the problem of Soviet officials ignoring or "losing" foreign workers' suggestions at the First State Ball-Bearing Plant. The two investigators concluded that workers had to periodically check-up on the idea they had proposed, which they noted Robinson had consistently done. The Moscow Party Committee, the Moscow City and Province Councils of Trade Unions, and the German newspaper *Deutsche Zentral Zeitung* supported the investigation. See "Will Report at Ball-Bearing Plant Meet on BRIZ Check-up," *Moscow Daily News*, 9 June 1933, p. 1; "Shows How Foreign Workers Can Get Rationalizations Effected," *ibid.*, 16 June 1933, p. 4; and "Ball- Bearing Plant Foreign Engineers Discuss Troubles," *ibid.*, 6 March 1933.

[63] Zhuravlev, *"Malen'kie liudi,"* esp. pp. 256-260 (quotation p. 256). Zhuravlev argues that during his interviews with members of the U.S. Embassy, Robinson emphasized that he was elected deputy because he was a hard worker and always "tried to do his work as best as he could." Due to Robinson's anxieties surrounding the American government's response to his election, which he discusses in his autobiography, he probably played up his image as the diligent black laborer in order to distance himself from association with the Communist Party. Whether or not the U.S. State Department believed Robinson, he was never a member of the Party but considered himself a devout Christian at odds with Communism's atheistic

role, though arguably less dramatic than in August 1930, in defining the country as the fatherland of all workers, as the first society to have become "raceless." The *Chicago Defender* published a photograph of Robinson standing with some of the Russian co-workers who had elected him, emphasizing Stalin's status as a member of the same city body. As the paper further noted, Robinson's impeccable work ethic, which had allowed him to formulate fifty rationalization proposals and create several "delicate practice instruments," was the reason for his election.[64]

In a lengthy profile of the new Moscow city deputy that appeared in *Vecherniaia Moskva*, Evgeni Mar introduced him by explaining that for the second time in his life the "name of this modest individual" has reached the pages of "our newspapers." Describing him as a talented instrumentalist, Mar juxtaposed the situation in the United States where no one wanted to give him skilled work simply because he was black, against that in the instrumental section of the First State Ball-Bearing Plant where "there was no more diligent and knowledgeable worker than Robinson." According to Mar, Robinson had not only submitted nearly fifty valuable rationalization proposals, but had also taught ten individuals his skill, three of whom he identified by name as having already become qualified enough to teach others. The paper's editors accentuated this point by publishing a photograph, which showed Robinson closely instructing a Russian worker. As Mar claimed in the article's conclusion, due to the respect that a large circle of friends and

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teachings; *Black on Red*, pp. 95-111. The photograph of Robinson and his Russian co-workers that appeared in the *Chicago Defender* was also published in the *Negro Worker* (February-March 1935): 9. The journal had published a short blurb announcing Robinson's election and the attack in Stalingrad in the previous issue; "Negro Elected to Soviets," 5 *ibid.*, (January 1935): 31.

[64] "Soviet Union Elects Deputies," *Chicago Defender*, 26 January 1935, p. 11; "US Youth is Soviet Leader," *ibid.*, 15 December 1934, p. 1. The *Afro-American* also mentioned Robinson's position in "Races Mingle in Russian Palace" (6 June 1936, p. 8).

pupils had for his intellect and skill, "Robinson has learned to speak Russian very well. He reads our newspapers and has begun to study the works of Lenin and Stalin."[65]

Although Soviet citizens were presented with more information about Robinson's occupational specialty and skill as a worker in one article regarding his election to the city soviet than in the multitude of stories regarding his assault in August 1930, the personage constructed was still rather hollow. The honest, hard-working black laborer of four years earlier had merely matured into a respected black proletarian who had become an instructor of fellow workers, a speaker of the Russian language and a reader of Lenin and Stalin. The articles regarding Robinson that Soviet as well as non-Communist publications printed after the Stalingrad trial illuminate further the extent to which his image as the ideal black worker was intertwined with the Soviet Union's image as the fatherland of all workers. As long as Robinson continued to thrive and prosper in the U.S.S.R., so did the country's identity as a refuge from racial discrimination and prejudice.

IV.

In glaring contrast to the paragon of "proletarianness" that was Robert Robinson, stood his two white American assailants, Lemuel Lewis and William Brown. Since Lewis was considered the main perpetrator in the assault on Robinson, his "anti-proletarian" activities, which paled in comparison to those Brown may have committed,

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[65] "Mandat deputata Robinsona," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 14 December 1934, p. 2. A large photograph of Robinson dressed in a suit and tie in which he appears to be listening intently to the proceedings of the Third Congress of Soviets of the Moscow Oblast appeared in *Trud* on 14 January 1935 (p. 2). The photograph in which the heroic black worker is strategically seated next to a young female delegate accompanies, for no explicit reason other than to promote the image of Soviet racial equality, V. V. Kuibyshev's closing remarks to the Congress.

were placed under greater scrutiny in the newspapers and during the court proceedings. Notwithstanding his racism, Lewis had a long track record of "hooliganistic" if not criminal activity, which the prosecutors made a point of establishing at the trial with the help of some witnesses' testimony. For example, Aleksandr Petrovich Mal'tsev, who worked in the cafeteria, claimed that Lewis frequently called Russian workers "red scum"; that when he was intoxicated Lewis and two of his "hooligan" friends frequently harassed him; and that on one occasion Lewis punched him when trying to break up a fight which the defender had provoked with another worker. According to prosecutors, as a result of Lewis' frequent provocation of fist-fights, name-calling and drunkenness on the grounds of the Traktorostroi he had become notorious among the local militsia. Yet even before Lewis had reached the factory, he had become inebriated and started a fight on the steamship that conveyed him and the other American laborers there.[66]

In the days preceding the trial, Lewis did nothing to improve his conduct but was instead arrested on 15 August 1930 for sexually assaulting a young Russian komsomolite who worked as a cleaning woman at the Traktorostroi. *Trud*'s editors stressed that by not having taken Lewis into custody for attacking Robinson, Stalingrad officials had allowed him to "commit a second, vile crime in which he raped a female cleaning woman at the factory." The sex crime, however, did not come under consideration of the workers' court because as a meeting of Stalingrad representatives and the CC VSRM emphasized it lacked political significance and the racially-motivated attack alone was sufficient reason to deport Lewis.[67] While the intentions of the press and especially community

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[66] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 15-16.

[67] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 6. See also, "19 avgusta – sud nad amerikanskimi rabochimi," p. 5; "Stalingradskaia prokuratura zamalchivaet delo amerikantsa Luisa," p. 6; and "Kak byl izbit tovarishch

prosecutors in stressing Lewis' lengthy crime sheet was to fully demonstrate the extent of his despicable, antiproletarian character, at the same time, this emphasis also fostered the impression that his reckless behavior had rendered his assault on Robinson inevitable.

Much like Robinson, personal information about the two defendants such as their age, educational level and marital status were inconsequential and therefore not disclosed in the press. More basic than this, *Trud* consistently misspelled Lewis' name as "Newis" and did not even identify Brown as a second assailant until late in the trial. This fundamental inaccuracy on the part of *Trud*'s editors who provided the most in-depth and extensive coverage of the campaign against Lewis and Brown is especially puzzling when considering that *Rabochaia Gazeta* and *Pravda* had named the two attackers correctly as "Lewis and Brown" by 15 August and 17 August 1930, respectively. Obviously what was most important about these two men was that they could stand in for all white Americans who dismissed the Soviet pursuit of racial equality as propaganda.[68] More specifically, Lewis was perhaps standing in for all southern white Americans because similar to the court testimony of Peter Parch which was mentioned earlier, Soviet publications consistently emphasized that Lewis was originally from "the southern portion of the United States where racial hatred is especially strong."[69] In light of their representative function, it is only from the court summary that we gain some idea of their

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Robinson," p. 4. The *Amsterdam News* reported inaccurately that Lewis was the "member of the Communist Youth League" when it was actually his victim. See, "Americans to Be Tried in Russia; Evicted Worker," *Amsterdam News*, 20 August 1930, p. 1. For Soviet leaders' negligence of sexual crimes, see chapter four.

[68] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 18; "Liuis i Braun vysylaiutsia iz SSSR," p. 7.

[69] See, for example, "Gazeta 'Bor'ba' zamazyvaet fakt antiproletarskoi vykhodki," p. 4; "SSSR-otechestvo dlia chernykh, zheltykh i belykh ras," p. 1; and "Prisoediniaius' k protestu rabochikh SSSR (pis'mo amerikanskogo rabochego)," *Put' MOPR'a*, nos. 23-24 (August 1930): 13.

identities outside of being white American racists. Both men, for example, were husbands and fathers: Lewis had one child and Brown had two in Toledo, Ohio. These former employees of the Detroit Ford Motor company were listed as having average educations and Brown was the older of the two at thirty-seven years old, eight years Lewis' senior. This revelation is somewhat surprising because one might have expected Lewis' sidekick to have been at least the same age if not younger, and more impressionable.

Not surprisingly, in contrast to Robinson, the names of Lewis and Brown largely disappeared from the pages of the U.S. and Soviet newspapers once the trial ended. The only exception was that several weeks after he had been expelled, Lemuel Lewis resurfaced in an article in the *Chicago Tribune* making accusations from Riga, Latvia that the Americans at the Stalingrad Tractor factory were starving, that their lives were endangered by a host of "Asiatic fevers," and that their mail testifying to such conditions was severely censored. A member of the American colony in Stalingrad, Frank S. Honey, responded to such accusations in a letter to the *Moscow News* in which he stressed that they were not starving, that their bodies had taken some time to adjust to the change in climatic conditions, that they were all doing much better, and were not being kept there against their will. Honey pointed out that if the conditions were so terrible in Stalingrad, then why did Lewis "at the Trial come forward with the defense that he was drunk (which he was quite often), and did not know what he was doing at the time, and after his sentence often sat up nights trying to think up another appeal to the Russian

workers to give him another chance to stay in the Soviet Union. Was he afraid to be 'freed' from Soviet imprisonment?"[70]

Unlike Lewis, it is possible that Brown, who was always very much depicted as the secondary character throughout the entire campaign, may have quietly stayed in the Soviet Union until the expiration of his work contract. According to *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, on 29 August 1930, the final day of the proceedings, Brown delivered a lengthy statement in which he denounced Lewis' conduct, emphasized his desire to continue working in the U.S.S.R., and acknowledged his own guilt in the assault. He specifically requested that the court give him the opportunity to remain at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory and join the trade union. In spite of his last minute apology, the workers' court ruled to deport Brown with Lewis, to which the former supposedly responded by refusing the assistance of the notorious American committee in order to file a motion in the Court of Appeals himself.[71] Arguably, if Brown did end up staying in the country on some type of probation status, then the workers' court in Stalingrad may have symbolically still succeeded in banishing from the Soviet Union Brown, the openly flagrant racist together with the unrepentant Lewis. Nevertheless, the uncertainty of Brown's status after the trial was probably deliberate. It was in the best interest of the country's antiracist image for the perception to remain that the court's ruling had been upheld to expel both of Robinson's white American assailants.

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[70] See Donald Day, "450 Americans Reported Held Captive By Reds," *Chicago Tribune*, 21 September 1930, p. A7; and Frank Honey, "Are the Americans Held Slaves by the Soviet Government," *Moscow News*, 16 November 1930, p. 7. As indicated in note 58, the U.S. government identified Frank Honey as one of the politically active members of the American Stalingrad community. The *Liberator* reported that the Soviet government denied Lewis' accusations and claimed that "M. Vaksoff (Vaksov)" who often visited Stalingrad testified that Lewis was the only one who wanted out of his contract (which is contradicted by his behavior at the trial, Honey's testimony, and Soviet records) and that he was constantly fighting with Russians and Americans. See "Detroit Chauvinist Worker Charge Denied by Soviet, Records Show Laborers Well Treated," *Liberator*, 11 October 1930, p. 2. For Vaksov, see note 13.

CONCLUSION

What is the significance of Stalingrad to this narrative? Although Moscow was the primary stage from which Communist leaders projected the image of the country as a brotherhood of peoples, the fact that the racially-motivated assault occurred at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi was perhaps rather fortuitous for them. [72] Placing American racism on trial at one of the country's giants of socialist industry enabled authorities to foster the impression that these massive industrial complexes were not only producing the technological products which would facilitate the arrival of a new socialist society, but also the enlightened individuals who would populate it. [73] The central press provided further confirmation of this success by portraying the workers of another Soviet industrial giant, the Moscow Elektrozavod, to be at the forefront of the efforts among foreign and Soviet workers to bring the two American racists to account for the attack. Furthermore, Stalingrad could stand in for all provincial Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic towns and reinforce Soviet leaders' claim that racism and national inequality had been transcended throughout the entire country, not just in the capital of internationalism.

What William Chamberlin witnessed in Stalingrad over eighty years ago was not merely a trial of two American men, "Mr. Lewis' and "Mr. Brown." It represented, moreover, the culmination of a state-orchestrated campaign against American racism

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[71] "Posledovateli lincha osuzhdeny," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 31 August 1930, p. 1.

[72] For a discussion of the ways in which representatives of the non-Russian nationalities were displayed in Moscow to demonstrate the country's ethnic heterogeneity, see Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Yuri Slezkine, "USSR as a Communal Apartment or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review*, 53 (Summer 1994): 414-452 (esp. 430-452). For Zhuravlev's argument about the election of German and American workers (including Robinson) to the Moscow city soviet for similar purposes, see note 63.

which laid the foundations for the even more far-reaching protest against United States racial injustice that the propaganda organization MOPR launched eight months later – the movement to liberate the nine young black American men in Scottsboro, Alabama (see chapter four). These two public indictments of American racism strongly suggest that throughout the First Five-Year Plan leaders in Moscow sought to ideally define socialism not only in terms of the absence of capitalism's chaotic markets and "selfish individualism" but also its racial hatred.[74]

Perhaps most striking about the Stalingrad trial was trade union authorities' full-scale mobilization of the central newspapers to depict the working masses as actively involved in bringing Robinson's two white American assailants to proletarian justice. Building on the arguments of Hirsch and Weiner cited in the introduction, this chapter further helps to illuminate how during an era when biological racism was paramount in European social thought and American race relations, Soviet leaders sought to claim a monopoly on civilization and enlightenment in what was then a unique way: they cast themselves and their citizens as staunch opponents of racial discrimination. While the slippage between the image of Soviet racial equality and reality was considerable, and the widespread participation of workers in the trial was manufactured "from above," this chapter does not discount the possibility that some Soviet and foreign workers, if only a few, may have actually been committed to the ideal of constructing a new society where conduct like that which Lewis and Brown committed was absent. [75]

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[73] Stephen Kotkin emphasizes that authorities sought to populate Magnitogorsk, which they conceived of as the embodiment of the new socialist city "with people who lived and thought in new ways"; *Magnetic Mountain*, pp. 72-105 (quotation p. 73).

[74] For a discussion of socialism as "the antidote to capitalism" or as "a kind of antiworld," see *ibid.*, esp. pp. 149-155.

All-union editors strategically portrayed foreign laborers as especially vocal in denouncing the racism against Robinson by formulating numerous protest resolutions and dominating the ranks of the international workers' brigade. Clearly, their objective was to distance the foreign workers who had been recruited into the country to help build socialism from any stigma or suspicion that Lewis and Brown's racist conduct may have brought on them as a whole. Their role as the proletarian "big brother" to Soviet workers with whom they were expected to share their technical knowledge could therefore remain in tact, if they were shown to be just as outraged as the Soviet toiling masses at white American men raising a hand to a black worker.[76]

During a period in Soviet history when the privileged category of "worker" was being reconfigured to include women, students, and peasant in-migrants from the countryside, the court proceedings in Stalingrad symbolically extended the boundaries to embrace a black migrant laborer from Detroit, and all other black laborers.[77] This

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[75] Historians have demonstrated that Soviet citizens generally derived a tremendous sense of purpose from the knowledge that they were participating in the construction of a new society, especially during the First Five-Year Plan. See, for example, Golfo Alexopoulos, "Victim Talk: Defense Testimony and Denunciation under Stalin," in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, eds. David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 204-220; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 67-75, 132-138; Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931-1939)," *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, 44 (1996): 344-373; Siegelbaum and Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life*, esp. pp. 315-316, 408-412; and Kenneth M. Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).

[76] On tensions between Soviet and foreign workers during the First Five-Year Plan as a result of the latter's role as "big brother" or authority of technical knowledge, see especially, Schultz, "The American Factor in Soviet Industrialization," pp. 146-148; and Zhuravlev, *"Malen'kie liudi,"* pp. 236-240, 272-274 (quotation p. 273).

[77] See Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia*, esp. pp. 136-137, 175, 187, 200-205, 244-246, 276. Unlike Straus, Hoffmann argues that these individuals were not generally willing to surrender their old identities to assume the identity of "worker" that Soviet authorities wanted them to assume; Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis*, esp. pp. 3, 106, 220, 23, 215. See also Jeffrey J. Rossman, "The Teikovo Workers' Strike of April 1932: Class, Gender, and Identity Politics in Stalin's Russia," *Russian Review* 56, no. 1 (January 1997): 44-69.

reflected the contemporary shift in Comintern policy which as noted in the study's introduction, starting with the declaration of black Americans as a nation at the Sixth Congress in 1928, elevated black American workers' importance in the international proletarian movement and status in the revolutionary family – a status that will be explored at greater length in chapter two. Two white Americans were at the same time stripped of the label "workers" and sentenced to expulsion from the fatherland of workers because they had assumed that their whiteness would automatically exonerate them for attacking a black laborer, while Robinson's blackness would automatically indict him. [78] Soviet leaders, in other words, strategically used Lewis and Brown's gross underestimation of their commitment to maintaining the façade of Soviet racelessness in order to strengthen it.

[78] See, for example, "Takie ne mogut nazyvat'sia rabochimi," p. 4; "Inostrannye rabochie Khar'kova i Rostova," p. 1.

Chapter 2

Enlightenment Through the Inclusion of Blackness: Images of Soviet Racial Equality, Depictions of American Racial Violence, and the Struggle Against Racism in the Trade Unions

During her address before the Fifth Congress of the Profintern or Red International of Trade Unions (RILU) [*Krasnyi internatsional profsoiuzov*] that took place in Moscow from 15-30 August 1930, Elena D. Stasova, General Secretary of MOPR briefly acknowledged that the trial of the two white American workers, Lemuel Lewis and William Brown, was then taking place in Stalingrad. She remarked,

> naturally, the white Americans here did not dare to attempt to lynch the Negro, but we hear practically every day cases of lynching in the United States. The trade unions pay insufficient attention to this remnant of medieval times. Comrades, we march hand in hand with the trade unions when they fight for the equality of white and Negro workers, whether it be in America or South Africa.[1]

Stasova's mention of lynching in the same sentence with the two white Americans' assault on a black worker at the Traktorostroi is provocative. It alludes to the antiracist discourse that became prominent in the Soviet Union during August 1930 as a result of both this assault as well as the convening of the Fifth Profintern Congress at which she was speaking.

The first two sections of this chapter closely examine the explicit statements that Soviet and black American trade union officials, leaders of non-trade union organizations like Stasova, workers, and all-union editors articulated (or were portrayed as articulating) in which they asserted, as fact, the prevalence of racial hatred in the United States and/or the racial harmony of the Soviet Union. All-union editors visualized these references to

[1] "The Red Trade Unions and IRA," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 197, ll. 64-70 (quotation l. 69). Elena Dmitrievna Stasova (1873-1966) whose pseudonyms were "Sturm" and "Friedman" had been active in the Zhenotdel.

racial discord and racial accord by publishing them in conjunction with graphic U.S. lynching photographs and pencil sketches or pictures of black American delegates to the Profintern Congress in Moscow. These written and visual images, together with the actual campaign against and trial of Lewis and Brown (the focus of chapter one) which they accompanied, fostered the development of an antiracist discourse that defined the Soviet Union in terms of its absence of American racial violence and inclusion of black Americans. The photographs, speeches and articles that appeared frequently in the pages of the all-union press reinforced the Stalingrad trial's juxtaposition of the enlightened, progressive attitude of Soviet citizens towards race and peoples of color against the "medieval" one of white Americans. As William Patterson observed in a telegram which he sent from Moscow to the *Afro-American* editors in Baltimore, Maryland on 17 August 1930, "the spirit [of] international solidarity" that the Soviet people have demonstrated in response to the assault stands "in direct contrast to the bourgeois America anti-Negro spirit in that country adding fuel to [the] new wave of lynching sweeping it."[2]

The image of the United States as a bastion of "barbaric" racial hatred, which this antiracist discourse deliberately fostered, was furthered significantly by another trial of American racism at a Moscow needle factory on 17 August 1930. The defendant, V.M. Tsiprus, who had lived in the United States for over three decades before returning to his Russian homeland, reportedly gained the disdain of Soviet workers not because he physically attacked a black man but because he expressed the racist opinion that Lewis and Brown should have lynched Robinson. As the third section of this chapter shows, Tsiprus gave trade union leaders another opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to

[2] For the telegram, which William Patterson signed with his pseudonym "William Wilson," see RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2225, l. 112.

maintaining the façade of antiracism in order to signify the creation of a new socialist society. Bearing striking similarities to the comrades-disciplinary courts of the early Soviet era in terms of its organization, they publicly tried him before a "proletarian court" for speaking, rather than acting as had Lewis and Brown, directly in violation of it.

Section four of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the role that the Fifth Profintern Congress played in the development of this antiracist discourse. Stasova's remarks to the Congress regarding the need for the trade unions to struggle against U.S. lynching and for black equality, suggests that it was rather influential. RILU leaders had in fact recently made the fight against racism and the mobilization of black workers to the revolutionary trade union movement two of the organization's highest priorities. This meant that for the first time in the Profintern's ten-year history, which the Congress was commemorating, many of the delegates were black Americans who became extremely active in the antiracist dialogue that took place both during the proceedings as well as outside them at factory meetings and in the Tsiprus trial.[3] Many delegates claimed that they were so impressed by the way in which Soviet trade union leaders and workers handled the manifestation of white chauvinism in Stalingrad that they presented it as an antiracist model for workers and trade union officials around the world to emulate for punishing white chauvinists. The coincidence of this monumental Congress with the exposure of news of the assault on Robinson undoubtedly had encouraged Soviet trade union authorities to respond in a particularly decisive or exemplary fashion since they constituted the "big brothers" in the RILU.

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[3] The Profintern's General Secretary, A. Lozovsky (1878-1952) whose real name was Solomon Abramovich Dridzo, posited in a fifty-page essay that the Profintern's greatest achievement in the past decade was its transformation from a European Propaganda Committee into a worldwide organization; "Desiat' let Profinterna (21/IV-30 g.)," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 7, ll. 13-64. Excerpts from this essay were

Testifying to Profintern delegates' success in insisting that the Soviet campaign against Lewis and Brown be used as a model of antiracism, this chapter concludes by briefly visiting the court proceedings against August Yokinen, a Finnish immigrant worker whom U.S. Communist leaders tried for white chauvinism in Harlem, just five months after the Profintern Congress closed and the workers' court in Stalingrad ruled to deport the two white American assailants. It seems more than coincidental that, Soviet leaders' most public indictment of American racism in late August 1930 was followed by, that, in near identical form, of U.S. Communist authorities on 1 March 1931. The latter's efforts, as unsuccessful as they may have been in introducing Soviet antiracist discourse into the American Party by organizing the Yokinen trial, nevertheless succeeded in furthering the Soviet Union's identity as the only country that had transcended racism, where even two American racists would not "dare to attempt to lynch a Negro."

I.

On 9 August 1930 *Trud*'s editors initiated as part of the campaign against Lewis and Brown a month long antiracist rhetoric which defined the Soviet Union as enlightened in terms of its inclusion of black Americans. Under a headline which read, "We will not Permit in the USSR the Ways of Bourgeois America," the paper published a protest resolution signed by the Stalingrad Traktorostroi workers in which they "remind(ed) comrades, who do not understand that the U.S.S.R. is the fatherland of all workers, a number of whom are Negroes. Negro workers are our brothers, as are American workers." To visualize these statements, the editors strategically printed a

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published in the *Daily Worker*, see Lozovsky, "10 Years of Red International Labor Unions," *Daily Worker*, 15 August 1930, p. 4.

photograph of black American female delegate and Philadelphia needle worker Helen McClain (pseudonym Jenny Reid) under their headline and next to the Stalingrad laborers' statement of opposition. McClain's smiling image was published merely for symbolic purposes, that is to illustrate that "Negro workers are our brothers": the Profintern Congress did not begin until six days later on 15 August 1930, and there were no articles concerning either it or the global conference of female workers which she also attended.[4] Sketches and another photograph of McClain also appeared in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, *Pravda* and *Trud* once the Congress had opened even though she neither addressed the assembly nor composed any articles for the press. In *Pravda* her image appeared next to that of two other female workers, one from Leningrad, and the other from Mongolia.[5] Obviously, McClain's identity as a black American and a woman, in fact the only black American female Profintern delegate, must have made Soviet editors particularly interested in displaying her image in their newspapers.

The following day, this symbolic process of defining the country and the black peoples whom it welcomed resumed in the press. On the front page of *Trud*, the editors quoted the workers of the Dinamo factory in Moscow as reminding their fellow toilers that no one "is permitted to violate the brotherly unity of the workers of all nationalities,

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[4] Jenny Reid is verified as Helen McClain in the list of U.S. delegates to the Fifth Profintern Congress found in RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 170, l. 42 as well as in Harry Haywood's autobiography, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978), pp. 328-329. It seems as though Reid may have attended the International Conference of Revolutionary Needleworkers which took place immediately following the close of the Profintern Congress. See "Protokol no 1 rasshirennogo zasedaniia mezhdunarodnogo komiteta revoliutsionnykh shveinikov," GARF, f. 5458, op. 14, d. 62, l. 24. The last article on the first International Conference of Female Workers that was published in *Trud* had appeared three days earlier; "Pervaia mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia rabotnits," *Trud*, 6 August 1930, p. 1.

[5] *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 21 August 1930, p. 1; *Trud*, 15 August 1930, p. 2; *Pravda*, 27 August 1930, p. 2.

a number of whom are Negro workers."[6] To visually depict this reminder a photograph of James Ford, black American Communist and head of the black American division of the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) was printed in which he was shown standing at the center of a group of male Russian workers of the Moscow Elektrozavod with his arms around the two closest men in "brotherly unity." Ford is donning a black suit and tie while the white laborers are clad in plain jackets, shirts, and cloth caps.[7] Ford's speech to the Elektrozavod community that accompanied the photograph and the Dinamo workers' protest statement, reinforced the messages of racial equality and inclusion which both expressed. He declared that in the U.S.S.R., "the fatherland of all nationalities" as he called it, "there is no place for racial dissension. Hand in hand all people (*narod*) are together building socialism."[8]

The efforts to base the Soviet Union's identity on a rejection of American racism continued on 11 August 1930 but with two notable distinctions. First, instead of a photograph of black Americans being respected as equals in Moscow, *Trud* depicted the Soviet Union's cultivation of the "underdeveloped" national minorities. Specifically, the photograph portrayed a Russian male worker instructing a *traktorista* who looked distinctively non-Russian at a machine tractor station. As the caption posited, "the machine tractor stations are breeding-grounds for culture among the backward

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[6] Members of the Dinamo factory issued a similar resolution declaring that "we remind American national chauvinists that in the Soviet Union there are no differences on the basis of nationality or color"; GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 18.

[7] Records from the Fifth Congress justified Ford's high-ranking party and trade union status by accurately identifying him as a metal and postal worker; RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 170, l. 42.

[8] "Pozornyi fakt na Traktornom vskryl slabost' internatsional'noi raboty profsoiuzov Stalingrada," *Trud*, 10 August 1930, p. 1. This image was later published in an issue of the *Negro Worker*, see page 110 note 78, and in the *Liberator* on 4 November 1932 (p. 5) when Ford was the U.S. Communist Party's vice presidential candidate. The photograph was accompanied by the article "How Soviet Russia Freed the National Minorities," and the caption inaccurately identified the men as workers of the AMO factory.

nationalities." This image, with its highly paternalistic undertones, spoke directly to Ford's characterization of the country the previous day as "the fatherland of all nationalities" where "hand in hand all people are building socialism." Regarding the second notable difference, *Trud*'s editors were slightly more bold in their front page headline, asserting above this photograph and the protest resolution of workers of the Khamovnicheskii raion which they also printed, that "The USSR is the Fatherland for the Black, Yellow and White Races." The editors had clearly derived the idea for this headline from the Khamovnicheskii workers' resolution (as they had done before with other workers' protest statements) in which they referred to the Soviet Union as "the fatherland of all the proletariat: white, black and yellow, against whom no kind of national inequality will be allowed to exist." There are significant distinctions, however, between *Trud*'s "fatherland of the black, yellow and white races" and "the fatherland of all the proletariat: white, black and yellow." Clearly, the trade union editors felt more comfortable than rank-and-file laborers to de-emphasize class in their characterization of the country in favor of race and to list "the white race" after the "black" and "yellow." That being said, neither *Trud* nor any other Soviet paper ever referred to the Soviet Union in this manner throughout the remainder of the month. [9]

In the days and weeks that followed, newspaper headlines persisted in announcing, "This is not Bourgeois America," "In the USSR there is no Place for Racial Enmity," "We do not Permit in the USSR the Ways of Capitalist America," "In the USSR There is Neither White nor Black" and "The Country of Soviets is the Society of All

[9] "My ne dopustim v SSSR nravov burzhuaznoi Ameriki," *Trud*, 9 August 1930, p. 1; "SSSR-otechestvo dlia chernykh, zheltykh i belykh ras," *ibid.*, 11 August 1930, p. 1.

Workers."[10] All-union editors depicted foreign and Soviet workers as reiterating in their protest resolutions the sentiment captured in these headlines by emphasizing with only slight variations in phraseology that "in the Soviet Union there are no and can be no differences among workers" and that "only in the U.S.S.R., are there no divisions between blacks, whites, and yellows."[11] In a letter to *Rabochaia Gazeta*, a group of five black delegates to the Fifth Profintern Congress were quoted as saying "when we return home to our brothers, we will tell them that in the U.S.S.R. there are no divisions between whites and blacks, that here each worker has the right to freedom."[12] Nakhimson, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court of the RSFSR, was shown contributing to this discourse, asserting "that Soviet power cannot allow the ways of racial enmity, which flourish in the countries of capitalism" to thrive in the country of Soviets.[13]

The central press continued to publish further visual confirmation of these statements as well. James Ford was again shown wearing a suit and tie on *Trud's* front page but instead of having his arms around a group of Russian workers as a sign of fraternal unity, he was shown with his right fist in the air, the symbol of interracial unity. In this case his image appeared as had Helen McClain's four days earlier without any

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[10] These all appeared in *Rabochaia Gazeta* throughout the month of August 1930: 11 August 1930, p. 4; 13 August 1930, p. 6; 18 August 1930, p. 6; 20 August 1930, p. 6.

[11] See, for example, "Inostrannye rabochie Leningrada posylaiut obshchestvennogo obvinitelia na Stalingradskii protsess," *Trud*, 17 August 1930, p. 2; "Rabochie-amerikantsy protestuiut protiv izbieniia rabochego-negra," *Izvestiia*, 18 August 1930, p. 3; "Inostrannye rabochie Khar'khova i Rostova poslali obshchestvennykh obvinitelei na Stalingradskii protsess," *Trud*, 20 August 1930, p. 1; "Rabochie fabriki 'Moskvoshvei' No. 5 reshitel'no osuzhdaiut amerikanskikh khuliganov," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; and "Stalingradskaia prokuratura zamalchivaet delo amerikantsa Luisa," *ibid.*, 17 August 1930, p. 6.

[12] "Strana sovetov-otechestvo vsekh trudiashchikhsia," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 20 August 1930, p. 6.

[13] "V SSSR net mesta rasovoi vrazhdebnosti," *ibid.*, 11 August 1930, p. 4.

articles mentioning his name.[14] Photographs of Ford also were published in *Trud* on 15 and 24 August 1930, and an extremely poor sketch of the high-ranking black Communist appeared in *Izvestiia* on 19 August 1930 next to a speech he had given at the Profintern Congress concerning the "Revolutionary Movement among Negroes."[15] *Trud* too printed two of Ford's speeches at length namely, "The Negro Proletariat is Entering the Revolutionary Arena" and "Negro Workers and the Profintern," but never placed them next to his photograph. The publication of Ford's visual image as well as his speeches furthered Soviet antiracist discourse and the production of the Soviet Union as a raceless society by presenting a young, black man as a political actor who was intelligent, articulate, and whose remarks were considered significant enough to print in the all-union papers.

The image of Isaiah Hawkins (pseudonym Jack Bell) another black American delegate to the Profintern Congress and a leader of the National Miners' Union in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, frequently graced the pages of the Soviet papers during August 1930. A sketch in *Pravda* portrayed Hawkins sitting with two white delegates looking down as if he were listening to a speech and taking notes. Six days later on 22 August 1930 the paper published a portion of his address before the congress (as did *Rabochaia Gazeta*) in which he emphasized the need to struggle decisively against white chauvinism and actively recruit black workers into the revolutionary trade unions. An extremely poor

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[14] For the articles that accompanied this photograph, see "Stalingradskii urok trebuet vsesoiuznoi proverki internatsional'noi raboty," *Trud*, 13 August 1930, p. 1, and "Amovtsy trebuiut vysylki vinovnikov iz predelov SSSR," *ibid.*, 13 August 1930, p. 1.

[15] For the photographs, articles and sketch, see *ibid.*, 15 August 1930, p. 2; *ibid.*, 24 August 1930, p. 2; "Negritianskie rabochie i Profintern," *ibid.*, 16 August 1930, p. 2; "Negritianskii proletariat vystupaet na revoliutsionnuiu arenu," *ibid.*, 20 August 1930, p. 3, and "Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie sredi negrov," *Izvestiia*, 19 August 1930, p. 2.

sketch of Hawkins in *Izvestiia* in which, he can be recognized only by his spectacles and the caption that identifies him by his alias "Jack Bell," similarly depicts the miner with his eyes cast downward as if he were recording information. As especially strong evidence of the symbolic function of Hawkins' visual image, he also appeared in the same photograph on the front pages of *Trud* and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* shaking hands with Sukhanov, a Russian delegate from Dnepropetrovsk in what was labeled "a brotherly meeting of congress delegates." As with Ford, by printing these sketches and photographs of Hawkins as well as the remarks he delivered before the Congress, editors presented the Soviet Union as a place where racism did not exist, that is, which afforded young black men the opportunity to be thinkers, speakers and leaders without any threat to their physical safety.[16]

The image of Robert Robinson, the man whose physical safety and equality Soviet authorities, editors and workers were presented as defending in dramatic fashion throughout August 1930, appeared only twice in the all-union press. As noted in the previous chapter, a pencil sketch of Robinson was printed on *Trud*'s front page on 12 August 1930. But much more importantly for the purposes of this chapter, he was featured in a photograph also on *Trud*'s front page seated at the center of a round table surrounded by several of the workers who had served as public prosecutors at the trial.

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[16] For Hawkins' remarks, see "Piatyi kongress Profinterna," *Pravda*, 22 August 1930, p. 2, and "Opyt millionov - na organizatsiiu revoliutsionnykh boev," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 21 August 1930, p. 1. For his photographs/sketches, see *Pravda*, 16 August 1930, p. 2; *Izvestiia*, 22 August 1930, p. 2; *Trud*, 23 August 1930, p. 1; and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 23 August 1930, p. 1. Isaiah Hawkins' alias was spelled various ways. Sometimes referred to as "James," "Jack," "John" or even "Jim," his last name inconsistently appeared as "Bell," "Bel," or "Bil." Hawkins, whose occupation was identified as "miner" in Soviet records, had by this time risen to become a leader of the National Miners' Union in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 170, l. 42. Hawkins was also the black American delegate chosen to address a carnival assembly of 12,000 people that was organized to commemorate the Profintern's ten-year anniversary, see *Trud*, 23 August 1930, p. 1; and "Moscow Workers Hold Festival for Fifth Congress of R. I. L. U.," *Daily Worker*, 8 September 1930, p. 3.

Similar to Ford, Robinson was wearing a black suit and tie while those seated with him were clad in modest shirts and pants. Although one may be inclined to read this image as a paternalistic depiction of these six white men and one white woman as defenders of the oppressed black victim, considering that it was published on the same day that the workers' court ruled to expel the two white American racists, it is more likely that the editors' primary intention in printing it was as a visual reminder that the Soviet Union welcomed as equals Robinson and all black laborers.

In addition to these specific photographs of Robert Robinson, and black American Profintern delegates Helen McClain, James Ford, and Isaiah Hawkins, groups of unidentified black Americans sitting and talking together with African, Asian, and white Profintern delegates in formal and casual settings often appeared in the press during August 1930 with little or no explanation of who they were or where they were taken.[17] The practice of printing photographs of black Americans amidst unrelated newspaper articles obviously did not begin and end with the campaign against Lewis and Brown, but it would be difficult to say it had previously occurred on any consistent basis in such a concentrated period of time.[18] These individual and group images of black American men and women as leaders, attending an international conference in Moscow, and being

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[17] For an example of these group photographs and sketches, see *Pravda*, 28 August 1930, p. 2, and *Izvestiia*, 22 August 1930, p. 2. A sketch published in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* (28 August 1930, p. 1) showed an artist drawing a Profintern delegate with the explanation that "Delegates of different nationalities and races attract the attention of a Soviet artist who attended the sessions."

[18] For example, a photograph of a black woman identified as "Comrade Bruce at the machine" appeared in *Trud* two separate times, 8 March 1930 (p. 2), and 2 September 1930 (p. 2). The first time it was small and printed with articles concerning International Women's Day. The second time the same photograph had been enlarged to occupy a sizable portion of the upper half of the page and the articles surrounding it pertained to fascism in Austria and self-criticism within the party. As another example, *Trud* printed a photograph (21 December 1930, p. 2) of two black American children identified as leaders in the Pioneer movement sitting with a bale of cotton. The articles next to it concerned Spain and Germany while a caption explained that black child labor remained common in the U.S., despite widespread unemployment.

respected as equals provided a sharp contrast not only with the two white Americans' treatment of "the Negro worker" in Stalingrad, but also more broadly with white Americans' treatment of all black Americans.[19] As will be outlined below, this juxtaposition was made most powerfully through the publication of both general assertions about white Americans' penchant for lynching black Americans as well as photographs of black American lynch victims.

II.

The antiracist discourse that the attack on Robinson helped inspire also defined the Soviet Union as a society free of racism negatively, that is by discussing the racial hatred that ravaged the United States. In addition to the trial itself, references to "Jim Crow" segregation, lynching and general U.S. racial discrimination in the newspapers, at factory protest meetings and during the Profintern Congress, as well as the publication of photographs of black American lynch victims effectively cultivated the image that the U.S.S.R. was vastly superior to the "civilized" United States in terms of its treatment of peoples of color. This chapter does not make the erroneous claim that the assault on Robinson was the first time that U.S. racial persecution was mentioned in the Soviet press, but prior to this incident references appeared sporadically. The near month-long references to U.S. racism that appeared in the central papers in August 1930 helped to explain why Lewis and Brown believed themselves to be superior to Robinson and

[19] The only other individual black American delegate identified by name was "Joseph Roberts" whose photograph was printed on 15 August 1930 (p. 2) in *Trud*. "Joseph Roberts" was identified in the list of U.S. delegates to the Fifth Profintern Congress, as "Joseph Straford Roberts" and "Jim Fromr" with no occupational specialty; RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 170, l. 42. Interestingly, the image of George Padmore, a leading member of the black American delegation was not published in the all-union press during the Fifth Congress. Yet it did appear on *Trud*'s front page four months later (14 December 1930) when he spoke at a Profintern meeting to protest capitalist intervention in the U.S.S.R.

attacked him. They also clarified that racially-motivated assaults like the one they committed as well as significantly more violent atrocities against black Americans occurred routinely in the United States.

Fred Marsh, Profintern delegate and editor of the Nigerian newspaper *Kete Ekate* informed a meeting of Moscow and Czech worker correspondents at the Park of Culture and Rest about the segregation to which black Americans were subjected on public transportation. He also discussed how factory managers in New York had used the recent economic depression to release thousands of black laborers whom they referred to as "black rubbish, good-for-nothings."[20] Delegates of the Fifth Profintern Congress similarly addressed the problem that "Negroes are the first to be thrown out into the streets" citing numbers that in the United States "out of the industrial Negro proletariat of 2 million there are today nearly 500,000 out of work."[21] J. Tussen, another black Profintern delegate outlined for *Trud*'s readers the conditions among black sailors and dock workers in the southern United States. In return for their hard work, Tussen claimed that these "wretched slaves of capital" were treated in an inhumane manner, refused entry into trade unions, allotted meager wages, forced to eat lunch in segregated

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[20] Fred Marsh was the face primarily associated with Africa during the Congress and *Rabochaia Gazeta* printed a photograph of him delivering these remarks; "Dat' zhestochaishii otpor," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 13 August 1930, p. 6. A sketch of Marsh attending the Profintern Congress also appeared in *Izvestiia*, 23 August 1930, p. 2, and *Pravda*, 22 August 1930, p. 2. In the latter he is featured with a delegate from Nizhni-Novgorod and Switzerland. The practice which Marsh described is referred to as "first hired, first fired" by historian Richard Thomas in *Life for Us is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[21] "O rabote sredi negrov rabochikh (Rezoliutsiia V kongressa)," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 154, ll. 58-79. A "Special Resolution on Work among Negroes in the United States and the Colonies," published in the *Negro Worker*, 2 (February 1931): 18-19 similarly stated that "the capitalists, in their effort to unload the difficulties of the crisis unto the backs of the working class have undertaken a particularly severe offensive against the Negro workers."

cafeterias, and threatened constantly with the prospect of being lynched.[22] Robinson, the "heroic black worker" himself testified during the court proceedings in Stalingrad that when he first arrived in New York and "entered a restaurant to get something to eat, I was refused a meal solely because I am a Negro." He further explained to those in the courtroom and listening in the factory's shops and barracks that he had seen law enforcement officials randomly beat black American men on the streets but that these incidents always went unpunished. [23]

As James Ford explained to Elektrozavod laborers at a factory protest meeting, "lynch law or trial by lynching has now become commonplace in America" because the bourgeoisie were using it as a tool of terror to suppress black Americans' growing militancy. He reiterated this point before the Profintern Congress which delegates collectively acknowledged in a resolution that stated: "the rapidly increasing lynching and massacre of Negroes, all tend to worsen the already horrible living conditions of the Negro proletariat."[24] Blaich, a Czech laborer and member of *Trud*'s international brigade emphasized during his remarks before the Stalingrad court that due to the bourgeoisie's greater urgency to weaken the revolutionary movement, the "lynching of Negro workers

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[22] "Kogo linchuiut v SASSh?" *Trud*, 5 September 1930, p. 2.

[23] "Obvinitel'noe zakliuchenie po delu izbieniia rabochego negra na Stalingradskom Traktornom Zavode," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 15-16; "Amerikanets Nuis ne tol'ko khuligan, no u fashist," *Trud*, 25 August 1930, p. 1.

[24] For Ford's remarks, see "Pozornyi fakt na Traktornom vskryl slabost' internatsional'noi raboty profsoiuzov Stalingrada," *ibid.*, 10 August 1930, p. 1, and "Negritianskii proletariat vystupaet na revoliutsionnuiu arenu," p. 3. In his speech before the Congress, Ford also emphasized that the U.S. bourgeoisie used the electric chair to suppress black militancy, a theme that would receive prominent attention during the Scottsboro campaign in the Soviet Union. For the Profintern delegates' resolution, see RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 154, l. 77. John Ballam, a white American Profintern delegate also declared in a letter on *Trud*'s front page that in this era when "the American capitalist government oppresses black workers in Haiti and Nicaragua, and lynches Negro workers and peasants in the southern United States, . . . the Profintern which is gathered for its Fifth Congress calls on the proletariat of all countries and races in a

in America has become a common phenomenon."[25] Fellow brigadier, Ferdinand Knut likewise remarked, "the true face of American capitalism" reveals itself in that countless "Negroes are subjected to lynching throughout the course of only one year."[26] Similarly, *Put' MOPR'a* published the letter allegedly written by an (anonymous) American laborer in which s/he explained that assaults like the one on Robinson "are commonplace in America where Negroes are detested and treated worse than dogs, where the law of Lynch rages at every level, where Negroes cannot even be in the same premises with white workers."[27]

Komsomol'skaia Pravda's editors described at some length for their young readers white Americans' perceptions of black Americans and the segregation and lynch law to which they consequently subjected them. Referring to Lewis and Brown on more than one occasion as "the followers of Lynch at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory," the paper explained, "Negro workers in America are in a position of the Indian pariahs. 100% Americans consider it disgraceful to eat in the same cafeteria with Negroes, to travel with them in the same train car, etc. For Negroes in America there are special laws. For any insignificant law violation fascist bands of the KKK seize their victims and 'lynch' them – burning, hanging, quartering them." After emphasizing that 3226 black

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common struggle against the common enemy – the capitalists of all countries"; "Napavshie na rabochego-negra poviniy v khudshem prestuplenii protiv proletariata," *Trud*, 10 August 1930, p. 1.

[25] "Vylazka kontrrevoliutsionerov: rech' chlena internatsional'noi brigady 'Truda' tov. Blaich," *ibid.*, 29 August 1930, p. 1.

[26] Ferdinand Knut, "Pered sudom vsia sistema kapitalizma," *ibid.*, 29 August 1930, p. 1. Records of the U.S. Department of State indicate that U.S. officials also believed Stalin to be involved in furthering this association of the United States with lynching. They quoted him as saying "Down with the land where every working person is enslaved, and the white-faced buildings have been laid over the bodies of lynched Negroes and slaves of the regime!'" See *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union, 1930-1939*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/623.

Americans (ninety-two women) were known to have been lynched in the United States, the editors reasserted the U.S.S.R.'s identity as a raceless society. As they specifically put it, "only in the country of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the Soviet Union, where there are no differences and no privileges accorded certain nations and races, Negro-workers find comradely proletarian relations."[28] The images of black American trade union delegates discussed above and of course the trial of Robinson's assailants itself were offered as concrete evidence of this.

Like the editors of *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, the central press depicted foreign workers and black Profintern delegates explicitly contrasting the racial animosity of the U.S. against the racial harmony of the U.S.S.R. in their protest resolutions. Foreign laborers of the Moscow Elektrozavod, for example, declared that unlike the "brotherly friendliness" of the Soviet Union where there is no place for racial chauvinism, in "civilized'" America two different policies exist for blacks and whites.[29] The following statement was attributed to a group of American metal workers visiting the Soviet Union: "we have seen the brotherly unity of the workers of all nationalities living in the U.S.S.R., working together to build a socialist society, while in America there still exists a disgraceful division between 'white' and 'black' blood, and instances of violence of Americans against Negroes."[30] In a lengthy protest resolution, black Profintern delegates likewise made this contrast. As they argued, "in no part of the world where there are

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[27] "Prisoediniaius' k protestu rabochikh SSSR (Pis'mo amerikanskogo rabochego)," *Put' MOPR'a*, nos. 23-24 (August 1930): 13.

[28] "Posledovateli lincha na Traktornom zavode," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 26 August 1930, p. 4; "Obshchestvennyi sud nad grazhdaninom Tsiprusom," *ibid.*, 18 August 1930, p. 4.

[29] "My vsetselo na storone tov. Robinsona," *Trud*, 14 August 1930, p. 1.

Negro toilers are they free from the vicious venom of race-hatred," which at the hands of the "ruling class" assumes the form of "lynchings and mob violence in the U.S.A." Only in the Soviet Union "where the class consciousness of the proletariat has reached such a high level, [is] the assault on a member of an oppressed race regarded as an attack of agents of the bourgeoisie upon the highest principles of the Soviet system." For this reason, "we declare the Soviet Union to be our fatherland. We have seen that the Soviet Union is the only country in the world that has solved racial and national problems."[31] There can be little doubt that Soviet leaders, editors, and workers' claims that the Soviet Union was superior to the U.S. in terms of its transcendence of racism and inclusion rather than persecution of peoples of color, were undoubtedly given greater credence when foreign laborers and especially black Americans were shown articulating them.

In order to visualize for Soviet readers or even random semiliterate passersby how black Americans experienced "justice" in the "free" U.S., all-union editors published photographs of black American lynch victims. They often printed these graphic images of "lynch law" adjacent to articles about the workers' court in Stalingrad with little or no explanation about the specific act of racial violence, which they depicted. By printing photographs of black American men like James Ford and Isaiah Hawkins in leadership positions on the front pages one day, and those of unnamed black American male lynch victims on the next, the central press clearly intended to juxtapose the racial equality of

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[30] "Amerikanskie rabochie osuzhdaiut izdevatel'stvo nad rabochim-negrom na Traktorostroe," *Izvestiia*, 18 August 1930, p. 3.

[31] "Down with Racial and National Chauvinism: Declaration of the Negro Delegation of the Fifth R.I.L.U. Congress against the white chauvinism of two American workmen," *Negro Worker* 2 (February 1931): 15-18 (quotations, pp. 15-16). The delegates further asserted that Lewis and Brown's "deportation from the U.S.S.R. where all races and nationalities are equal proves that the workers in Soviet Russia will not permit the breaking of the basic laws of their country which are not only written in the Constitution, but which are practiced in everyday life."

the Soviet Union against the racial brutality of the United States. More specifically, when placed opposite of visual images of Robert Robinson or black American trade union delegates, U.S. lynching photographs contrasted the future of black American men in the United States against their future in the first workers' state.[32]

On 28 August 1930, a large photograph of two black American men, Thomas Shipp and Abraham Smith, aged 18 and 19 years, respectively, appeared on the front page of *Trud*, their murdered bodies dangling above a crowd of well-dressed white men and women who were laughing, smiling, and looking shamelessly at the camera.[33] No article accompanied the depiction of the Marion, Indiana, lynching explaining who the victims were, or where, when, and why it took place. Only a small caption read, "The trial by lynching of two Negroes." Obviously, *Trud*'s readers were expected to know intuitively that this photograph was taken somewhere in the United States, the details of which were somehow inconsequential – just another example of horrific racial violence in bourgeois "democratic" America. Rather strategically, the article published directly next to it related the recent developments in the trial of Robinson's white American assailants. The association of the Soviet Union with the law of the proletariat and the United States with lynch law was unmistakable.[34]

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[32] David Marriott, "'I'm gonna borer me a Kodak': Photography and Lynching," in *On Black Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000): 1-22. As Marriott argues in regards to U.S. lynching photography, "there to frighten, to show black men their future such images document the truth of lynching as both trauma and gala: a show for the white men, women and children before whom it is staged" (p. 5).

[33] As the *Afro-American* reported (16 August 1930, p. 1), although several of the participants could be identified from the now famous photograph taken by Lawrence Beitler, no one was ever brought to account for murdering these two men on 7 August 1930. James H. Madison explores the Marion lynching and the ways in which it has been remembered, in *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). See also, James Allen, Hilton Als, John Lewis and Leon F. Litwack, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Twin Palms, 2000); and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[34] For the article that accompanied the double lynching photograph, see, "Luis i Braun pytalis' perenesti na

The same large photograph of the Marion double lynching was also printed on 28 August 1930 on the front page of *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*. Although the editors failed to identify the victims' names, the date the lynching occurred and the specific geographical place where it transpired, they unlike *Trud*'s staff did give some indication of the pretext under which it occurred. Readers were accurately informed in a short caption that, "American farmers forcibly seized from prison two Negroes who were suspected in the murder of a white woman, and executed them via a trial by lynching."[35] Curiously, this image of the double lynching stood alone, it was not published next to articles regarding either U.S. racism or the Stalingrad trial. Two days later the paper published another yet smaller front-page photograph of a black male lynch victim with a headline that explained "In the homeland of Lewis." It was strategically printed next to two articles about the trial of Robinson's assailants, one of which had a headline that declared, "The USSR is eliminating racial dissension." A lengthy caption claimed that the image depicted "a Negro-worker, victim of lynch law at the hands of a band of white landowners in Marion (America)." It added that he was "hanged only for this, that he (together with other Negroes) actively participated in preparations for a strike. Police appeared only after the murderers finished their 'work.'"[36] The editors were inaccurate in reporting that this man had been lynched in "Marion (America)." Shipp and Smith, whose image they had printed two days earlier were the only men who were reported as having been lynched in Marion, and neither of them had been involved in labor activity.

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sovetskuiu pochvu fashistskie nravy," *Trud*, 28 August 1930, p. 1.

[35] James Cameron, who had been arrested with Shipp and Smith, was also dragged out of the jail by the white mob. But as Cameron explained, a divine voice intervened and he was returned to his cell before anyone did him serious harm. See James Cameron, *A Time of Terror: A Survivor's Story* (London: Writers and Readers, 1995; orig. pub. 1982).

Despite the omission of details and the factual inaccuracies to which Soviet readers would have been largely oblivious, these images of lynched black men succeeded in equating the United States with horrific racial violence.

Two days before printing these photographs, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* had also published a lynching cartoon next to an article about the Stalingrad trial. The image featured a bare-chested black man, his mouth contorted in agony, with a noose around his neck. The top caption threatened white Americans that, "We will chop off the clutches of the Hangman" while the bottom one intended for Soviet citizens read, "Workers! Struggle against the lynching of your Negro-proletarian brothers!" An extremely fat, white male capitalist wearing a top hat, long coat and gun holster, was depicted tacking up a sign above the victim's head, which warned all black workers, "Do Not Dare to Struggle for Your Rights," and was signed in English penmanship, "The State of Indiana." The signature was an obvious reference to the recent Marion lynching and indicates as *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*'s editors openly noted that the cartoon had been taken from the U.S. English-language publication, the *Daily Worker*.[37] The official organ of the U.S. Communist Party had printed this cartoon two weeks previously on 12 August 1930. The only major difference between the original and the *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* version was that in the former the bottom caption explained to American readers, "They can't do that in the Soviet Union." In the Soviet paper, this point was confirmed in the written reports about the trial of Robinson's two white American assailants and to

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[36] *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 28 August 1930, p. 1; *ibid.*, 30 August 1930, p. 1.

[37] "Posledovateli lincha na Traktornom zavode," p. 4. Soviet political posters like the iconography of Western labor movements typically depicted the capitalist as an obese, white man wearing a top hat. See the discussion and references found in chapter four regarding the standard image of the capitalist, which became pervasive in Soviet Scottsboro cartoons from 1931-1932.

have asserted it so explicitly would have been absurdly stating the obvious. Overall, the editors of *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* and the *Daily Worker* had published this cartoon with the same objective, that is to set Soviet workers' outrage at the attack on a black laborer in Stalingrad against the murderous conduct of the citizens of Marion, Indiana.[38]

The editors of *Rabochaia Gazeta* likewise printed a photograph of a lynched black American man surrounded by articles regarding the campaign against Lewis and Brown. While accurately locating the crime geographically, noting in the caption that it depicted the "charred corpse" of a black man "who was burned alive in America, in Sherman, the state of Texas," they failed to mention that it had transpired three months earlier on 9 May 1930. The victim's name which also was not disclosed was George Hughes, a farm laborer and newcomer to Sherman, who had been accused of raping the wife of his white employer after he had argued with him about wages.[39] Similar to their colleagues, *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors published this image with minimal explanation and a tremendous lapse of time which went unacknowledged, in order to contrast the image of the Soviet Union that was emerging from reports regarding the efforts to bring a black worker's attackers to justice, against the routine lynching of black men in the United States.

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[38] The *Daily Worker* had even printed *Trud*'s front-page headline "We will not permit the ways of bourgeois America in the U.S.S.R." next to U.S. headlines regarding the recent double lynching. The editors sardonically asked whether "Matthew Woll (vice president of the AFL) will come forward with howls of rage, that American workers in the Soviet Union are being 'persecuted' because they are not allowed their truly American (capitalist) right to lynch Negroes"; *Daily Worker*, 12 August 1930, p. 2; "Headlines About Negroes," *ibid.*, 11 August 1930, p. 1.

[39] The *Moscow Daily News* mentioned Hughes' lynching two years later because the local Ku Klux Klan had circulated leaflets warning black voters not to vote in the upcoming elections otherwise they would meet the same fate as Hughes had two years earlier; "Ku Klux Klan Terrorizes Negro Workers," *Moscow Daily News*, 30 September 1932, p. 1. For a copy of the leaflet, see *Daily Worker*, 1 October 1932, p. 2. For a scholarly discussion of the Sherman, Texas lynching, see Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), esp. pp. 328-330.

It should be noted that references to lynching as a common form of "justice" administered against black Americans in the U.S. began to appear in the central press when news of the assault in Stalingrad was first exposed on 9 August 1930. The majority of the lynching images however were printed at the end of the month in the days immediately preceding the Stalingrad court's announcement of their verdict against the two white American racists. Editors undoubtedly sought to underscore the great disparity in that Soviet authorities and "workers" were bringing two white Americans to account for assaulting, not lynching a black laborer, while countless incidents of lynching at the hands of white Americans went completely unpunished in the U.S. These lynching photographs which constituted "'exhibitions and narrations of racial violence'" provided powerful evidence that the "'law was white'" in democratic America.[40] Soviet authorities and editors used the events of August 1930 to cultivate the image that in contrast the Soviet Union was the first raceless society where the law was "proletarian."[41]

III.

The pairing of the United States with barbarous lynch law and the Soviet Union with the civilized law of the proletariat was also reinforced by the organization of a second, albeit significantly smaller, workers' trial of American racism. Before the court proceedings in Stalingrad opened, V.M. Tsiprus, a worker at a Moscow needle factory

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[40] For phrases, see Marriott, *On Black Men*, p. 6. Marriott quotes Richard Wright as making the observation that "the law is white" in *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States of America* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1947; orig. pub. 1941).

[41] The author has yet to find a photograph of a black American lynch victim in one of the all-union newspapers prior to August 1930. It seems safe to say that this was the first time several of these images were printed within a few days of each other in the central press. One may have thought that they would have resurfaced with the Scottsboro protest less than a year later, which was another period when American racism was mentioned consistently in the press, but as chapter four shows this was primarily not the case.

named for the Profintern was tried before a "proletarian court" because he made white chauvinistic remarks at a factory meeting that had been organized to protest the racially-motivated attack on Robert Robinson. A *Rabochaia Gazeta* reporter who was covering the meeting had asked Tsiprus his opinion of the "assault on our Negro comrade" since, as a Russian Jew, he had emigrated to and lived in the United States for thirty-six years. [42] According to most newspaper accounts and the testimony given by witnesses and the defendant himself during the trial, Tsiprus responded by saying, "I am not surprised by the American workers' attack on the Negro. Negroes are snakes. They all need to be lynched or subjected to lynch law. I would have lynched the Negro."[43]

Two days after Tsiprus made these remarks, the central press reported that his fellow needle workers were outraged and had formulated a protest statement proclaiming, "We brand as disgraceful the worker of our factory Tsiprus for his anti-proletarian act against the Negro worker, who declared, that 'Negroes are snakes, they all need to be lynched.'" In the resolution they also allegedly requested that *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s

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[42] This was the identity, which the *New York Times*, *Liberator*, *Trud*, and *Rabochaia Gazeta* ascribed to Tsiprus. *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* and the *Daily Worker* ("Soviet Workers Hit Chauvinist," 22 August 1930, p. 2) claimed that Tsiprus was a Russian Jew who had lived in England not the United States even though William Patterson had sent the *Daily* Worker's editors a telegram from Moscow on 17 August 1930 informing them that Tsiprus, a "Russian worker who lived long in America expressed sympathy with Americans is being tried today in workers court"; RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2225, l. 111. Patterson and the first four newspapers listed were most likely accurate about Tsiprus' identity. The editors of *Rabochaia Gazeta* organized the trial against Tsiprus, and it was their reporter who had originally interviewed him. Furthermore, *Trud* and *Rabochaia Gazeta* reported on the case from its beginning while *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* only published one article after the trial was over. Walter Duranty who was then serving as the Moscow correspondent for the *New York Times* clearly based his articles on information in *Trud* and *Rabochaia Gazeta*, both of which initially spelled Tsiprus' name as "Tsipros"; "Rabochie fabriki 'Moskvoshvei' No. 5 reshitel'no osuzhdaiut amerikanskikh khuliganov," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; "O chem govorit sluchai na Traktornom zavode" *Trud*, 12 August 1930, p. 1.

[43] Henry Filmore Cabot who participated in the trial claimed that Tsiprus whom he referred to as "Charles" stated: "'You want American technique, American machines, American skill, then you must also learn other things from the Americans. We can learn from them not only mechanical skill, but also their handling of the race question.'" Since Cabot recorded his experiences over two years after the trial, it is certain that the contemporary Soviet press accurately quoted Tsiprus while Cabot paraphrased his remarks; "'To Hell with American Race Prejudice!,'" *Liberator*, 4 November 1932, p. 5.

editors help them organize a community trial against the offender and force him to publicly admit his offense. The editors, as no surprise, immediately agreed and each day preceding the trial's start, published a notice informing readers of the time and location where it was to be held, as well as the names and occupations of its participants.[44] On Sunday, 17 August 1930 at 2:40 in the afternoon, as a prelude to the court proceedings in Stalingrad, American racism was placed on trial in Moscow. As the Soviet papers and even the *New York Times* announced, Tsiprus was charged with having "expressed solidarity with the American hooligans who attacked the Negro Robinson."[45]

The all-union newspapers described the factory's hall where the trial convened as overflowing. *Rabochaia Gazeta* claimed that a substantial number of attendees were workers from other factories, many of whom had worked previously in America and "now are putting forth their efforts towards building socialism in the USSR." *Trud* and *Rabochaia Gazeta* published photographs of the trial's large audience in order to visually document that representatives of the Soviet working community had come forward on a Sunday to denounce as reprehensible Tsiprus' racist comments. *Rabochaia Gazeta* also printed a photograph of the members of the court and an unflattering sketch of an unshaven and smug-looking Tsiprus. *Trud* too printed a photograph of Tsiprus on the

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[44] On 14 August 1930 without any explanation, the date of the trial was listed as Sunday, 18 August 1930, instead of 15 August 1930 as the editors had originally posted it. The next day when the announcement appeared, the editors corrected the date of the trial yet again without any explanation as Sunday, 17 August 1930 at 2:40 instead of at 3 o'clock as originally scheduled. See "Rabochie fabriki Moskvoshvei No. 5 vozmushcheny vystupleniem gr. Tsiprusa," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 13 August 1930, p. 6; Obshchestvennyi sud nad grazhdaninom Tsiprus," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 6, and "Zavtra – obshchestvennyi sud nad gr. Tsiprus," *ibid.*, 16 August 1930, p. 5.

[45] Walter Duranty reported in the *New York Times* (14 August 1930) that textile workers were organizing a "demonstration trial" (as he called it) or more accurately a show trial, for a man who had expressed support for the attack on Robinson.

witness stand captioned by the unenlightened statements that had landed him there.[46] Evidently, the location of the trial in the capital allowed for these photographs to be taken and sketches to be drawn because neither visual images of Lewis and Brown nor the makeshift courtroom at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory ever appeared in the central press.

The main witnesses in the Moscow judicial spectacle as named by *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors included: Turover and Sokolov, two workers who were present when Tsiprus stated that black Americans should be lynched; Kotliar a member of the factory committee; and Peresvetov, the *Rabochaia Gazeta* reporter who had asked the defendant his opinion of the assault.[47] Those whom *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* described as Tsiprus' worker political emigrant peers spoke during the proceedings highlighting the tragedy in that Tsiprus had been a victim of tsarist pogroms and was now contributing to the persecution of another oppressed group. As one Jewish worker and political emigrant from the U.S. chided, "Tsiprus, obviously forgot, about the wave of Jewish pogroms which the tsarist government organized."[48]

Besides being judged by his political émigré and needle worker colleagues, two representatives of the specific group of people whom Tsiprus offended, black Americans, also participated in condemning him. Together with Tsekher, *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s assistant editor-in-chief, two black American workers and representatives of the

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[46] For the sketch of Tsiprus, as well as the photographs of the audience and the members of the court, see *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 19 August 1930, p. 6. Although *Trud* published news of the verdict on 18 August 1930 they printed the photographs of the audience and Tsiprus being cross-examined two days later (20 August 1930, p. 1) under the headline, "In the USSR there is no place for national enmity ("V SSSR net mesta natsional'noi vrazhde").

[47] Another witness named Vinner insisted that he was testifying on behalf of neither the prosecution nor the defense but then proceeded to excuse Tsiprus' racism by attributing it to a "psychological abnormality." The newspapers claimed that the court nearly laughed him off the stand.

[48] "Obshchestvennyi sud nad grazhdaninom Tsiprusom," p. 4.

American section of the Profintern, Isaiah Hawkins and Henry Filmore Cabot (Eldin Berrouz), served as public prosecutors. Cabot recalled several years later that, "I was in Moscow at the time, and I was asked, as a Negro worker, to come to the trial and tell the workers the story of American race prejudice, from the point of view of one who had suffered from it."[49] Hawkins, who was reportedly met with tumultuous applause when he rose to address the court, characterized workers like Tsiprus as a discredit to proletarian power and claimed he was not surprised that his statement had roused "all kinds of indignation among workers of the Soviet Union." *Rabochaia Gazeta* further quoted Hawkins as drawing a clear connection between the defendant's remark and the rampant racial violence against black Americans: "'the conduct of Tsiprus can be explained by the pernicious influence that capitalist America has had upon him . . . (where) they continue to lynch Negroes.'"[50]

Tsekher, the third public prosecutor, built upon Hawkins' last remark by asserting that standing at "the defendants' bench is not only Tsiprus but also the bourgeoisie who had imbued him with such racist feelings." For this reason, he emphasized to the workers in the courtroom "the significance of this trial transcends the boundaries of your factory." From Tsekher's perspective, the defendant's remarks placed him in league with both the American "hooligans" at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi, as well as the tsarist officials who had set Russians against Jews, and Armenians against Turks. Tsiprus, he argued, did not only exhibit this "anti-proletarian" behavior in the racist statements for which he was

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[49] Cabot, "'To Hell with American Race Prejudice," p. 5.

[50] For Hawkins' statement, see "Grazhdanin Tsiprus iskliuchen iz soiuza," *Trud*, 18 August 1930, p. 1. Similar to the Stalingrad trial, the editors of *Trud* and *Rabochaia Gazeta* also framed this one in a trope of indignation. From the outset, they claimed that the needle workers were "deeply indignant" at Tsiprus' racist statements. See, for example, "O chem govorit sluchai na Traktornom zavode" p. 1; and "Rabochie fabriki Moskvoshvei No. 5 vozmushcheny," p. 6.

being tried, but also in his selfishness on the factory floor and poor relationship with the highly skilled, productive American workers.[51]

The court met for merely ten minutes to determine their verdict and sentence. Its members, whom *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors and the factory committee jointly appointed, were all workers at the Moscow needle factory and included: Dorofeev, an older worker who also served on the newspaper's editorial board; Kar, an American female worker; and Barmashenko and Kudriavtsev who worked in the same shop with Tsiprus. With Panev, a party representative of the factory acting as chairman, the court unanimously declared V.M. Tsiprus' conduct antiproletarian and therefore incompatible with membership in both the union of needle workers, and the Profintern. They ordered that he be publicly censured in the pages of *Rabochaia Gazeta* and expelled from the trade union for three months, or until he was able to demonstrate through community service his commitment to working class principles.[52]

This trial in terms of its organization, content and conclusion greatly resembled the comrades-disciplinary courts, which first emerged during the 1905 Revolution to discipline individuals who lacked "revolutionary consciousness" and which resurfaced in an even more formal form under the aegis of the trade unions following the October Revolution of 1917. In addition to the prominent role the trade union of needle workers played in prosecuting the offender (Tsiprus), the similarities are numerous: he was tried for engaging in what textile union officials had twelve years earlier deemed

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[51] "Vchera na fabrike no. 5," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 18 August 1930, p. 6. Workers were also depicted asserting that the American bourgeoisie were ultimately responsible for Tsiprus' racist attitude. See, for example, "V otvet na antiproletarskuiu vykhodku Tsiprusa dopolnitel'no podpishemsia na zaem," *ibid.*, 17 August 1930, p. 6.

[52] "Prigovor rabochikh mass," *ibid.*, 18 August 1930, p. 6.

impermissible behavior, namely offending someone by words; it convened publicly during non-working hours; and the audience consisted of laborers from several factories who attended, at the repeated encouragement of the press, for largely entertainment purposes. Moreover, the proletarian court that sentenced Tsiprus mirrored the comrades-disciplinary courts of the early Soviet period by rendering swift justice and making the penalty dismissal from the union.[53] Thus, in their pursuit of propagating antiracism, trade union authorities in Moscow resorted to a method that their predecessors had employed to instill and enforce labor discipline in the toiling masses in the years following the Bolshevik Revolution. While perhaps lending the endeavor greater authenticity by grounding it in a practice of revolutionary historical precedence, it was also problematic to conceive of and approach the eradication of articulations of racism in nearly the same manner, as eradicating card-playing, drunkenness, hooilganism, embezzlement, tardiness, absenteeism, and other conduct that authorities had deemed anathema to the cultivation of proletarianness.[54]

The court proceedings against Tsiprus nevertheless suggest the importance that trade union authorities attached to furthering the Soviet state's enlightened image by cultivating the appearance that workers participated in or adhered to the standards of antiracist discourse. The Moscow trial complemented its more elaborate Stalingrad

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[53] See Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "Narratives of Appeal and the Appeal of Narratives: Labor Discipline and Its Contestation in the Early Soviet Period," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 24, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1997): 65-87, and "Defining and Ignoring Labor Discipline in the Early Soviet Period: The Comrades-Disciplinary Courts, 1918-1922," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 3 (Winter 1992): 705-730 (esp. pp. 709- 713).

[54] The Tsiprus trial can also be seen as having cultural precedence in the "agit-trials" or "agitational courts" used by union cultural circles or drama groups during the 1920s to gain the active involvement of the audience in rendering a collective judgment regarding a controversial issue that had been acted out before them. See, for example, Lynn Mally, "The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Youth Theater TRAM," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 411-430, and *Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theater and the Soviet State, 1917-1938* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

counterpart by illustrating through judicial spectacle that not only committing racist actions but also articulating racist thoughts was incongruent with the emergence of the New Soviet Person and the establishment of a new socialist society.[55] Tsiprus, in other words, provided Soviet officials with another prime propagandistic opportunity to reassert that the U.S.S.R. was a raceless society where "there is no distinction between whites and blacks" and where the construction of socialism was predicated upon the attitude that "the proletariat of all races are our brothers, our comrades-in-arms."[56] As the trial of American racism at a Moscow factory named for the Profintern ended, international trade union leaders were overseeing the proceedings of the third day of what was the Profintern's first congress to seriously address racism as a major hindrance to the mobilization of black workers.

IV.

Trud's exposure of the attack on Robinson could not have occurred at a more opportune time in the Soviet Union. We have already seen how many black Americans who were in Moscow for the Fifth Profintern Congress directly and indirectly contributed to the antiracist discourse that it inspired. They attended factory protest meetings, made speeches and formulated protest resolutions that were printed in the newspapers,

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[55] Tsiprus was not the only worker publicly reprimanded for making racist remarks. A year after he was tried, militsia in Tula allegedly arrested an inebriated worker for making "a few joking remarks" about Robert Turner, a twenty-year old black American who was part of a U.S. May Day delegation that was visiting the town; J. James, "Fight Against Chauvinism and Nationalism," *Workers News*, 12 May 1931, p. 2. For information about Turner who was a member of the Chicago YCL, see "Delegations Visit Moscow; Will Make Tour of U.S.S.R.," *ibid.*, 7 May 1931, p. 1. Harry Haywood claimed that in the only instance in which he was the target of a racial slur in Moscow during the late 1920s, the Russians on the train placed the offender who was intoxicated under citizen's arrest and escorted him to the nearest militsia station where the officer on duty supposedly detained him in order to teach him a lesson; *Black Bolshevik*, p. 169.

[56] These were the headlines that appeared in *Rabochaia Gazeta* on 18 August 1930 with the announcement of the court's verdict.

participated in the trial of V.M. Tsiprus, and editors published their visual images in the Soviet press.[57] Why however were black Americans in the capital to attend this congress and therefore poised to play such an active public role in furthering this rhetoric? This section demonstrates that Profintern leaders' decision to make the struggle against white chauvinism one of the organization's highest priorities, which brought several black Americans to Moscow in August 1930 to participate in the Fifth Congress, created an environment conducive for antiracist discourse to flourish.

At the organization's Fourth Congress in March 1928, Profintern leaders openly criticized their previous apathy in recruiting black laborers into the revolutionary trade union movement and in combating the white chauvinism within it. They placed much of the blame for this indifference on the supporters of Jay Lovestone who, as alluded to in the introduction, had offered up various excuses in order to avoid dealing with black workers insisting that they were "too backward," that those in the Black Belt were "agents of capitalist reaction," that there was an insufficient number of them in industry, and that their liberation would come only after the "industrial revolution" in the South. As James Ford argued, "of course this was not only reformism (the reformists say let the Negroes wait, the proletariat will free them), but it was the height of chauvinism.'" A. Lozovsky, the Profintern's General Secretary emphasized that significant strides had been made in getting the organization on the right path to addressing issues of race "when the Comintern ousted from the Communist Party of America the band of Lovestonites

[57] *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors even succeeded in recruiting some of them to participate in meetings between themselves and the Central Committee of Metal Workers Union concerning the establishment of an English language newspaper in the Soviet Union; "Brigada TsK metallistov vyezzhaet na Traktorostroi," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 13 August 1930, p. 6; "Angliiskaia gazeta dlia inostrannykh rabochikh v SSSR," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 6.

who introduced into the Party the theory and practice of the 'white race.'"[58] By no means a coincidence, the Profintern's admission of past mistakes in regards to treating black workers as a viable revolutionary force and pledges to improve upon them, preceded by only five months the Comintern's decision at the Sixth World Congress to declare black Americans a nation with the right to self-determination.

In an attempt to compensate for the chauvinistic indifference of the previous eight years, Profintern leaders at the Comintern's Sixth Congress commissioned the convening of an international conference of black trade union workers to be held at the end of 1929. This conference did not materialize until the following summer and Ford and Padmore's plans to hold it in London on 1 July 1930 were foiled by the decision of Ramsay MacDonald's British labor government to forbid them from congregating there.[59] The first International Conference of Negro Trade Union Workers finally convened in Hamburg, Germany from 7-14 July 1930 and officially established the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), which had been founded in name

[58] See James W. Ford, "Problems of Organization of the Negro Liberation Movement," pp. 29-30, in the Richard B. Moore Papers, Box 6, Folder 6, and GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 7, ll. 44-45.

[59] For the conference preparations including the appointment of Ford and Padmore as its leaders, and the decision that the London government issued on 21 May 1930, see "Instructions on Leading the International Conference of Negroes," f. 495, op. 155, d. 86, ll. 7-8 (19 June 1930), and "Minutes of Meeting of Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of RILU (29 May 1930)," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 83, ll. 96-97. Fred Marsh criticized white British workers for not protesting the Labor Government's decision to bar black workers from meeting in London. He lamented, "they think this is only a question of the Negroes, that it affects Negroes only"; "Evening, 6th Session, 18.8.30," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 93-94. For contemporary newspaper accounts of the preparations, see for example, James W. Ford, "The International Conference of Negro Workers," *Liberator*, 10 May 1930, p. 4, and 17 May 1930, p. 4; "Negro Toilers Forward to the London Conference!", *Liberator*, 7 June 1930, p. 7; and "Ford of T.U.U.L. is Chairman at Negro Congress, Banned By MacDonald Held in Berlin," *Daily Worker*, 9 July 1930, p. 1. For an historian's account of the conference, see Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), esp. pp. 59-61.

only by RILU officials two years earlier.[60] Reflecting the Profintern's policy shift, the ITUCNW's primary objective was to "carry on a struggle against (white) Chauvinism" and to develop trade union organizations in the United States, Africa and the West Indies.[61] As the *New York Times* warned in August 1930, the Profintern in recent years has increased work among black peoples throughout the world, including sponsoring the formation of an "'International Negro committee" to "counteract the 'chauvinism of whites.'"[62] In addition to representatives from the United States, black workers from Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Nigeria, South Africa and Jamaica attended the proceedings. With black Americans as the ITUCNW's vanguard, James Ford, Helen McClain, Isaiah Hawkins, and George Padmore were appointed to its executive bureau.[63] While Padmore expressed his concern that delegates from Latin America, East Africa, and the French colonies were underrepresented, he nonetheless emphasized that "this conference is of tremendous significance. It is the first time in the history of the Negro labor movement that such a conference has been convened."[64]

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[60] For Profintern authorities' official announcement of the decision to establish a committee and organize a conference at the Sixth Comintern Congress, see "Mezhdunarodnyi profkomitet rabochikh-negrov," *Trud*, 1 August 1930, p. 1.

[61] For Ford's complete report of the origins and functions of ITUCNW before the Fifth Profintern Congress, see "V RILU Congress, 17.8.30," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 137, ll. 174-176, 179-190. For the resolutions adopted by the members of ITUCNW regarding its organizational functions, see "Resolution on the Organization and Functions of the ITUCNW," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 96, ll. 2-4; and "Regarding the Organization and Functions of the International Trade Union Committee of Negroes in Hamburg, 15 November 1930[Russian]," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 85, l. 25. Excerpts of Ford's speech can also be found in James Ford, "Negritianskii proletariat vystupaet na revoliutsionnuiu arenu," p. 3. For the ITUCNW, see also, "Novye otriady rabochego dvizheniia," *Trud*, 6 August 1930, p. 1.

[62] See "World Negro Rising Said to Be Soviet Aim," *New York Times*, 21 August 1930, p. 3.

[63] See Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, esp. pp. 328-329, and V. Chattopadhyaya, "International Conference of Negro Workers," *Daily Worker*, 7 August 1930, p. 4.

[64] "Evening, 6th Session, 18.8.30," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 109-113 (quotation l. 113). The weaknesses in preparations for the Hamburg Conference were also discussed during an October meeting of the All-American Bureau of the International Committee of Propaganda of Revolutionary Metal Workers;

Although it was primarily a shortage of funds and poor communication with the colonies that delayed the convening of this monumental conference until the summer of 1930, it was a rather fortuitous development for Profintern leaders. Once it closed, delegates merely traveled east and arrived in Leningrad on 31 July 1930. Ford informed a reporter that the ITUCNW delegates were going to use the weeks in the U.S.S.R. preceding the Fifth Congress to examine Leninist nationality policy in practice which many of them did, as we have seen, by becoming instrumental in the early stages of the campaign to bring the two American racists to justice. Then when the Fifth Congress actually opened, the ITUCNW delegates' attendance helped prove that the organization was making progress in mobilizing black laborers.[65] As Ford emphasized, the Fifth Congress constituted "the first time in an international congress of the RILU, (that) Negro work has been brought seriously to the attention of the movement" and that more than two or three black delegates participated.[66] Although *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* reported that it was the first time that representatives of black workers were involved in the Profintern's proceedings, Ford, together with two other black delegates, one from Cuba and the other from Guadeloupe had attended the organization's Fourth Congress in March 1928. However, according to Ford, "the delegate from Cuba had not had such

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"Protokol zasedaniia vseamerikanskogo biuro ot 29 oktiabria 1930 g.," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 171, ll. 15-17.

[65] For the early arrival of black delegates in the Soviet Union who had been attending the conference in Hamburg, see RGASPI, f. 534, op. 3, d. 755, l. 68; RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 85, ll. 25-26; and "Negro Workers Visit the Soviet Union," *Daily Worker*, 1 August 1930, p. 4. In July, U.S. Communist leaders had requested that Comintern authorities send Harry Haywood back to the United States prior to the Congress, insisting that they needed a strong black leader in the South in order to avoid losing recruits while the leading black American Communists like Ford and Padmore were in Moscow. Comintern officials denied this request and Haywood attended thereby increasing the black American presence during the proceedings; "To the Political Commission (2.7.30)," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1869, l. 45.

[66] Ford made this remark on the third day of the congress (17 August 1930); RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 137, l. 171.

open experiences with chauvinism in Cuba as we had in the U.S.A. and therefore was very passive on the question."[67]

Delegates were hardly passive in addressing the impediment that white chauvinism posed to the international proletarian movement during the Fifth Congress. Although the proceedings were to a large degree concerned with displaying and celebrating the progress that the organization had made in reaching out to black laborers, delegates collectively acknowledged that between the Fourth and Fifth Congresses a still insignificant number of black workers had been drawn into the revolutionary trade unions in the U.S. and that an "extremely insufficient" number of black Americans had been promoted to "leading trade union work."[68] They even discussed the shortcomings of the Hamburg Conference adding to Padmore's list of underrepresented groups black laborers from the West Indies and the U.S..[69] Lozovsky and Ford emphasized that in order to mobilize effectively the potentially powerful revolutionary force of the twelve million black Americans, they needed to approve concrete measures to eliminate white chauvinism, which involved promoting black Americans to positions of power and implementing black and white organizational unity.[70]

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[67] "Ravnaia plata za ravnyi trud," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 24 August 1930, p. 1; Ford, "Problems of Organization of the Negro Liberation Movement," p. 30.

[68] RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 154, ll. 78-79.

[69] "Resolution on Negro Work (29.8.1930)," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 164, l. 10.

[70] RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 137, ll. 171-172, 174-178, 180. Lozovsky had been rather forthright in stating in the months preceding the Fifth Congress that "we are still far from resolving the question of race, but we have adopted the correct path towards its resolution"; GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 7, l. 45. Soviet newspapers and the *Negro Worker* printed many of Lozovsky's and Ford's remarks on this issue. See, for example, James Ford, "Negritianskie rabochie i Profintern," *Trud*, 16 August 1930, p. 2; "Nachinaetsia vosstanie chernogo kontinenta protiv imperializma," *ibid.*, 24 August 1930, p. 2; "Mirovoi kongress polnost'iu odobriaet liniiu i rabotu tsentral'nogo soveta," *ibid.*, 24 August 1930, p. 1; Lozovsky, "5th World Congress of the R. I. L. U.," and "Summary of the Report of Comrade Ford to the 5th World Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions on Work among Negroes," *Negro Worker*, 4-5 (April-May 1931): 12-18,

Because the Congress emphasized the urgency of adopting concrete measures to eliminate racism and thereby attract black workers into the revolutionary trade unions, several delegates including the General Secretary himself held up Soviet trade union officials' response to the racially-motivated assault in Stalingrad as a tangible model for all their "little trade union brothers" but particularly those in the U.S. to follow in punishing white chauvinists. One of the more prominent advocates was George Padmore who officially spoke on behalf of the black delegates of the U.S., Latin America, and Africa. He insisted that the mass mobilization of workers against Lewis and Brown constituted an especially valuable lesson for U.S. trade union leaders. As Padmore specifically emphasized, "the Russian workers, led by their trade unions, did not pamper this white chauvinist, but they rallied their forces not only in Stalingrad but throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union and demonstrated their strength against this bourgeois white chauvinism. This is of significance to the American comrades, and shows that the correct way in which to combat white chauvinism."[71]

Lozovsky elaborated on Padmore's argument by contrasting how Soviet trade union leaders and *workers* dealt with the two racists in Stalingrad against how their U.S. counterparts had handled an encounter with racism in Chicago just a month earlier. In response to a Lithuanian restaurant owner's refusal to serve black delegates of the Unemployed Workers' Convention, Lozovsky explained, TUUL authorities had

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18-22. For Fred Marsh's input into the discussion about white chauvinism in which he stressed the need for interracial working class unity, see "Evening, Sixth Session, 18.8.30," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 138, ll. 92-95. For excerpts of Hawkins' statements about the inadequacies of work among black laborers, see "Opyt millionov - na organizatsiiu revoliutsionnykh boev," p. 1.

[71] Padmore delivered this speech during the nineteenth session of the Congress on 25 August 1930, several days before the trial in Stalingrad closed; "V Congress – 19th Session, 25.8.30," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 145, ll. 115-116. Padmore was considered part of the U.S. delegation to the Congress and his occupational specialties were listed as publisher, writer and sugar worker; d. 170, l. 42.

suggested that, "We will let the Negroes have the money, and they can go and eat wherever they want to."[72] Lozovsky called this a "blot on the revolutionary movement" and criticized trade union leaders for handling it even more shamefully by doing nothing following the incident to "stigmatize" the white chauvinists. Fighting white chauvinism, he stressed, did not mean writing Moscow, or discussing it at a congress every two years, and then walking away with an indifferent attitude, instead "that is masking condoning white chauvinism." Clearly casting Soviet laborers as paragons of proletarian antiracism who were to be emulated, he emphasized that when Robinson was attacked they "did not wait till their Congress was due to meet" to address it. Rather, after it "became known in the press, in all the factories of cities like Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and others, and plants in places as wide apart as the Urals and the Far East the workers met and passed protest resolutions. They elected special delegates, which they sent to Stalingrad in the capacity of public prosecutors against the hooligan in question. That is what you call fighting white chauvinism, this is what is meant by really mobilizing the workers and rapping every rowdy over the knuckles who takes it into his head to show his racial 'superiority' over Negro workers."[73]

Discussions of Soviet authorities' and workers' response to the assault as the ideal model for combating the ideology of white superiority among the toiling masses, although perhaps never as passionate as those articulated by Lozovsky, did not end with

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[72] According to Bill Dunne in the *Daily Worker*, "the Lithuanian comrades, afraid of losing business in their co-operative restaurant appealed to the arrangements committee for the transference of Negro delegates to another restaurant, and offered to pay for their meals as a 'donation' (rather to say 'bribe') to the committee." The paper emphasized that this was not the first manifestation of white chauvinism within the Chicago Lithuanian fraction; "White Chauvinism in Chicago," *Daily Worker*, 23 July 1930, p. 1.

[73] "Nachinaetsia vosstanie chernogo kontinenta protiv imperializma," p. 2. See also Lozovsky, "5th World Congress of the R.I.L.U.," *Negro Worker* 4-5 (April-May 1931): 12-18.

the closing of the Profintern Congress in late August 1930. Several black Profintern delegates worked to perpetuate the memory of the first Soviet campaign against American racism in the years that followed. For this reason, they met with *Trud's* worker correspondents on 5 September 1930 around a kitchen table in their dormitory. The meeting's black and white participants whose photograph appeared in *Trud* agreed that the bourgeois press around the world, especially the mainstream and African-American newspapers in the U.S. had distorted the details of the trial and deliberately glossed over its importance for the liberation of black workers. They even noted that the proletarian press had yet to fully illuminate its significance.[74] Thus the interracial group reportedly discussed ways to both "better mobilize the attention of the international proletariat to the verdict of the Soviet court about the act of two American fascists at the Tractor factory" and establish communication between black workers in Detroit and Alabama and laborers in the Soviet Union. James Ford, who had been elected to the Profintern's Executive Bureau, was the only participant identified by name.[75]

As its contents indicate, one of the *Negro Worker*'s objectives during its first full year of publication in 1931 as the official organ of the ITUCNW was to fully "illuminate the significance" of the Stalingrad trial by informing and/or reminding "the international proletariat" about the court's ruling against the white American racists. With George

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[74] "Prigovor, o kotorom dolzhen znat' ves' proletariat," *Trud*, 5 September 1930, p. 2. Both *Trud* and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* quoted the "fascist paper '*Popolo d'Italiia*'" as reporting that, "the trial against Lewis represents the great propaganda in defense of the Negroes of all the world and especially of Negroes in the USA." See "Ital'ianskaia gazeta o sude nad Luisom," *Trud*, 30 August 1930, p. 1; and "'SSSR unichtozhaet rasovuoe rozn' ' - Ital'ianskaia gazeta," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 30 August 1930, p. 1.

[75] "Tsentral'nyi sovet Profinterna izbral novyi sostav Ispolbiuro," *Trud*, 1 September 1930, p. 1.

Padmore and James Ford acting as editors,[76] they published the Elektrozavod workers' protest letter as an example of "How to Organize for Mass Action"; the Profintern Congress' statement of opposition; Lozovsky's remarks; and articles like "Race Prejudice in England" which compared Soviet authorities' attitude towards racism as exhibited in their response to the assault on Robinson with that of U.S. and British officials.[77] They also reproduced the "brotherly unity" photograph of Ford with his arms around a group of Elektrozavod workers. Opposite it, they printed a cartoon which depicted in its last frame a black and white worker with their arms around each other kicking over a table on top of which a little man named "Chauvinism" had been standing and under which a fat man named "Capitalism" had been hiding. The photograph was arguably designed to constitute the logical ending of the cartoon since Ford and the Russian workers had already kicked over the table upon which "capitalism" had been propping up "chauvinism" in the U.S.S.R..[78] By publishing these artifacts of the Soviet campaign

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[76] The *Negro Worker* sometimes had its monthly circulation to the U.S., the West Indies, and several African countries interrupted by government interference and/or other distribution problems. For correspondence between Padmore and distributors in which the former candidly expressed his frustration, see, for example, RGASPI, f. 534, op. 3, d. 756, ll. 2, 11-13, 14-15, 18, 20-29; d. 755, ll. 4, 75, 78; d. 754, ll. 7, 135, 156, 170. Padmore was succeeded as editor-in-chief by James Ford and Charles Woodson. The Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern instructed all editors that the articles needed to be "written in simple style so that the most backward Negro worker could understand: pictures reflecting the conditions under which the Negro toilers live should be freely utilized in making the Review attractive." They were also told to publish material about black American working class life in order to educate workers in the U.S.S.R. and imperial metropoles; RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 96, l. 4.

[77] This letter first appeared in *Trud*, 19 August 1930, p. 1. For Padmore's commentary, which accompanied its reprinting, see "How to Organize for Mass Action," *Negro Worker* 2 (February 1931): 21-22. See also "Declaration of the Negro Delegation of the Fifth R.I.L.U. Congress against the white chauvinism of two American workmen," *ibid.*, 2 (February 1931): 15-18; and Margaret Clyde, "Race prejudice in England," *ibid.*, 6 (June 1931): 12-14. See also note 73. In a 26 February 1932 letter to A. Ward (of the London Negro Welfare Association), Padmore claimed that the March 1932 issue which he was sending him would sell well there because it contained a reprint of "Race Prejudice in England"; RGASPI, f. 534, op. 3, d. 754, l. 135.

[78] The image was first printed in *Trud*, 10 August 1930, p. 1. It appeared with the cartoon in the February 1931 edition of the *Negro Worker* (pp.16-17). The caption claimed that it had been taken after "a monster protest mass meeting, against two American chauvinists at Stalingrad".

against Lewis and Brown, Padmore and Ford not only privileged it as a model of antiracism, but also provided their readers with evidence that class-conscious white workers, represented by Russians, could be color blind and thus, be trusted.

This was clearly the dual objective of other forms of ITUCNW literature as well. For example, an agitational pamphlet that was intended for dissemination among black and white workers in early 1931, recounted what had quickly become standard narrative: two Americans, who were "accustomed to treating Negroes as dogs," attacked a black worker "named Robinson" in the Soviet Union. A workers' court subsequently expelled them from the country and "assured Robinson that although he is a Negro he was their class brother and that they will always defend Negro workers against the attempts of any white chauvinists who showed prejudice against them." The Soviet court, the ITUCNW pamphlet emphasized, also warned anyone who was thinking of imitating the white assailants' racist conduct "that the workers of the Soviet Union will never tolerate race prejudice." It then encouraged readers to contrast Soviet citizens' defense of Robinson against the systematic mistreatment of black toilers in the U.S., England and Africa. From this, ITUCNW officials argued, "Negro workers, can at once see the difference in the attitude of the revolutionary workers of the Soviet Union with that of capitalists and their social reformist agents within the ranks of the working class."[79] Eugene Gordon claimed in a July 1931 article in the *New Masses* that they could see the difference, by which he meant that the Soviet campaign against the two white Americans was integral to black American workers' collective memory of white Communists' and especially Soviet citizens' commitment to fighting racism.[80]

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[79] RGASPI, f. 534, op. 3, d. 669, ll. 48-51 (quotation l. 50).

Finally, in addition to ITUCNW literature, James Ford used another means to fulfill the pledge that he and other Profintern delegates had made at the September 1930 meeting with *Trud*'s correspondents about popularizing the campaign's legacy. In a teaching unit that he wrote for students and future leaders of the CPUSA attending the Workers' School in New York, he presented the Stalingrad trial as the antiracist model for eradicating white chauvinism. In the "Problems of Organization of the Negro Liberation Movement," Ford specifically instructed that the way in which the "Russian workers" responded to the assault on Robinson "was of international importance to the working class and to oppressed people." He continued to recite the near routine narrative stressing that, "when this incident became known, there was not a factory in the whole of Russia that did not let loose a volume of indignant protests. . . . Workers' meetings, conferences, and congresses from Moscow and Leningrad to the Urals and the Far East passed resolutions of protest against this bourgeois American practice" and the two American racists were banished. Reminiscent of the speeches Lozvosky and Padmore had delivered during the Congress, Ford advised students, "that is how to fight chauvinism, that is how the Russian trade unions affiliated to the R.I.L.U. set the example of struggle against bourgeois practices. The Russian workers showed the world and especially the working class what is meant by internationalism, that the workers of all races are brothers, that no chauvinist must dare raise the bourgeois practice of chauvinism in the U.S.S.R."[81]

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[80] See Eugene Gordon, "The Negro's New Leadership," *New Masses* (July 1931): 14-15.

[81] Ford, "Problems of Organization of the Negro Liberation Movement," p. 29.

As Ford's teaching unit and all the above examples demonstrate, by recounting or romanticizing about the first Soviet campaign against American racism with the nominal objective of presenting it as a model for eradicating white chauvinism, Lozovsky, Ford, Padmore, and other trade union officials glorified the Soviet state as supremely enlightened and furthered the image that it was the only country to have discovered the cure for racism. This image of Soviet racelessness was even further bolstered when the antiracist model assumed concrete form at a casino in Harlem.

V.

Profintern officials' advocacy that the Stalingrad trial be used as an example for combating white chauvinism, a message particularly intended for U.S. leaders, did not fall on deaf ears. When the *Liberator* first announced in February 1931 that the U.S. Communist Party was placing August Yokinen, a Finnish immigrant worker on trial in Harlem for white chauvinism, Cyril Briggs highlighted the connections between it and the trial of Lewis and Brown that had occurred in Stalingrad five months earlier. He argued that "the sincerity of the Communists in fighting all forms of national oppression of the Negroes, is thus shown not only in Stalingrad where two American engineers were tried for beating a Negro, but also in the United States where an energetic and fearless struggle has been started by the Communist Party to wipe out all chauvinist tendencies from the Revolutionary Movement."[82] In a later article, Briggs again acknowledged the similarities between the two court proceedings. As he put it, "the prejudiced boss lynchers of the United States" had barely recovered from the blow of witnessing "two

[82] "Workers' Mass Trial in Harlem March 1st," *Liberator*, 21 February 1931, p. 1. The editors misspelled Yokinen's name as "Jakonen."

white Americans being kicked out of the Soviet Union for an attempt to introduce American race prejudice into the workers' republic," when U.S. Communists dealt them another by organizing a mass trial against a member for exhibiting racism.[83]

What did August Yokinen specifically do to be charged with white chauvinism? Did he physically assault a black laborer like Lewis and Brown, or express racist statements as had Tsiprus? Party leaders of the Second District tried the custodian and Party unit leader of the Finnish Workers Club in Harlem for an incident that had taken place in December 1930.[84] When three black workers attended a dance that the Club sponsored, they encountered tremendous hostility from several of the white guests who even threatened to kick them out. Communist investigators found it most appalling that the Party members who were present did not come to the defense of the three black men. While the majority of these offenders told officials what they wanted to hear, conceding, in other words, that they should have upheld the Party's principles and expelled the racist white men, Yokinen defended the hostility shown towards the black workers. He stressed that, "if Negroes come into the dance hall and poolroom they will want to use our baths and I for one do not wish to bathe with a Negro."[85] Following the Soviet example, when the District Committee announced that they were placing Yokinen before

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[83] Cyril Briggs, "Expels White Chauvinist from Ranks," *ibid.*, 14 March 1931, p. 6.

[84] This chapter benefits from the brief discussions of the Yokinen trial found in both Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), pp. 47-48, and Solomon, *The Cry was Unity*, pp. 139-142. Neither Naison nor Solomon mention the Yokinen trial and Stalingrad predecessor.

[85] Cyril Briggs, Herbert Newton, and Harry Haywood wrote a letter to Comintern leaders in April 1931 accusing the U.S. Communists of failing to implement the ECCI's October 1930 Resolution about taking seriously work among black Americans. They cited Yokinen's remarks to encapsulate the white superior mentality with which they routinely were forced to deal. Specifically they explained that "during the investigation of the incident in the Finnish Club, a comrade by the name of Yokinen expressed the rankest hating sentiments, inferring that Negroes should not be allowed in the pool room and bath rooms"; "A

a workers' court for such an attitude of white superiority, they instructed all mass revolutionary organizations to "send delegates to participate in rendering the verdict" against him. They hoped that as in the Soviet Union the Yokinen trial would allow them to launch a general discussion and campaign against racism among U.S. workers.[86]

The trial opened on Sunday, 1 March 1931, in the New Harlem Casino before an audience of two thousand people (half of whom stood), which reportedly included black and white women who held babies in their arms.[87] The walls of the large hall were covered with posters and placards which explicitly defined the space as antiracist by proclaiming "Race Inferiority Is a White Ruling Class Lie" and "Smash All Jim Crow Laws and Practices." Clarence Hathaway editor of the *Daily Worker* served as prosecutor, Richard B. Moore, black American national leader of the International Labor Defense and the Party's candidate for State Attorney General acted as defense attorney, and Alfred Wagenknecht an active member of the TUUL and a leader of the unemployed movement presided as judge. This assignment of duties which had a white Communist essentially defending the three black workers and a black Communist defending the white immigrant worker was obviously intended to reflect the higher level of consciousness that members of the Communist Party were supposed to posses in regards to issues of race.

Statement of Several Negro Comrades Concerning Negro Work Particularly by the L.S.N.R.," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 96, ll. 18-26 (quotation l. 19).

[86] "Race Equality Trial Draws 2,000 Workers," *Afro-American*, 7 March 1931, p. 7; "Call Yokinen to Mass Trial on Grounds of White Chauvinism," *Daily Worker*, 16 February 1931, p. 1; "Hold Mass Trial on March 1 to Expose White Chauvinism," *ibid.*, 24 February 1931, p. 1; "Against White Chauvinism!", *ibid.*, 28 February 1931, p. 1; "Workers' Mass Trial in Harlem March 1st," *Liberator*, 21 February 1931, p. 1. The Yokinen trial was intended to be the first of many trials organized to prove that the Party was serious about eradicating racism.

[87] While the *Daily Worker* reported on 4 March 1931 that 1500 people attended, the *New York Times* (2 March 1931, pp. 1-2), the *Pittsburgh Courier* ("2000 Hear 'Equality' Trial in New York," 7 March 1931, p. 4), *Afro-American* ("Race Equality Trial Draws 2,000 Workers," p. 7) and the *Liberator* (14 March 1931, p. 6) set the number at 2000.

As reiterated in the October 1930 ECCI Resolution, white Communists were required to lead the struggle for black equality, while black Communists were expected to see foreign immigrant laborers and all white workers as allies rather than enemies.[88]

When addressing the court, Clarence Hathaway resolutely demanded that Yokinen be expelled from the Party, emphasizing that attitudes like his were detrimental to their efforts to attract black workers and prove their commitment to racial equality. As he specifically remarked, "Comrade Yokinen made formal acceptance of the Communist principle of equal rights but he was not willing to accept its substance. Do you suppose it is possible for our party to convince the Negroes that we will fight for them if we show them we are not ready to bathe with them." Testifying directly to the influence of the Soviet antiracist model on the Harlem proceedings, Hathaway reminded the audience of the trial and expulsion from the Soviet Union of the white Americans who attacked a black worker in Stalingrad, emphasizing the need to take similar dramatic action.[89] During his formal remarks, Richard B. Moore portrayed Yokinen as a victim of both the U.S. capitalist system that had inculcated him with racial hatred, as well as of the U.S. Communist authorities who had failed to implement the necessary concrete measures to eradicate racism among its members. Moore advocated that the Party not make Yokinen a sacrificial lamb but instead "examine ourselves to see how far we have contributed to

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[88] Somewhat ironically, the Comintern leader who had drafted this resolution was Otto Kuusinen (1881-1964) of Finnish descent. The document stated that, "it is the duty of white workers to march at the head in the struggle. They must everywhere make the breach in the walls of segregation and 'Jim Crowism' which have been set up by the bourgeois slave-market morality. . . . They, the white workers, must boldly jump at the throats of the 100% bandits who strike a Negro in the face"; Kuusinen, "Directives for the Thesis on the Negro Question in the U.S.," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 94, ll. 203-209 (quotation l. 208). This last statement suggests that Comintern leaders were using the October 1930 Resolution to implicitly instruct white American workers to respond to an assault on a black worker in the way that Russian workers responded to the attack on Robinson, that is by "boldly jump(ing) at the throats" of the assailants.

[89] "Race Equality Trial Stirs Harlem Reds," *New York Times*, 2 March 1931, pp. 1-2; "Race Equality Trial Draws 2,000 Workers," p. 7.

this thing of which Comrade Yokinen was guilty." He insisted that they should not expel him from the Party but "must win him back" to Communist principles. A jury of seven black and seven white Communist workers who had been selected from the audience at the start of the proceedings issued their verdict after about thirty minutes of deliberation. The foreman, Thomas Mitchell announced that they had found Yokinen guilty of the "crime of white chauvinism" and unanimously ruled to expel him from the Party. [90]

Despite the verdict, the judge did not discount Moore's argument about the Party's need to reach out to Yokinen rather than completely turn its back on him. Thus, similar to V.M. Tsiprus' expulsion from the Soviet needle workers union and Profintern, Wagenknecht made Yokinen's re-instatement in the Party possible if he demonstrated active involvement in the fight for black equality. He specifically ordered Yokinen to fulfill several concrete tasks towards this end. These included: to speak about the trial before a mass meeting at the Finnish Workers Club; to advocate that black laborers be admitted to the Club with full privileges which meant access to the pool room, bathhouse and restaurant; to become a member of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR) and sell weekly a significant number of copies of the *Liberator*; to organize a demonstration against a particular restaurant in Harlem that refused to serve black Americans; and to assume a prominent role in the general campaign and activities against Jim Crowism.[91] Yokinen responded to this list of specific tasks by promising "I will do

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[90] "Mass Trial Tomorrow in Relentless Fight on White Chauvinism," *Daily Worker*, 28 February 1931, p. 1. The CPUSA issued a pamphlet documenting the trial, *Race Hatred on Trial* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1931). The pamphlet was reprinted in its entirety in Philip S. Foner and Herbert Shapiro, eds, *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1930-1934* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). For its release, see "Workers Court Fights Race Hatred," *Liberator*, 28 March 1931, p. 8; "Yokinen Trial Pamphlet Ready," *Daily Worker*, 31 March 1931, p. 1; "Race Hatred on Trial," 6, *Negro Worker* (June 1931): 21-22; and "'Race Hatred On Trial' Heard in Far West," *Liberator*, 27 June 1931, p. 6.

it! I did wrong at the club." The *Daily Worker* lauded Yokinen for recognizing that his conduct constituted "'a crime against the working class as a whole'" and asserted that by recognizing his mistakes and accepting his assigned duties, he "won the deep, proletarian respect of every worker in the hall."[92]

As alluded to in Hathaway's remarks and those that Cyril Briggs recorded at the beginning of this section, U.S. Communist leaders were clearly trying to emulate Soviet trade union leaders by using a workers' court and expulsion to define the organization as a small yet growing refuge of antiracism within a larger virulently racist society. That is to say, just as Soviet leaders sought to define the country through a rejection of American racism and the inclusion of black workers, U.S. Communist leaders attempted to define the Party in similar terms. I. Amter explicitly acknowledged this in an article in the *Daily Worker*. Specifically, he argued that "in this trial the Communist Party of the United States openly tells the working class what the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union declared when in Stalingrad several months ago, two Americans working in the tractor plant slugged a Negro worker. At that time, the workers of the plant declared that 'there is no place in the Soviet Union for American capitalist methods.' The Communist Party declares that there is no room in its ranks for enemies of the Negro, who therefore are enemies of the working class."[93]

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[91] Ryan Walker, "A Communist Trial," *Daily Worker*, 4 March 1931, p. 2.

[92] "A Warning," *ibid.*, 3 March 1931, p. 1; "Expells White Chauvinist from Ranks," *Liberator*, 14 March 1931, p. 6; "Defend Yokinen," *Daily Worker*, 4 March 1931, p. 1.

[93] I. Amter, "Significance of the Yokinen Trial," *ibid.*, 9 March 1930, p. 4; Williams, "Socialists Spread Race Hatred," 10-11; "Yokinen Mass Trial Sunday," *ibid.*, 25 February 1931, p. 2. Amter was one of the Communist authorities whom Haywood, Briggs, and Newton criticized in their April 1931 letter to Comintern leaders for exhibiting white chauvinistic tendencies; RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 96, ll. 21-22.

The efforts of American Communists to replicate the Soviet antiracist model were rather ineffectual. Not only was there a significant delay in time from when Yokinen committed the offense in December and the Party's punishment of it in March, but even more importantly, out of all the manifestations of white chauvinism from which they had to choose some of which involved white American-born men, they decided to make an example out of a white immigrant worker from Finland who had not been savvy enough to have just told investigators what they wanted to hear, who barely spoke or read English, and thus had to have most of the proceedings explained to him through an interpreter. In fact, two to three weeks before U.S. Communist leaders announced their plans to try Yokinen for white chauvinism, the *Daily Worker* had published two articles in which Maude White and Harold Williams detailed numerous manifestations of racism within the Philadelphia needle workers' trade union and the Harlem section of the Communist Party.[94] Although they organized similar trials in the year that followed none received nearly as much publicity and carried as much mobilizing potential as this, their first. U.S. Communist leaders failed to capitalize on a prime opportunity to make their statement against American racism even more profound and more effective in attracting black American workers by targeting a representative from among the white American-born men, who as a whole dominated the U.S. Party's leadership (although not its membership).

[94] White, who was at KUTV when the Fifth Congress convened, had even challenged authorities to implement the suggestions that Lozovsky had made during it about eradicating racism. Harold Williams, "Chauvinistic Tendencies in the Harlem Section," *Daily Worker*, 3 February 1931, p. 4; Maude White, "Against White Chauvinism in Phila. Needle Trades," *ibid.*, 28 January 1931, p. 3.

It was due to his immigrant status that after the trial, Yokinen was transformed immediately from a "white chauvinist" into a "champion of the Negro masses."[95] On 2 March 1931, immigration authorities arrested Yokinen and held him for deportation to Finland on the pretext that he belonged to an organization, which encouraged "the overthrow of the government by force and violence."[96] However, black and white Communists like Moore, Amter, William Patterson and Sol Harper insisted that the U.S. government would not be trying to deport Yokinen if he had just been expelled from the Party and had refrained from vowing to lead the struggle for black equality. Due to these circumstances, U.S. Communist leaders expected black workers to assume a prominent role in defending Yokinen.[97] The *Liberator* quoted the white chauvinist-turned "Negro champion" as saying that if he had to be deported, then he only wanted to be sent to the land of antiracism, to the Soviet Union "where there is no unemployment, no wage cuts, no 'race' hatred." On 10 October 1932 the same day that the U.S. Supreme Court heard

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[95] See "Free Yokinen, Champion of the Negro Masses, Who Faces Deportation, Death," *Liberator*, 3 October 1931, p. 2. The *Daily Worker* and *Liberator* documented the work that Yokinen was doing to fight for black equality. See, for example, "Yokinen Fights Race Prejudice," *Daily Worker*, 6 March 1931, p. 1; "Mass Meets in Harlem to Fight Prejudice and Deportation," *ibid.*, 10 March 1931, p. 2; and "American Bosses Continue Effort to Deport Yokinen," *Liberator*, 5 September 1931, p. 5.

[96] The International Labor Defense filed Yokinen's appeal; "Fight the U.S. Move to Deport August Yokinen," *Daily Worker*, 4 March 1931, p. 1; "Yokinen Ordered Deported by Department of Labor," *Liberator*, 11 July 1931, p. 3; and "Mass Campaign to Save Yokinen from Hangman," *ibid.*, 10 October 1931, p. 3.

[97] Sol Harper insisted that "particularly must the Negro workers fight the deportation of Yokinen, for it is to him the government now says, 'you pledged to fight discrimination against Negroes in Harlem and lynching,' and 'for this you will be sent back to Finland identified as an enemy of capitalist society to be murdered'"; "Attacks on Foreign Born Under Cover of Job Getting," *Daily Worker*, 13 March 1931, p. 4. For other criticism of U.S. leaders, see William Wilson (Patterson), "August Yokinen Persecuted. Why?" *Liberator*, 18 July 1931, p. 2; "Calls for Fight to Free Yokinen," *Daily Worker*, 3 March 1931, p. 2; and "Arrested for Advocating Race Equality; Held for Deportation," *Liberator*, 14 March 1931, p. 1. For examples of LSNR's activities, see "LSNR Pledges Aid To Yokinen," *Daily Worker*, 5 March 1931, p. 5, and "Save Yokinen! Demonstrate March 28th!," *Liberator*, 28 March 1931, p. 4.

the appeal on behalf of the seven Scottsboro defendants, they "refused to review the (Yokinen) case" and the Finnish worker was subsequently deported. [98]

CONCLUSION

1928 marked the beginning of the "Third Period" of the Communist International when the organization, at Stalin's behest, abandoned united-front policies and pursued a more militant, revolutionary position. Accordingly, Profintern authorities at their Fourth Congress in March 1928, and then Comintern leaders at their Sixth Congress in August 1928 turned their attention to black Americans, recognized them as a potentially revolutionary force, and identified racism as the primary obstacle in the realization of that potential. To destroy this impediment, the Profintern vowed to increase significantly black Americans workers' involvement in the revolutionary trade unions, while the Comintern declared black Americans a nation with the right to self-determination. Despite this interest that high-ranking Soviet authorities displayed in the plight of black Americans, August 1930 was the first time that they sought to propagate and sustain among the Soviet populace an antiracist discourse, that is a rhetoric which visually and discursively condemned American racial violence and defined the Soviet Union, in terms of its absence, as enlightened. U.S. racism was placed on trial twice before two separate "proletarian courts," authorities, workers, and all-union editors were depicted actively asserting the U.S.S.R.'s racially harmonious identity, allusions to and visual images of U.S. racial persecution became more frequent in the press, and the Fifth Profintern Congress brought together more black delegates to Moscow to condemn white

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[98]"Repudiated Racial Hate; Now Faces Deportation," *Liberator*, 15 June 1932, p. 2; "To Deport Worker Who Repudiated Race Prejudice," *ibid.*, 20 October 1932, p. 2.

chauvinism and identify the Stalingrad trial as the ideal model for combating it, than had previously been the case. Ironically, while this was the first RILU Congress to place work among black laborers at the forefront of their objectives, it was also the last international congress before the organization was dissolved completely in 1937.[99]

U.S. Communist leader Earl Browder argued in December 1931 that without the "educational and agitational effects" which they had gained from the workers' trial against August Yokinen, the Party would never have "seized upon the Scottsboro case." As he concluded, "I think that we can say that without the prelude of the Yokinen case, the Scottsboro case would never have been heard of."[100] Presumably, the same could be said for Soviet leaders. This chapter contends that the antiracist rhetoric, which authorities fostered throughout August 1930 laid the groundwork for them to develop an even more enduring and far-reaching discourse to accompany the Soviet campaign to free the nine young black American men in Scottsboro, Alabama from 1931 to 1932. In fact, the legal lynching that transpired in April 1931 confirmed the image of U.S. race relations that Soviet officials had deliberately generated in the pages of the all-union press in the wake of the assault on Robinson less than a year earlier.

Rather significantly, however, this first campaign against American racism was one of the only times that the central Soviet press printed several photographs of lynched

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[99] The Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) dissolved the Red International of Trade Unions by decree on 17 November 1937. See Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson, eds., *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 49-51, 138-139. The first international conference of black workers in early July 1930, which was sponsored by the Profintern and established the ITUCNW was similarly the last of its kind. The ITUCNW and *Negro Worker* continued to function throughout the early 1930s, but suffered a tremendous blow when George Padmore who was largely the man operating both was expelled from the Comintern in 1934.

[100] "Excerpts from the Reports and Speeches at the XIII Plenum of the CP USA Re Work Among the Negro Masses, 12.1.1931," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2222, ll. 13-28.

black American men. Images of the near naked, murdered and sometimes charred bodies of black American men dangling from tree limbs above indifferent white crowds in the U.S., were deliberately juxtaposed against the images and speeches of black American men in Moscow and Stalingrad who were always shown to be dressed impeccably in black suits and ties and being respected by their fellow white trade union delegates, Russian factory workers and/or newspaper correspondents. These opposing depictions were often the first contact many Soviet citizens had with black Americans. Thus, by printing photographs of and speeches delivered by black Americans in the all-union press one day, and on the next, references to and visual evidence of their systematic persecution in the United States, Soviet authorities were inviting the populace to take pride in their country and in the project of building socialism in ways other than industrialization and collectivization. That is, while the country was working to catch up to and exceed the industrial achievements of the "civilized" West, the antiracist rhetoric inspired by the assault on Robinson and the convening of the Fifth Profintern Congress was intended to instill within citizens the knowledge that they had already surpassed it in terms of enlightenment concerning issues of race.

Yet this chapter also helps to illuminate that Soviet leaders and citizens were not the only ones to use U.S. racism to define the Soviet Union as the only country where racism was nonexistent, a theme, which will be addressed at greater length at the end of this study. Some black American Communists represented in the preceding pages primarily by trade union delegates asserted as fact the existence of Soviet racial harmony. As reflected in the protest resolution cited earlier, many publicly claimed to feel "at home" in the Soviet Union because at the very least, the threat and fear of physical

danger, of lynching was completely absent. This perception had not only been symbolically confirmed by the trial of the two Americans who had assaulted Robinson, but also by the Tsiprus trial which took the requirements of proper proletarian behavior a step further to communicate that a true proletarian even refrained from uttering any type of racially insensitive remark to or about a black worker(s). Thus, the image of workers' adherence to (though not necessarily agreement with) Soviet antiracist discourse was critical to allowing Stasova to assert and black American Communists to agree that "naturally" no one would even dare lynch a black worker in the Soviet Union.

Chapter 3

The Soviet Cure for Racism: International Education and Soviet Culpability for American Racial Violence

The story of two Americans' assault on a black American worker does not end with a Stalingrad court ruling to expel the pair of racists from the country with what the central press presented as the unanimous support of the Soviet working community. It also does not end with the pervasive images of U.S. racial violence juxtaposed against images of Soviet racial equality; or of international trade union leaders praising the Soviet trade unions' response to it as a model for American Communist officials to follow in uprooting racism within the revolutionary movement. As this chapter demonstrates there is another major aspect to this story, which like the others was critical to perpetuating the Soviet Union's image as a superior society where racism was not tolerated. Yet unlike the others, it does not deal with an impressive exhibition of Soviet antiracism and an ignominious example of American ignorance. Rather it concerns Soviet culpability for having allowed two Americans to raise a hand to a black man at one of the country's prized giants of socialist industry, and then for covering up its occurrence for over two weeks until the all-union trade union newspaper exposed it.

Soviet trade union leaders in Moscow held authorities at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory to be just as responsible for the racially-motivated assault as the two American assailants, Lemuel Lewis and William Brown. The Central Committee of the Metal Workers Union (CC VSRM) and Profintern leaders argued that local trade union officials had made this attack "inevitable" (*neizbezhnyi*) by failing to conduct international education (*internatsional'noe vospitanie*) among Soviet, and especially foreign workers

at the Traktorostroi.[1] International education, broadly defined as the antithesis of "capitalist education," meant instructing workers in the necessity of transcending feelings of national and racial hatred in order to create an "anti-capitalist" society where national and racial animosity were nonexistent.[2] The CC VSRM therefore conceived of the trial against and removal of the American culprits as only one step towards preventing the reoccurrence of a similarly flagrant manifestation of racism in a country that was supposed to be a refuge, a fatherland, for all workers. They considered decisively acting against those who had enabled racism to exist through their indifference and implementing changes to create an environment where laborers could be transformed into supremely conscious proletarians who would not even fathom harming "our Negro worker brother" to be equally imperative.[3]

Yet blame for the absence of international education and consequent racial violence in Stalingrad also extended beyond the local level. The "old" leaders of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) who had been purged from 1929 to early 1930 were held ultimately accountable for it.[4] During the six months preceding the

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[1] "Amerikantsy ne byvali na rabochikh sobraniiakh," *Trud*, 13 August 1930, p. 1; "Tov. Niderkirkhner o Stalingradskom dele," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 1; "Usilit' politicheskoe vospitanie amerikanskikh rabochikh v SSSR," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 15 August 1930, p. 6. See also notes 27 and 28.

[2] See, for example, "Soveshanie ob internatsional'noi rabote," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, ll. 3-45 (esp. l. 43); "Mezhdunarodnaia rabota sovetskikh profsoiuzov," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 29 August 1930, p. 2; "Opyt inostrannykh spetsialistov ne ispol'zuetsia," *ibid.*, 15 August 1930, p. 6; and "Pozornyi fakt na Traktornom vskryl slabost' internatsional'noi raboty profsoiuzov Stalingrada," *Trud*, 10 August 1930, p. 1. It was because Lewis and Brown had been raised under the system of "capitalist education," a term which signified the inculcation of workers with racial hatred and selfish-individualism, that the Stalingrad court commuted their sentence from imprisonment to deportation. See chapter one. Stephen Kotkin argues that Soviet leaders largely defined the new socialist society that they were building in terms of the absence of the features common to a capitalist one; *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism As a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), esp. pp. 149-155.

[3] For quotation, see "Tov. Belbei," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 23, l. 17.

[4] Lewis Siegelbaum posits, "that the purge was so widespread that it affected all Soviet institutions." See Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

attack, which transpired on 24 July 1930, the new leadership had accused their predecessors of having completely underestimated the importance of international education, and of thereby having fostered indifference towards it among lower-level trade union officials. Moreover, in early July at the Sixteenth Party Congress, Stalin himself had admonished all party and trade union authorities of the need to combat remnants of national and racial chauvinism by eradicating the malaise of apathy that consequently existed around the country towards international education.[5]

To be sure, the assault on Robinson proved the validity of these charges and lent greater urgency to this preexisting campaign to improve international education as part of the project of building socialism.[6] At the same time, it especially forced Soviet leaders to seriously consider foreign workers in this equation if they wanted to further the image of Soviet racial and national equality. Accordingly, in the wake of the racial bigotry in Stalingrad which was followed a few days later by V.M. Tsiprus' inflammatory comments at a Moscow factory meeting, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (CC VKP[b]) and the Central Committee of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (CC VTsSPS) issued general directives to all party and trade union officials about developing international work among foreign laborers on a daily rather than monthly or bi-monthly basis. The underlying objective was maintaining the

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2000), pp. 103-109 (quotation p. 105). See also Lynn Mally, "The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Youth Theater TRAM," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 411-430; and Ronald G. Suny. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 240-247.

[5] See "Za internatsional'noe vospitanie mass," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 20 August 1930, p. 1; "Zadachi profsoiuzov v rekonstruktivnyi period," *ibid.*, 19 July 1930, pp. 3-4.

[6] *Trud*'s editors and Profintern officials argued that the Stalingrad attack constituted an important lesson for all organizations that have "forgotten the decision of the Sixteenth Party Congress about the need to strengthen international work"; "O chem govorit sluchai na Traktornom zavode: Mestnaia pechat' bezmolvstvuet," *Trud*, 12 August 1930, p. 1; "Sudebnoe sledstvie nachato," *ibid.*, 13 August 1930, p. 1.

image of Soviet superiority over the U.S. in terms of the treatment of people of color, while still receiving a large number of workers from capitalist countries into the country to help eradicate Soviet industrial inferiority.[7] This placed much of the responsibility for protecting this image on local officials. They were in charge of administering this putative "cure-all" for racism on a daily basis, of cultivating the antiracist conscience, which was a prerequisite for this superior socialist society to flourish.

This chapter examines how efforts to protect the myth that the U.S.S.R. was the only country to have discovered the cure for racism affected the locality where the original infraction against it had taken place, the Stalingrad Traktorostroi. Just as the Soviet trade unions historically assumed the role of correcting "unconsciousness" among Soviet workers, the CC VSRM was the main actor in implementing measures (based on the aforementioned directives which the CC VKP[b] and CC VTsSPS had issued) in order to prevent further violations of it from occurring at the Stalingrad giant and at other factories under their jurisdiction.[8] By the estimation of central party and trade union leaders, if international work was in such a miserable condition at the Traktorostroi, then conditions were most likely similar in enterprises around the country. Yet because it was the original site of violence against a black worker, the CC VSRM undoubtedly attempted to enact these measures with the most fervor in Stalingrad. This chapter

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[7] "Obzor raboty soiuznykh organizatsii metallistov: Vyvody," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 39-40; "O chem govorit sluchai na Traktornom zavode: Vylazka na Moskvoshvee no. 5," *Trud*, 12 August 1930, p. 1; "Stalingradskii urok trebuet vsesoiuznoi proverki internatsional'noi raboty," *ibid.*, 13 August 1930, p. 1; "Doklad o rabote," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 180-183 (esp. ll. 182-183). The CC VSRM explicitly acknowledged that the reconstruction of the country on the basis of industrialization and collectivization required the technical knowledge and experience of workers from capitalist countries. They emphasized that a significant number of foreign workers were already in the factories and that the scale of socialist construction would only cause those numbers to grow.

[8] See especially Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "Narratives of Appeal and the Appeal of Narratives: Labor Discipline and Its Contestation in the Early Soviet Period," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 24, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1997): 65-87.

concludes by briefly addressing, with important implications for the one that follows, how the assault on Robinson increased the emphasis on developing international education among Soviet workers with the purpose of further fortifying the country's superior, raceless identity.

I.

According to Robert Robinson, who recorded his version of the attack in his autobiography over fifty years after it occurred, it was authorities in Stalingrad and the lower Volga who immediately recognized its "propagandistic value" and consequently drew union-wide and international attention to it.[9] However, the very opposite was the case. As previously noted but not explained in chapter one, there was a significant lapse in time between when this physical confrontation occurred on 24 July 1930, and when any action was taken regarding it on 9 August 1930. In fact, the CC VSRM severely reprimanded local and factory trade union authorities for having failed to recognize the political significance of the racially-motivated assault and forcing them to first find out about it several weeks after it had transpired on the front page of *Trud*, the official organ of VTsSPS. Although the blame fell most heavily the Traktorostroi's trade union officials, the CC VSRM and Soviet editors also criticized the inaction of law enforcement officials, the trade union authorities of the lower Volga, and the two local newspapers *Daesh' Traktor* (the factory publication) and *Bor'ba* (the Stalingrad paper).[10] Thus,

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[9] Robert Robinson, *Black on Red: My 44 Years Inside the Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1988), p. 68.

[10] *Bor'ba* was originally the organ of the Tsaritsyn Soviet of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' and Cossacks' Deputies and ultimately became the official organ of the Stalingrad party organizations. The paper printed its last issue on 14 March 1933. See J. V. Stalin, "Privetstvie Stalingradskoi gazete 'Bor'ba," *Sochineniia*, 9 (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1950), pp. 169, 368 n37.

Moscow trade union leaders' indignation with local officials for allowing an attack on a black worker to occur at a giant of socialist industry, was compounded by their collusion in a conspiracy of silence in an effort to suppress news of it.[11]

After the editors of *Trud* exposed the bigotry of the two Americans on 9 August 1930, an increasingly contentious relationship developed in the pages of the central newspapers between the Stalingrad Traktorostroi factory committee and the CC VSRM in Moscow.[12] Not only had the former failed to notify central authorities about the violence immediately, but the factory committee also boldly ignored several of the Central Committee's telegrams requesting information about the case. Its secretary, Moskatov, sent a telegram to the factory on 9 August 1930 ordering the chairman to quickly come to the capital to give them a report about the attack on the "Negro worker."[13] On 11 August 1930, *Rabochaia Gazeta* quoted Moskatov as explaining that the chairman needed to brief them on the incident, which they expected to occur the following day, before they could make any concrete decisions concerning the situation at the Traktorostroi.[14]

However, instead of receiving this information, on 12 August 1930 Moskatov sent a second telegram to the factory committee again demanding that its head quickly report to Moscow and inform them not only about the assault but also about the general

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[11] "Reshenie sekretariata TsK metallistov o sluchae na Traktornom zavode," *Trud*, 18 August 1930, p. 4.

[12] For the CC VSRM's detailed description of the role of the factory committee, see "Metal Workers Union of U.S.S.R.: To Metal Workers Delegates at the 12th Anniversary of the October Revolution," GARF, f. 5667, op. 6, d. 8, ll. 11-33.

[13] "Stalingrad, Zavkomu Traktornogo Zavoda," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 8.

[14] "TsK metallistov srochno vyzval v Moskvu predcedatelia zavkoma Stalingradskogo zavoda," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4.

conditions among foreign workers there.[15] During an interview with *Trud* two days later, Moskatov emphasized that they still had not received any word from the factory regarding either the "disgraceful" attack on Robinson or the educational work conducted among foreign laborers. As he argued, their failure to even respond to the first telegram, which was sent on 9 August 1930, confirmed their political ineptitude. Moskatov threatened that if in the next two days a Traktorostroi trade union official did not appear before them, then a representative of the Central Committee would be forced to travel to Stalingrad and conduct an inspection of the factory committee that would likely result in its dissolution.[16] *Trud*'s editors declared their solidarity with the Central Committee and the entire proletarian community in protesting the "anti-proletarian" behavior *not* of Lewis and Brown, but of the tractor factory's trade union authorities.[17]

Although the committee's chairman, Lysov, showed up in Moscow on 17 August 1930 a few days before the trial of Lewis and Brown opened, and only after (according to the press) the CC VSRM had sent a third telegram, his arrival was anticlimactic since his fate clearly was already sealed. Besides commenting on the dismal state of international education at the Traktorostroi, which will be addressed below, Lysov confirmed that a member of the CC VSRM had been visiting the factory from 23-27 July 1930 when the attack occurred but that no one had mentioned it to him. Central trade union leaders considered this concrete evidence that the factory committee had actively suppressed

[15] "Stalingrad, Zavkomu metallistov Traktornogo zavoda," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 9.

[16] "Poslednee preduprezhdenie zavkomu Traktornogo," *Trud*, 14 August 1930, p. 1.

[17] "Brigada TsK metallistov vyezzhaet na Traktorostroi," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 13 August 1930, p. 6; "Zavkom Traktornogo vtorichno vyzvan TsK metallistov," *Trud*, 13 August 1930, p. 1.

news of the racial violence and ordered that its members be immediately dismissed and that new elections be organized.[18]

The CC VSRM also criticized officials of the Lower Volga krai committee of the VSRM for failing to recognize the political significance of two white Americans assaulting a black worker. Echoed by *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors, they denounced the conduct of Gagarin, a member of the Presidium of this Lower Volga body, as especially "disgraceful." Gagarin had been in Stalingrad shortly after the attack and knew of its occurrence, but did nothing to bring attention to it. In fact, Traktorostroi officials allegedly had asked for his assistance in handling the case following *Trud*'s exposure of it on 9 August 1930, but he ignored their request and left Stalingrad on 11 August 1930 as his original schedule had dictated. They additionally rebuked Gagarin for failing to take the initiative to familiarize himself with the condition of international work among the factory's foreign laborers and to instruct its trade union officials in how to develop it.[19]

Law enforcement authorities in Stalingrad were also not above reprimand. As Gerasimov, assistant Procurator of the Supreme Court remarked, "unfortunately, organs of the procurator found out about this disgraceful manifestation of national enmity towards a Negro worker only from the newspaper."[20] In response, Ponomarev, assistant

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[18] "Zasedanie Sekretariata TsK VSRM ot 17 avgusta 1930 g.," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 1-3. Lysov's arrival in Moscow and report to the CC VSRM was also well-covered in the press. See "TsK soiuza metallistov ob izbienii rabochego-negra v Stalingrade," *Pravda*, 18 August 1930, p. 2; "Delo ob izbienii rabochego-negra," *Izvestiia*, 18 August 1930, p. 3; "Kak byl izbit tovarishch Robinson," *Trud*, 18 August 1930, p. 4; and "Zavkom Traktornogo budet dosrochno pereizbran," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 18 August 1930, p. 6.

[19] "Utverzhdeno Prezidumom N.V. Kraikoma VSRM ot . . . avgusta 30g.," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 35, l. 89.

[20] Moscow ordered the lower Volga krai procurator to conduct an urgent investigation in order for the assailants to be brought to account for their crime. For the telegram, see "Saratov, Prokuroru Nizhnevolzhskogo kraia," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 10. See "Srochno rassledovat' i privlech' k ugolovnoi otvetstvennosti," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 13 August 1930, p. 6.

procurator in Stalingrad, pleaded ignorance claiming that he too had been forced to find out about it from the central press. Ponomarev tried to transfer all the blame to the Stalingrad militsia. They had not informed the procurator's office of its occurrence, had arrested and subsequently released both Robinson and his attacker the night the confrontation occurred, and had failed to conduct any type of investigation.[21] But the assistant procurator's efforts to explain their inactivity in terms of the incompetence and dereliction of duty of the militsia were not well received in the all-union papers. *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s and *Trud*'s editors accused the procurator of moving slowly in the investigation and glossing over new information in the case.[22] According to *Rabochaia Gazeta*, the workers' court in Moscow, which tried Tsiprus on 17 August 1930, also criticized the Stalingrad procurator for procrastinating in the investigation and challenged the Stalingrad workers to expose the extreme negligence.[23] Responsibility for the "disgraceful" suppression of news concerning the race crime also fell on the local press. The CC VSRM as well as the editors of *Trud*, *Izvestiia* and *Rabochaia Gazeta* criticized the factory and Stalingrad newspapers, *Daesh' Traktor* and *Bor'ba*, for giving it minimal attention. As *Rabochaia Gazeta* detailed, *Daesh' Traktor*'s editors printed only one protest resolution, and most egregiously failed to recognize the attack as an opportunity

[21] On 11 August 1930 *Trud* reported that "up until now, the local police for some reason have moved slowly and have still not arrested the American"; "V otvet na burzhuaznuiu nenavist' k tsvetnym rasam luchshe organizuem internatsional'nuiu rabotu," *Trud*, 11 August 1930, p. 1.

[22] "Na Traktornom pobezhdaet solidarnost' proletariata," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 1; "'Okruzhim negra Robinsona samym druzhestvennym vnimaniem,'" *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 15 August 1930, p. 6; "Stalingradskaia prokuratura zamalchivaet delo amerikantsa Luisa," *ibid.*, 17 August 1930, p. 6.

[23] "Prigovor rabochikh mass," *ibid.*, 18 August 1930, p. 6.

to organize a campaign against American racism and other forms of great-power chauvinism.[24]

There can be little doubt that the CC VSRM found the political obtuseness that multiple levels of Stalingrad officialdom exhibited in dealing with the racial violence (the militsia, the procurator, the factory's trade union authorities, Lower Volga trade union officials, and newspaper editors) to be more disturbing, than the conduct of the two white American assailants. Although the Americans' racism was of course utterly reprehensible by the Soviet code of proletarian conduct it was to be somewhat expected or was not out-of character considering that they had been raised under the system of "capitalist education" which teaches hatred for black people. In contrast, local Soviet officials were expected to at least publicly adhere to these higher, Soviet standards. Central authorities undoubtedly had presumed that if one segment of local authority had overlooked the significance of this manifestation of American racial prejudice, then at least one of the others would have recognized its importance and taken decisive action to expose it as the editors of the VTsSPS newspaper ultimately did. The manner in which Robert Robinson described, with considerable cynicism, how local authorities responded to the racial violence against him, that is by instantly recognizing its tremendous propagandistic value for the country's image, was the way in which Moscow leaders had hoped that they would have responded. Robinson gave local officials too much credit.

[24] "Gazeta 'Bor'ba' zamazyvaet fakt antiproletarskoi vykhodki," *ibid.*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; Mikhail Danilov, "Newis i Robinson," *ibid.*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; "Zavkom Traktornogo budet dosrochno pereizbran," p. 6; "O chem govorit o sluchai na Traktornom zavode," p. 1; "Delo ob izbienii rabochego-negra," p. 3.

II.

The CC VSRM not only branded the Stalingrad Traktorostroi trade union authorities politically vacuous for suppressing news that a black American worker had been assaulted, but also for posing as much a threat to the image of Soviet racial harmony as the American workers who entered the country without automatically relinquishing their "civilized, bourgeois mores." They consistently reiterated from August through late October "that only the complete absence of any kind of educational work conducted by the factory committee among foreign workers can explain the attack on the Negro-worker in July in Stalingrad (the Lower Volga krai) at the tractor factory."[25] Besides articulating this reprimand themselves, all-union editors fostered the impression that workers were constantly sending them resolutions in which they also fulminated against the tractor factory's trade union officials for having placed Robinson in physical danger, by failing to organize international work.[26] The image that deliberately emerged in the Soviet press was that central trade union authorities, all-union editors, and the toiling masses around the country had united to participate in a public or collective shaming of Traktorostroi trade union officials who had jeopardized the country's image as a superior society without racism by severely neglecting their Leninist duty.

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[25] See "Obzor raboty soiuznykh organizatsii metallistov," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 3-38 (l. 36).

[26] For resolutions attributed to workers, see, for example, "Rabochie fabriki 'Moskvoshvei' No. 5 reshitel'no osuzhdaiut amerikanskikh khuliganov," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; "Vyslat' amerikanskikh fashistov iz predelov SSSR," *ibid.*, 27 August 1930, p. 6; "Luis i Braun pytalis' perenesti na sovetskuiu pochvu fashistskie nravy," *Trud*, 28 August 1930, p. 1; "Inostrannye rabochie Khar'kova i Rostova poslali obshchestvennykh obvinitelei na Stalingradskii protsess," *ibid.*, 20 August 1930, p. 1; "Reshenie sekretariata TsK metallistov o sluchae na Traktornom zavode," p. 4; and "Zavkom Traktornogo budet dosrochno pereizbran," p. 6. For the editors of *Trud* and *Rabochaia Gazeta*, see "O chem govorit sluchai na Traktornom zavode," p. 1; "SSSR – otechestvo dlia chernykh, zheltykh i belykh ras," *Trud*, 11 August 1930, p. 1; and "Za internatsional'noe vospitanie mass," p. 1.

The CC VSRM and editors of the VTsSPS organ, *Trud* immediately conducted investigations which were shown to provide conclusive evidence that international education among both Soviet and foreign laborers was virtually nonexistent at the giant of socialist industry.[27] But due to the assailants' identity as Americans, and the horrific image of U.S. race relations that was being manufactured in the central press, greater attention was devoted to its absence among the tractor factory's English-speaking, and especially American workers. They identified the following findings to be especially problematic: the Traktorostroi's wall newspaper lacked any information regarding the international revolutionary movement in either Russian or English; English-language literature and a Red Corner for foreign workers were absent; the library contained only thirty English-language books; American workers had never attended meetings with Russian workers; there were only thirty-five interpreters for three-hundred fifty American workers; and authorities had made no effort to communicate with the American colony through the factory's Russian-American laborers who could speak English and Russian fluently. The CC VSRM and all-union editors portrayed themselves as most outraged by the fact that American laborers had been so severely isolated from factory life that they supposedly had been hitherto unaware that a factory committee even existed.[28]

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[27] *Trud* depicted Elektrozavod's foreign workers praising the paper for printing investigative reports which encouraged the CC VSRM to conduct an all-union inspection of international work; "Pis'mo rabochikh Elektrozavoda gazete 'Trud,'" *Trud*, 14 August 1930, p. 1. When a MOPR brigade had investigated conditions among Soviet workers at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi in July 1930 immediately preceding the assault, they found that a MOPR cell did not even exist there. "Otchet po proverke raboty MOPR Traktornogo zavoda i rukovodstva im so storony Stalingradskogo okryzhkoma MOPR," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 23, l. 250 (21/VII-1930 g.); "Vypiska iz protokola no 1 soveshaniia gorodskogo Stalingradskogo aktiva - 10 July 1930 g.," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 23, l. 251; "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma TsK MOPR SSSR o sostoianii raboty sredi sezonnikov v Stalingradskoi organizatsii MOPR," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 23, l. 249.

[28] "Vyvody i predlozheniia o rabote sredi amerikanskikh rabochikh na Stalingradskom Traktornom Zavode," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 68-72 (esp. l. 68); l. 36; d. 381, ll. 17-18; "Profrabotniki do sikh por nichego ne znaiut," *Trud*, 12 August 1930, p. 1; "Amerikantsy ne byvali na rabochikh sobraniiakh," p.

As its chairman, Lysov openly admitted during the report he delivered to the CC VSRM in Moscow on 17 August 1930, that the factory committee had been derelict in leading international work among the American laborers. However, unlike the CC VSRM and the all-union press, which actively supported them, Lysov blamed them for it. He specifically accused the CC VSRM of not placing at their disposal the necessary funds and resources to organize international education. They had tried, he claimed, to hold discussions with American workers, but they were conducted almost exclusively in Russian because of the insufficient number of qualified interpreters. By his estimation, in order to implement international work effectively, the CC VSRM had to provide them with the necessary resources, which he insisted must at the very least include two propagandists and foreign currency to purchase English-language books.[29]

The central press, as to be expected, never hinted at the possibility that the CC VSRM may have in some way been responsible for the poor state of international education at the Traktorostroi or around the country. One of the factory's interpreters claimed that the Central Committee were to a degree culpable, but unlike Lysov criticized them for having not providing enough guidance regarding how to conduct international education rather than for insufficient financial and material support.[30] Clearly, the CC

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1. In addition to the absence of activities and materials for American workers, the director of the factory earlier admitted that they had failed to maximize their potential, and faced problems which ranged from poor medical attention to an insufficient supply of cigarettes, meat, and fresh produce; "Opyt massovogo primeneniia truda amerikanskikh rabochikh i tekhnikov na Stalingradskom Traktornom Zavode," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, ll. 120-125.

[29] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 2-3.

[30] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, l. 39. In accordance with the interpreter's comments, in mid-October 1930 the CC VSRM reprimanded the lower Volga krai committee and the Traktorostroi factory committee for having achieved insufficient progress in establishing international education despite the fact that they had provided them with the proper guidelines to do so. See "Nizhkraikomu V.S.R.M. i zavkomu Traktornogo zavoda," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 390, l. 378.

VSRM was not completely unaccountable for the poor state of international education at the Traktorostroi. Central authorities were generally notorious for issuing numerous directives while at the same time failing to provide the proper instructions and resources for fulfilling them.[31] Thus when something went wrong because these orders were not carried out, the blame in most cases appeared to rest on the presumed incompetence of the localities rather than the center's neglect. Yet at the same time, Lysov and his fellow factory committee members were not the passive victims that he depicted them to be, a presumption reinforced by the indifference they continued to exhibit once the racially-motivated assault had occurred. They had neither written Moscow requesting more resources for leading international work nor taken any initiative to integrate the Americans into the factory by mobilizing its Russian-American workers.[32]

Regardless of where the primary responsibility lay, the CC VSRM and central press emphasized that as a result of the obscene absence of literature, activities and meetings for American workers, they did not just have Robinson's two attackers with whom to deal, but a slew of "Lewises and Browns" at the Traktorostroi who as *Rabochaia Gazeta* announced in a headline "'do not like Negroes.'"[33] The CC VSRM elucidated how, in addition to racial hostility, this complete isolation from factory life had encouraged other "anti-proletarian" behavior to become rife among them like

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[31] For example, a Lower Volga MOPR official complained in February 1931 that leaders in Moscow made it difficult for them to lead international work among Americans because they had failed to provide them with the English-language literature they had requested; "III-i vsesoiuznyi s'ezd MOPR'a, vechernee zasedanie 17/II-31 goda," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 26, l. 241.

[32] The CC MOPR blamed local officials for the poor state of international work emphasizing that "not one local organization which had a significant number of foreign workers put forth any kind of categorical demands to the CC MOPR regarding developing work among foreign laborers"; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 180-182.

[33] "Amerikantsam na Traktornom 'ne nraviatsia negry,'" *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 25 August 1930, p. 6.

drunkenness, prostitution, card-playing and brawling.[34] Lysov had not denied this group's existence when he appeared before the CC VSRM either. Rather, like V. Vaksov of the All-Union Auto-Tractor Association (VATO) who reported to the committee about conditions at the Traktorostroi on the same day, he identified this "fascist-minded" group as numbering between thirty to forty men.[35] To give them an idea of the level of ignorance with which they were dealing, Lysov quoted Bolduin, one of its proud members as remarking to him, "You can pass judgment however you want, but personally I will not sit at the same table with a Negro."[36]

It is unsurprising that the CC VSRM assigned such great significance to the inclusion of American workers in the Traktorostroi's social and political life, and attributed the prevalence of racism and debauchery among them to its trade union officials' failure to realize it.[37] Historians have demonstrated the importance that Soviet leaders assigned to factory life in the creation of the Soviet proletariat. As Stephen Kotkin argues, central authorities largely conceived of the factory as the space where laborers could be transformed into New Soviet Men and New Soviet Women. David Hoffmann claims that the isolation of peasant in-migrants to Moscow from workers'

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[34] The criticism that local party and trade unions' weak organization of massive cultural work among foreign laborers had allowed derelict behavior to flourish was unique to neither the Stalingrad factory nor the CC VSRM. See, for example, "Dokladnaia zapiska: otdela agitatsii i massovykh kampanii TsK o vypolnenii postanovleniia TsK ot 16.8-30 g.," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, l. 30.

[35] The Presidium of the CC VSRM had sent a telegram to VATO on 15 August 1930 ordering them to send a representative from the foreign workers' division to a meeting on 17 August 1930 to listen to the report of the Traktorostroi factory committee "about the assault on the Negro worker." Vaksov who had investigated conditions at the factory earlier that month (see note 28 for the reference to his report) was obviously selected; "V Pravlenie VATO, Ino otdel," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 14.

[36] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 3-4. According to William Chamberlin, one of this group's leading members appealed to him as a fellow white man, saying "'You know, brother, . . . what they're trying to do with this trial is to force on us something no white American will stand for: social equality with the colored race'"; *Russia's Iron Age* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1934), pp. 363-364.

culture frustrated Soviet officials' efforts to mold them into their notion of an ideal proletariat. As Lewis Siegelbaum explains, Soviet leaders considered an individual's involvement in trade unions and workers' clubs critical to the process of making workers "Soviet" or enlightened citizens of the first workers' state.[38] Placed in this context, the trade union authorities of the Stalingrad Tractor Factory had not merely failed to establish a vibrant social setting among Americans at the factory, but more gravely failed to create the conditions whereby they could be transformed from laborers who possessed the "mores of capitalist education" to proletarians who possessed the emancipated consciousness begotten by international education.

III.

During his report to the CC VSRM, Vaksov warned that while their losses were already "extremely great" among the Stalingrad Americans, "they will be still greater if we do not quickly introduce changes." Vaksov was primarily speaking of the majority of Americans at the Traktorostroi whom he advised wavered between the "clearly fascist" group of forty men and a smaller one consisting of fifteen to twenty Americans, which "is completely on our side."[39] What concrete changes did the CC VSRM implement with the

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[37] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, l. 39.

[38] Stephen Kotkin, "Coercion and Identity: Workers' Lives in Stalin's Showcase City," in *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity*, eds. Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 274-310; *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 18-23; David Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 133-157; Lewis Siegelbaum, "The Shaping of Soviet Workers' Leisure: Workers' Clubs and Palaces of Culture in the 1930s," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (Fall 1999): 78-92.

[39] RGASPI, f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, l. 125. Vaksov and Lysov expressed confidence that with some international work many in this largest group of Americans would gravitate to the "Soviet side" because they did not want to return to the U.S. and face unemployment; GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 3-4. For the Americans who were sympathetic to the Soviet state, see also chapter one.

objective of preventing any further "losses" among the American colony, or more plainly with the goal of preventing the reoccurrence of an incident that would threaten the Soviet Union's image as a superior society free of racism?

The brigade which the CC VSRM dispatched to the factory in early September to begin the transformation process, recognized the urgency of immediately undermining the influence that the "fascist-minded" group exercised over the community. Soviet workers at the factory were presented in the trade union press and VSRM records corroborating the urgency of employing this tactic, emphasizing that despite the trial this "conservative and reactionary" segment of Americans remained "under the hypnosis of the fabrications of the capitalist press" and will do anything to transfer the "high culture and civilization" of America to "our 'ignorant and backward' Soviet soil."[40] Whereas the brigade had hoped that the American Cultural Technical Society, which the factory's American-Russian laborers had formed after the assault would have aided them in this regard, they quickly discovered that its members were afraid to oppose the "clearly fascist" cohort at meetings and had failed to even nominate a candidate to run opposite them during recent reelections to the American committee.[41] In contrast, the work that

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[40] See Nemchik, "Amerikantsy v Stalingrade," *Trud*, 6 October 1930, p. 4 (quotation); and "Tov. Miroshnikov (SSSR STZ)," RGASPI, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 23, l. 191. Robinson too noted that the trial did not change most Americans' attitude towards him. See, *Black on Red*, pp. 72-75. When considering his reminiscences, it is important to keep in mind that Robinson recorded them after he had become severely disillusioned with the Soviet project thereby making it unlikely that he would have exaggerated Russians' amiability and Americans' hostility towards him.

[41] Two main objectives of the American Cultural Technical Society were raising the American workers' "cultural-enlightenment" level and maximizing the technical knowledge shared with Soviet workers in order to demonstrate "that our interests and the interests of Russian workers are one." Investigators numbered its membership at sixty-five individuals, including ten American-born workers, thirty-five Russian emigrants, and ten interpreters. They did not explain who constituted the remaining ten members. See "Doklad o rabote sredi amerikanskikh rabochikh na Stalingradskom Traktornom Zavode," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 66-67; Nemchik, "Amerikantsy v Stalingrade," p. 4; and "Amerikanskie rabochie sozdali v Stalingrade obshchestvo tekhnicheskoi pomoshchi Sovetskomu Soiuzu," *Trud*, 6 October 1930, p. 4.

Morris Childs (Charles Summers), an American student of the International Lenin School whom Comintern leaders had sent to the Traktorostroi, helped further the CC VSRM's cause, but the results could still only be limited without more drastic action.[42]

The brigade's most effective strategy in neutralizing the fascist group's influence over the Traktorostroi Americans was deporting seventeen of the most "reactionary" among them. Those whom they so designated had openly opposed the brigade's preliminary attempts to introduce international work, and in a short time had established long records of displaying racial animosity, organizing gambling rings, buying and selling vodka which had been banned from the American store, frequenting prostitutes, assaulting night watchmen, and physically harassing Americans who objected to their conduct.[43] William Dunne who visited the colony twice prior to November 1930 claimed that some of the deportees had been Detroit "gangsters" who had fled the U.S. under pressure from law enforcement officials, who had been close to cracking down on their illegal operations.[44] As William Randolph observed during the late autumn 1930, the

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[42] For Childs as Summers, see RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1870, l. 137 and chapter five, note 43. Smith, a Hungarian, was the other student dispatched to the Traktorostroi but he was scheduled to stay there for a month less than Childs. Judging from a letter William Weinstone addressed to the latter at the factory and dated 25 February 1931, Childs extended his stay there or made return trips to survey their progress; d. 2224, l. 7. Later that year Weinstone sent a letter to the Secretariat CPUSA explaining that the policy of "send(ing) comrades of the Lenin School to Stalingrad in order to work among these Americans" was "not a very good procedure as it withdraws the comrades from their studies." He inquired whether it was possible for them to send one American with "political understanding, but who is in all respects American, to work in Stalingrad" for approximately a year; RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2225, ll. 27-29 (quotation l. 29).

[43] For the names of the deportees and their conduct, see GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 66, 72.

[44] Bill Dunne, "Detroit Racketeers on the Volga," *New Masses* (September 1931): 10-12. According to Anna Louise Strong, a Stalingrad worker claimed that he and other "decent" Americans had complained to officials about this group but that it was not until Lewis and Brown attacked Robinson that action was taken; Anna Louise Strong, *I Change Worlds* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1936), pp. 317-319.

expulsion of these men was having a "salutary effect" on the Traktorostroi and the remaining American "reactionaries" were becoming isolated.[45]

Besides directly undermining the "fascist" Americans' control of the American colony by removing the worst among them, CC VSRM officials also instituted measures to establish an environment at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory where workers could be transformed into internationally minded, or antiracist proletarians. What changes did the brigade led by Kirillov who had represented the CC VSRM on the international workers' brigade during the trial of Lewis and Brown, identify as critical to cultivating this type of atmosphere? They used as their blueprint the directives that the CC VKP(b) and VTsSPS had issued in the wake of the assault to all local Party and trade union officials for developing systematic international education among foreign laborers. These included: in Russian language classes; involving them in factory production meetings, shock work, socialist competition, the trade unions and the most promising among them, the party; publishing foreign-language articles in factory and wall newspapers; printing and compiling foreign-language literature and newspapers in libraries and Red Corners; holding periodic meetings to listen to their complaints; developing a system to review their proposals; organizing Russian-language classes, sports activities, radio programs, film nights, and joint international evenings with Soviet workers; familiarizing them with the results of building socialism through excursions to houses of rest, collective and state farms, and day care centers; convening lectures on topics like the Five-Year plan; and

[45] "To the Secretariat, CPUSA, 19.11.30," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1870, ll. 136-139 (quotation l. 137).

mobilizing as translators political emigrants, Communists and Komsomolites who could speak German and English.[46]

With this as the blueprint, the Secretariat of the Presidium VSRM allotted the brigade a designated amount of money and a list of those things, which they deemed necessary to implement first at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi from September – December 1930. Judging from the numerous red pencil marks, checks and cross-outs, several individuals had opinions on what these initial changes should be. For example, the person who originally drew up the list budgeted four excursions over the course of four months at four hundred rubles each, but someone had reduced this total to two. Some of the measures that seemed to have unanimous approval included: the establishment of a Russian-language school for six hundred rubles; ten family evenings every ten days at two hundred rubles each; ten English-language lectures at one hundred rubles each; English-language literature; and 2800 rubles to cover the cost of producing English-language pages within the factory newspaper, *Daesh' Traktor*. Some of the items that were crossed out were tennis rackets, balls and nets, footballs and volleyballs, a boat, and an athletic field. Boxing gloves, ping-pong table and winter sports equipment survived the revision process. The fact that the CC VSRM approved these specific recreational items, and that Kirillov urged factory trade union officials to involve the American laborers in winter sports suggests that they anticipated drinking and gambling to become

[46] See "O rabote sredi inostrannykh rabochikh priekhavskikh v SSSR," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, l. 21; and "VTsSPS ot 28/8 –30 g.: O rabote sredi inostrannykh rabochikh," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, l. 101.

even more rife among the colony during the long winter months if changes were not introduced.[47]

Least surprising on the list of things that the CC VSRM deemed vital for imbuing Traktorostroi Americans with an antiracist, proletarian consciousness was the publication of English-language pages in the factory newspaper. Throughout August 1930, no doubt fueled by the directives that the CC VKP(b) and CC VTsSPS issued, Soviet editors fostered the image that authorities and workers unanimously demanded that English-language pages be created in all pre-existing factory newspapers and that a full-length, all-union English-language newspaper be founded in order to prevent an assault like that committed against Robinson from ever happening again in the U.S.S.R.. The central press even reported that on 13-14 August 1930 members of the Central Committees of both the Metal Workers and Construction Workers Unions had met with *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors and U.S. Profintern delegates to discuss establishing an all-union newspaper in Moscow as well as dispatching a brigade to the Traktorostroi to begin the process of publishing an English-language section in the factory paper.[48]

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[47] "Vypiska iz protokola no 33 zasedaniia sekretariata TsK VSRM ot 25/IX-1930 g.," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 14-16. Lysov, was not the only one who testified to the drunkenness among Americans at the Traktorostroi (GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, ll. 1-3). Bill Dunne discussed it at length in his aforementioned article in the *New Masses* as did LeVerne M. Halsey who worked there for a year as a toolmaker. Halsey in a disposition to U.S. officials on 6 May 1931 claimed that this drinking often led to acts of violence. See *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union, 1930-1939*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/249 (Reel 36).

[48] "Brigada TsK metallistov vyezzhaet na Traktorostroi," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 13 August 1930, p. 6; "Angliiskaia gazeta dlia inostrannykh rabochikh v SSSR," *ibid.*, 14 August 1930, p. 6; "TsK soiuza metallistov ob izbienii rabochego-negra v Stalingrade," p. 2; "Reshenie sekretariata TsK metallistov o sluchae na Traktornom zavode," *Trud*, 18 August 1930, p. 4; "Opyt inostrannykh spetsialistov ne ispol'zuetsia," p. 6. *Rabochaia Gazeta* quoted John Bellam, a U.S. Profintern delegate, as emphasizing the travesty in that the several thousand English-speaking workers who were accustomed to reading a daily newspaper in their homelands, did not have a newspaper at their disposal in the USSR; "Usilit' politicheskoe vospitanie amerikantskikh rabochikh v SSSR," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 15 August 1930, p. 6.

The English-language pages which the CC VSRM funded in *Daesh' Traktor* finally appeared as the *Industrial Spark* in November 1930.[49] As the *Daily Worker* put it, these pages in the Traktorostroi newspaper were intended, "for the education of American engineers and mechanics there in the principles of Communism, and the fact that all workers are class brothers, regardless of the color of their skin."[50] The first central English-language newspaper for American, Canadian and British workers materialized a month earlier on 5 October 1930 as a five-day weekly called the *Moscow News*. Although incorrect about the details of the confrontation, the *Liberator,* the official organ of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR) explicitly attributed its establishment to the assault on Robinson. It explained that, "the publication of this paper is a direct result of the incident which occurred in Stalingrad where two white Americans threw a Negro worker out of a mess hall."[51] The *Moscow News* gained competition in February 1931 when a second central English-language paper was organized, the *Workers News* (*Rabochie Novosti*). The latter quickly gained a wider circulation among English-

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[49] The establishment of the *Industrial Spark* did not occur without controversy. In early October, John Becker, leader of the American Cultural Technical Society and former member of the international workers' brigade, appealed to *Trud*'s editors to help them obtain a type-setter with the Latin alphabet because the English-language pages had still not been created. The editors responded by emphasizing that the CC VSRM in agreement with the Central Committee of Printers had already acquired the type-setter, but that Becker did not reply to their last two messages. For the VSRM's general problems with Becker, see GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, ll. 37-41. Becker was also unpopular among CPUSA officials even though as they acknowledged he has been "working with us against the reactionary elements in Stalingrad"; RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1870, l. 137. VTsSPS officials conducted a review of the *Industrial Spark* less than a year after it was founded. See "Stalingrad Spark Must Be Powerful Weapon for Soviet Tractors," *Workers News*, 25 August 1931, p. 5.

[50] "Soviet Workers Hit Chauvinist," *Daily Worker*, 22 August 1930, p. 2. The U.S. Consulate obtained a few copies of the *Industrial Spark* from returning American Traktorostroi workers. One of them claimed in May 1931 that it was full of Communist propaganda and edited by a Russian who had all the articles translated in order to approve them. Less than two years after it was established, the German paper, *Echo* replaced the *Industrial Spark* because Russian and German laborers had gradually replaced Americans. See *Records of the Department of State*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/248 (Reel 36); and 861.5017 – Living Conditions/469 (Reel 38).

[51] "New Moscow Paper Fights Chauvinism," *Liberator*, 11 October 1930, p. 1.

speaking workers because it was not burdened by the lengthy, theoretical speeches characteristic of its predecessor. The CC VTsSPS also favored the *Workers News*, because they claimed it strengthened foreign workers' international education by publishing Russian-language lessons, advocating the improvement of Red Corners, and encouraging involvement in socialist competition, shock work, and the trade unions.[52] When the two papers merged on 1 May 1932 to become the *Moscow Daily News*, the *Workers News*' editor was placed in charge since the new daily was supposed to reflect the more popular paper's format.[53]

Besides the establishment of the *Industrial Spark* and access to an all-union newspaper, the CC VSRM brigade reported that in accordance with the directives that the CC VKP(b) and VTsSPS had issued in mid-August 1930, by the end of the year numerous other changes had occurred among the Traktorostroi Americans which substantially reduced the risk of further racial violence there. In contrast to the isolation that existed before the assault, they reported that a Red Corner was opened in which eight discussions were led; twenty-five lectures were held on political, industrial, and cultural themes (fifteen more than the original budget had allowed); a school for American

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[52] "Predsedateliam ino biuro oblast i krai sovprofov i instruktoram po rabote sredi inostrannykh rabochikh i inospetsialistov," GARF, f. 5451, op. 39, d. 10, ll. 1-2. The *Workers News* began publishing "Lessons in Russian Language" by Professor V.D. Elmanovich on 9 October 1931. This section appeared on page three thereafter. The paper also printed the names of factories where the study of Russian was still not taken seriously, announced when Russian-language classes were being held and printed letters appealing for the donation of Russian-language books. See, for example, 20 March 1931, p. 3; 24 February 1932, p. 3; and 28 February 1932, p. 3.

[53] The CC MOPR also spoke highly of the *Workers News* and ordered local officials to use it to establish communication with each English-speaking workers; "III-i s'ezd MOPRa 19/II-1931 g., zakliuchitel'noe zasedanie," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 147-185 (esp. l. 184). Anna Louise Strong, who was one of the *Moscow News* editors, claimed that the decision to combine the papers and de-emphasize theory in the merged product was made at a Kremlin meeting which only she, Stalin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, and three others attended. Before the merger, much name-calling had gone on between the papers. The *Workers' News* editors called their *Moscow News* counterparts "bourgeois" while the latter called them "illiterate";

children was established; film equipment was installed in the American cafeteria; inspections into the use of specialists and the application of their proposals were conducted; and societies of inventors (consisting of eight individuals) and worker correspondents (consisting of six members including Robinson as its secretary) were formed.[54] Kirillov's brigade also found it encouraging that the Americans' labor discipline was improving; that thirty of them in groups of three had begun Russian-language courses; and that they had started to attend production meetings despite the still insufficient number of reliable interpreters. The CC VSRM reemphasized the need for interpreters and trade union officials to work together to ensure that the international education instituted throughout the general factory continued, and so that additional work in the individual shops and sections could be developed.[55]

Regarding the Traktorostroi's shortcomings, Kirillov's brigade identified four main problem areas: trade union membership, MOPR membership, the library, and shock work and socialist competition. They characterized as "weak" the results of the campaign to recruit American workers into the trade union because only forty-eight Americans or eighteen percent of the colony had become members. The CC VSRM conceded that many feared losing their U.S. citizenship status and of being persecuted by employers and the American Federation of Labor upon their return home, yet still held trade union officials accountable for making at least fifty percent of the American

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Strong, *I Change Worlds*, pp. 300-315, 333-352; "Why 'Moscow Daily News' Has Begun," *Moscow Daily News*, 1 May 1932, p. 1.

[54] For Robinson as secretary, see chapter one. A delegation from the International Conference of Revolutionary Metal Workers was also supposed to have led a discussion among the tractor factory's Americans about their racism, see "Tov. Bulat," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 23, l. 189.

[55] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, ll. 36, 39-41, 44-45.

laborers members within two months. They also ordered them to mobilize an even higher percentage of Americans, seventy-five percent, to join MOPR, a directive that reflected a larger push within the trade unions to strengthen what had previously been a poor relationship with MOPR. The brigade further instructed them to establish daily communication with the Traktorostroi's leading American workers whom they named and numbered as seventeen men in order to help them fulfill these as well as other goals.[56]

Assessing the status of the library, Kirillov stressed the significant strides that needed to be made. All the journals were outdated, technical literature was nearly nonexistent, and fictional works were absent.[57] The brigade's conclusions invoke little surprise when taking into account that just a few weeks earlier the *Moscow News* had published a letter from Morris Childs, the aforementioned ILS student who was conducting work among the Traktorostroi Americans in which he implored "English-speaking comrades residing in the Soviet Union or even abroad to help us out by donating any books, magazines, etc. to our Library." While the *Moscow News*' editors applauded the efforts of Childs and the Stalingrad workers and promised to forward any books or magazines that they received, judging from Kirillov's comments the donations had not yet been forthcoming.[58]

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[56] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, l. 66-72. For the emphasis on improving the relationship between the trade unions and MOPR, see, for example, "The Red Trade Unions and IRA," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 197, ll. 64-70; "III-i vsesoiuznyi plenum MOPR, utrennee zasedanie, 18/II-1931 g.," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 76, 91, 116-118; 172-174. A brigade which the CC MOPR dispatched to the Traktorostroi in February 1931 claimed that fifty American workers had been recruited into MOPR, a figure significantly lower than the goal of seventy-five percent that Kirillov's brigade had set; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 182-183.

[57] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, l. 66.

[58] "Stalingrad Tractorzavod," *Moscow News*, 26 November 1930, p. 7.

The CC VSRM further reprimanded the Traktorostroi's trade union authorities for continuing to grossly "underestimate" the importance of socialist competition and shock work to inculcating American workers with socialist mores.[59] With only eighty-four Americans belonging to shock brigades, they ordered them to gain at least fifty percent participation in socialist competition and shock work. The brigade also advised authorities to closely monitor American laborers' progress in fulfilling a socialist agreement to improve international education that the entire factory had made with the Moscow Elektrozavod on *Trud*'s front page after the assault.[60] Specifically, the Elektrozavod workers, whom the Soviet press consistently portrayed as the paragon of proletarian enlightenment (see chapter one), were quoted as declaring, "We are assured that the incident with the Negro comrade appears for you as an excellent lesson, as a decisive turning point in your organization of international education." The official organ of the VTsSPS portrayed the Stalingrad workers as accepting the challenge to strengthen international work and collectively assuring "the proletariat of Moscow and Leningrad that we will not allow another incident like this to occur."[61]

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[59] "Inostrannye rabochie dolzhny stat' aktivnymi uchastnikami sotsialisticheskoi stroiki," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 29 August 1930, p. 1. Lewis Siegelbaum emphasizes that socialist competition (*sotssorevnovanie*) assumed a systematic character during the first Five-Year Plan. See "'Dear Comrade, You Ask What We Need': Socialist Paternalism and Soviet Rural 'Notables' in the Mid-1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 107-132; *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. pp. 40-53; and "Socialist Competition and Socialist Construction in the USSR: The Experience of the First Five-Year Plan (1928-1932)," *Thesis Eleven*, no. 4 (1982): 48-67.

[60] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 67-72.

[61] The agreement's guidelines included leading international discussions, studying Leninist nationality policy, and developing MOPR work. Due to their high-ranking status, the role of the interracial group named as arbiters (Molotov, Dmitri Manuil'skii, and James Ford among them) was symbolic; "Pozornyi fakt na Traktornom vskryl slabost' internatsional'noi raboty profsoiuzov Stalingrada," *Trud*, 10 August 1930, p. 1; "'Okruzhim negra Robinsona samym druzhestvennym vnimaniem,'" *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 15 August 1930, p. 6; and "Pis'mo internatsional'noi konferentsii Elektrozavoda," *Trud*, 19 August 1930, p. 1. According to the minutes of the International Conference of Revolutionary Metal Workers, Traktorostroi and Elektrozavod workers confirmed the agreement during the proceedings; GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 23, ll.

Five months after Robinson was attacked, the VSRM could not claim that they had established an environment at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi where large numbers of Americans were being transformed into antiracist proletarians. Only fifteen to twenty percent of them were responding positively to the new measures and becoming active in Soviet factory life. Since the CC VKP(b) and CC VTsSPS repeatedly re-issued their orders about developing systematic international education among foreign laborers, it is safe to presume that the same can be said for factories around the country.[62] This modest success could be attributed to local officials' non-cooperation, foreign workers' indifference, and/or central authorities' unrealistic goals in light of limited resources and the amount of time allotted for their realization. Considering that the CC VSRM probably scrutinized the actions of the Stalingrad factory's trade union officials more closely (no doubt under pressure from the VTsSPS) than those of other enterprises, American laborers' apathy may have been the most decisive factor in dictating the success of international work there.

Arguably, however, central trade union authorities had achieved their underlying goal: the threat that any of the Americans would attempt to injure Robinson had been eliminated, rendering the image that the U.S.S.R. had discovered the cure for racism temporarily secure. Yet this was not because most Americans had embraced Soviet

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17-18. The *Workers News* claimed that subsequent VTsSPS investigations showed that they had become more involved in socialist competition and shock work; "Americans in Stalingrad Appeal to All Foreign Workers in U.S.S.R.," *Workers News*, 11 July 1931, p. 1; "Lesson of Stalingrad Stressed By Trade Union Council," *ibid.*, 25 August 1931, p. 5.

[62] See RGASPI, f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, l. 30; "Informatsionnaia zapiska o khode vypolneniia profsoiuznogo postanovleniia TsK VKP(b) i fraktsii VTsSPS po rabote sredi inostrannykh rabochikh i spetsialistov," f. 495, op. 30, d. 648, ll. 32-40; "Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b), ot 16/VIII-31 g. o sostoianii raboty s inostrannymi rabochimi i spetsialistami," GARF, f. 5451, op. 39, d. 1, ll. 1-4; and "Postanovlenie orgovemaniia pri TsK VSRM o rabote sredi inostrannykh rabochikh," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 383, ll. 23-25 (23/XI-1930 g.).

antiracism or become convinced of the incorrectness of racial animosity towards black Americans. Rather, it was simply because the most "fascist" among them had been deported while the others were no longer allowed to exist in near complete isolation from trade union officials. Those Americans who were uninterested in assuming the identity of an international proletariat left the Traktorostroi by late 1931 when their contracts expired, reducing the colony's total population to one-hundred thirty. Only then was it possible to say that the campaign to improve international education at the giant of socialist industry, which the CC VSRM had begun over a year earlier had gained near one hundred percent American trade union membership.[63]

IV.

As the preceding sections demonstrate, trade union leaders' primary objective in developing international education among foreign workers in the Soviet Union was to inculcate them with socialist, antiracist precepts by increasing three things: their communication and interactions with both Soviet authorities and colleagues; their understanding of the project of building socialism, particularly the notion that racial hatred threatened its realization; and their involvement in extracurricular activities. What was the main purpose of developing international education among Soviet workers? The objective was to increase Soviet workers' knowledge and consciousness of the international revolutionary movement and thereby fortify the country's image as a superior society without racism. As Lozovsky, leader of the Profintern explained, Soviet trade union authorities' purpose in conducting international education was for "our

[63] "Open Letter of the American Workers of the Stalingrad Tractor Plant (Soviet Union) to the Workers of the World," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2225, ll. 105-106.

worker to know first of all how a worker lives in a capitalist country, and how he lives in a colonial country."[64] Simply put, the true proletarian or the New Soviet Man or Woman was supposed to be erudite in the sufferings and struggles of the workers of the world.

Lewis and Brown's assault on Robinson gave impetus to the recently renewed efforts within the Soviet trade unions to make this ideal a reality. During the summer 1930, VTsSPS officials emphasized that their "right-opportunist" predecessors had written "Workers of the world unite," on every paper yet dismissed international education as "superfluous," "simply recreational work" and "very often declared that we cannot be concerned with international education we are concerned with trade union work."[65] By classifying trade union work and international education as mutually exclusive tasks, the "old" union leaders had failed to struggle against great-Russian chauvinism, anti-Semitism and local nationalism, and to imbibe Soviet workers with the knowledge that building socialism was integral to the victory of the international revolutionary movement. During a Moscow meeting of the VSRM held in November 1930 to address international education, an official of the Moscow oblast elucidated "we heard very little in the factories about the work of the Profintern, it was as if the Soviet trade unions were isolated completely from the Profintern and the international workers' movement." As a result of their extreme isolation he claimed that a group of Soviet delegates to the Fifth International Conference of Revolutionary Metal Workers which was held earlier that September informed him that they had been hitherto unaware that an International Committee of Propaganda and Activity of Revolutionary Metal Workers

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[64] "Tov. Lozovsky," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 3, d. 975, l. 41.

[65] "Tov. Kavinkov (SSSR Mosoblastkom VSRM)," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 24, l. 69; "Internatsional'noe vospitanie sredi metallistov (Shugar)," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 24, ll. 41-51.

(*Mezhdunarodnyi komitet propagandy i deistviia revoliutsionnykh metallistov*, MKPDRM) even existed let alone had convened four previous conferences.[66] During the proceedings, one of MKPDRM's leaders likewise had stressed that because little attention had been given to international education, neither the new nor old cadres of Soviet workers were familiar with the living and working conditions of laborers in capitalist countries.[67]

Central trade union authorities first attempted to reverse the old VTsSPS leaders' "difficult legacy (*tiazheloe nasledie*)" regarding international work in the early spring 1930. They ordered all trade union officials to prepare for the Fifth Profintern Congress in every factory by strengthening it.[68] Accordingly, the CC VSRM subsequently issued several directives to the factories of the metal industry insisting that, "this preparation should be led under the slogans of the struggle against remnants of opportunism within the trade union movement in the U.S.S.R., (and) against the underestimation of the significance of international education." They stressed the importance of establishing "closer connections between the workers of the Soviet Union and the workers of capitalist and colonial countries."[69] The Presidium even drew up a list of thirteen measures for local trade union authorities to implement in order to "familiarize the metal workers of the U.S.S.R. with the movement of metal workers in the capitalist countries."

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[66] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, ll. 6, 43.

[67] GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 24, ll. 41-51.

[68] "Rol' profsoiuzov SSSR v sotsialisticheskom stroitel'stve," RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 146, ll. 25-120. For the term "difficult legacy," see GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 24, l. 69.

[69] "Zasedanie Prezidiuma Tsentral'nogo Komiteta VSRM (14/VII-1930 g.)," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 530, l. 19; ll. 134-136; "Utverzhdeno Prezidiumom TsK VSRM 19-go maia 30 g.," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 5, l. 58.

These included leading regular lectures and discussions in clubs, Red Corners, and barracks; printing and disseminating a series of "international education" brochures on themes like "the latest struggle of metal workers in capitalist countries"; and organizing groups within factories to lead international education.[70]

Despite this renewed emphasis on improving international education in preparation for the Fifth Profintern Congress, most of these measures were not implemented before it opened.[71] As Moskatov of the CC VSRM explained, although international education had acquired greater importance in the months preceding it "the assault on the Negro by the fascist-spirited Americans became for us the signal to strengthen international education (among Soviet laborers) and work among foreign workers." Accordingly, a representative of the Moscow oblast committee of the VSRM claimed in a report to the CC VSRM that it was not until 10 August 1930, the day after *Trud* exposed news of Robinson's assault, that they realized the dangers of failing to lead international work and finally began investigating the condition of international work in their factories.[72] A trade union official of the Dinamo factory likewise gave this account,

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[70] "O plane organizatsii raboty po internatsional'nomu vospitaniiu, Vypiska iz protokola no 199 zasedaniia Prezidiuma TsK VSRM (1/IV-1930 g.)," GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, l. 1. Moscow and Moscow oblast officials were also instructed to hold lectures and short courses for foreign metal workers about international education.

[71] When the workers' court of the Moscow textile factory ruled to expel V.M. Tsiprus from the needle workers' union and Profintern for his racist remarks, they reportedly ordered Party, trade union officials, and MOPR representatives to improve international education at the factory and advised *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editors to more systematically acquaint Soviet workers with the struggles of the international proletariat, the "oppressed peoples of the East," and the daily life of foreign laborers working in the USSR; "Prigovor rabochikh mass," p. 6.

[72] "Zakliuchitel'noe slovo Shugara," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 24, ll. 79-83 (esp. 81-82); "Tov. Moskatov," ll. 84-138 (esp. ll. 102-104). A representative of the Moscow oblast committee argued that although they had just turned their attention toward developing international education, "there is the saying better later, than never ("Tov. Kavinkov," ll. 69-70)." In order to ameliorate the situation, he claimed they were organizing three-person committees in every factory to oversee the carrying out of international education and subsidiary troikas in each shop.

remarking that "we had done absolutely nothing regarding international education" among either the Soviet or near four hundred foreign laborers. Additionally, an AMO factory worker informed the CC VSRM that although some forms of international education had been instituted, it was the result of the efforts of a few leading comrades rather than of trade union officials.[73]

When the Fifth Profintern Congress convened from 15-30 August 1930, VTsSPS leaders reemphasized the problems that their predecessors had left them by having obscenely underestimated international work, thereby again transferring the ultimate blame for the racially-motivated assault in Stalingrad on them. They promised in the upcoming year to more effectively erase the old leaders' legacy by "leading greater, more intensive work to develop international education among the millions of workers of the USSR"; to resolutely struggle against its underestimation by officials around the country; and to thus assume their role as the vanguard of the international revolutionary trade union movement. They consequently emphasized the need for their trade union officials to gain the interest of the entire Soviet working community in this movement.[74]

Accordingly, the CC VSRM pledged to improve three main strategies in order to make international education a fixture of everyday trade union work and increase Soviet workers' interest in the plight of laborers in capitalist and colonial countries. The first, which was the most conventional of the three tactics required that Soviet workers regularly attend study circles, discussions, and lectures, as well as read newspapers, wall newspapers and agitational literature. The other two methods involved establishing

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[73] GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, ll. 26-28.

[74] RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 146, ll. 26, 81-83.

regular written correspondence with workers outside of the U.S.S.R., and personally interacting with them through workers' delegations. While the latter, as Shvernik of the VTsSPS argued, had enormous significance in furthering Soviet citizens' international education and enabling foreign laborers to receive the correct impression of the U.S.S.R., written correspondence conducted on both an individual and group level was more practical.[75] Soviet trade union leaders held up as a model for establishing international correspondence that which the workers of the Khar'kov State Electric Factory (GEZ) had arranged with laborers at a factory in Berlin. A representative of the Khar'kov factory, stressed the critical role that translators played in making this communication possible. He urged his colleagues to mobilize the foreign laborers in their respective factories to help them and, to appeal to revolutionary organizations like MOPR and Mezhrabpom for further assistance.[76]

The *Liberator*, the LSNR's official organ, fostered the impression that some Soviet workers had become interested in black American workers' status and wanted to establish contact with them. For example, the paper's editors printed a letter that they attributed to the workers of Perm (located in the Urals) in which they asked black American toilers to send them letters detailing their specific living and working conditions.[77] They published a similar note that they claimed to have received from A. Figurin, a Soviet worker from Lugansk. Figurin requested the addresses of black workers

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[75] "2 sentiabria 1930 g., GARF, f. 5667, op. 6, d. 14, l. 14; RGASPI, f. 534, op. 1, d. 146, l. 25.

[76] Trade union representatives reiterated on several occasions that the communication between the Khar'kov and Berlin factories had made the latter more responsible in organizing the re-election of their factory committee because they knew they had the Soviet workers watching them. See GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 381, ll. 6, 9; "Tov. Bezrukov," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 23, l. 22; "Tov. Slutskin (GEZ – Khark'kov)," GARF, f. 5667, op. 5, d. 24, ll. 56-66; and ll. 44-47, 138.

in the U.S. or Liberia with whom he could develop correspondence as well as a copy of the *Liberator*. A letter from the students of a technical school at the State Mechanical Shop in Podolsk, which was clearly designed to show how workers' delegations had the potential of inspiring written correspondence, also appeared in the *Liberator*. These students, who were also identified as Komsomolites addressed their appeal specifically to the Young Liberators of Chicago because they had recently met Robert Turner, a young black American of that organization who had been a member of the 1931 May Day workers' delegation to the U.S.S.R.. The students were quoted as saying, "with this letter, we want to begin a systematic correspondence with you. Our correspondence should have its aim and principle of our international proletarian solidarity. . . . Tell us how the capitalists are discriminating against you, and how the Negro masses are being revolutionized. In the process of our correspondence, we will give each other encouragement and we will make an agreement of Socialist competition."[78]

On a practical level, central trade union leaders undoubtedly conceived of all three methods of increasing Soviet laborers' international education as a means of improving their generally contentious relationship with the foreign laborers and specialists who were employed in their factories.[79] Idealistically, these strategies were

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[77] "Letter from U.S.S.R. Workers Reveals Keen Interest in Negro Masses Struggle," *Liberator*, 11 July 1931, p. 6.

[78] "Soviet Youth Hail Struggles Negro Masses - Call for United Fight of Working Youth," *ibid.*, 16 May 1931, p. 4; Soviet Youth Hails the Young Liberators and Pledge Support," *ibid.*, 13 June 1931, p. 7; "Bob Turner Greets Young Workers Convention in Name of Soviet Youth," *ibid.*, 20 June 1931, p. 6. Robert Turner reportedly informed a convention of the Young Communist League that young Soviet workers were interested in "the life of the workers in the capitalist countries, and especially wanted to know how the United States is preparing for war against workers of Russia." As the *Negro Worker*'s editor Padmore wrote Turner asking him to become the primary distributor of literature in Chicago; RGASPI, f. 534, op. 3, d. 754, l. 5. For more info on Turner, see chapter two.

[79] For the tensions between Soviet and foreign workers at the Traktorostroi and around the country, see chapter one.

supposed to cultivate the enlightened consciousness that workers who inhabited a country without racism would be required to possess. The ascendancy of the emphasis on increasing Soviet workers' knowledge of and interest in the lives of "their brothers in class" in order to perpetuate the image of Soviet racelessness assumed a similar course in the international propaganda organization known as MOPR. Although in their effort to prove their commitment to building socialism the CC MOPR in 1929 had made international educational a primary organizational objective, as with the trade unions, it was Lewis and Brown's assault on Robinson, which confirmed the seriousness and urgency of their task.[80] This increased significance of instructing Soviet workers in the sufferings and struggles of laborers in capitalist and colonial countries helps explain why MOPR leaders depicted themselves as launching the U.S.S.R.'s largest international education campaign several months later in the form of the Scottsboro protest.

CONCLUSION

Lewis and Brown's assault on Robert Robinson not only elicited Soviet leaders' indictment of "civilized" American racial norms, but also their simultaneous indictment of local Soviet authorities for failing to do their part in maintaining the image of the Soviet Union as a superior society which had transcended racism. As early as 1903, Lenin had emphasized the need to propagate the formula for internationalism and struggle against dominant-nation nationalism among the working classes, a directive he

[80] See, for example, "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma TsK MOPR - SSSR o sostoianii raboty MOPR na krupnykh predpriatiiakh i sredi sezonnykh rabochikh Nizhegorodskogo kraia," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 23, l. 193; "Polozhenie o raionnykh organizatsiiakh MOPR," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 23, l. 201; "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma TsK MOPR USSR o roste organizatsii po sostoianiu na 1/VIII-1930 g.," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 23, l. 216; "Ocherednye zadachi massovoi vospitatel'noi raboty MOPR'a," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 44-45; "Tezisy otcheta s rabote Moskovskogo oblastnogo komiteta MOPR za vremia s 1 ianvaria 1930 g.

issued with increasing frequency in the two decades that followed before his untimely illness and then death in early 1924. While this dictate never disappeared, Moscow leaders placed it at the forefront of party and trade union policy during the first Five-Year Plan. Because Stalingrad Traktorostroi officials had fallen gravely short in taking seriously their obligations to organize international education and thereby combat great-power chauvinism in either its Russian or American form, central trade union authorities were able to argue that they may as well have raised a hand to Robinson themselves.

The VSRM also accused Stalingrad officials of jeopardizing the Soviet Union's racially egalitarian image by doing nothing to stigmatize the assailants. This placed them in league with both U.S. Communist authorities whom Soviet leaders upbraided for encouraging racism by never bringing white chauvinists to account (see chapter two), as well as local authorities throughout the "free" United States who were notorious for participating in or turning their back to the routine persecution of black American workers. Their complete apathy and nonchalance towards the racial violence against Robinson at the tractor factory suggests that it was essentially a de facto policy to ignore manifestations of chauvinism against members of non-Russian nationalities without fearing any repercussions from Moscow. Traktorostroi trade union officials therefore just treated the assault as if it were a routine scuffle between a Russian and a non-Russian worker, which may have happened with some frequency.[81] Only when *Trud*'s editors

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po 1 ianvaria 1931 g.", GARF, 8265, op. 1, d. 23, ll. 34-39 (esp. ll. 37-38); "V Plenum TsK MOPR SSSR (15/VII-1930 g.)," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 24, l. 72.

[81] See "Za internatsional'noe vospitanie mass," p. 1. Also suggestive of this point, on 19 August 1930, a few days before the Lewis and Brown trial opened, the CC MOPR sent a telegram to Magnitigorsk officials, that is another one of the country's giants of socialist industry, warning them that the poor state of international education among Soviet workers there was extremely dangerous since it "is one of our most important construction sites, which has the attention of not only the proletariat of the USSR, but of the whole world." They ordered local authorities that they must consequently meet further chauvinistic and

published news of the attack on the paper's front page two weeks later did they realize that they had erred in overlooking its greater political significance, something which central trade union authorities implicitly argued they would not have done had they been routinely conducting international education. Moscow trade union leaders' immediate punishment and censure of local representatives, which conveniently helped to remove blame from themselves, also provided a stark contrast to the unwillingness of U.S. leaders in Washington, DC to take any major punitive action against state and law enforcement officials in localities where black workers had been lynched and brutalized.

Despite the exposure of numerous Lewises and Browns at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi and the consequent attention surrounding the need to develop international education among "backward" American laborers around the country, trade union officials and all-union editors were careful not to attribute racism to the entire American diaspora in the Soviet Union. They had a vested interest in portraying racism as confined to a limited group because they still depended on American workers' skill and experience to build socialism, and did not want to emerge "as racists by association" through their mere dealings with them. Thus after mentioning the "fascist-reactionary" group of Americans at the Traktorostroi, officials and editors of the all-union press often acknowledged themselves or portrayed Soviet workers as explicitly acknowledging in their protest resolutions, the contributions that many American workers in Stalingrad and throughout the U.S.S.R. were making to the construction of socialism. The central newspapers also frequently published letters and protest resolutions that they attributed to "conscious"

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anti-Semitic acts with the proper investigations and to prevent their future occurrence by working closely with trade union representatives to include seasonal workers in the unions, by increasing MOPR membership, disseminating MOPR literature, and involving all laborers but especially women in international education by holding discussions in the barracks. See "Postanovlenie Prezidiuma TsK MOPR

American laborers working in Soviet factories. In them, they were presented as expressing unequivocal outrage at the conduct of their fellow Americans and resolutely condemning as "medieval" U.S. racial norms.[82]

The urgency of conducting international work among foreign laborers, which the two white Americans' racist actions helped precipitate, was largely about outlining an ideal code of conduct for workers to follow in order to perpetuate the Soviet Union's image as a society where racism was absent. Yet on a practical level this focus produced concrete results, which certainly helped improve the livelihood of the American and other English-speaking laborers in the U.S.S.R.. Largely on the initiative of VTsSPS, baseball, football, and soccer teams were formed, a foreign workers' club was established in Moscow, English-language radio programs were introduced, foreign workers' libraries were organized, and English-language newspapers were published which among other services announced the weekly schedule of these activities and of special concerts, films and English-language lectures.[83] The English-language newspaper, the *Moscow Times*, which is printed in present-day Moscow has its roots in these original English-language Soviet publications, and by implication indirectly in the racial violence against a black American worker at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi during the summer of 1930. Although one may argue that many of these programs would have eventually been implemented

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USSR po rabote Magnitogorskogo raikoma MOPR sredi sezonnikov," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 23, ll. 228-229.

[82] For an example of this tactic by the CC VSRM, see, for example, GARF, f. 5469, op. 14, d. 382, l. 15. For this strategy in the press, see "Takie ne mogut nazyvat'sia rabochimi," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 11 August 1930, p. 4; "Rabochie-amerikantsy protestuiut protiv izbieniia rabochego-negra," *Izvestiia*, 18 August 1930, p. 3; "My obrashchaemsia k amerikanskim rabochim," *Trud*, 10 August 1930, p. 1; and "My ne dopustim v SSSR nravov burzhuaznoi Ameriki," *ibid.*, 9 August 1930, p. 1.

[83] GARF, f. 5451, op. 39, d. 32, ll. 10-21;1 d. 10, ll. 1-49. For examples from the *Workers News* regarding the foreign workers' club, lectures, radio programs, English-language literature, etc., see 1 June 1931, p. 2;

regardless of Lewis and Brown's assault on Robinson, without question their conduct facilitated and accelerated their advent.

This chapter has focused on the aspect of Soviet antiracist discourse that Lewis and Brown's bigotry in Stalingrad elicited which privileged international education as the cure for eliminating racism and great-power chauvinism. International education was in other words touted as the cornerstone of a raceless society, juxtaposed against capitalist education as the foundation for a racist one. This meant that its weakness if not absence among the toiling masses threatened to upset the tenuous boundaries between the new Soviet socialist world and the capitalist one it was supposed to replace. It was Soviet workers' international rather than capitalist education, which was supposed to have empowered them with an emancipated consciousness to condemn U.S. racial norms, to transcend thoughts of ever physically injuring a black worker, to respect black Americans like James Ford and Isaiah Hawkins as political actors in Moscow, and to prevent heinous racial injustices like lynching from becoming a part of Soviet reality. The image that Soviet citizens had become mobilized en masse to the MOPR-orchestrated campaign during the spring 1931 to liberate nine young black American prisoners in Scottsboro, Alabama constituted another performance of this emancipated consciousness begotten of and by the recently strengthened system of international education.

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21 June 1931, p. 4; 1 July 1931, p. 4; 16 July 1931, p. 4; 21 July 1931, pp. 2-3; 18 January 1932, p. 2; 12 February 1932, p. 4; 16 February 1932, p. 2.

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ANOTHER KIND OF FREEDOM: THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT WITH ANTIRACISM AND ITS IMAGE AS A RACELESS SOCIETY, 1928-1936

VOLUME II

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Meredith L. Roman

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Chapter 4

A Potemkin Village of Antiracism: The Scottsboro Protest in the Soviet Union, 1931-1932

On 25 March 1931, nine black American male teenagers, most of whom were unacquainted with each other, hopped on the same freight train in different towns in Alabama en route to Tennessee to search for work. Upon receiving word that several black men had forced off the freight some white male hitchers, the police rounded up all black men on the train when it arrived at the station in Paint Rock, Alabama. The nine black teenagers were hauled off to Scottsboro, the county seat, and initially charged with assault until law enforcement officials persuaded two white prostitutes, whom they had also pulled off the train, to accuse them of rape. The trials, for which the alleged gang rapists were refused impartial legal counsel, began on 6 April 1931 with a lynch mob surrounding the courthouse. A day later, despite the fact that evidence in the case was extremely weak, an all-white jury condemned eight of the defendants to death and sentenced the youngest to life imprisonment. The execution date was scheduled for 10 July 1931. Largely as a result of the efforts of the International Labor Defense (ILD) as well as the national and international protests organized against the sentence, the Scottsboro teenagers were not executed in July. After other execution dates had been scheduled and then appealed by the ILD, the U.S. Supreme Court in November 1932 ordered a new trial for the young men on the grounds that the rights guaranteed them under the Fourteenth Amendment had been violated.[1]

[1] For the foundational texts on the Scottsboro case, see Dan Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1969); and James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

How is the legal lynching of nine young black men in Alabama remotely relevant to the history of the Soviet Union during the early 1930s? As Soviet authorities embarked on a massive campaign to build socialism through rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture, they used American racism and especially the Scottsboro legal lynching as an alternate means of glorifying as enlightened the policies of the Soviet state.[2] The propaganda organization known as the International Organization for Assistance to Revolutionary Fighters (*Mezhdunarodnaia organizatsiia pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii*) or MOPR, orchestrated the Scottsboro protest in the U.S.S.R. not necessarily to bring U.S. racial discrimination to an end or to liberate the nine prisoners, these goals were secondary at best. Rather, their major objective was to promote the Soviet Union's image as a superior society that in contrast to the "free" and "democratic" United States had transcended racism. Germane to this image, MOPR leaders and editors of the all-union press presented Soviet citizens as not only aware of the racial injustice in Alabama but also genuinely outraged by it.

As this chapter demonstrates, from 1931 to 1932, that is up until the U.S. Supreme Court issued its monumental decision, frequent newspaper accounts, photographs, cartoons, banners, placards, protest resolutions, and detailed MOPR reports helped to cultivate a Potemkin village of antiracism. This Potemkin village of antiracism constituted an idealized image of the Soviet Scottsboro campaign in which Russian and non-Russian workers, kolkhoznik, students, and intellectuals had risen up "spontaneously" en masse from Minsk to Vladivostok to condemn all forms of American

[2] In his study on the Soviet League of the Militant Godless, Daniel Peris argues that this was the objective of most propaganda campaigns during this era. See *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

racial injustice and to demand the "liberat(ion) of our black comrades!" The purpose of conjuring up this anti-reality or parallel reality where racism did not exist was to depict the country that was building socialism as it should be instead of how it actually existed.

MOPR leaders' use of the Scottsboro protest in order to highlight the enlightened nature of the Soviet state and its citizenry rendered it distinct in several ways from the Scottsboro liberation movements in the U.S. and throughout Europe. First, in conjunction with the last phase of the Cultural Revolution (1928-1931), representatives of art, science, and literature, that is, "intellectual toilers," were cast in an especially prominent role in leading the Soviet campaign and articulating its main themes. Second, border regions of the country, agricultural areas subjected to forced collectivization, and/or republics which had some type of history of ethnic conflict were depicted in MOPR reports and the all-union press as having enthusiastically risen to the Scottsboro teenagers' defense. Third, due to the privileging of education, and international education in particular as a means of self-improvement and cultivating the New Soviet Person, MOPR authorities portrayed Soviet citizens as receiving a lesson in "U.S. Racism 101" by participating in the protest.

The dominant image of the Scottsboro prisoners that the Soviet campaign propagated also made it unique. The nine Alabama defendants were hardly ever referred to as "the Scottsboro boys" (except in English-language publications), but were consistently identified as the "Scottsboro prisoners (*Skottsboro uzniki*)," the "9 Negroes (*9 negry*)," the "young Negroes (*molodye negry*)," and the "Negro workers (*negritianskie rabochie*)."[3] If Soviet authorities had used the term "boys" rather than "prisoners,"

[3] Some scholars argue that the terminology "boys" was degrading to the defendants but underscored the vicious injustice of the sentence. See James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft, "Mother

"Negroes," and "youth," then it would have undermined their depiction of the defendants as first and foremost "Negro workers" who, having rejected their "slave" status, had joined the proletarian movement. In light of the Comintern's official recognition of black American workers as "indispensable allies" of the Soviet Union in 1928,[4] it is unsurprising that the identities of the Scottsboro teenagers' were distorted in order to make them members of this revolutionary group. As will be shown, this highly strategic depiction rendered the black American prisoners "worthy" of the paternalistic assistance and support of the citizens and leaders of the first workers' state, while allowing MOPR officials and Soviet intellectuals to depict their death sentence as the first step in the U.S. capitalists' plot to wage imperialist war against the U.S.S.R..[5]

Finally, this chapter illuminates that the Scottsboro protest in the Soviet Union was primarily a masculine exercise. Soviet and black American men were cast as it main contributors, and all black male workers, in addition to the Scottsboro prisoners, were portrayed as the main victims of U.S. racial persecution. Whereas the Scottsboro mothers and especially Ada Wright played a highly visible role in leading the cry for the freedom of the "Scottsboro boys" in the U.S. and European campaigns, there was no conceptual space for "mothers" in a liberation movement which portrayed the defendants unequivocally as young black revolutionary workers. Furthermore, because the Soviet

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Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934," *American Historical Review*, 106 (April 2001): 387-430.

[4] On the Comintern's declaration of black Americans a nation, see the "Introduction," pp. 15-22.

[5] For this conceptualization, see for example, "Otvedem ruku ubiits," *Ogonek*, No. 11 (20 April 1932): 2. On the "siege mentality" characteristic of this period of Soviet history, see Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, pp. 102-117; and Gabor Tamas Rittersporn, "The Omnipresent Conspiracy: On Soviet Imagery of Politics and Social Relations in the 1930s," in *Stalinism: Its Nature and Aftermath*, eds. Rittersporn and Nick Lampert (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), pp. 101-120.

liberation movement cast the Scottsboro defendants as young male workers instead of "boys," it emphasized their innocence not by focusing on their youthfulness but by attacking as fallacious the myth of the black rapist (of white women). Thus although the Soviet campaign largely presented white American men as the main perpetrators of U.S. racism, it did not elide completely the integral role that white American women played in upholding the American racial regime.

I.

Intellectual toilers of the U.S.S.R. constituted the de facto spokespersons and organizers of the Scottsboro protest especially during its first year, 1931. Their prominence in a campaign to expose the hypocrisy of "freedom" and "justice" in bourgeois America was intended to serve as evidence that the Cultural Revolution had successfully established "Communist and proletarian hegemony" in the cultural and intellectual spheres of Soviet society. [6] Signaling that the Cultural Revolution's most militant and radical aspects were being rescinded, Maxim Gorky was hailed in his return "home" to the Soviet Union in May 1931 as the "great writer of the proletariat" when just the previous year the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) had attacked him for "unproletarian" literary work. Shortly after his celebrated homecoming which ensured the "mobilization of all of Soviet literature for socialist construction, for proletarian culture," the press reported that Gorky had answered MOPR leaders' appeal

[6] See especially, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

by forming a Defense Committee to help lead the country's Scottsboro campaign.[7] The Committee consisted of fifteen other "distinguished representatives of science, literature and society," one of whom was Anatolii Lunacharskii, former Commissar of Enlightenment, whose participation as a casualty of the Cultural Revolution constituted further proof that it had effectively proletarianized the Soviet intellectual community.[8] The remaining members included: Antatol' Gidash, a Hungarian poet of the International Association of Proletarian Writers; Bela Illesh, a Hungarian novelist; Felix Cohn, an "old Bolshevik"; black American Communists George Padmore and Lovett Fort-Whiteman; M. Musso, an Indonesian Comintern official; authorities of MOPR and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS); the editors of *Rabochaia Gazeta* and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*; and a member of the Academy of Sciences.[9]

In late June 1931, this disparate group of intellectual and cultural figures called on "workers and female workers, toilers of the entire world, brothers in class" calling on them to recognize that "saving the lives of the prisoners in Scottsboro rests entirely in the hands of the working masses" and that it was necessary to "gain the freedom of the Scottsboro prisoners at any cost." The appeal denounced as an old form of "racist

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[7] See, for example, "Vchera priekhal v Moskvu Maksim Gor'kii: Da zdravstvuet velikii pisatel' proletariata!," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 15 May 1931, p. 1; and "Velikii pisatel' proletariata," *Ogonek*, No. 15 (30 May 1931): 3.

[8] On Lunacharskii's role as Commissar of Enlightenment, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts Under Lunacharsky October 1917-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; orig. pub. 1970). For his removal on the grounds of having an alleged "soft-line" on culture, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The 'Soft' Line on Culture and Its Enemies: Soviet Cultural Policy, 1922-1927," in the *Slavic Review* 33, no. 2 (June 1974): 267-287.

[9] See "V zashchitu 8 negritianskikh rabochikh, prigovorennykh k kazni na elektricheskom stule," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 23 June 1931, p. 4; and note 11. *Rabochaia Gazeta*'s editor, Tsekher, was also prosecutor in the Tsiprus trial. For information on Andrei Troitskii, editor of *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, see Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 126, 208.

'trickery'" the accusation that the defendants, who represented "the doubly oppressed and persecuted Negro proletariat," raped two white women.[10] It asserted that the real "crime" for which the "bourgeois-fascist American court" made the young black men "candidates for the electric chair" was their efforts "to rally the black and white workers for the struggle against the unbridled terrorism of the maddened bourgeoisie."[11]

Although the portrayal of the Scottsboro prisoners as champions of interracial proletarian unity was fabricated, it quickly became replicated as fact in the speeches, essays, poems, and resolutions that Soviet cultural and intellectual figures, following the example of their "leading representatives" on the Defense Committee, subsequently formulated. On the basis of this appeal, the following also became standard features of Scottsboro discourse among Soviet intellectuals: identifying the myth of the black rapist as a fundamental component of American racism; branding the court which sentenced the defendants as "bourgeois-fascist" (which meant anti-Soviet); and declaring solidarity implicitly or explicitly with the project of building socialism.

While the easiest way to regurgitate these points was by drawing up a resolution decrying the injustice of the Scottsboro legal lynching, some Soviet writers were more

[10] The Soviet economist, Nikolai Osinskii, who recorded his impressions and observations of the U.S. after visiting the country during the mid-1920s, compared the myth of the black rapist to the "ritual legend" of the tsarist era about Russian Jews' purported use of Christian children's blood. Like the legend, he explained, the myth justified the perpetration of all types of violent atrocities against black Americans. See *Po tu storonu okeana iz amerikanskikh vpechatlenii i nabliudenii* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1926), esp. pp. 41-44.

[11] For the appeal, see "Preliminary Informational Summary of the Campaign in Defense of the 9 Negro Youths in Scottsboro, USA, Measures Taken on the Part of the C.C. of the MOPR/IRA Section in the USSR," RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, ll. 105-108 (esp. l. 105); "V zashchitu uznikov Skottsboro," *Izvestiia*, 29 June 1931, p. 3; "Obrashchenie komiteta sodeistviia MOPR," *Trud*, 29 June 1931, p. 1; "Mezhdunarodnaia solidarnost' rabochego klassa dolzhna spasti rabochikh negrov," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 29 June 1931, p. 4; "Vyrvem uznikov Skottsboro iz ruk palachei," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 29 June 1931, p. 4; "Vyrvem uznikov Skottsboro na svobodu!" *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, no. 19 (July 1931): 3-4; and "In Defense of the Negro Workers Condemned to Death," *Workers News*, 1 July 1931, p. 4.

creative.[12] Nikolai Aseev, a leading poet of the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s, penned "A Song about Alabama" in which he reiterated in the poem's refrain the notorious reputation that the southern U.S. state had acquired as a result of its inhabitants' relentless persecution of black Americans and recent replacement of the "laws of lynch with electricity." Aseev explicitly identified the myth of the black rapist as fundamental to understanding the logic of the legal lynching and all forms of US racism. He emphasized that in Alabama, if a black man, above whose head constantly hangs a "long, sturdy noose," even flashed a smile at a white woman, then he would be "burned alive" whether by the extralegal means of wood and kerosene or the legal means of electricity. The Soviet poet connected Alabama's systematic terrorism against its "black slaves" with the ultimate threat of imperialist war against the U.S.S.R., positing that the barbaric southern state sought to "replace the power of the Soviets with the cross of the fascists."[13]

Alexei Tolstoy composed an essay in which he simultaneously articulated his disgust about the legal lynching and allegiance with the new proletarian era in Soviet literature. Speaking on behalf of all "Soviet writers" who were "taking part as far as our strength will allow in the building of the foundation of Socialism,"[14] he stressed that the absurd lengths to which white Americans historically have gone to inflict violence upon

[12] See, for example, the protest resolution printed on the front page of *Literaturnaia Gazeta* on 5 July 1931 (Pozor amerikanskomu fashizmu! Protiv kazni, gotoviashcheisia v Skottsboro) to which the names of one hundred forty writers and cultural figures were attached. In accordance with the Defense Committee's appeal , the signatories had posited that the Scottsboro prisoners were going to be "burned to death on the electric chair" because they refused to remain "slaves" and had "advanced the slogan of international solidarity of the working class."

[13] Nik. Aseev, "Pesenka ob alabame," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 30 July 1931, p. 2. A. Gidash also wrote a poem, "Nu, a dal'she? [posviashchaetsia vos'mi alabamskim rabochim-negram]", dedicated to the "eight Alabama Negro-workers" that appeared in *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, no. 35 (December 1931): 3.

[14] Aleksei Tolstoy, "Osvobodite nashikh chernykh tovarishchei!" *Izvestiia*, 8 July 1931, p. 3. The English-language translation was published as "History Has a Long Memory" in the *Workers News*, 16 July 1931, p. 4.

black workers had become even more desperate as a result of the crisis in capitalism and growing strength of the international proletariat. Specifically, Tolstoy remarked, "ten thousand white farmers rushed into the small town of Scottsboro, in order to condemn to death eight Negro workers. If for this purpose it was necessary to prove that the Negroes had stolen the moon from the sky ten thousand whites would have shouted: Yes!" As a result of the preparations of these "10,000 horsemen, mounted farmers, sons of frightened bourgeoisie," and "members of the Young Men's Christian Association" to murder eight innocent "black proletarians" in Scottsboro, "really one is ashamed to call himself a white man." Tolstoy's explicit use of the racial identifier "white" to refer to the American constituents of the Scottsboro lynch mob and then to himself, suggests that one of the underlying objectives of his essay and of the larger protest in the U.S.S.R. was to disassociate the attitudes and conduct of Soviet citizens (many of whom would be considered "white" by American standards), from that of white Americans. In other words, as Tolstoy's piece indicates, the Soviet Scottsboro campaign was in essence about symbolically redefining "whiteness" to show that in a socialist society "whiteness" signified enlightenment rather than ignorance in regards to issues of race.

This objective was also evident from the lengthy essay that Anatolii Lunacharskii dedicated to Scottsboro. He summarized with a discernible tone of disbelief that eight black male teenagers will be murdered, and the ninth, the youngest "will spend his entire life in prison" when there is absolutely no proof that they physically violated "two white professional prostitutes." Lunacharskii asserted that most white Americans' attitudes towards the race question were backwards in comparison to those of Soviet citizens.[15] As

[15] Lunacharskii was one of the few individuals in the Soviet campaign who emphasized that alleged victims were prostitutes. For the dangers involved in using this tactic to emphasize the prisoners' innocence which

he stressed, with a subtle allusion to the hypocrisy of Christianity, even the more "open-minded" white Americans who opposed the verdict on the grounds that the nine black defendants had been denied a fair trial, still believed that if it could be proven that they had even just "made advances" at the white women, then they deserved to be deprived of their lives. This was because, the former Commissar of Enlightenment continued, by white Americans' logic "'the black dogs'" needed to "understand that it was entirely impermissible for them to raise their eyes to white women, whom their white brothers in Christ can acquire for a few dollars." Lunacharskii's commentary also illustrates how the Soviet protest depicted the Scottsboro prisoners' vulnerabilities as lying primarily in their blackness, secondly in their working class origins, and lastly in their exaggerated status as active revolutionaries. Specifically, he argued that the real reasons why the "bourgeois-fascist American court" had decided to execute the defendants were the following: "The first crime is that they are Negroes. The second crime is that they are workers. The third crime is that they are unemployed. The fourth crime is that a rumor had reached the ears of the police that these workers had revolutionary leanings."[16]

In terms of content, Maxim Gorky's protest essay resembled the writings of his peers as well as the original appeal to which his name was attached as founder and head of the Defense Committee. The only major difference was that it was printed and distributed in the form of an agitational pamphlet rather than in the all-union press. According to MOPR records, three million copies of Gorky's "Terror against the Negro

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was common in U.S. Scottsboro discourse, see William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 128-151.

[16] "Rabochie, akademiki, pisateli Sovetskogo souiza protestuiut protiv gotoviashcheisia v SASh kazni negritianskikh rabochikh," *Izvestiia*, 3 July 1931, p. 2; A. Lunacharskii, "Palacham ne uiti ot suda istorii," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 10 July 1931, p. 2.

Workers in America" were released simultaneously in twenty-four areas of the U.S.S.R. during the summer 1931.[17] Gorky characterized the impending execution of the nine (when it was eight) Scottsboro youth, who "are guilty of no crime," as just one aspect of "civilized life" in capitalist countries where "an interminable war against the working class" rages. Emphasizing that the growth of black workers' militancy had caused the American bourgeoisie to feel increasingly threatened, he argued that the purpose of this legal lynching was "to scare Negroes, this murder is a 'preventative measure.'"[18] To reinforce his argument, Gorky cited the atrocities at Camp Hill, Alabama (of mid-July 1931) where he detailed, "400 policemen and armed fascists" stormed a Scottsboro protest of black Alabama sharecroppers, murdered the leader (Ralph Grey), lynched four black men, and set fire to the homes of black families. This escalation of U.S. racial violence, the "great writer of the proletariat" instructed, increased the urgency for the world proletariat to fight against lynching and in defense of all black American workers.[19]

Members of the Soviet cultural and intellectual community not only displayed their proletarian commitment to the Scottsboro campaign and the construction of

[17] See "Terror kapitalistov protiv negritianskikh rabochikh v Amerike," RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 76, ll. 252-253. For distribution numbers, see GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 69. Gorky's essay was printed in the MOPR journal, *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, no. 25 (September 1931): 3-4. For English-language translations, see RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 76, ll. 254-257; *Negro Worker*, 1 (January 1932): 13-15; and *Workers News*, 1 September 1931, p. 2. A reprint of "Terror against the Negro Workers in America" can be found in Gorky's collected essay volumes.

[18] For other Scottsboro pamphlets, see RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, l. 105.

[19] The Camp Hill violence was well covered in the Soviet press, see "Kak pogib negr Grei," *Trud*, 20 July 1931, p. 4; "Politseiskaia okhota na negrov v Amerike," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 20 July 1931; "'Demokratiia' politseiskikh banditov Ameriki," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 20 July 1931, p. 1; "Police Terror Against Negro Workers in U.S.A.," *Workers News*, 21 July 1931, p. 1; and "Ubiistvo v Dedville," *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, no. 33 (November 1931): 7.

socialism via the printed word, but also through their attendance at protest rallies.[20] The Defense Committee organized one of its most publicized mass meetings on 4 July 1931 at the Uritsky Palace in Leningrad, six days prior to the Scottsboro prisoners' first execution date. They obviously had scheduled it on this particular day in order to juxtapose the U.S. holiday's celebration of American liberty and justice against the systematic persecution of black Americans. George Padmore and Wilhelm Pieck of the Comintern reportedly led fifteen hundred writers, artists, lawyers, and scientists in condemning the preparations for the "brutal murder of eight innocent young Negro-workers" and as Tolstoy exhorted, in "demand(ing) the liberation of our black comrades."

This Leningrad rally particularly provided an ideal platform for members of the Academy of Sciences, who had been a major target of the Cultural Revolution's antibourgeois offensive, to demonstrate that the institution had become a bulwark of socialist construction.[21] To be sure, the presence (however symbolic) of one of its members on the Defense Committee was strategic. Several academicians even issued statements emphasizing the superiority of Soviet society over U.S. "civilization." N.S. Derzhavin, for example, posited that because American intellectuals helped keep workers racially divided, "in the area of culture, we have long surpassed America. Our new ethical outlook, our national policy, our Soviet civilization stands immeasurably higher." A.N. Samoilovich similarly declared, "Soviet citizens cannot find sufficient words for

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[20] Scholars have demonstrated that Soviet leaders used celebrations, festivals, and meetings to showcase the popular support that the regime and its policies enjoyed among the populace but that these events often became sites of alternative discourse. See especially Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism As a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 158-206.

articulating their anger and surprise that in our day a manifestation of such barbarity would be permitted in a country which purports to belong to a higher civilization."[22]

Another well-publicized meeting that the Defense Committee organized as proof that the protest had pervaded the Soviet cultural community convened after the first act of Eugene O'Neil's *Negro* (*All God's Chillun Got Wings*) in Moscow's Kamernyi Theater on 5 July 1931.[23] The protest, which was also broadcast over the radio, opened with the following appeal: "Listen, listen, listen! Here and now is convening a meeting of protest against the preparation of the murder of 8 Negro-workers, condemned by the bourgeois court of America." Before the "overcrowded hall," M. Musso compared his experiences in Indonesia with the segregation black Americans suffered in the U.S. He explained, "I experienced in its entirety the horrible position of Negroes in the U.S., where they are victimized by savage hatred. For Negroes there are special restaurants, special schools-forbidding them from associating with whites."[24] One of the play's male actors attempted to personalize the plight of black Americans by performing a monologue in which he assumed the identity of a black American man. During the seventy-line long

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[21] See Ronald G. Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 209-213, and notes 6 and 8.

[22] "V zashchitu uznikov Skottsboro: internatsional'nyi miting Leningradskikh uchenykh i pisatelei," *Izvestiia*, 6 July 1931, p. 2; "Rabochie, akademiki, pisateli Sovetskogo Soiuza," p. 2; "Pisateli i akademiki Leningrada protestuiut protiv kazni 8 rabochikh negrov," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 3 July 1931, p. 4. Pieck was also head of the German Red Aid, the German affiliate of MOPR.

[23] For other Scottsboro meetings in movie houses and theaters, see "Dek. 32 g. TsK MOPR SSSR," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 80-83 (esp. l. 83); "V punktu 4-mu povestki dnia Sekretariata TsK 14/1-33 g.: O khode kampanii protesta protiv kazni 9 negritianskikh iunoshei Skottsboro v 1932 g.," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 68-79 (esp. l. 69); and "Operativnyi plan kampanii Skottsboro po komitetu sodeistviia MOPR v provedenii kampanii Skottsboro i TsK MOPR," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 84-85. KUTV students included this play in their criticism of Soviet productions, which derogatorily portrayed peoples of African descent. See chapter five.

[24] "V zashchitu uznikov Skotsboro," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 7 July 1931, p. 3; "Scottsboro Demonstration at Moscow Show," *Liberator*, 8 August 1931, p. 2. *Rabochaia Gazeta* superimposed Musso's photograph over an image of the "attentive" theater crowd.

soliloquy, the performer lamented: "from childhood because of my black skin they called me swine. Because of the color of my skin, they made a laughing stock of me, trying to put me in chains to lynch me." Admonishing the audience to recognize the urgency of becoming involved in the Scottsboro protest, he declared, "the American law has already prepared eight new nooses for eight Negro lads. I cry out to you – the only Negro among you – to you – from the first row to the last: the execution is nearing, the critical hour is approaching. Together with us, comrades, raise your voice of protest!"[25]

By 1932, MOPR authorities sought to demonstrate publicly that the protest resolutions, poems, and essays that the country's intellectual toilers composed and the mass meetings in which they participated had inspired Soviet industrial workers to join the Scottsboro campaign. In March 1932, after the Alabama Supreme Court ruled to uphold the death sentence of seven defendants,[26] an "all-union radio rally" was held in Moscow's Palace of Trade Unions. For the first time in the liberation movement, instead of Soviet intellectual and cultural figures, the Defense Committee selected workers from the country's giants of socialist industry to travel to the capital, the epicenter of antiracism, to serve as its featured speakers. These included but were not limited to representatives from Magnitogorsk, the Khar'kov Tractor Factory, Sel'mashstroi (Rostov-on-Don), Dneprostroi, Elektrozavod (Moscow), the Nizhni-Novgorod Avtozavod, and Stalino (Donbass).[27] To be sure, the rally was designed to show that the Scottsboro protest had not only reached industrial workers around the country during its

[25] "Monolog," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 5 July 1931, p. 1. "M. Svetlov" was named as the author.

[26] Eugene Williams' death sentence like that of Roy Wright earlier was commuted to life imprisonment because he had been under the age of fourteen when originally tried.

first year, but more importantly that it was so successful that it had also rendered the more advanced among them capable of leading an all-union radio discussion in Moscow about the case and U.S. racism in general. Soviet industrial workers thus deliberately emerged from the Scottsboro campaign appearing to share the same enlightened perspective on issues of race and U.S. racial norms as the proletarianized toiling intelligentsia.

While this common enlightened consciousness was celebrated and exhibited at protest rallies in Moscow throughout the summer 1932, the most elaborate assumed the form of a two-day carnival in the Park of Culture and Rest, which reportedly attracted thirty thousand participants.[28] Among the more notable who participated were members of the Defense Committee; Sen Katayama, a Comintern official from Japan and KUTV instructor; the black American male and female cast members of the Mezhrabpom film *Black and White* who had arrived in the capital in late June;[29] and sixty-two year old Emma Harris, a black American woman who had lived in Russia since 1901. According to Langston Hughes, although Harris disagreed with many of the policies of the Soviet state, she supported its stance on the legal lynching, attended all the capital's rallies, and was always introduced as "our own beloved Negro comrade, Emma, who before she came to the Soviet motherland, knew the stinging lash of race hatred in her native

[27] Party officials in regions such as the North Caucasus reportedly instructed sovkhozes and kolkhozes to organize meetings in order to listen to the workers' discussion; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 68-69, 75; RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, l. 105.

[28] GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 69.

[29] The film was supposed to have focused on the lives of black workers in an Alabama steel mill but Hughes found the script unrealistic and unworkable. For its "postponement," see p. 221; and the epilogue of this study.

America."[30] Disclosed most clearly in this manner in which Harris was introduced, the black Americans and persons of color from colonized countries who served as members of the Defense Committee and/or who attended the major Scottsboro meetings as both participants and organizers were explicitly and implicitly cast as the beneficiaries of the Soviet state's antiracist policies. In other words, their presence on the Defense Committee and at well-publicized Scottsboro protest functions constitutes further evidence of how Soviet authorities exploited the country's black American residents and visitors as a means of highlighting the emancipated consciousness of the state and its intellectual and industrial laborers.

II.

Whereas the previous section demonstrated how the Scottsboro campaign served as a means for intellectuals to affirm publicly their commitment to the socialist project and hence the goals of Soviet leaders, this section further illuminates how it also functioned to showcase the Soviet state's vast support among the toiling masses during a period of massive upheaval especially in the countryside. On 27 June 1931, just two months after the eight young black men had been condemned to death in Scottsboro, Alabama, *Rabochaia Gazeta* claimed in what could be nothing short of hyperbole that thousands of protests against the sentence had risen "from all ends of the Soviet Union:

[30] Hughes and David Levering Lewis (who based his account primarily on Hughes' testimony) attributed Harris' lack of support of the Soviet government to her resentment that it had stripped her of a lucrative business as head of a brothel. See Langston Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), pp. 83, 87; David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989; orig. pub. 1969), p. 290. It should be noted that black American Communists and non-Communists, for their own strategic purposes, like Soviet officials, celebrated the "freedom" that Harris enjoyed from U.S. racism in the Soviet Union, and by extension glorified as enlightened the state that afforded it to her. See, for example, I.D.W. Talmadge, "Mother Emma,"

from Arkhangel'sk to Viatka, Novosibirsk to Vladivostok, the Donbass mines to the Baku oil fields, the cotton fields of Central Asia to the textile factories of Ivanovo-Voznesensk."[31] The following year, the CC MOPR USSR similarly asserted as fact in equally picturesque language that the protest had pervaded the vast territory of the country: "throughout the whole of the Soviet Union, from Leningrad to Vladivostok, from Minsk to Tiflis, the mighty voices of millions thunder: 'Freedom for the Scottsboro Prisoners!'"[32] In addition to these broad, dramatic statements, all-union editors and MOPR authorities used protest resolutions and extensive numerical data to foster the image that protest meetings covered nearly every inch of Soviet soil where citizens "spontaneously" and "simultaneously" expressed their outrage at the legal lynching.

While the CC MOPR was essentially unrestricted in the number of Scottsboro protest resolutions it could include in their records from local cells and individual industrial and agricultural enterprises, all-union publications of course had to be more selective. Among the central newspapers, without question *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*'s editors printed the most, often displaying at one time between three and seven Scottsboro resolutions on the front page.[33] They typically claimed that the editorial office had been

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Opportunity (August 1933): 245-247; and William Wilson, "A Lapse Into a Bad Americanism," *Moscow News*, 1 January 1931, p. 7.

[31] "Na ikh storone sochuvstvie proletariata vsego mira," *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 27 June 1931, p. 2.

[32] "Svobodu uznikam Skottsboro!," RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 126, ll. 68-71. Like most MOPR documents, besides English (ll. 72-74) this report was translated into French (ll. 64-67) and German (ll. 75-77). The CC MOPR USSR made "Freedom for the Scottsboro Prisoners!" one of its slogans in commemoration of MOPR's ten-year anniversary and Third International Conference. See "Lozungi TsK MOPR SSSR k 10-letiu MOPR i vsemirnomu kongressu," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 49, l. 943.

[33] See, for example, "Volnoi gnevnogo protesta udarim po rukam palachei!" *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 27 May 1931, p. 2; "Ostanovit ruku palacha!" *ibid.*, 30 May 1931, p. 1; "Trebuem otmeny krovavogo prigovora!" *ibid.*, 31 May 1931, p. 1; "Alabamskoe ubiistvo dolzhno byt' predotvrashcheno," *ibid.*, 8 June 1931, p. 1; "Smertniki Alabamy vse eshche pod ugrozoi," *ibid.*, 9 June 1931, p. 1; "Palachi v sudeiskikh-mantiiakh glukhi k golosu millionnykh mass," *ibid.*, 26 June 1931, p. 1; "Cherez sem' dnei palachi

flooded with protest resolutions, and the majority of statements that they published were attributed to industrial laborers, factory workshop students, and komsomolites. The editors of the MOPR journals *Sputnik Moprovtsa* and *Internatsional'nyi Maiak* efficiently maximized the space devoted to statements of opposition. Generally, they first printed the complete text of two or three, and then listed numerous groups of other workers, kolkhozniks, and young people, whom they claimed had likewise formulated statements, but which "unfortunately" there "was insufficient space" to publish.[34]

Even if these other protest resolutions actually existed, it was unnecessary to print each of them since as evidenced by those that appeared in the all-union press and MOPR records, there was insignificant variation among them regardless of who was identified as the author. Although a primary objective of publishing statements of opposition was to promote the image that Soviet citizens were contributing to the antiracist discourse of the Scottsboro protest, as a result of their near complete uniformity printing them made their contrived nature even more readily apparent. This uniform yet "spontaneous" outcry was undoubtedly intended to symbolically unify the vast country of soviets, serving as evidence that it was becoming populated by a New Soviet Person, who had begun to think in a superior way about race than an individual in a capitalist society like the U.S..[35]

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gotoviatsia vkliuchit' tok," *ibid*., 4 July 1931, p. 1; "Palachi vkliuchaiut elektricheskii tok," *ibid*., 3 March 1932, p. 1; and "Alabamskie ubiitsy vkliuchaiut tok," *ibid*., 27 March 1932, p. 1.

[34] For examples of this strategy or variations of it, see "Ne dopustim kazni nashikh chernykh tovarishchei," *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, nos. 20-21 (July 1931): 7; "V ozhidanii elektricheskogo stula," *ibid*., no. 16 (June 1931): 4; and "Svobodu uznikam Skottsboro! po zavodam, fabrikam, uchrezhdeniiam," *Sputnik Moprovtsa*, nos. 5-6 (March 1932): 6; "Stroim internatsional'nyi detskii dom," *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, no. 19 (July 1931): 16.

[35] For the emphasis on the New Soviet Person thinking in new ways, see especially David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 45-56.

The scripted nature of Soviet Scottsboro resolutions was most glaringly disclosed in that they assumed two standard forms in the central press and MOPR records. The first type consisted of a short, more basic statement articulating indignation at the American racial injustice. As a standard example, on 7 July 1931, *Trud* reported on page one that 16,000 workers at a red banner factory in Nikolaev (southern Ukraine) "with great indignation are protesting the American bourgeoisie's barbaric execution of eight Negro workers." In their resolution this large group of industrial laborers collectively declared: "'We demand the immediate repeal of the bloody sentence and the liberation of our brothers in class! Down with the bloody terror of fascism! Long live international proletarian solidarity!'"[36]

In the second form, workers, kolkhozniks and students alike followed the prototypical "angry" denunciation of the legal lynching with a pledge to respond to it by fulfilling a certain task or tasks to strengthen socialism. These included forming shock brigades, engaging in socialist competition, organizing subbotniks, sowing plots of land, collecting donations, subscribing to the bond "The Five-Year Plan in Four Years," and/or organizing new MOPR cells on behalf of the liberation of the "9 Negroes" and the project of building socialism.[37] Thus, just as the intellectual workers discussed above often used

[36] "Doloi krovavyi fashistskii terror," *Trud*, 7 July 1931, p. 1. MOPR authorities sanctioned indignation as the proper proletarian response by asserting that, "the indignation of workers and peasants in the country of soviets who have risen" in opposition to the Alabama courts and American racism "is natural and comprehensible"; RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 126, ll. 68-71. For additional articulations of indignation, see, for example, "'Nashei energii ne ubit' prigovorom!'" *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 26 June 1931, p. 1; and "Rabochie Leningrada vozmushcheny krovavym terrorom amerikanskoi burzhuazii," *Trud*, 7 June 1931, p. 1.

[37] The overwhelming majority of protest resolutions cited from *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* in note 33 as well as from the MOPR journals in note 34 assumed this lengthy form in which the writers made a series of pledges. The CC MOPR summarized these pledges by declaring, "workers and kolkhozniks are leading the Scottsboro campaign by strengthening their dedication to udarnichestvo, socialist competition and by improving the quality and quantity of production"; "Biuro pechati TsK MOPR o kampanii Skottsboro"

their official statements of protest, essays, or poems to reiterate and confirm the connection between the Scottsboro prisoners' death sentence and the threat of ultimate imperialist war against the Soviet Union, the Soviet toiling masses were presented as doing the same in the pledge portion of their Scottsboro resolutions.

For instance, on the front page of *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* on 4 July 1931, amid several other statements of opposition, the editors printed the following resolution: "We, the workers of the first raion of Ufa, having listened to a report about the preparations for the execution of eight Negro comrades, declare our unanimous protest against the unprecedented sentence of American justice. . . In response to the atrocities of the barbaric fascism of the bourgeoisie we are creating a new udarnik brigade named for the eight Negro comrades in order to struggle by all means possible for the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan in four years, and for strengthening the power of the U.S.S.R. – the fatherland of the world proletariat. Freedom for the Scottsboro prisoners!"[38] Similarly, in a transparent attempt to illustrate that the Scottsboro protest and by implication Soviet power was so far-reaching that it had even penetrated the female social networks of non-Russian women in the southern Caucasus, MOPR reported that "non-Russian women, at their meetings in Makhachkala set themselves a number of tasks, i. e. the formation of shock-brigades, collection of funds, and the recruitment of members into MOPR, and

RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 3012, ll. 59-63 (l. 60). For a similar summarization, see RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, l. 105.

[38] "Brigady imeni 8 molodykh negrov," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 4 July 1931, p. 1. Because most workers considered themselves shock workers during this era, it is unsurprising that the most frequent pledge in protest resolutions was to form shock brigades. For other instances, see "V punktu 4-mu povestki dnia Sekretariata TsK 14/1-33 g.: kampaniia Skottsboro sredi shkol'nikov i pionerov," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 72; "Na ikh storone sochuvstvie proletariata vsego mira," p. 2; and "Leningrad MOPR Mobilizing for Mass Demonstrations," *Workers News*, 14 April 1932, p. 3.

called on a number of towns, Buynaksk, Derbent, Kizliar, and Akhty, to follow their example."[39]

Whether or not any of these promises were ever fulfilled – which is unlikely – was secondary. As Daniel Peris poignantly argues in regards to the same pledges found in the reports of the propaganda organization, the League of the Militant Godless during the early 1930s, "these were rituals of declaration much more loudly declaimed than actually observed . . . Revolutionary discourse was running far ahead of revolutionary reality and was increasingly divorced from it."[40] Thus these promises as "rituals of declaration" were intended not to reflect what types of activities the Soviet toiling masses were actually engaging in to protest the Scottsboro legal lynching. Rather their purpose was to identify the activities that the revolutionary citizens of a new socialist, i.e. anti-capitalist society should be engaging in to demonstrate their support with their eight black American comrades.

In addition to the publication of protest resolutions in the Soviet press, the information that the CC MOPR USSR incorporated into their records furthered the image that "at thousands of meetings, laborers of all nationalities of the country of soviets are demanding freedom for the Scottsboro prisoners." This included countless statements of opposition from specific industrial, agricultural, and academic enterprises as well as extensive numerical data. Much of the latter concerned the frequency with which protest meetings were organized and how well they were attended in certain republics and/or

[39] RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, ll. 106- 108. For further examples of pledges to engage in a series of tasks, see notes 33 and 34 as well as "32,000 Putilov Workers Condemn Death Sentence," *Workers News*, 6 July 1931, p. 1; and "Resolution Against Scottsboro Sentence," *ibid.*, 16 March 1932, p. 3.

[40] Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, pp. 99-106 (quotation p. 102).

broader geographical regions of the country.[41] MOPR leaders certainly had fabricated these numbers or at least taken considerable creative license with them. Yet important insight can still be gained into which social groups and regions of the country they thought should appear the most active in condemning U.S. racism and demanding the release of the nine young black men.

Before pursuing this angle further, it is important to note that "women" as a separate category of identification for participants at Scottsboro gatherings appeared inconsistently in these tabulations. This might initially be interpreted as a sign of hesitation on the part of authorities to wholeheartedly depict Soviet women (many of whom would be considered white by American standards) as expressing support for nine alleged black gang rapists. However when considering all-union editors' and MOPR officials' emphasis on the black defendants' innocence, on dispelling the myth that black men were inherently inclined to rape white women (which will be addressed at length in section four), as well as their occasional invocation of the traditional image of the "apolitical" Caucasian village woman to illustrate the far-reaching nature of the Scottsboro protest and by implication Soviet power, this interpretation seems inaccurate. It is much more likely that the inconsistency in MOPR record-keeping was due to the general ambivalence and confusion that existed among officials in the center and

[41] "V punktu 4-mu povestki dnia Sekretariata TsK 14/1-33 g: svodka o khode kampanii Skottsboro po otdel'nym organizatsiiam," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 73-74. In addition to the numerical data attributed to the organizations of broad geographic regions, the records of the CC MOPR USSR also contain numerous reports allegedly from local cells regarding the numbers of meetings held and/or people who attended them at specific enterprises and/or in specific cities. See, for example, "Materialy o sostoianii organizatsii MOPR na tekstil'nom kombinate 'Proletarka' (g. Kalinin.)," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 47, l. 161; "Itogi uchastiia MOPR-organizatsii v uborochnoi i khlebozagotovitel'noi kampaniakh v 1932 g.: massovo-vospitatel'naia rabota," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 47, ll. 228-230; "Rabota MOPR na Luganstroe," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 47, l. 137; "Otchetnyi doklad o rabote Samarskogo gorkoma MOPR na vodnom transporte c oktiabria mes. 1931 g. po 1-oe aprelia 1932 g.," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 49, ll. 252-253; and "Doklad o moprovskoi rabote na tekstil'nykh predpriatiia gor. Ivanovo-Voznesenska," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 47, l. 169.

localities during this era about whether women should be mobilized as "women" or appealed to as "workers," "kolkhozniks," and "students."[42]

Significantly, many of the geographical places for which MOPR collected (or fabricated) "data" regarding the number of Scottsboro protest gatherings held were border regions such as the Far East, Ukraine, and Eastern Siberia and/or regions where there had been or continued to be some type of turmoil pertaining to ethnic conflict, nationalist-religious aspirations, or collectivization including Transcaucasia, Ukraine, and the Central Black Earth region. Terry Martin has forcefully demonstrated that Soviet leaders' increasing concern over the security of the border regions during the early 1930s was inseparable from the heightened discontent and ethnic tension that collectivization precipitated.[43] Propping up numbers that Scottsboro meetings were not only organized but also well-attended in these areas served as evidence that the inhabitants there were fully mobilized to the protest and hence the socialist cause, thereby dispelling any popular "misconceptions" of these regions' alleged instability and disloyalty to the center. In a survey of six regions that included Azerbaijan and Armenia, the two Transcaucasian republics were shown to be at the top of the list in terms of overall mobilization. Although Azerbaijan was credited with organizing over three hundred more mass meetings than Armenia (405 to seventy-two! not including the 6960 small

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[42] For a discussion of Russians' traditional images of women of the Caucasus, see especially Susan Layton, *Russia Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Katya Hokanson, "Literary Imperialism, *Narodnost'* and Pushkin's Invention of the Caucasus," *Russian Review* 53 (July 1994): 336-352. For a discussion of how this ambivalence exhibited itself in broader areas of Soviet society see, for example, Susan E. Reid, "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 133-174; Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women and the Soviet State: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[43] See Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70 (1998): 813-861.

group discussions that Azerbaijani officials also allegedly held), Armenian officials had somehow managed to involve about thirty thousand more participants (125,000 to 82,350).[44] While the numbers at first glance seem disparate (perhaps in order to foster the impression that they were not contrived), the CC MOPR USSR made sure that both republics appeared to have nearly the same level of success; Armenia was just portrayed as holding fewer meetings of a more massive character. MOPR leaders offered this "data" as proof that Armenians and Azerbaijanis had become committed to inaugurating a new socialist society. This was due to both past ethnic animosities between the two groups which especially surrounded the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as a more recent anti-Soviet uprising that ten thousand men and women had staged in northwest Azerbaijan in 1930 to establish an Islamic state.[45]

Another survey that credited the Central Black Earth Oblast and Khar'kov with organizing a large number of protest gatherings was most likely geared towards dismissing "rumors" of the existence of unrest and anti-Soviet sentiment related to collectivization and grain procurement. In the Central Black Earth Oblast, a region with one of the country's highest rates of forced collectivization and dekulakization,[46]

[44] GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 74.

[45] See Bruce Grant, "An Average Azeri Village (1930): Remembering Rebellion in the Caucasus Mountains," *Slavic Review* 63, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 705-731. Scholarship on the historical tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia especially over Nagorno-Karabakh has become vast because of the ethnic conflicts that occurred there prior to and after the collapse of the U.S.S.R.. See, for example, Audrey L. Altstadt, "Nagorno-Karabakh: 'Apple of Discord' in the Azerbaijan SSR," *Central Asian Survey* 7, no. 4 (1988): 63-78; Michael P. Croissant, *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications* (London: Praeger, 1998); Ronald G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); A.N. Yamskov, "Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus: the case of Nagorno-Karabakh," *Theory and Society* 20, no. 5 (1 October 1991): 631-660.

[46] See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), esp. pp. 49-79; and Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: New Press, 1994; orig. pub. 1985), pp. 142-177.

kolkhozniks were strategically listed as the most active participants in Scottsboro meetings (at least five times as many as workers), while sovkhozniks and MTS laborers were shown to be the predominant actors in Khar'kov. MOPR officials also included the Urals in this survey, unsurprisingly depicting industrial workers as the segment of the populace most involved in the protest rallies there. What is especially significant about the incorporation of the Urals was that it allowed the CC MOPR USSR to show that kolkhozniks and sovkhozniks were mobilized to the protest in numbers comparable to those of industrial workers in a region of the country where they constituted the majority of the populace. Central authorities obviously sought to convey the message, a presumption given further credence in the additional MOPR data discussed immediately below, that the agriculture revolution had begun to raise the level of consciousness in the countryside to where it had the potential of paralleling that of the proletariat in the Soviet industrial centers.[47]

In addition to numerical figures regarding Scottsboro meetings, MOPR records contained data quantifying other protest activities in which the Soviet toiling masses were allegedly engaging in specific regions and republics. The CC MOPR USSR likewise held up these tabulations as evidence that the campaign effectively had penetrated the country outside the center. The activities that they quantified were primarily those that were listed in the pledge portions of the protest resolutions with the exception of one category: newspaper coverage. Similar to the "data" regarding protest gatherings, Azerbaijan, Khar'kov, and the Central Black Earth Oblast (as well as the North Caucasus which was also a site of intense collectivization) were commended for dedicating a

[47] GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 73.

significant amount of press coverage to Scottsboro.[48] Azerbaijan and Eastern Siberia were recognized for organizing the most new MOPR cells both reportedly having established twenty-four.[49] Pertaining to the formation of shock brigades on behalf of the Scottsboro prisoners and the construction of socialism, the CC MOPR depicted inhabitants of Ukraine as forming the most, accomplishing the staggering feat of surpassing the industrial workers of the Urals who were shown as coming in at a slightly distant second. Of course, this portrayal was again highly strategic: Ukraine was a site of substantial unrest regarding collectivization. The inhabitants of Ukraine suffered a grain requisitions crisis during the fall 1932, devastating famine in 1933, and repression against thousands of so-called Ukrainian nationalists who were accused of plotting with the new Nazi regime and Polish government to have the republic secede from the U.S.S.R.[50]

The data regarding the monetary amount of donations that several geographic regions supposedly collected was even more bizarre because yet again Ukraine was credited with contributing the most and over two times that of the region shown to have come in second which was Eastern Siberia. How could the inhabitants of Ukraine be suffering from an acute agricultural crisis and how could the sympathies of the

[48] RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, ll. 106-108; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 72-73, 75.

[49] GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 68, 75. For specific statements in MOPR records to join MOPR and/or form new cells as a form of protest, see RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 126, l. 74; d. 127, ll. 106- 108. Unsurprisingly, MOPR authorities encouraged this form of protest in memorandum to officials at the national republic, krai, and oblast level. See, for example, GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 81.

[50] On the "Ukrainian Crisis," see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 325-328. Neither the Central Black Earth Region nor Azerbaijan, which MOPR officials had cast as extremely active in others areas of the protest were mentioned in these calculations. Although included, Armenia was situated near the bottom of the list with unimpressive totals compared to those attributed to Ukraine and the Urals. See "Bor'ba s shovinizmom i mestnym natsionalizmom: massovye kampanii," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 48, l. 200-204 (esp. l. 203); "3 povestki dnia Sekretariata 14 sentiabria: o sostoianii raboty udarnykh MOPRovskikh brigad," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 49, l. 832; d. 57, ll. 71, 73-74. The "exact" totals were

inhabitants of Eastern Siberia come under any suspicion when they willingly donated more funds and resources than their fellow citizens to the project of building socialism and to improving the welfare of the black American prisoners and their relatives.[51] Finally, the inhabitants of Ukraine were also placed at the top of the list for the number of hectares they had sown in the name of the Scottsboro nine which was tabulated to be four times the amount of the second and third place finishers, the Lower Volga and Eastern Siberia.[52] Who would have suspected that at least from 1931-1932 the heart of Soviet antiracism and by implication the bulwark of support for the socialist project outside of Moscow was located in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

III.

According to Raymond Price, a white American from Washington, DC who worked in the Soviet Union in 1931, "in Russia one hears and sees – for posters everywhere are graphic even to the illiterate and the foreigner – more of the American

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550 or 5000 in Ukraine; 313 - Urals; 199 - Leningrad; fifty - Armenia; forty-three - Western oblast; thirty-nine - Eastern Siberia; twenty-five - Lower Volga; twelve - Vitebsk; and eleven - the Far East.

[51] The CC MOPR USSR's records claim that they received the following in ruble donations: 10,935 from Ukraine; 4260 from Eastern Siberia; 3650 from Belorussia; 1035 from the Western oblast; and 742 rubles the Far East; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 73-77. The "collected money" allegedly went towards the legal efforts and food and clothing for the families; RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 76, l. 56. For the individual statements of monetary and material donations from specific industrial and agricultural enterprises, see RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, l. 108; d. 126, ll. 73-74; "Materialy: sostoianiia raboty MOPR na Luganskom parovozo-stroitel'nom zavode "OR" i Luganstroe pod uglom uchastiia MOPRovtsev zavoda v rekonstruktsii transporta," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 47, ll. 130-137 (esp. l. 133); and "Material o sostoianii raboty sredi inostrannykh rabochikh," GARF, f. 8265, op.1, d. 47, ll. 63-68 (esp. l. 66).

[52] The "exact" totals of the number of hectares sown were listed as follows: Ukraine – one hundred; Lower Volga – twenty-five; Eastern Siberia – twenty-four; Far East – five; and Western oblast – one; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 74. The *Negro Worker* even reported that "so great has been the sympathy created on behalf of the victims (in the Soviet Union), that some workers have recently organized a collective farm, which they have named 'Scottsboro.'" However, there is no evidence in either MOPR records or Soviet newspapers to support this thereby indicating that there were even greater extremes to which Soviet officials refrained from taking the Potemkin portrait of the Soviet Scottsboro campaign; "Under the Banner of the Red Aid," *Negro Worker* 10-11 (October-November 1931): 31-37 (quotation p. 37).

negro problem than in our southern states."[53] Three black American laborers (Sam Langford, Morris Wikman and Abraham Lewis) who visited the country in 1931 corroborated Price's observation, explaining, "everywhere the Russian workers inquired about the Scottsboro boys. Pictures of the Scottsboro boys and of Tom Mooney are to be seen everyplace – on street corners, in factories, in hotels and clubs."[54] As the Americans' testimony indicates, Soviet citizens and foreign visitors, especially in Moscow, could encounter the discursive and visual images of Soviet antiracism without attending an organized Scottsboro protest event.[55] The banners and placards that adorned the capital's public spaces condemning the Scottsboro legal lynching and all forms of American racial injustice, were clearly designed to bolster the image that the protest (and by implication Soviet antiracism as a whole) had widespread support among the toiling masses and that the country had succeeded in transcending racism.

In mid-March 1932, a reporter for the *Workers News*, a Soviet English-language newspaper described Moscow's antiracist décor. As the writer explained, "'Stop the

[53] Price made his statement to the U.S. Legation in Riga, Latvia on 10 February 1932; *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union, 1930-1939*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/419 (Reel 38).

[54] Langford, Wikman, and Lewis were members of an American Workers' Delegation that the Friends of the Soviet Union sponsored to participate in the celebration of the fourteenth anniversary of the October Revolution. See "3 Negro Workers on Delegation to Soviet Union," *Liberator*, 10 October 1931, p. 4; "Negro Workers to Contrast U.S.A. with Soviet Union," *ibid.*, 17 October 1931, p. 4 (p. 2 of this issue featured a photograph of the three delegates together with black American cotton technicians headed to Uzbekistan [see the epilogue); and "The Soviet Union - - A Land Without Jim Crowism," *ibid.*, 1 July 1932, p. 8.

[55] It is most likely that these four Americans were speaking primarily in reference to Moscow. Langford, Wikman, and Lewis spent most of their time there, and most Americans who worked in the Soviet Union visited Moscow at some point if they did not work in the area. Considering its status as the capital of internationalism and the number of foreign and Soviet visitors it welcomed, it is unsurprising sense that it would have been the most plastered with Scottsboro and general antiracist materials. The fact that MOPR reports contained numerous reminders to republic, krai and oblast officials about the need to display and distribute agitational literature suggests that other regions of the country lacked Moscow's decoration; "V bloknot iacheikovogs aktiva," *Sputnik Moprovtsa*, nos. 5-6 (March 1932): 6.

lynchers at Scottsboro! Smash the frame-up!' blazes forth from thousands of posters on street cars, billboards, and walls of Moscow." Other placards read: "'The murderers of Sacco and Vanzetti, the jailers of Tom Mooney and W.K. Billings, the conspirators against the Soviet Union – the American capitalists are getting ready to burn on the electric chair nine innocent Negro boys at Scottsboro. Join the world-wide protest! Halt the hands of the murderers!'"[56] Later that same month the paper again announced, "the proletariat of Moscow, the capital of the first workers' republic, joins in the protest, with posters all over the city and in the streets cars, and an electric sign near the railway station with the same demand in flaming letters."[57] The "electric sign" to which the *Workers News* referred was draped across Kalanchevskaia square and specifically informed passersby in letters one and a half meters high, "We Will Pull the 8 Scottsboro Negro Youth from the Clutches of the Executioners."

After the Alabama Supreme Court ruled to uphold the Scottsboro death sentence, the CC MOPR USSR had ordered that three million protest placards be displayed on trains, trams, streets and in train stations, post offices, stores, theaters, and movie houses.[58] An agitational poster that the party publisher printed was headlined by the exhortation, "Freedom for the Scottsboro Prisoners!" and appealed in bold-faced capital Cyrillic letters to "Workers, Female Workers, Kolkhozniks, Female Kolkhozniks, Engineers and Technicians, Scientists, Artists, Writers, Proletarian Students, Service

[56] "Resolution Against Scottsboro Sentence," *Workers News*, 16 March 1932, p. 3.

[57] "Stop the Hand of the Executioner!", *ibid.*, 30 March 1932, p. 2.

[58] "Razvertyvaniia massovkykh meropriatii komiteta sodeistviia MOPR SSSR v sviazi s utverzhdeniem Verkhovnym Sudom shtata Alabama prigovora nad vosem'iu iunoshami-negrami Skottsboro," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 47, l. 252; d. 57, l. 69. "Vyrvem 9 negritianskikh iunoshei Skottsboro iz lap palachei " was one of MOPR's twenty-four agitational slogans for their 1932 Third International Conference; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 49, l. 943.

Workers, Handicraftsmen and All Workers of the Soviet Union." It warned that although they had forced a review of the death sentence against the incarcerated black teenagers, "the executioners of Alabama who have sent the Scottsboro youth to the electric chair, have once again created around this trial an atmosphere of a trial by Lynching." Soviet citizens were encouraged "to raise still higher the militant protest against lynch justice, against the class violence directed against revolutionary workers, against the debauchery of the civilized executioners and the explosion of racial hatred!"[59]

The slogans found on these various signs and banners encapsulated many of the same themes of the Scottsboro campaign that Soviet intellectual workers and industrial toilers articulated in their essays, poems, speeches, and protest resolutions. These included the unquestioned innocence of the young black defendants; their depiction as "revolutionary workers"; the challenge to U.S. leaders' hypocritical claims to represent the pinnacle of "civilization"; the connection between the black men's "civilized American" executioners and those seeking to wage war against the first workers' state; and references to the extralegal practice of physical lynching, a theme which will be explored at greater length below as well as in the next section. Furthermore, the phraseology of Scottsboro placards, like that found in the writings that the Defense Committee and other Soviet intellectual workers issued, perpetuated a variant of the ideology of white superiority that they were ostensibly intended to counter, namely paternalism. For instance, the most ubiquitous slogan "We Will Pull" or "We Will Break Loose" "the 8 Negro Youth From the Clutches of the Executioners" implies that Soviet leaders and workers, led of course by Russians, "the first among equals in the Soviet Union," were responsible for liberating the "Negro Youth" (note that only their racial *not*

[59] "Svobodu uznikam Skottsboro!" GARF, f. 8265, op. 3, d. 31, ll. 6-7.

their class identity was invoked here) from the "clutches" of the (white American) murderers, from whom as Tolstoy conceded made a person "ashamed to call himself a white man." To put it differently, reflecting the official conceptualization of the relationship between Russians and non-Russians under the Soviet system, the latter of whom were depicted as its chief beneficiaries, Soviet Scottsboro discourse portrayed the black teenagers as victims who needed the paternalistic beneficence of the "good" "conscious" white people (primarily Russians) in order to be freed and uplifted from the clutches of the white American executioners.[60]

In addition to placards, banners and posters, the antiracist discourse of the Scottsboro campaign in the U.S.S.R. was also conveyed through the cartoon. Cartoons were of course accessible not only to actual newspaper readers but also to foreign visitors like Price who were unfamiliar with the Russian language; illiterate adult Soviet citizens; young children who were yet unable to read; and especially when printed on the front page, random individuals who walked by the capital's newspaper kiosks. Whereas the photographic image of the lynched black man dangling above a festive crowd of white American men and women had dominated the campaign against U.S. racism in August 1930, cartoon sketches depicting an electric chair, noose, the grim reaper and/or a coffin dominated the Scottsboro protest. These symbols of death were clearly meant to remind onlookers of the impending fate of the Scottsboro teenagers and by implication ultimately of the first workers' state if the American bourgeoisie had their way and Soviet citizens

[60] For the "big brother/little brother" conceptualization of the relationship between Russians and non-Russian minorities, see especially Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," in *Becoming National, A Reader*, edited by Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 203-238. See also Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Robert Conquest, *Soviet Nationalities Policy in Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967).

did not recognize that their fate was intimately connected to that of nine black prisoners in Alabama. Sometimes juxtaposed in the cartoons against an ultimate symbol of American freedom such as the Statue of Liberty, these visual signifiers of death were also clearly designed to underscore the hypocrisy of U.S. democracy, conveying that legal lynching and capital punishment had become increasingly integral to its operation. The Defense Committee poignantly summarized this point in a March 1932 appeal, in which they remarked that, "the tried and tested weapon of the American bourgeoisie, the electric chair, is the pride of the 'justice' and 'democracy' of the USA."[61]

Two cartoons, one of which appeared in *Rabochaia Gazeta* and the other in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* used very different but equally powerful renditions of the Statue of Liberty in order to expose as utter propaganda U.S. leaders' claims to have established the world's only truly "free" country.[62] The scathing image in *Rabochaia Gazeta*, which was printed on the paper's front page on 17 August 1931, purported to capture "American 'Democracy', As It Really Is." It depicted the back of the Statue of Liberty with skeletal arms, hands and neck and a skull for a head (which has a crown on it). An American flag is wrapped around the monument's base. From Lady Liberty's skeletal arms hang ten nooses with the bodies of black American men dangling at the end of five of them. The torch in the raised right arm is shown to have smoke emanating from it. The caption even more explicitly disclosed that the cartoon's primary purpose was to

[61] "International Appeal for Scottsboro Lads, Signed by Gorky and Lunacharskii," *Workers News*, 19 March 1932, p. 1.

[62] In light of the fact that the assistant editors of *Rabochaia Gazeta* and *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* were listed as members of the Defense Committee, it comes as little surprise that in terms of cartoons as well as overall coverage, the CC MOPR USSR accurately commended these two papers for dedicating the most space (out of all the central newspapers) to items related to Scottsboro in 1931; RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, l. 106. *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* enjoyed similar accolades in 1932, which the editorial staff of *Rabochaia Gazeta* possibly could have again matched had the paper not ceased publication at the end of 1931.

depict what freedom actually consisted of for black American laborers in the U.S.: "For Negro-workers in 'free' America there are many free nooses." From the perspective of black workers, in other words, the Statue of Liberty was a skeleton, that is, the grim reaper disguised as Lady Liberty, because liberty was dead or nonexistent to them in the capitalist U.S. and came only through the cessation of life there. It also visualized that the teenagers' death sentence, although it was to be fulfilled by means of an electric chair rather than literally by "rope and faggot," still constituted a form of lynch justice.

The version of the Statue of Liberty that appeared the following year in a front-page *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* cartoon by Dmitrii Moor, known as the "unofficial 'commissar of propagandistic revolutionary art,'" was designed to expose who defined and controlled access to freedom in the U.S.. An obese white male capitalist wearing a suit and top hat is shown disguised as the Statue of Liberty. Wearing a robe draped over his suit and a crown around his top hat, his large mouth is open to display his teeth as if he is screaming while his nostrils are flared and his eyebrows raised in anger. In the palm of his fleshy right hand, which is raised like that of Lady Liberty, instead of a torch, the giant capitalist is holding an electric chair. His right shirt cuff which is slightly sticking out from his suit jacket, bears a small swastika. The capitalist's plump left hand is resting on a guillotine. At the base of the monument's pedestal are figures of the eight Scottsboro prisoners (drawn in proportionate size to the guillotine and electric chair) shackled to one another by the wrist and walking around in a circle. On one side of them is a white male law enforcement official with an extremely long rifle and wearing a ten-gallon hat. He is drawn slightly taller than the captives but still dwarf-like compared to the "Statue of Liberty." On the other side of the eight condemned teenagers stands a man

who appears to be a high-ranking religious official perhaps in the Catholic Church as indicated by his long robe and tall pointed hat with a cross on it. *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*'s editors strategically printed around the image several accounts of what Soviet workers, kolkhozniks, and/or komsomolites were doing to demand the liberation of "our Scottsboro brothers " in seven different districts of the country. The main headline announced, "The Executioners are Switching on the Electric Current."

Moor's depiction of the villain as an obese white capitalist in a top hat and suit was consistent with the general Soviet iconography found in political posters since the October Revolution, but his large teeth and open mouth are unique to the image of the capitalist during First Five-Year Plan.[63] Soviet citizens would have therefore been very familiar with the figure and what he represented. The main difference was that now this bourgeois capitalist "everyman" was specifically shown to be not only their own formidable enemy, as inhabitants of the first workers' state, but also that of black workers, the most exploited segment of America's toiling masses whom the Scottsboro prisoners were depicted as representing. Because he assumed the form of the easily recognizable class enemy, the U.S. capitalist bore no distinctly American physical features. This meant that the Soviet onlooker knew to associate him with the U.S. only if he posed as the Statue of Liberty (as in Moor's cartoon) or was featured next to a sign

[63] For the description of Moor, see Stephen White, *The Bolshevik Poster* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 43. Soviet iconography largely mirrored Western socialist iconography of the late nineteenth, early twentieth centuries by using the top hat (an indicator of the highest rank in the class hierarchy because of its stiffness) and obesity (the sign of an inactive, greedy man) to characterize the prosperous bourgeois male capitalist. While the purpose of the top hat was to make its wearer look taller and slimmer, Soviet iconographers typically exaggerated his weight and small stature to such an extent that it just made him look more absurd. See Nina Baburina, *Rossiia -- 20. vek:: istoriia strany v plakate* (Moskva: Panorama, 1993); Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters Under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 187-224; B.S. Butnik-Siverskii, *Sovetskii plakat epokhi grazhdanskoi voiny 1918-1920* (Moskva: Izd-vo Vses. knizhnoi palaty, 1960); and Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography," *History Workshop* 6 (Autumn 1978): 121-138.

that read "Scottsboro" (as he was in other cartoons that appeared in the all-union press during the campaign).[64]

The presence of the swastika, which could easily be overlooked because of its small size became a feature of the capitalist's image during the First Five-Year Plan and was consistent with the protest's rhetoric.[65] As has been noted throughout this chapter, the Alabama court which sentenced the Scottsboro defendants and the executioners themselves were often referred to as "bourgeois American fascists," and Lemuel Lewis and William Brown had been denounced as such a year earlier (see chapter one). While the term "fascist" was intended to place the U.S. bourgeois executioners in league with capitalists throughout the rest of the putative "Western world," at this juncture it and the swastika signified a general "anti-Soviet" stance, rather than specific forms of fascism (such as that in Italy or Nazism in Germany). Finally, the inclusion of the church authority directly implicated American Christianity in the legal lynching of eight innocent black men and by extension in sanctioning all forms of racism against black workers. The image of a religious figure acting in collusion with the bourgeois capitalist

[64] For examples of other Scottsboro cartoons that will not be discussed in the main text featuring the standard image of the capitalist, see "For merchants of electro-justice (Za kupisami elektro-iustitsii)," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 30 May 1931 p. 1, which depicted the grim reaper negotiating coffins with him; "Deflect the hand of the Alabama executioners (Otvesti ruku Alabamskikh palachei)," *ibid.*, 29 June 1931, p. 4, that showed a giant muscular arm of the proletariat preventing him from flipping on the electricity outside of a "Scottsboro" prison; and "Blacks and whites (Chernye i belye)," *ibid.*, 21 April 1932, p. 1 which portrayed him with a Ku Klux Klan member and policeman standing at the opposite end of a chess board from the handcuffed black American prisoners. See also the *Workers News*, 6 July 1931, p. 1.

[65] See Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, pp. 216-217. The other Scottsboro cartoons in the central press that featured a swastika also appeared in 1932. On 29 March 1932, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* printed a cartoon on its front page, "We will not permit it!" that showed a capitalist's fat, hairy hand poised to flip a switch marked "verdict" which was attached to a knob labeled "electric chair." Like Moor's cartoon, the swastika was located on the capitalist's sleeve cuff. The *Workers News* printed a Scottsboro cartoon a day later (30 March 1932, p. 1), which featured a mustached Nazi-like character wearing a hard hat bearing a swastika acting in collusion to flip the switch on an electric chair with two other villains (the standard capitalist and an anti-Semitic, intellectual-looking figure with a pointed nose and chin wearing an "SD" for Social Democrat on his scarf).

to keep the masses oppressed had of course been a popular component of Soviet political posters during the civil war including a few that Moor had designed.[66]

The *Workers News* also printed Scottsboro cartoons, which "unmasked" the true face of American democracy by using the image of the Statue of Liberty. Because the paper was one of only two recently established English-language serials published in the country at the time (and the more popular one), American visitors such as those mentioned at the beginning of this section, must have encountered at least a few of these cartoons at some point during their stays. The antiracist images, although generally less creative and complex than those found in the Russian-language Soviet press, therefore perhaps played a role in shaping their impressions about the pervasiveness of the protest in the U.S.S.R.. On 25 November 1931, the *Workers News* depicted as the cartoon's title disclosed, "An X-ray of the Statue of Liberty" which revealed an electric chair located inside the monument and at its base. Two months later, on 2 February 1932 (p. 4) the paper showed the shadow of the Statue of Liberty adjacent to an electric chair across which a banner was posted announcing, "Electric Chair for Workers, Scottsboro Boys." A fat white hand, presumably belonging to a (male) capitalist is shown holding up a sign over the shoulder of Lady Liberty's shadow explaining, "Liberty for Capitalists, Murderers, Gangsters, Bootleggers, Grafters, etc."[67]

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[66] See, for example, Moor's 1921 poster "Christmas (Rozhdestvo)," in White, *Bolshevik Poster*, p. 48; Nikolai Kochergin's 1920 "Vrangel' idet! K oruzhiiu, proletarii! (Wrangel is coming! To arms, proletarians!)," in Baburina, *Istoriia strany v plakate*, p. 48; and Viktor Deni's "Tov. Lenin ochishchaet zemliu ot nechisti (Comrade Lenin cleans the world of garbage)," in Maurice Rickards, *Posters of Protest and Revolution* (New York: Walker, 1970), no. 101.

[67] For other *Workers News* Scottsboro cartoons, see "The Shadow of Capitalist Justice," 6 March 1932, p. 1; and 14 April 1932, p. 1. The *Moscow News*, which did not have as large a circulation among the English-speaking community as the *Workers News* (see chapter three), published no articles or cartoons regarding Scottsboro. After the two papers merged to become the *Moscow Daily News* in May 1932 its coverage was limited to short wire reports and articles by J. Louis Engdahl, the U.S. International Labor Defense (ILD) leader in charge of Ada Wright's European tour. See, for example,; J. L. Engdahl,

The only cartoon that rivaled the aforementioned *Rabochaia Gazeta* image of the grim reaper as the State of Liberty in illustrating that the Scottsboro death sentence constituted a form of lynching appeared in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* on 27 January 1932. The artist, V. Federovskii, used the letters "USA" rather than the image of Lady Liberty to accomplish this.[68] Specifically, a long rope is depicted forming the letters of the acronym USA, and in the places where there are supposed to be knots, the heads of the eight Scottsboro prisoners are shown with the rope looped around each of their necks. Headlined by the directive, "Snap the Wire of the Electric Guillotine," the cartoon was obviously designed to invoke a connection between the wire of the electric chair that was used to carry out legal lynchings and that of a rope used to carry out physical lynchings. This image, like that found in *Rabochaia Gazeta* conveyed that the "free" United States of America was founded upon the lynching of black American workers.[69]

The Scottsboro cartoon that most explicitly exposed the hypocrisy of American democracy as it existed for all American workers, thereby de-emphasizing black Americans' status (implied in the majority of the other cartoons) as the most oppressed segment of the U.S. working class whom the Scottsboro prisoners represented, was drawn by the American cartoonist Fred Ellis in *Trud* on 22 August 1931. Two of the Scottsboro defendants who can be identified as such only by the sign which they are

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"Scottsboro Mother in Ruhr," *ibid.*, 20 May 1932, p. 4; "Ada Wright Arrested," *ibid.*, 8 September 1932, p. 1; and "New Scottsboro Trial Is Ordered By Supreme Court," *ibid.*, 10 November 1932, p. 1. Although manufactured, the Potemkin version of the Soviet Scottsboro protest was much more interesting to read about than the straight factual information about the legal case that the *Moscow Daily News* put forth.

[68] The only cartoon in the central press during the protest that used the American flag alone to expose the fallacy of U.S. democracy had been taken from the German paper *Die Rote Fahne*. Printed in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* on 12 July 1931, p. 1, it depicted the U.S. flag with an electric chair drawn in the center. Superimposed over the chair was an "x" made out of rope and a skull and cross bones, all of which was identified as "An Essential Amendment to the American Flag."

holding that reads "Skottsboro" are depicted as merely first in a seemingly infinite line of workers awaiting their turn at the electric chair. All the figures are ambiguously drawn to downplay the role of skin color (which is why it is difficult to identify the Scottsboro prisoners without their sign) but not gender because they all appear unquestionably to be men. Standing beside the electric chair, which had the names of Sacco and Vanzetti inscribed on it and gesturing to the first in line (i.e. the Scottsboro prisoners) to sit down, was of course the obese white male capitalist dressed in a suit and top hat with a cigar dangling from his mouth. The two male laborers standing behind the Scottsboro pair most likely represented the miners involved in the Harlan, Kentucky strike because the first three letters of their sign spell "XAP (KHAR)" in Cyrillic. The article published adjacent to the cartoon confirms this visual cue because it emphasized how the Sacco and Vanzetti, Scottsboro, and Harlan cases proved that the electric chair had become integral to U.S. bourgeois democracy and justice in regards to workers. Encapsulating the primary message of the article as well as the cartoon, the caption written under the latter read "The 'Democracy' of the Electric Chair."[70]

Besides cartoons, the other visual images of the Scottsboro campaign that all-union editors printed which contributed to the illusion of the protest's pervasiveness in the U.S.S.R. as well as to the Soviet state's enlightened image included photographs and photo collages of the nine black American prisoners surrounded by armed white male

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[69] For a *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* Scottsboro cartoon which used the exact term "Trial by Lynching," see "In the jungle of civilization," 11 July 1931 p. 1.

[70] See "'Demokratiia' elektricheskogo stula" and the accompanying article, "Krovavyi terror ne spaset kapitalistov SASSh," in *Trud*, 22 August 1931, p. 4. On 26 June 1931, another *Trud* cartoon depicted the "the true face of American bourgeois justice" by showing the seven Scottsboro defendants, their hands bound standing underneath a giant electrocution cap with "capitalism" written on it ("Ruki proch' ot rabochikh negrov," p. 1). *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* printed a similar cartoon over a week later (4 July 1931, p. 1) in which all nine men had electrocution caps poised ominously above their heads.

guards; of Scottsboro meetings supposedly held in various parts of the Soviet Union; of black American children protesting lynching; and of general protest gatherings in the U.S. and Europe.[71] In contrast to the Scottsboro cartoons, these photographs were not always situated next to articles that bore any relevance to their subject matter, which as discussed in the preceding chapters, was common practice among Soviet editors. Publishing images of the campaign outside the Soviet Union were arguably intended to serve as proof that the international proletarian movement was developing outside of the country, the members of which were not only acting in unity with but following the example of the inhabitants of the first workers' state.

Despite the numerous references to, discussions of and general emphasis on lynching throughout the Soviet Scottsboro campaign, only *Ogonek* and the *Workers News* printed a U.S. lynching photograph during the protest. In both instances it was the image of the August 1930 Marion, Indiana double lynching that had appeared in the all-union newspapers near the end of the Stalingrad trial of Robert Robinson's assailants. In the case of *Ogonek*, the editors published a close-up of the corpse of Abraham Smith. As had previously been the case, the caption disclosed no information about the murder including when, where, and why it took place or who the victim was, but only explained "A Negro executed in a trial by lynching."[72] The *Workers News* reproduced a small

[71] For the Scottsboro defendants in the central press, see *Rabochaia Gazeta*, 27 June 1931, p. 2; *Trud*, 18 April 1932, p. 4; *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 16 May 1931, p. 1; *ibid.*, 10 July 1931, p. 2; *Ogonek*, no. 11 (20 April 1932): 2; *Workers News*, 1 June 1931, p. 3; *ibid.*, 14 January 1932, p. 4; *ibid.*, 16 March 1932, p. 4; *ibid.*, 22 January 1932, p. 1. For Soviet rallies, see *Trud*, 7 July 1931, p. 1 as well as the MOPR journal *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, no. 19 (July 1931): 3, 5. For black American children protesting, see *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 8 October 1932, p. 1; and *Ogonek*, no. 32 (20 November 1932), p. 5. For meetings in the U.S. and Europe, see *Trud*, 30 April 1931, p. 2; *ibid.*, 5 July 1931, p. 1; *ibid.*, 9 June 1931, p. 2; *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 10 July 1931, p. 2; *ibid.*, 22 August 1932, p. 4.

[72] See *Ogonek*, no. 17 (20 June 1931): 13.

version of the entire photograph and did just as poorly a job contextualizing it, merely informing readers where the lynching had occurred.[73] One of the few other visual images of the lynching of black American men that was circulated during the Scottsboro protest assumed the form of about two million postcards that the People's Commissariat for Posts and Telegraph printed in August 1931. Sold at post offices and newspaper kiosks throughout Moscow, the postcard depicted a lynched black man with a menacing-looking crowd of white American men and women beneath his corpse, and a U.S. flag displayed strategically in the background. While the flag's presence served the practical purpose of identifying where the violent atrocity had taken place, like the cartoons, it also served the more symbolic function of visualizing how freedom was defined in "civilized" America. The postcard read: "Down with Lynch Justice! Long Live the Negro Workers!"[74]

The enemy portrayed in the Scottsboro cartoons depicted who, within the Soviet lexicon of the class struggle, was ultimately responsible for the systematic racial violence and discrimination perpetrated against black Americans in the U.S.: the obscenely affluent white male capitalists who were in charge of running the country. What they were ineffective at visualizing and which lynching photographs, especially those that depicted the crowd accomplished, was the critical role that men and women of all classes, creeds, nationalities and ages played, that is, those whom the bourgeois capitalists had inculcated with racial hatred, in sustaining and carrying out the racial persecution of black Americans. If a Soviet cartoonist had sketched the scene captured in the Marion, Indiana double lynching photograph, then the resulting image would most likely have

[73] See *Workers News*, 17 May 1931, p. 2. The article that accompanied the image entitled "Frame-Up of Negro Youths Leads to Legal Lynchings" contained within it the text of a letter that Heywood Patterson, one of the Scottsboro prisoners, had allegedly written.

shown a superimposed image of the standard capitalist looking down approvingly from the tree at the bodies of the two black men dangling from it and the boastful white crowd beneath them.

IV.

On 6 April 1932, Iaskov, a representative of the Moscow Institute for the Blind opened a plenum of the CC MOPR USSR by briefly recounting with specific numbers the activities the institute had organized to further the Scottsboro protest. Specifically, he reported that over the past ten months they had organized fourteen small group discussions about the Scottsboro legal lynching which involved a total of 210 people, and three mass protest meetings which 1025 people attended. Iaskov further claimed that a subscription drive for the journal *Internatsional'nyi Maiak* had proved successful at the Institute for the Blind and cited corresponding data to support his assertion. According to MOPR records, later in the plenum, a leading MOPR official reiterated the urgency of struggling in "every possible way" for the liberation of the nine black teenagers whose death sentence represented the attitude of the "civilized American government" towards all workers "but especially in regards to black workers, towards Negroes." To further underscore how U.S. leaders used the law of lynch to routinely dispose of black Americans this MOPR leader recited to a brief statistical history of lynching in "free" America. From 1885-1931, he explained, "4,340 individuals were lynched, 1052 white, 3200 black, and from 1890-1928, 2065 blacks were lynched." As evidence that the

[74] The U.S. government investigated if these postcards were still available for sale in 1936, having been printed in August 1931, but found none remaining at either Soviet post offices or kiosks. See RG-84, MLR Number 435, USSR Embassy, 1935, vol. 28 (824.2-841.5), Entry 60, 840.1.

number of lynchings of black Americans was increasing, "in 1929, 33 blacks were lynched, in 1930 – 45, and in 1931 – 79."[75]

Why during this April meeting of the CC MOPR USSR were attendees first urged to further the Scottsboro protest and then immediately thereafter given a history of physical lynching against black Americans in the United States? Obviously, it served as additional damning evidence that black Americans constituted the segment of U.S. society that was subjected to the most discrimination and violence. But more than this it speaks to how the Soviet campaign in all its manifestations was not just limited to visual and written information about the specific Scottsboro case but was inseparable from a discussion of American racism in general and physical lynching in particular. The brief statistical overview of American extralegal violence furthermore suggests that MOPR leaders sought to remind attendees of the importance of assigning the topic of lynching a prominent place at Scottsboro meetings around the country. The contents of a lecture guide that was labeled for distribution to all lecturers entitled, "The Lynching and Persecution of Negro Workers in the USA (*Linchevanie i presledovanie trudiashchikhsia v SASh*)", which will be discussed at greater length below, reinforces this inference.

Since newspaper articles and MOPR records deliberately cast Soviet citizens as attending a myriad number of protest meetings throughout the union, the CC MOPR attempted to enhance the credibility of this image by also including in these records documentation that they were dispatching properly informed individuals to conduct them as well as evidence of what kind of information they were giving them to present to the

[75] "III-ii rasshirenyi plenum TsK MOPR SSSR (6 April 1932)," GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 1, 189. When speaking before the Third World MOPR Congress on 11 November 1932, Stasova cited similar numbers to emphasize the increasing violence against black Americans ("Desiatiletie i zadachi MOPR,"

supposed worker, kolkhoznik, and student participants. MOPR files thus contain numerous references to Moscow representatives traveling by train to regions like the Far East to lead discussions about the "significance of the (Scottsboro) verdict"; to the dispatch of brigades of "properly briefed" individuals to the countryside to lead Scottsboro work; and to the recruitment of residents in the localities to lead protest meetings in their respective areas.[76] As MOPR reports also claim, the Defense Committee had succeeded in enlisting foreign laborers as well as black and white American Communists to speak at meetings in Khar'kov, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, the North Caucasus, the Central Black Earth Region, at Red Army command personnel schools, and Red Army camps.[77] The image that emerges from these records was that the CC MOPR USSR in Moscow had established an effective system for relaying information concerning the Scottsboro campaign to the countryside and localities.

Similar to other Soviet propaganda organizations which distributed uniform lecture material to all lecturers and cells, MOPR's main Scottsboro guide, the aforementioned "The Lynching and Persecution of Negro Workers in the USA" was a twelve-page, single-space document, divided into seven sections that contained

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Internatsional'nyi Maiak, nos. 32-33 (November 1932): 7), as did Otto Huiswood in an article in the *Workers News* in March 1932 (p. 2).

[76] *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, no. 35 (December 1931): 7; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 82. The MOPR oblast committee of the Central Black Earth Region for example, reported that they had dispatched 217 speakers to the raions and, in particular, to the newly constructed enterprises in order to lead protest gatherings; GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 73-74. In some instances, those recruited belonged to institutes of higher learning, as in the case of twenty-six members of the agit-prop sector of Sverdlosk University who volunteered to conduct agitational Scottsboro work in the surrounding localities; RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, ll. 105, 108.

[77] GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 57, l. 84; RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 127, ll. 105-106; "Bez uchastiia Moprovskoi iachiki," *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, nos. 20-21 (July 1931): 15.

information for several lessons about American racism.[78] Examined closely it provides insight into what authorities thought Russian and non-Russian workers, kolkhozniks, and students in the Caucasus, Ukraine, Siberia, and the Urals should have heard and been knowledgeable about if the Potemkin village version of the Scottsboro campaign in the Soviet Union corresponded with Soviet reality; that is, if inhabitants of these regions were actually attending protest meetings and group discussions en masse as so portrayed.[79]

Consistent with the Soviet campaign's presentation of the Scottsboro prisoners as young black workers, the first section of the "Lynching and Persecution of Negro Workers in the USA" introduced population data from the 1920 U.S. census, broken down by occupational category, to show that the majority of black Americans were industrial and agricultural laborers, and by geographical region to highlight their concentration in the southern states. Additional statistics demonstrated that the U.S. Great Depression had only exacerbated black workers' position at the very bottom of the country's employment ladder. Skipping erratically from current statistics to the era of U.S. Reconstruction, it denounced as a fallacy the claim that Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment "freed" black Americans from slavery; and elucidated upon the systematic terror that former white slaveowners used to preserve their domination and wealth following the U.S. Civil War. Stressing the importance of lynching in this repertoire of terrorism against the "emancipated slaves," it

[78] See Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, pp. 73-75.

[79] Protest resolutions helped foster the impression that Soviet citizens attended these types of meetings and lectures. In the opening line of many of them, the authors were shown as saying something like they had just finished "listening to a report on the persecution of Negroes in the United States and the Scottsboro frame-up." See, for example, "Podnimem volnu protesta po vsemu miru," *Trud*, 7 July 1931, p. 1;

placed its origins in the mid-eighteenth century and outlined the ways in which lynching had come to be used almost exclusively against black men on trumped up allegations of the rape of white women. Lecturers were supposed to admonish attendees against believing such accusations and to particularly emphasize (the passage was underlined in the original) that "in the course of two centuries incidents of violence committed by black men against white women are not only rare, but are completely unknown." The emphasis on dispelling the myth of the black rapist, which resurfaces repeatedly in the document, clearly was intended to give historical context to the alleged sex crime for which the Scottsboro prisoners were condemned to death, and to thereby justify the Soviet press' depiction of the nine young black men's innocence as undisputed.[80]

This extralegal practice, the guide went on to detail in section two, was often conducted under the auspices of organizations like the Ku-Klux-Klan (which it accurately noted was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1866), and became rampant throughout the South. Consequently, 107 lynchings occurred in Alabama during the course of two years, while in Mississippi, "where it is the favorite sport of whites to hunt Negroes," more than 200 blacks were murdered by lynch mobs over the course of only several weeks in 1868. Moreover, from the end of the Civil War to 1868, 1035 blacks died by rope and faggot in Texas. Although it was impossible to know exactly how many black workers were lynched, according to official statistics, 1665 lynchings occurred from 1891-1900; 921

"Trebuem otmeny krovavogo prigovora!" p. 1; and "Resolution Against Scottsboro Sentence," *Workers News*, 16 March 1932, p. 4.

[80] While a few scholars of Soviet history have suggested that Soviet authorities' general disregard for the seriousness of sex crimes predisposed them to dismiss as false the accusation against the Scottsboro prisoners, it clearly had more to do with the fact that there was no concrete evidence to support this accusation, and that since U.S. Reconstruction black men have been murdered on the false charge of raping white women. Furthermore, dismissing the charge that a white (Russian) man raped a white (Russian) woman is hardly comparable to dismissing the accusation that a black man raped a white woman.

from 1900-1910, 840 from 1910-1921; and 304 from 1922-1928. The guide attributed the steadily increasing number of recorded lynchings between 1929 and 1931 (33 in 1929, 43 in 1930, 79 in 1931) to the growing U.S. economic crisis and the bourgeoisie's intensified efforts to incite racial animosity among white and black workers. By using the term "Negro workers" throughout these statistics to refer to lynch victims and explaining the phenomenon in terms of the class struggle, section two reinforced the Soviet campaign's underlying emphasis that the black American (man) as worker and farmer was most persecuted in the U.S.[81]

The third section, designed to personalize the lynching statistics and historical background disclosed in the previous sections, graphically described four cases of black Americans who had been savagely lynched. The victims were mainly identified by their last names and their occupation as black workers, and indication of when the murders took place was indicated only in the first two accounts. Similar to the lynching photographs published with minimal detail in the central newspapers during Lewis and Brown's trial, these four stories were included to shock listeners by fully illuminating the enormity of white Americans' treatment of black American workers. Again, there is no evidence that this lecture (or even parts of it) was actually given once, let alone the myriad of times around the country, which was the image that MOPR authorities sought to project. However, the fact that the information found within it was what Soviet officials wanted to depict Soviet citizens as being exposed to during Scottsboro meetings and discussions, in order to perpetuate the country's enlightened, antiracist image is significant.

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[81] "Linchevanie i presledovanie negritianskikh trudiashchikhsia v SASh," RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 126, ll. 43-44.

The first lynching account detailed the January 1930 murder of black American worker Henry Lorey near Memphis, Tennessee. A crowd of five hundred white spectators forced his daughter and wife to watch as Lorey was tied to a tree trunk and burned alive "centimeter by centimeter." The lecture guide stressed that individuals from the crowd continually placed fresh wood under Lorey to keep the fire strong but that he never asked for mercy even as the flames reached his waist and visibly scorched the bones in his legs.[82] According to the second account, on 20 September 1930 an angry white mob in Mississippi randomly seized a black American man after a young white woman said that he "sort of resembled" her alleged attacker. The murderers tied him to an iron pole, poured gasoline over a pile of nearby brushwood, and set fire to it. Some six hundred onlookers stood by as the victim, with flames gradually engulfing his body, cried out for mercy and professed his innocence. As the iron pole became red from the heat, and the flames began to engulf his head, the man again screamed, "Have pity on me. It is not me. It is not me." Despite his pleas, no one in "the crowd showed the slightest indication of compassion. Soon his face became calm. There was no doubt, he was dead." As the audience of men and women dispersed, the document detailed, one individual was heard saying despite "the smell of charred meat" permeating the air, "I have built up an appetite."[83]

Both narratives deliberately highlighted the complicity of the large number of white male *and female* spectators in these savage murders, who not only implicitly approved of them through their gaze but also actively forced two young black women to

[82] George Padmore had mentioned the Lorey lynching in a November 1930 article ("Samosud nad negram," pp. 6-7) in *Put' MOPR'a*, no. 32, explaining that the forty-year old Lorey had been slowly burned alive because he had disagreed with his landlord.

watch their husband and father be burned alive; continually placed more fuel on the fire beneath the victim; and flatly ignored the second man's anguished cries for mercy and pleas of innocence. The jovial mood that permeated the crowd during and after the murders underscored how "civilized" white Americans conceived of lynching as a legitimate form of entertainment and extralegal justice. Additionally, since the second story mentioned that it was a white woman's false identification of a black man which served as the justification for white men to lynch him, white female Americans' adherence to U.S. racial norms was not completely ignored even though the Soviet protest cast white men as its primary perpetrators.

Speaking of women, the last two lynching stories that the lecture guide recounted attempted to incorporate, although they were historically fewer in number, the experiences of black female lynch victims. In the first, a black male worker, (Haynes) Turner, was lynched in Georgia on the false suspicion that he killed his white boss because the latter had refused to pay him the salary he owed him. His wife (Mary Turner) subsequently "lost control of her senses" and called for the condemnation of the men responsible for lynching her husband. By demanding justice, it explained, this "unfortunate woman," who was eight months pregnant, had placed herself in grave danger. Some friends had tried to stave off the inevitable by hiding her in a remote place, but her whereabouts were quickly found out and a mob dragged her into the woods, hung her upside down from a tree by her ankles, poured gasoline over her dress, and set it on fire. One of the white male murderers sliced open Turner's stomach with a hunting knife

[83] RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 126, ll. 44-46.

causing the infant to fall to the ground where it was immediately stomped to death.[84] Following this heinous depiction of the execution of Turner's "wife," the document recounted in equally horrid detail another lynching that involved a black American woman but which occurred in Mississippi alongside her husband. A lynch mob, it related, seized and burned a married couple alive, severed their fingers and ears, which they distributed as souvenirs, gouged out the husband's eye, and plunged an "enormous corkscrew" into the victims' bodies in order to pull out "bloody smoked meat."[85]

The purpose of these last two lynching stories certainly was to even more blatantly illustrate the sheer barbarity of white Americans' inhumane treatment of black toilers by discussing the lynching of two women, the first of whom was pregnant. Unlike the first two accounts, which explicitly indicated that they had occurred in 1930, dates were not provided with these narratives thereby suggesting that obtaining examples of black female lynch victims had assumed precedence over incorporating two other examples of recent murders. On the one hand the inclusion of these accounts was extremely important because it constituted one of the few instances in the lecture guide and in the larger Soviet campaign in which black American women were explicitly acknowledged as victims of U.S. racism. On the other, their inclusion in this manner was problematic in that they appeared, as was the case even in the very first lynching of Henry Lorey, as targets of racial violence only in their roles as wives (or daughters) of

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[84] This lynching occurred in Valdosta, Georgia in 1918. The man who murdered Turner's boss, the white planter Hampton Smith, had been identified immediately by Smith's wife as Sidney Johnson. But when a lynch mob failed to locate Johnson, they sought to unleash their vengeance on several other black men including Haynes Turner. See Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), pp. 245-247.

[85] RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 126, l. 46. *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* printed an article in conjunction with the Scottsboro case regarding "Trial By Lynching: the Foundation of the Slaveowners' Supremacy" which

black men. This portrayal thus upheld the masculine focus of Soviet antiracist discourse that the mention of black women at first glance seemed to at least somewhat dismantle. Furthermore, in the story regarding the Turners, the "wife" as she was only identified was depicted as contributing to her own downfall by succumbing to the fatal female flaw that all women have been historically stereotyped as possessing: allowing her emotions to overtake her ability to think rationally.

While the remainder of the lecture guide, as reflected in its title, addressed other forms of persecution that black laborers suffered it continued to make references to lynching. Sections four through five prepared lecturers to discuss "the Mass Murder of Negro Workers" during the bloody riots in Annapolis (Maryland), Philadelphia, Washington, and Tulsa (Oklahoma), as well as the U.S. government's complete apathy towards lynching and consequent failure to pass any legislation against it. It again denounced as utter myth the claim that black American men were inherently inclined to rape white women which in this instance it supported by citing studies of criminologists and printing statistics which showed that a greater number of men belonging to nationalities other than "Negro" (including Russians, Italians, and Hungarians) were more often arrested on rape accusations. The sixth section focused entirely on the plight of black American farmers and used specific accounts to illustrate the constant persecution those men who worked diligently and became prosperous confronted from former white slaveowners and their descendants. Finally, in the guide's last section the absurdity of the legal blood definitions of "black" that existed in several U.S. states was exposed and what it meant to be defined as "black" in the "free" United States was

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outlined similar cases of physical and legal lynching; "Samosud – osnova gospodstva rabovladel'tsev," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 9 July 1931, p. 2.

outlined. As it detailed, because "civilized" American society was founded on the presumption that "'whites are not much different from angels, and blacks are not much different from wild beasts,'" being labeled "black" meant being "oppressed in every aspect of life and separated from whites in public places." This "Jim Crow" segregation existed not only on trains and boats, but also in "hospitals, schools, clubs, associations, churches, meetings, the YMCA, and even in tourist camps where there are signs 'only for whites,' 'only for blacks.'" Black American workers, the Soviet audiences were supposed to have learned, only entered "white" establishments or residences in order to sweep floors, wash windows and dishes, or clean vegetables.[86]

As the "Lynching and Persecution of Negro Workers in the USA" reveals, MOPR officials portrayed themselves as using the Scottsboro campaign and protest meetings in particular to prove that they were improving the state of international education throughout the country and specifically educating the Soviet citizenry about the plight of black American (male) workers.[87] This was disclosed most basically by the fact that it omitted any direct mention of the legal lynching while still addressing issues pertinent to it and reinforcing several of the protest's main themes. Consistent with the Bolsheviks' emphasis on the importance of education to an individual's self-improvement and maturation into the New Soviet Person,[88] the implication was that the transmission of this

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[86] RGASPI, f. 539, op. 5, d. 126, ll. 47-54. This section may have been based on "Kak zhivut chernokozhie krest'iane v Soediennykh Shtatakh)," an essay by George Padmore that appeared in *Put' MOPR'a*, nos. 26-27 (September 1930): 2, 19.

[87] *Murzilka* printed short stories for children which provided lessons in U.S. racism. They relayed fictional scenarios that addressed how black American children for instance were prohibited from attending many theaters and restaurants and could only ride in those areas on various forms of public transportation designated "For coloreds." See, for example, "Rasskazy pro fashistov i pro pionerov," *Murzilka*, no. 9 (1933): 7-11.

[88] See Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, pp. 51-54, 63-67; and Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, p. 78-81.

knowledge was helping to inculcate an emancipated, antiracist attitude within the Soviet toiling masses and thereby facilitating the emergence of this New Soviet Person from one "remote corner" of the Soviet Union to the other.

As further indication of MOPR leaders' interest in cultivating the image that Soviet citizens were receiving a structured international education in U.S. Racism 101 at Scottsboro meetings, their records claim that they gave black Communists who sometimes served as lecturers like Robert Ross material to follow. They seemingly did not want Ross and others to speak from personal experience alone, but instead wanted them to ground it in population statistics, history, and specific cases of lynching as well as to emphasize class in the appropriate places.[89] Besides bureaucratic control, this can in part be seen as a further manifestation of the paternalistic approach that Soviet officials frequently exhibited towards black Americans in their efforts to prove or illustrate the racelessness of Soviet society: Soviet authorities' rendition of the history of black Americans' discrimination (since the Civil War) was superior to any version that a black American lecture could conjure up contemporaneously. Yet this situation is of course complicated, as Soviet antiracism of the interwar era often was, by the fact that George Padmore, was most likely a major contributor to this lecture material and hence to the image of U.S. racism that authorities approved for consumption among Soviet citizens.

"The Lynching and Persecution of Negro Workers in the USA" encapsulates another fundamental problem endemic to nearly all forms of Soviet antiracism during the

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[89] GARF, f. 8265, op. 1, d. 48, l. 203; d. 57, l. 69. Robert Ross of Montana, who originally traveled to the Soviet Union as a member of the Communist Youth League, was probably a postal worker when he was recruited to lead Scottsboro lectures. See the letters found in GARF, f. 5667, op. 16, d. 281, ll. 166-168. A photograph of Ross participating in a physical culture parade on Red Square appeared in *Izvestiia* on 8 July 1936, p. 2. Black American delegates to the International MOPR Congress held in the fall 1932 were also supposedly dispatched to several meetings in Moscow as well as the surrounding provinces; "ILD (24 April 1932)," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 3017, ll. 99-100.

period between the wars. While black Americans were not presented as "lazy" or "passive" victims, but appeared fighting back against their white bourgeois oppressors and their henchmen, this was because it was largely in the best interest of Soviet authorities to depict them as such, rather than because of an enlightened, progressive attitude that they possessed towards black Americans. The purpose of conferring agency upon black American workers, in other words, was not to disprove that they were victims. Rather, it was to prove that they merely were not passive victims, and were therefore worthy of Soviet leaders' and citizens' support. More specifically, in those instances where black Americans were shown to assert their rights or as working to rise above their indigence, the angry white lynch mob and/or former white slaveowners inevitably struck them down. The implication here was obvious: much like the non-Russian nationalities of the former tsarist empire, only through Soviet assistance could black American workers be fully liberated from their de facto slave status. [90] The militancy of the black American toiling masses, in other words, could only take them so far in the struggle before Soviet paternalistic beneficence, the support of the fatherland of all workers, became imperative.

As a final note, the lecture guide reflects two of the predominant biases of the Scottsboro protest and Soviet antiracism as a whole. The first concerns the inordinate focus on the racism that black American male laborers encountered at the near complete elision of black female workers. The second pertains to its overemphasis on the southern U.S., which in essence came to stand in for the situation throughout the entire country.

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[90] The non-Russian nationalities were not portrayed as passive oppressed victims of the Russian empire either but were strategically depicted struggling with the guidance of their elder Russian brother against tsarism. See Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

These biases can be explained in part by the fact that most of the sensational, well-publicized acts of American racism during the interwar era including the legal lynching were perpetrated largely against black men in the U.S. South. This reflected both the racialization of black American men as posing a far greater, menacing threat to the white hegemonic social order than black American women, and the harsh reality that historically "the institutionalized rape of black women has never been as powerful a symbol of black oppression as the spectacle of lynching."[91] However, what must also be considered in helping to explain the campaign's masculinized presentation of American racism is that Soviet male officials and black American male Communists were the primary contributors to these lectures and in setting the protest's general focus, neither of whom could be depicted as ahead of their time in devoting equitable attention to female workers' issues. And as previously noted, Soviet authorities had a poor track record of treating rape as a serious crime which was of course the major form of racial violence that white American men inflicted upon black women.[92]

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[91] For quotation, see Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 39, as cited in Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, eds. Ellen Carol Du Bois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 292-297. See also Angela Davis, "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," in *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 172-201; George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), esp. pp. 52-58, 275-282; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'The Mind That Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, eds. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983): 328-349; and Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (New York: Macmillan, 1983), esp. pp. 6, 110-113, 152.

[92] Regarding Soviet officials' negligence in dealing with female sex crimes, see note 79. For a detailed discussion of the masculine bias of Langston Hughes' writings on Scottsboro which William Maxwell argues contributed to the slighting of black women, see *New Negro, Old Left*, pp. 128-151. For the important role of black women in the CPUSA and the sexism they confronted, see Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the wide-scale mobilization of Soviet citizens that the Scottsboro protest was depicted as achieving in the U.S.S.R. as a Potemkin village of antiracism, that is an ideal image that was offered up as reality. At the same time, however, it does not discount the possibility that some individuals especially in the Soviet center became well-informed about if not interested in the Scottsboro case and U.S. racism. The testimony of a black American woman who supported the Soviet pursuit of antiracism and two white American men who clearly opposed it serve as evidence of this. According to Dorothy West, a member of the *Black and White* film group, when she and the other cast members attended Scottsboro rallies in Moscow during the summer 1932, some of the Russian workers were so knowledgeable about the legal lynching, that they actually learned about developments in the case from them.[93] While West could have exaggerated or romanticized the situation for whatever deliberate or unconscious reasons, her reminiscence simply cannot be dismissed as a sympathizer's propaganda.

This is given further credence by the statement that the aforementioned white American Raymond Price made to the U.S. Consulate regarding his stay in the Soviet Union during 1931. Specifically, Price claimed that the Russians with whom he spoke believed that black Americans were not allowed to attend schools or universities with whites, and that they refused to believe otherwise when he tried to tell them that they were misinformed. Another white American man, Isador Besbek, who visited the Soviet

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Carolina Press, 1990), esp. pp. 21-22, 33, 79-80, 206-207; and Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), pp. 136-137, 259-260.

[93] Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, p. 290. Dorothy West, writing under the name of Mary Christopher, recorded her impressions of the Soviet Union in the journal *Challenge* for March and September 1934. See also "Cast of 'Black and White' Comments on U.S.S.R. and Films," *Moscow Daily News*, 6 July 1932, p. 4.

Union in 1932, informed the U.S. Consulate of a similar encounter that he had had with the daughter of a Moscow University professor. Besbek recounted, evidently with some bitterness that the young woman had asked him, "Don't you people in the 'free' United States of America lynch Negroes?" Besbek tried, to no avail, to refute the young woman's association of the U.S. with the persecution of black Americans by insisting that lynch victims, regardless of their skin color, deserved it.[94] The obstinacy that Price and Besbek claimed to have encountered among some Soviet citizens regarding their perceptions of white Americans' (mis)treatment of black Americans, and West's claim that some workers were extremely well-informed about American racial injustice, inadvertently suggests that the Soviet campaign may have successfully perpetuated among inhabitants of the first workers' state, the association between the "'free' United States of America" and systematic racial discrimination against black Americans.

Although the Scottsboro legal case obviously had a long way to go before being resolved and before all the defendants were released from prison, after 1932 only a few random wire reports concerning developments in the case appeared in the central press. That is to say, the Potemkin village of the Soviet Scottsboro protest, the idealized image that the entire country was mobilized, outraged, and united in antiracist opposition against the death sentence and the increasing American racial violence which it represented ceased to exist. This in itself constitutes additional and even more powerful evidence that the Scottsboro campaign in the U.S.S.R., like most of the other propaganda campaigns of this era, was more about glorifying as enlightened the policies of the Soviet state than about gaining the black American prisoners' freedom. Yet why did it dissolve

[94] See *Records of the Department of State*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/419 (Reel 38); and *ibid.*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/623 (Reel 39).

after 1932? On a minor note, MOPR officials encountered enough difficulties between 1931 and 1932 in maintaining the credibility of the image of spontaneity and simultaneity that was critical to the Potemkin portrait of the Scottsboro protest. To try to do so beyond this roughly two-year interval would have meant bordering on the absurd. But even more importantly, two major factors must be considered in understanding this development. First, as noted at the beginning of this chapter a monumental legal victory was achieved in November 1932 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Scottsboro defendants' right to due process as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment had been violated and ordered the convening of a new trial. Just as leaders of the European and U.S. campaigns considered this a major success, Soviet authorities may have likewise concluded that the pressure, which the Potemkin village portrait of the Soviet liberation movement placed on U.S. officials had successfully served its purpose in the international arena.

In light of the fact that the Scottsboro campaign in the U.S.S.R. was primarily about highlighting the enlightened nature of the Soviet state, the second major factor is perhaps of greater relevance in explaining why the idealized image of it largely disappeared after 1932. By the fall 1932, Soviet leaders thought that they were finally on the brink of establishing diplomatic relations with the U.S. government. Diplomatic relations had by this time become even more critical to officials in Moscow as a result of political developments in Germany to the country's west and Japan's activity in Manchuria to the east. Therefore, it was fine for MOPR to cultivate the impression that Soviet citizens had risen en masse to condemn the legal lynching and, by implication, the U.S. capitalists' preparations for an imperialist war against the U.S.S.R. that it signaled,

as long as diplomatic relations seemed distant. Paradoxically then it was the perceived threat of war that encouraged MOPR authorities to promote the image that the first workers' state was unified in antiracist protest against U.S. racial injustice and which prompted them to withdraw it less than two years later.

A discussion that Dmitri Manuilsky, a high-ranking Comintern leader, conducted in 1933 with some African and black American students of KUTV about the relationship between the Comintern's September 1932 decision to "temporarily postpone" production of the Mezhrabpom film *Black and White* and the Soviet government's pursuit of diplomatic relations with the U.S., sheds further light on this issue. As Manuilsky emphatically explicated, at that particular period in time it would have been in the best interest of neither the first workers' state, nor the black toiling masses of the world whose cause the Soviet Union resolutely championed, to have produced a film, which blatantly exposed U.S. race relations. There can be little doubt that MOPR leaders had felt similar pressure to scale down significantly their campaign against the Scottsboro death sentence and U.S. racism.[95]

[95] "Stenogram of the Conversation of Comrade Manuilsky with students of the Ninth Sector of KUTV (19 January 1933)," RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 1-12. See also note 29.

Chapter 5

Freedom from Racism: The Promise of Soviet "Racelessness" and Black American Students in Moscow's Comintern Universities

Despite his disillusionment with the Soviet Union, Claude McKay still claimed in his 1937 autobiography, *A Long Way from Home*, that white American Communists, not Russians, were the source of his anxiety when he visited Moscow for the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922. As he recalled, "I had no fear of even the 'whitest' Russians in Russia . . . The only persons that made me afraid in Russia were the American Communists."[1] Nine years later, as evidenced in the accusations of racism that several black Americans in the International Lenin School (ILS) [*Mezhdunarodnaia leninskaia shkola* (*MLSh*)] leveled against their white American colleagues, the situation largely had not changed. Yet the fact that they had not only raised these accusations but also presented them to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) suggests that Soviet antiracism had placed them in a strategic position to challenge their white counterparts and demand that they respect them as equals.

The reason why a sizable group of black Communists were even ILS students in 1931 was because the previous year black American students at the Communist University of Toilers of the East (KUTV) [*Kommunisticheskii universitet trudiashchikhsia Vostoka*] had themselves invoked Soviet antiracism to criticize the ILS's admission policies. As the older of the two institutions founded in 1921, KUTV had

[1] As an unofficial member of the U.S. delegation to the congress, the American Communists told McKay that he could not join them because they already had their "token Negro" delegate, the light-skinned Otto Huiswood. Sen Katayama who led the Comintern's Eastern Section made sure McKay participated. See Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (New York: Lee Furman, 1937), pp. 165-169, 172-174 (quotation p. 169); and Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990; orig. pub. 1983), pp. 221-222.

historically been comprised of students from Soviet Asia, colonial countries, and the Middle East as well as black Americans. Conversely, the student body of the ILS, which the Fifth Comintern Congress had established in 1926 to "bolshevize" the communist parties of capitalist countries, consisted predominately of white Americans and Europeans.[2] By 1930, black Americans in KUTV denounced as institutional racism this policy of operating a "white" and "non-white" university. As William Weinstone (William Randolph) the CPUSA representative to the Comintern emphasized in a letter to the U.S. Secretariat, the justification for this de facto segregation, namely the ILS's higher requirements defined in terms of Party and industrial experience, was no longer viable.[3] The recent groups of white Americans admitted to the ILS had not even met its political prerequisites thereby justifying the KUTV students' charge of discrimination.[4]

Comintern leaders devised two main strategies in an attempt to quell this accusation. The first involved sending a few white Americans to KUTV, which

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[2] For the ILS mission statement, see "Otchetnyi doklad ispolkomu kominterna ob itogakh dvukhletnei raboty mezdunarodnoi leninskoi shkoly," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 36-51; and "Tsirkular po voprosu o novom nabore studentov M.L.Sh.," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 18, l. 9. After the Commissariat of Nationality Affairs (Narkomnats) was abolished in 1923, the Comintern assumed jurisdiction over KUTV and it began admitting black Americans and Africans. See Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 201-202; and Woodford McClellan, "Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925-1934," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26 (1993): 371-390. For the institutions designed to create a Bolshevik intelligentsia, see Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[3] Preference was given to unmarried manual laborers from large industries with at least three years party experience and "not less than one year standing in practical political work." Non-industrial laborers had to be a party member for five years and active in party work for three. English-speaking candidates were supposed to have read ten books by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. See "Re Conditions For Admission to the International Lenin Courses," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 10, ll. 28-31; "Instructions, Conditions of Acceptance into the International Lenin School," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 26-28; and "Selection of Students to the ILS for the New Academic Year," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 22-25.

[4] Weinstone sent this letter after attending a meeting of the Negro Section of the Comintern's Eastern Secretariat that Harry Haywood chaired; "Minutes of the Meeting of the Negro Section of the Eastern Secretariat (8 January 1930)," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 83, ll. 19-21; "Secretariat and Polbureau, CP USA. 12 January 1930," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1870, ll. 2-6.

Weinstone advised U.S. leaders that they had do because "if only Negro students are sent it will absolutely appear as segregation, since the only white students that come here go to the Lenin School."[5] The other strategy was admitting a larger number of black Americans into ILS.[6] The contingent of white and black American Communists that was consequently sent to the more prestigious of the two Comintern institutions during the late summer 1931 was the largest in the school's history consisting of approximately forty individuals, roughly fifteen (rather than two or three) of whom were black.[7] But before this experimental group even reached the ILS, racial tensions had become rife, a situation which became increasingly worse in Moscow.

The following analysis addresses the ways in which black American ILS students demanded the freedom from racism that the image of the Soviet Union as a raceless society promised them. It explores the specific accusations against white American students, which they first brought to the attention of the school's party officials during the

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[5] See the "Proposals Adopted at Meeting of Negro Section of the Eastern Secretariat," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 84, ll. 1-3. In a November 1930 letter, Weinstone emphasized to the CPUSA that they still needed to send the seven selected white students despite the late date because "we will have endless trouble if only Negro comrades are in the Eastern University." See RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1870, ll. 4-5; "To the Secretariat, CPUSA, 19.11.30," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1870, ll. 136-139 (quotation ll. 137-138). Otto Huiswood supported this policy change; RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1872, ll. 28-29.

[6] Only three black Americans had been in the ILS at one time prior to 1931. Haywood was first admitted in 1927. Later that year Roy Farmer, a Party member since 1922, and Robert Brady a member since only 1926 but described as "well-tested" were enrolled. Haywood stayed the longest, three years, Farmer for two, and Brady for one; "Protokol No. 34: zasedaniia pravleniia M.L.K. ot 2-go maia 1928 goda," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 14-15; "Spisok studentov s 1926-31 god," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 1-34 (Amerika ll. 2-4). Three black Americans were students in late 1930, one of whom Gilbert Lewis died of tuberculosis the following June at a Yalta sanatorium; RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1869, ll. 59a, 59v; "To the Secretariat of the CP USA (30 April 1931)"; "WOPAT NEW YORK (2 June 1931)," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2225, ll. 37, 46. A 13 August 1931 resolution reiterated the need "to send the Negro Comrades to the ILS, uniting them into one group with the Americans"; "Rezoliutsiia politsekretariata po dokladu t. Kirsanovoi o rabote MLSh," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 47-49.

[7] The 1930 ILS population data shows that 0.58 percent of the student body was black American, and 3.45 percent white American. Chinese and German students constituted the largest groups numbering 14.19 percent and 14.14 percent, respectively. The next largest were the British at 6.33 percent; "Studencheskii sostav M.L.Sh.," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 45-46.

fall 1931, and then to the ECCI and the district committee of the CPSU when they were dissatisfied with ILS officials' response. In this way, it highlights how Soviet antiracism had invested black American Communists with the right to demand that not only their fellow Americans but also school officials adhere to a code of conduct that was congruous with the image of Soviet racial equality.[8] The very act of making these demands, in fact, constituted a simultaneous exercise of Soviet antiracism and reaffirmation of its existence. Comintern authorities responded to them by attempting to instill an antiracist consciousness in the future leaders of the U.S. Communist Party, and in the process received an informal education in the layered, complex nature of American racial discrimination that both challenged and confirmed their perceptions of U.S. race relations during the interwar era. Their harshest lesson was perhaps the realization that white American Communists were just as oblivious if not more so than were they about its subtleties.

This chapter concludes by switching venues to KUTV where, in 1933, a group of African and black American students even more explicitly drew upon and challenged the master narrative of Soviet antiracism in order to criticize before the ECCI certain aspects of Soviet society and culture as racist.[9] In what follows, the master narrative of Soviet antiracism consists of recounting how Soviet leaders and citizens had triumphantly

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[8] Exploiting official discourse or images in order to frame appeals was of course not without precedent in Soviet history. For discussions of its use among non-Russian nationalities, see especially Francine Hirsch, "Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities," *Russian Review* 59 (2000): 201-226; and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), esp. pp. 128-132. Hirsch specifically argues that non-Russians quickly learned to use the discourse of nationality, regardless of whether they believed that they belonged to a distinct nationality, to voice their complaints and make demands.

[9] For the concept of drawing on and challenging a master narrative in order to make appeals, see especially, Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "Narratives of Appeal and the Appeal of Narratives: Labor Discipline and Its Contestation in the Early Soviet Period," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 24, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1997): 65-87

transcended (or were in the advanced stages of transcending) bourgeois racism so that the Soviet Union had become (or was in the final stages of becoming) a superior society where racism was not tolerated, the reality of which was proven in the Stalingrad trial and the Scottsboro protest. As will be shown, however, when a few of their African colleagues went beyond the proper bounds of challenging this master narrative by calling into question its validity, three black American students sternly criticized them and reasserted its authenticity. By comparing the experiences of black American Communists in the ILS and KUTV, this chapter demonstrates how both groups exploited the image of the Soviet Union as a society without racism in order to improve their livelihood and increase their agency in Moscow vis-à-vis white Americans and Soviet authorities, while also revealing that their use of it in this manner was critical to its perpetuation and success.

I.

White American men who either worked in or traveled to the U.S.S.R. during the early 1930s often mentioned encountering black American male and female students of the ILS and KUTV when discussing their journeys with U.S. government officials. These same observers rarely noted the presence of their white American colleagues. This was largely because they were unaccustomed to seeing black Americans having equal access to education, money, public facilities, and in regards to the men, openly associating with white women. As several engineers and architects claimed "the reception and kindly treatment which American Negroes have had in Russia" where they are "well looked after" had caused them to adopt an "extremely offensive" attitude

towards all white Americans in the Soviet capital.[10] Some directly attributed the "pompous" demeanor of black male students to their fraternization with Russian (white) women, alleging that: "the Negroes say: 'we are just like white men; we marry white women'" and singled out Isaiah Hawkins as filling their minds with such "nonsensical" ideas.[11] The larger underlying fear of these men was obvious: black Americans would return to the U.S. with this insufferable haughtiness and foment unrest by demanding similar treatment.

To be sure, the acts of racism, which several black Communists charged many white American students with committing, were not as overt as the disgust and disdain that these white American male observers shamelessly expressed. Yet the meetings that the investigative commission of the ILS nucleus bureau of the CPSU held with American students in October and November 1931, reveal that their racist conduct was motivated by similar fears about black male-white female relationships, and while they may have espoused black equality in theory, were also unaccustomed to being treated in the same manner as black Americans on a daily basis. Some even responded to these "destabilizing" circumstances by instituting inequality as soon as they boarded the *Majestic*, the vessel that conveyed the student body, in two groups across the Atlantic during the late summer 1931. Whatever initial trust, however limited, the majority of

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[10] See, for example, the statements of Colonel Hugh L. Cooper in *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union, 1930-1939*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/519 (Reel 38); John M. Pelikan in *ibid.*, 861.77 – Living Conditions/4233 (Reel 36); John Stafford Cromelin in *ibid.*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/371 (Reel 37); and Samuel George Bloomfield in *ibid.*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/575 (Reel 39).

[11] See the statements of Eugene Szepesi of Park Avenue, New York City in *ibid.*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/255 (Reel 37). For Hawkins, see chapter two. William C. White in *Scribner's Magazine* also emphasized that when most white American men first arrived in the capital, whether Communists or non-Communists, they had a difficult time adjusting to the reality that many black American men had "Russian lady friends." See "Americans in Soviet Russia," *Scribner's Magazine* (January 1932): 171-182.

black American Communists may have had in their white colleagues, was therefore eroded by the time they reached Moscow. Similarly, by the time the commission of the ILS nucleus bureau of the CPSU finished the investigation and issued a resolution on 18 November 1931, they too had succeeded in earning their distrust.

As the fall meetings in the ILS made clear, the racial hostilities among the American student body were largely rooted in the experiences of the first group, which contained four times as many black Americans as the second (or twelve as compared to three) during their journey to Moscow. Arguably, the tone of the trip was set at the outset, when Molly Pyaturk (Mary Dorn), a member of the four-person (student) commission, which the CC CPUSA had placed in charge on the *Majestic* remarked, "I don't know what we are going to do with the Negroes on the boat." Leonard Patterson (Cotton Terry) rhetorically asked ILS party authorities how else could he and his fellow black Communists interpret this remark but to mean "that we Negroes are some dumb illiterate people, etc. for whom she is responsible and she just does not know what she is going to do with these dreadful people."[12] With the vocal and silent support of the majority of white American students, what Pyaturk and the other three commission members ended up "doing" with "the Negroes on the boat" was segregating them from the rest of the student body even though Jim Crow policies were not observed among the *Majestic*'s general populace.[13]

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[12] For verification of Leonard Patterson as "Cotton Terry," see "V TsK VKP(b) komissiiu po perevodu v VKP(b)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 20, and for Molly Pyaturk as "Mary Dorn," see "V TsK VKP(b) v komissiiu po perevodu v VKP(b)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 67. Pyaturk had been a party member since 1928 while Patterson had joined the Youth Communist League (YCL) in 1929 and the Party in 1930.

[13] Problems among the second group were not discussed during the fall ILS meetings. It was not until the CPUSA held an emergency meeting in December, which will be discussed in the following section, that Isadore Weinstein (Leon Douglas), one of the second group's leaders, admitted that Intourist had arranged for the cabins were not to be segregated on the *Majestic*, but that he and Sophie Eizenburg (Bee Simons),

Some black students explained that because of these circumstances, if their white comrades did speak to them then it was only was to relay orders. According to William Nowell (William Cooper), the few who did not segregate themselves, nonetheless adopted a condescending "paternalistic" attitude towards "us" making it clear "that 'we' fight for Negroes." The CC CPUSA had instructed the commission to conform to segregation and in particular to limit the contact between white female and black male students, but this was only if it had existed on the boat. The Party's primary concern was preventing the disclosure of the group's identity, which of course became a non-issue when it was not observed. [14]

In addition to practicing segregation, Molly Pyaturk also suggested during a meeting on the *Majestic* that what they should "do with the Negroes" once the group arrived in London was assign one white student to supervise or chaperone each black student, implying that they could not be responsible for themselves. The ILS commission denounced Pyaturk's proposal and her fellow commission members who failed to harshly criticize it as a "holdover of the bourgeois morale of the slave market and superiority of

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another commission member should have done more to have the three black students sit with their colleagues during meals. They had only succeeded in eliminating the segregation of the group's sole Asian-American student, Chi-Fin Lo; "American Landergroup. 12.24.31," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56a, ll. 1-178 (esp. ll. 91,126, 157-158). The landergroups within the ILS were based on the landersecretariats (regional secretariats) within the Comintern which in 1927 the ECCI increased in number to six, one of which included the Anglo-American landersecretariat. Their main purpose was to strengthen communication between the ECCI and the communist parties identified in a specific region. See G.M. Adibekov, Z.N. Shakhnazarova, and K.K. Shirinia, *Organizatsionnaia struktura Kominterna, 1919-1943* (Moskva: Rosspen, 1997), esp. pp. 109-112, 152-155.

[14] "Protokol: sobraniia amerikanskoi lendergruppy ot 19/IX-31 g.," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 1-19 (esp. l. 6); "Meeting of Special Commission to Investigate the Situation in the American Landergroup, held 14 November 1931," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 56-74 (esp. l. 65), ll. 96-165 (esp. ll. 131-132). For verification of William Nowell as "William Cooper," see RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 20. Nowell had joined the Party in 1925.

the white race against Negroes."[15] Several black male Communists posited that the white Communists exhibited this "slaveowner psychology" by making paternalistic suggestions and practicing Jim Crowism where it was previously nonexistent largely because they were anxious about black men and white women interacting.[16]

Their argument was supported by numerous incidents, the most obvious of which occurred on the dance floor in the *Majestic*'s dining room where Rose Riley ordered two black male students Charles White (Earl Shumacher/Shoemaker) and John Brown (Carl Jacoby) to stop dancing.[17] Attributing it to the group's strict observance of segregation but more likely due to her fears, as later disclosed, that the two black men would attempt to start dancing with her if she approached them herself, Riley had not directly given them the order. Instead, she sent Youngblood (Scovin), the only black student on the commission, to relay it to them. Riley refused to admit in discussing the incident with ILS officials that her order was racist, but conceded that because several students had been offended by it she should have refrained from giving it. By qualifying her admission of error in this manner, Riley had effectively placed the blame on her "hypersensitive" black colleagues, who had simply overreacted to her rather reasonable and innocent request.[18]

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[15] "Rezoliutsiia (18 noviabria 1931)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56v, ll. 4-14 (esp. ll. 6, 9); d. 56, ll. 158, 161.

[16] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 3-4, 147.

[17] "Resolution on the Situation in the American Lander Group of the ILS," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 75-77 (esp. l. 76).

[18] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 5-6, 8-10, 132, 138, 149-150. Riley was a Party member since 1928; "V TsK VKP(b) komissiiu po perevodu v VKP(b)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 17. For verification of "Jacoby" and "Shumacher" as Brown and White, see "Amerika," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 2-3. Carl Price of the Fifth District (Pittsburgh) wrote Earl Browder on 1 July 1931, to inform him that they had selected Youngblood, a steel worker, active in Party and trade union work in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, to

White American male and female students' contemptuous treatment of the group's interracial married couple, William Nowell and Molly Beckman (Gladys Paigne), both during the journey and at the ILS, further substantiated the black Communists' argument. As one black male student attested, the discrimination against Beckman and Nowell was "one of the rankest, bitterest forms of white chauvinism towards the Negroes in the Lenin School" which negatively affected the entire black student body.[19] Anna Bush (Maria Rock), Fanny Cooper (Jenny Bowers), Rose Riley, Emma Bentley, and Molly Pyaturk deliberately refused to assign Beckman any practical work despite her status as a long-standing Party member. They justified their actions by stressing that at every meeting Beckman had sat and sided with "the Negro comrades" because as rumor had it, "if I was away from Cooper [Nowell] five minutes I would die."[20] Leonard Patterson contextualized for ILS party authorities the racism that the interracial pair experienced. As he put it, women like Beckman were perceived inside and outside of the Party as whores, degenerates, and traitors of their race, while Nowell and other black men were perceived as sexual predators who were only interested in Communism because it gave them access to white women. For this reason, he added, the women with whom he spent time in Moscow were constantly the subject of rumors among white American students.[21]

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attend the ILS; "Communist Party, District #5 Pittsburgh (1 July 1931)," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2274, l. 41.

[19] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 56-57, 65, 115, 132, 161.

[20] For verification of Beckman as "Gladys Paigne," and the identities of the other white female students, see RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 67; d. 40, ll. 2-3. Beckman had joined the Party in 1924.

[21] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 115-116, 122-124, 162-163. George Balker (James Edwards) too explained that a white American male student, B. Malone had told a particular white woman not to talk to him, which the accused defended by insisting he had been joking. Balker had only joined the YCL in 15 January 1931; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 20. When Harry Haywood attended the ILS, he claimed that

But the name-calling and rumor spreading which targeted black American Communists and the white persons who associated with them went beyond the realm of the sexual. At least six white Americans were accused of referring to and describing the black student body as a "gang of nationalists," hopelessly sentimental, inherently opposed to school authority, and instigators of an atmosphere of "negritudeness" (by which they meant chaos and unruliness) in the school.[22] In order to dismiss any perceived threat that they posed them, these white Communists slandered the educated black Communists within the group as "petty-bourgeois intellectuals." Patterson who was not among this educated contingent, emphasized the fallaciousness of the label by explaining that they had also used it to refer to the "ideal black worker," Robert Robinson in Stalingrad. In addition to Beckman, because Jim Brooks and Alice Goldkhar (Olga Macy) socialized with and aligned themselves with black Americans on certain issues, they complained to authorities that the accused had also unjustly disparaged their names in the ILS as opponents of the CC CPUSA and proponents of "social democratic tendencies."[23]

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upon returning from doing practical work in the Crimea in 1929, a student had disseminated a cartoon that featured him surrounded by several Russian women at a sanitarium with a caption that read: "Comrade Haywood Doing Practical Work in a Crimean Rest Home." Forty years later Haywood discovered that the cartoonist was the Mexican muralist Davido Siquieros; *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978), pp. 310-315. It should be noted that black female Communists, like black women in general were also presumed to be promiscuous. For the sexual stereotypes surrounding white female and black Communists, see Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 79-80, 85.

[22] For the contradictory but historically coexistent racial stereotypes of black Americans as sentimental and insubordinate, see, especially, George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp.53-58, 102-109, 168-171.

[23] The primary offenders were Abe Garfield (James Morgan), Anna Bush, John Marr (Cass), Fanny Cooper, and Molly Pyaturk. Nowell claimed that because he was educated, Abe Garfield had called him a "Goddamned liar" during a discussion of a theoretical question. See RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 57-59, 116-117, 119, 132, 162-165; d. 56a, ll. 104-106. Nowell and Patterson stressed that because of the

The other major incident about which the majority of black students expressed concern to ILS party authorities directly involved Leonard Patterson and John Brown, and yet again concerned dancing. During their first week in Moscow, a group of Russian workers had gathered around Patterson and Brown on the street out of curiosity. This prompted several white American students who were walking with them to chide them "to do the jig." Patterson and Brown emphasized that this request was entirely inappropriate and extremely offensive because white slaveholders had forced their slaves to dance and sing under the threat of being struck on the feet and legs with a whip, a practice that some former slaveholders had not yet abandoned. As Patterson elucidated, by telling them to start dancing the jig in the street, they both felt like their white colleagues viewed them as having just emerged from the jungle and should act like the mad, uncivilized people they were perceived to be. Confused, ILS Party investigators asked why, when Russian workers had asked Harry Haywood to perform "the dance of slaves" several years ago, he did not consider their request racist. Patterson highlighted the important difference between white Americans and Russians asking black Americans to dance, stressing that unlike Russians, white Americans had a long history of enslaving black people and propagating the myth that "dancing the jig" was the only thing they could do well.[24] Both incidents concerning dancing reveal, many white American Communists conceived of their black ILS colleagues in primarily physical, bestial or savage terms: in the first case it was sexual, predatory, and thus potentially dangerous but in the other it was clownish, entertaining, and hence harmless.

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discrimination against educated black men in the CPUSA only one black Communist had an assignment in general Party work, while the rest were confined to positions in "Negro work" (ll. 155-156). Despite the push within the Party in 1930 to change this, by late 1931 the situation remained the same; 10 Feb 1930, to WW Randolph in U.S.S.R. from Otto Huiswood (Negro Dept.)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 1872, ll. 28-29.

In addition to these specific acts of racism, black American students argued that even those whom they did not directly implicate were guilty of encouraging racism because they had refused to take any action to correct the behavior of their fellow white Americans. What is particularly striking about whom they identified as active offenders, was that many of them were white women. White American female students, in other words, played an equal if not a more active role than white American men in displaying a paternalistic attitude, in spreading rumors, and in trying to limit the contact between white and black students, but especially between the latter and white women whether they were American, Russian, or British. Perhaps either out of fear that black males actually had a rapacious appetite for white women or out of concern with preserving their own reputations (that is, of not being called a whore by their white male and female colleagues for associating too closely with black men), most white American women in the ILS helped uphold a U.S. societal myth that preserved their own oppression.[25]

In contrast to the existence of this extremely vocal contingent of twelve or thirteen white American female Communists, there was only one black woman in the school, Harriet Ferguson (R. Dayton). This disparity alone testifies to the discrimination within the CPUSA and larger U.S. society against black American women, which prevented them from even entering the ILS.[26]

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[24] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 116-119; "Report of the Resolution Commission, October 15-16," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 56-63 (esp. l. 61).

[25] See especially, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'The Mind That Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality,* eds. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983): 328-349.

[26] For verification of Harriet Ferguson as "R. Dayton," who had joined the Party in 1930, see RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 20. Women comprised fifteen percent of the American student body, which was only slightly higher than the percentage of women in the entire ILS (roughly thirteen percent). White men clearly constituted the majority of American students; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 16, ll. 45-46. For the important role black women played in the CPUSA and the double discrimination that they faced, see

II.

Although it may have seemed that the ILS commission of the CPSU's nucleus bureau was making progress towards resolving hostilities among the American students by conducting an investigation and providing black students with the opportunity to explain their grievances, in actuality they alienated the overwhelming majority of black Americans. Consequently, in December 1931, they sent a letter documenting their grievances regarding the unbridled growth of racism within the ILS and the dissatisfactory manner in which school authorities had handled it, and sent it to the ECCI as well as the raikom or district committee of the CPSU. After the special commission, which the ECCI quickly established to investigate the situation, completed its assignment, Comintern leaders issued a resolution siding with the black American students' criticism of not only their white colleagues but also the ILS leadership. Specifically, as the ECCI put it in a regards to the latter, the commission of the nucleus bureau of the CPSU had gravely erred because "instead of immediately, without delay, correcting and condemning the mistakes of the individual white comrades which were manifestations of remnants of white chauvinism, they tried to create a certain balance between the mistakes of this kind made by some white comrades, and the mistakes of another kind committed by some Negro comrades." Because they erroneously applied a "mechanical implementation" of the Bolshevik struggle on two fronts, the ILS's party officials held all members of the American student body equally accountable for the hostilities and equally responsible for altering their behavior in order to resolve them,

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William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism Between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 125-130; Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), pp. 136-137, 259-260; and Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, pp. 21-22, 33, 79-80, 206-207.

thereby exacerbating these hostilities and consequently losing the black students' confidence.[27]

By no means a coincidence, shortly after the black American ILS students had sent their appeal to the ECCI and raikom of the CPSU, Earl Browder, the U.S. Party's General Secretary, and Clarence Hathaway, the CPUSA representative to the Comintern, showed up at the ILS to help lead together with representatives of the CPSU and Comintern an emergency three-day meeting (22-24 December 1931). During this meeting, the American students, and white Communists in particular, were called upon to admit their mistakes and engage in Bolshevik self-criticism in order "to solve this problem."[28] CPUSA authorities were arguably somewhat embarrassed by and critical of the ILS black students for not having addressed their issues first to them before having taken them to the ECCI and CPSU district committee. But the ECCI vindicated the actions of black American Communists, making it unequivocally clear that as current members of the CPSU they absolutely had the "political right" to appeal to them and demand that immediate action be taken to eliminate the rampant racism within the school. However, Comintern leaders emphasized that it had been the "political *duty*" of the white Communists to bring the problem of white chauvinism to their attention. Not only did they fail to fulfill their "political duty," which did of course reflected unfavorably on the

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[27] "Rezoliutsiia o polozhenii v Amerikanskoi gruppe M.L.Sh.," RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2602, ll. 37-43; "Draft Resolution on the Situation which Developed in the American Landergroup of the I.L.S.," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 10-17 (esp. ll. 14-15); d. 56, ll. 120-121; d. 20, l. 25. The "Draft Resolution" can also be found in RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 2602, ll. 76-83.

[28] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56a, ll. 19, 26. Clarence Hathaway was an ILS alumnus, having entered the school during its first year in 1926. During the 1930s he served as the CPUSA representative to the Comintern, *Daily Worker* editor, and candidate member of the Politburo. Comintern leaders who had blocked his promotion to full member in 1936, ordered that he be expelled from the Party in 1940, emphasizing his excessive drinking and, a drunken fight that he had had with a Moscow policeman as an ILS student. See Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism*, esp. pp. 40-48.

CPUSA leadership, but also the self-criticism that the majority of white students engaged in during the December meeting was highly problematic. It is no wonder, then in light of these circumstances that Comintern authorities declared that this meeting only confirmed that white American ILS students and U.S. Communist authorities still failed to completely grasp the "far-reaching political significance" of the struggle against racism.[29]

Even a few white American students accused the majority of their white colleagues for demonstrating this lack of understanding during the meeting. Although several (including Riley and Pyaturk) finally admitted that their actions were racist, or conceded that they had failed to take any action to fight racism, at the same time they also did one or more of the following: complained that the charge had become so "vulgarized" that they were afraid to say anything to a black Communist out of fear of being accused of it; emphasized the errors that a particular black student had made; and/or committed an additional expression of white chauvinism. As one student, Samuel Vint (Samuel Bly), observed in regards to his fellow students, because many had posed the question, "how can I be a white chauvinist" when they were supposed to be engaging in self-criticism, they revealed that they still "do not know what is the sign of a white chauvinist mistake." But in addition to this majority, there were others whom as Molly Beckman noted at the meeting's end refused to even criticize themselves of any racism if simply for the sake of appearances.[30]

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[29] "RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 76, 16-17.

[30] Although Pyaturk acknowledged as a "crass example of paternalism" her suggestion to assign one white student to a black student, at the same time she compared her difficulties communicating with black ILS students who, as Clarence Hathaway stressed, were already class-conscious Party members, to her difficulties communicating with "unconscious mill workers" in the U.S.; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56a, ll. 33-36, 76, 100-102, 110, 118, 135, 143-145.

In the resolution that members of the ECCI investigative commission formulated first in draft form in late January 1932 and released as a final version the following month, they connected the expressions of racism among the white American students to its recent manifestations within the CPUSA. They attributed this increase in racism to the deepening of the U.S. economic crisis and the intensification of the class struggle. As the revolutionary movement advances, the commission elucidated, the backward tendencies within the working class such as the "ideology of white chauvinism" assume their sharpest form even within the Communist Party. The U.S. bourgeoisie, "aware of these developments and threatened by the increased labor activity of black workers, intensifies their efforts to foster the latter's mistrust of all whites and to isolate them from the rest of the working class" by disseminating even more propaganda about "'white superiority,'" and by increasing "the legalized practices of Jim-Crowism and lynching." It is furthermore within this atmosphere that the black bourgeoisie capitalizes on the consequent, heightened lack of trust "to intensify this separation and systemize it under the ideology of a Negro bourgeois nationalism."[31]

The ECCI commission stressed that as a result of these developments, it was without question "THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK of the American Party and above all the first duty of the white comrades" to *lead* the struggle for black equality and "to conduct a relentless war against every manifestation or even slightest echo within its own ranks of the ideology of white chauvinism, which is the main danger to the successful carrying through of the task of unifying white and Negro workers for common struggle." White American Communists had not just failed to lead this struggle within the ILS, but more egregiously, they had also committed numerous acts of racism, which they

[31] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 10, 75.

repeatedly denied committing but instead blamed the racial hostilities within the school entirely on their black colleagues. Furthermore, as Comintern authorities noted, in those instances when some black American students did make mistakes, rather than "handling carefully" all holdovers of nationalist feeling among "the long time oppressed nations [and] mak[ing] certain concessions in order to overcome more quickly this mistrust and these prejudices," white American Communists exacerbated the situation by denouncing them as "'bourgeois nationalists.'"[32] The ECCI commission reprimanded U.S. leaders for white students' gross inability to apply theory, specifically Lenin's nationality policy, to their everyday interactions with their black colleagues.[33]

Comintern investigators did not ignore the mistakes that black Communists had made, specifically identifying them as including conceiving of black "groupings" as vital to combating racism, distrusting all white Americans as racists, composing slogans that read "Down with White Imperialist Superiority!," and denying that bourgeois nationalism influenced black Americans. However, unlike the ILS commission that preceded them they attributed these mistakes to white American Communists' unabashed racism and/or complete apathy towards it. While they reminded the black ILS students of the need to combat the influence of black bourgeois nationalism, they also ordered U.S. authorities to better prepare all black Communists to systematically expose it "as an adjunct of the

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[32] Ibid., ll. 11-12, 75-76. Comintern officials reminded the white students of the descent of fellow white American Communist Alfred Weisbord into the bourgeois conception of "the Negro question," which they argued helped to illustrate "how this rotten liberalism leads directly into the swamp of the most extreme Southern white chauvinism." They explained that in a speech he delivered in Gastonia, North Carolina Weisbord emphasized that the Party was fighting for black equality only in the trade unions and not in the schools, churches, or residential neighborhoods. Accordingly, the man who spoke after him claimed that "when Weisbord speaks about equality he does not mean that you must chose Niggers as your friends," to which Weisbord responded by remarking that these words accurately captured the message he had been trying to convey (l. 13).

[33] "Resolution," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 50-52 (esp. l. 50); ll. 11-12, 77.

policy of the white bourgeoisie," which would enable them to "patiently and persistently" explain to black workers that their mistrust of whites was a revolutionary force when directed against the white bourgeoisie, but when directed against the white proletariat it constituted an impediment to their own emancipation and to the development of the international proletarian revolution as a whole.[34]

The concerns of the ECCI that American students and officials still severely underestimated the political magnitude of the problem of white chauvinism and the need to observe Lenin's formula for internationalism were proven to be well-founded by the follow-up investigation that they and the new leaders of the school's nucleus bureau of the CPSU conducted in April 1932. Although the ECCI resolution had explicitly held white American students as members of the "oppressing nation" primarily responsible for the errors made by black students; and named white chauvinism and not black nationalism as the principal danger, investigators discovered that white students actually celebrated it as a "petty" personal victory simply because it acknowledged their black colleagues' errors. As a result of their baffling distortion of the resolution's meaning, most white Communists continued to attribute the hostilities in the ILS to the "distrust of Negro comrades towards white comrades." As one investigator remarked, with obvious frustration, if "obliged to judge the situation of the American Party on the basis of the situation of the American Lander group here, I would receive a very bad impression of the American Party."[35] The one development that Comintern and party investigators

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[34] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56v, ll. 7-8; d. 56, ll. 42-43, 161; d. 60, ll. 14-15, 77. Two black ILS students wrote an essay in the *Workers News* (the paper of course did not identify them as such) a month or two after the resolution was released, arguing that the conduct of Walter White and the NAACP, as well as Marcus Garvey and UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association) in the Scottsboro case proved that they were agents of white imperialists; Terry and Jacobs, "Negro Reformist Mis-Leaders: Scottsboro Proves Them Lackeys of Imperialism," *Workers News*, 28 March 1932, p. 1.

found encouraging was the organization of the Scottsboro campaign within the ILS, but even this had not been conducted without some white students offending their black colleagues with their "tactless" efforts to involve them in it.[36]

At a meeting held to discuss investigators' findings on 22 April 1932, some white students conceded that it was true, they had given very little if any attention to implementing the ECCI resolution and had thus completely failed to struggle against racism. But yet again, Comintern authorities did not consider white students' forthright admission of guilt as an indication that they would actually improve their conduct. The record of the conduct of Samuel Nessin (Gary Kelly) helps put their skepticism into perspective.[37] Four months earlier, during the December meeting that CPUSA representatives had attended, Nessin had given an impressive performance criticizing both himself and his fellow white students at length for treating black nationalism as the main danger and for leaving the fight against racism entirely "in the hands of the black students." But in early April 1932, the ILS nucleus bureau of the CPSU was forced to reprimand Sam Nessin for attributing the hostilities in the ILS to black students'

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[35] "Anglo-American Lander Group Meeting ILS (22.4.32)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56b, l. 25; "Draft notes for the Conclusions of the Commission of the AA Secretariat Regarding the Carrying out of the CI Resolution of 27 February 1932 (9 April 1932)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 18-20; "Proekt rezoliutsii o khode realizatsii resheniia politkomissii IKKI o polozhenii v Amerikanskoi lendergruppe," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 5-7 (esp. ll. 5-6).

[36] Most of the criticism fell on Sophie Eizenburg, an organizer of a Scottsboro play, who subsequently issued a statement of self-criticism. See "Postanovlenie komissii IKKI po voprosu o polozhenii v Anglo-Amerikanskom Sektore MLSh," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, l. 1; ll. 5, 19-20; and "Statement on My Position in the Carrying through of the ECCI Resolution in the American Landergroup," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56v, l. 29; d. 56b, l. 71. There was also some charges leveled against black students, which in part, concerned the play. This will be addressed in the following section.

[37] Before entering the ILS, Samuel Nessin, at the age of twenty-one, had been secretary of the New York Unemployed Council and run as the Community Party candidate for New York senator in the Bronx. Upon returning to the U.S. in late 1932, early 1933, Nessin became the leader of the Building Trades Workers, and in the second half of the 1930s the local union that he led in New York was the largest in the east. See Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), pp. 52-53, 236, 433.

"sustained mistrust" of their white colleagues. At the 22 April meeting, Nessin tried to explain his inconsistent behavior by articulating what had by then become a standard ploy among ILS students. He claimed that the reason why he had still failed to take up the fight against racism was because he was having difficulty accepting the fact that he was actually guilty of it, when for the past seventeen years he had led the struggle against his town's Ku Klux Klan and had been at the forefront of mobilizing black laborers. It is any wonder, that at the meeting's end, Comintern leaders emphasized that this investigation would be their last.[38]

There can be little doubt that the ECCI had fulfilled their role in maintaining the public transcript of antiracism by not only responding to the black American students' appeals, which the ILS nucleus bureau of the CPSU had done as well, but also and more importantly by emphasizing that they had been correct in appealing to them and correct in thinking that they were entitled to demand a school environment free from racism. However, there was only so much that the ECCI could do to create this environment beyond repeatedly challenging and ordering the white students to change their conduct and to recognize that the racism to which they consistently gave expression posed a serious danger to the international revolutionary movement. What they found most disturbing in their two investigations was not so much that these men and women had

[38] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, 56b, ll. 6, 35-37, 66; d. 56a, ll. 52, 165-166. Despite this admonition the ECCI was forced out of their "retirement" in September because a Canadian Communist belonging to a "clique" of American and Canadian students called a black American student, Youngblood, a "black son-of-a-bitch (*chernym sukinym synom*)" and spat in his face. Besides expelling the student from the Party and school, they blamed the conciliatory attitude of ILS Communists to racism for having allowed it to occur. See "Resolution of the Commission of IKKI on the Question about the Position in Anglo-American Sector of ILSh (16/September 1932)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 168, l. 81. See also RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, l. 1; "About the Anti-Party Grouping in the Anglo-American Sector," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 44-45; "Rezoliutsiia (28/IX/32 g.)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, l. 55; and "Otchet o rabote biuro iacheiki MLSh za vremia s 1-go aprelia 1932 g. po 15-e dekabria 1932 g.," f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, ll. 83-89 (esp. l. 84).

committed acts of racism, but that they had failed to understand the full gravity of their actions and self-righteously denied the possibility that they could have even committed them. Their definition of racism, in others words, seemed to be almost limited to physical violence and overt racial slurs regardless of how many times the ECCI rebuked and corrected them. If these students were, as Earl Browder described them, "the best we have in America," then the U.S. Communist movement was doomed to isolation from if not alienation of the black American toiling masses. Faced with this prospect, he ECCI commission strongly advised the CC CPUSA to pay closer attention to whom they sent to the ILS for the upcoming 1933 school year.[39]

III.

As already shown, unlike the ILS commission of the nucleus bureau of the CPSU, the ECCI largely supported black American students' demands that their white counterparts change how they treated or interacted with members of the black student body on a daily basis. However, when some black students accused a few of their black colleagues of "Uncle Tomism" or of encouraging acts of white chauvinism, Comintern authorities assumed the same position that ILS party officials had taken: they dismissed the possibility that there was any substance to the charges. ECCI representatives insisted that accusations of "Uncle Tomism" could only be attributed to black students' exacerbated mistrust – although completely justified – of white American students and

[39] Charles White had made a similar suggestion a year earlier when he called on U.S. leaders to reevaluate how they defined the Party's "best members" and chose who was sent to Moscow; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 45-46.

anyone who worked closely with them and the CC CPUSA.[40] In other words, they ruled unequivocally that there were no "Uncle Toms" in the International Lenin School.

The first of two accusations of Uncle Tomism in the ILS was leveled at Youngblood, the only black member of the four-person commission that the CC CPUSA had placed in charge during the journey on the *Majestic*. Although having questioned U.S. leaders' appointment of Youngblood over black students who had longer party records and previous experience in the U.S.S.R., several black Communists who brought the complaint first to party and then Comintern authorities stated very plainly that they did not call him an "Uncle Tom" because of his appointment to the commission but because of the way in which he conceived of his role as a member of it. Specifically, instead of conceiving of his duty as ensuring that the instructions of the CC CPUSA were implemented correctly, Youngblood had treated his primary responsibility as only closely watching them, but not the white students, to see if they "committed any sins." Thus as Leonard Patterson specifically, emphasized, they were not demanding that Youngblood treat them "better than the white comrades" but that he merely treat them in the same manner and with the same level of respect, which was what they were also merely asking of their white colleagues.[41]

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[40] For a discussion of the historical background of the term "Uncle Tom," see Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, esp. pp. 110-129. As Donald Bogle argues, "always as toms are chased, harassed, hounded, flogged, enslaved, and insulted, they keep the faith, n'er turn against their white massas, and remain hearty, submissive, stoic, generous, selfless, and oh-so-very kind." See *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1989), pp. 1-10, 47-53 (quotation pp. 4, 6).

[41] Some black students were also guarded around Youngblood because he had been the only commission member to support Pyaturk's suggestion that one white student be assigned to each black student in London. During the December CPUSA meeting in the ILS, Patterson conceded that they should have taken Youngblood who was a new comrade aside, provided him with evidence that he was exhibiting "Uncle-Tom" tendencies, and explained what his proper function was a member of the commission; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 11-13, 96, 99, 113-114, 136-139, 147-149, 157-158, 160; d. 56a, l. 120.

Although black ILS Communists publicly ceased using the terms "Uncle Tom" and "Uncle Tomism" after ILS and Comintern authorities had ordered them to do, some did not stop accusing each other of the conduct, which these terms connoted. In an ironic turn of events, two black male Communists who had been involved in leveling charges of "Uncle Tomism" against Youngblood during the fall 1931 became the primary targets of these accusations the following spring. William Nowell, Charles White, and George Balker denounced these men as well as the ILS's only black female student, Harriet Ferguson as "Judases" because they participated in the school's Scottsboro play and allegedly minimized the racist errors that white students committed. While Comintern leaders had dismissed the charges made against Youngblood, they considered the charges that Nowell, Balker, and White made in April 1932 to be even more unsubstantiated and indicative of an atmosphere of unbridled racism within the ILS. Although they reprimanded the three accused for having expressed a "tactless" attitude towards a few black colleagues, the ECCI harshly criticized Nowell, Balker, and Whites' accusations as a manifestation of bourgeois nationalism because their primary purpose was proscribing behavior, such as participating in the school's Scottsboro play, which furthered interracial proletarian unity.[42]

Also detrimental to the credibility of their "Judas" charges, was the fact that one of the individuals against whom they leveled them was Leonard Patterson. Since the group had arrived at the ILS, Patterson, as has been alluded to throughout this chapter, had acted as the de facto spokesman for the majority of black Communists in their efforts

[42] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56b, ll. 9, 43, 71-73, 77-79, 98, 109; d. 60, ll. 19-20. Black American Communist Otto Huiswood confirmed that Nowell had criticized the play for incorrectly depicting the class differences within the black American community, but Nowell denied it and claimed that it was a "very good play."

to bring white American students to account for their racist actions, and in criticizing the school's former party officials for having made bourgeois nationalism the primary danger. Patterson had even gone on record before school authorities to discuss specific instances of racial discrimination against Nowell. Moreover, in December 1931, Ferguson had actually accused Patterson of exhibiting bourgeois nationalistic tendencies, while Patterson and Charles White, who were now accused and accuser, had charged her with underemphasizing the struggle white chauvinism, and overemphasizing the danger of bourgeois nationalism.[43]

Nowell's leveling of unfounded charges of "Judas behavior" within the ILS was indicative of the path his career would subsequently take in the CPUSA. Upon returning to Detroit, Nowell continued to call certain black American Communists "Uncle Toms," a practice for which a fellow ILS alumnus, Harry Haywood, denounced him at the Eighth Party Convention in Cleveland in early April 1934. By 1936, Nowell, who had refused to forsake this name-calling, had been expelled from the Party and became a cooperative witness before the Dies Un-American Activities Committee, where Haywood claims he revealed that he had been a government agent while a member of the CPUSA. Nowell's duplicity helps to explain why he was so intent on sowing division among black American ILS Communists by throwing around charges of "Uncle Tomism" when a few colleagues allegedly cooperated too closely with CPSU and then CPUSA officials. Furthermore, his tendency to quickly brand a fellow black Communist an "Uncle Tom"

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[43] Ferguson charged Patterson with exhibiting harmful distrust of whites by opposing the appointment of Morris Childs (Charles Summers) as "head of the Negro Bureau." Patterson claimed that he did not oppose Childs' appointment because he was white, but because he had had little practical experience working among black workers. Quoting from the 1930 Comintern resolution on the "Negro Question," Patterson argued that white workers must participate in the struggle for black rights, not by sitting in an office but by going out in the "field where the Negroes are oppressed and struggle against the oppression of the Negro workers"; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 96, 99; d. 56a, ll. 102, 110.

was undoubtedly a strategic ploy that he used to distance himself from such an association since, in the end, the charge was most appropriately suited for him.[44]

Comintern leaders were perhaps intolerant of any "Uncle Tom" accusation, regardless of whether there was any substantive evidence behind it, because from their perspective such conduct was only possible and only *rewarded* in a capitalist society. As they saw it, black American bourgeois leaders, who colluded with the white American bourgeoisie to keep black American workers and farmers oppressed, were the true "Uncle Toms." In contrast, because Soviet leaders presented themselves as genuine proponents of black equality and committed to the reality of the U.S.S.R. as a raceless society, from their perspective there was absolutely no incentive for black Americans to act in an "Uncle Tom" fashion since "whites" did not occupy a privileged position (based on their racial identity) in relation to "blacks." When considered in this framework, Comintern officials could only interpret accusations of "Uncle Tomism" as an indirect indictment of the new socialist society, which they were inaugurating.

IV.

Of the various expressions of racism that black American Communists charged their white counterparts with committing, the one which was perhaps of greatest interest to ILS party officials and Comintern leaders, concerned the accusation that John Marr, a white American Communist, stated that Soviet workers, like white American workers, hated black people. According to John Brown, a black Communist from Detroit, he had raised the issue of how friendly Russian workers had been towards him and his fellow black students in a conversation he had had with Marr when the group was on an

[44] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, pp. 431, 667; Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, pp. 340, 471.

excursion in Khar'kov. Specifically Brown claimed he had remarked to Marr that "these workers seem to like the Negro workers here, as it is not like America here, we get a good smile from the workers." But Marr, he alleged, responded with skepticism, stating, "'Don't be so sure about that,' as he had seen some workers spit on the ground as we passed . . . as if trying to tell me there was hatred among Russian workers towards Negro workers."[45]

When the ILS commission of the CPSU questioned Marr about the incident during the fall 1931, he emphasized that he had received a different impression than Brown of Russian workers' attitudes towards black laborers because when walking around with the other ILS students in a group, he always stayed at the back in order to observe with "great interest" the way children ran up to and gathered around his black American colleagues. On one occasion, Marr elucidated, he saw a small girl stare intently at Brown and another black student, "vehemently" spit on the ground, and mutter something as they walked by her. As Marr insisted, although he had interpreted the child's actions as a "white chauvinistic expression" (even though he admitted to being unaware of what she mumbled), by relaying the incident to Brown he was not implying that all Russian workers were "infected" with racism, but that racism still existed among some of them.[46]

Following the precedent of his fellow white American Communists, Marr eventually criticized his actions during the emergency meeting that Earl Browder had attended in the ILS in December 1931, but simultaneously emphasized the significant

[45] "Section Meeting (Anglo-American Nucleus Bureau Report)," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 64-68 (esp. l. 64).

amount of work he had done to struggle against racism in Detroit, which had, in his opinion, made it unfeasible for him to be guilty of it. He even tried to gain officials' sympathy by arguing that as a result of the accusations leveled against him, several of his fellow white students had begun to call him a "counter-revolutionary." But while adhering to the standard script of self-righteousness, Marr, more so than any of the other students, explicitly criticized himself for violating Soviet antiracism. Specifically, he claimed that by propagating a theory about the continued existence of racism in the U.S.S.R. on the basis of one small girl's actions, he had jeopardized damaging the image of the Soviet Union as a society without racism among black American workers, which would have made it even more difficult for the CPUSA to mobilize them to the defense of the U.S.S.R.. Marr thus acknowledged that he was rather fortunate that Brown did not receive the "wrong impression" from the observation that he shared with him, did not start to question whether racism was actually pervasive among Russian workers, and did not become "antagonistic" towards them.[47]

It comes as little surprise that the ILS commission of the nucleus bureau of the CPSU handled this particular accusation of racism, the only one directly concerning "Russian workers," in a manner that Comintern leaders approved. They sternly criticized Marr for failing to appreciate the high level of consciousness among Soviet workers, which made the construction of socialism possible in the U.S.S.R.. More specifically, they denounced him for denying the "Leninist conception" that white chauvinism was the

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[46] "Report of the Resolution Commission: Statement of Comrade Jacoby, in regard to the remarks made by Comrade Cass as to the existence of chauvinism in the USSR," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 56-57.

[47] Marr identified George Flick (Jack Rosen), Samuel Nessin, and G. DeSatsio (Tom Barter) as the primary culprits. See RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56a, ll. 130-132; d. 60, ll. 56-57. The only American Communist whom Marr claimed to have informed about his conversation with Brown issued a statement addressing the

class weapon of the bourgeoisie, and for having instead made "it an ideology of all whites including even the workers of the Soviet Union." Interestingly, near the end of the meeting held to articulate their conclusions on this matter, the school's CPSU authorities further instructed the American student body that "undoubtedly, among the backward elements of the Soviet workers occur incidents of chauvinism, against which the party decisively struggles," but these were only remnants and more likely, they insisted, of an anti-Semitic rather than anti-black nature.[48]

While all American students had also approved a resolution at this meeting "unanimously condemn[ing] the behavior of Comrade Cass [Marr] in regards to accusing the workers of the U.S.S.R. with having the presence of white chauvinism," several black Communists also individually criticized him for suggesting that, "the Russian workers hate Negroes so badly that they spit on the floor every time they pass." Some of these black students had actually been the ones who had finally convinced Brown that he needed to bring Marr's flagrant violation of Soviet antiracism to authorities' attention, advice which school officials' chastised him for not having followed sooner.[49] But why did the majority of black American students, as Marr put it during his self-criticism not

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matter in which he called Marr a liar. See "Report of the Resolution Commission: Statement by Comrade Milton," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 59-60.

[48] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56v, ll. 6-7. Accusations of anti-Semitism and Jewish chauvinism were also leveled among American students in the ILS. Comintern leaders condemned anti-Semitism as the twin brother of white chauvinism and emphasized that "the same relentless struggle must be directed against all expressions of anti-Semitic tendencies"; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 50-51; "15 June 1932," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56v, ll. 15-22; l. 14; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 20, l. 83.

[49] RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56, ll. 63, 132; d. 60, l. 60. Brown criticized himself at the December meeting for having concealed white chauvinism by not reporting the incident sooner; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 56a, l. 87; RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 56-57, 60. Authorities also rebuked other students for waiting too long to report white chauvinism. See RGASPI, f. 531, op. 1, d. 56a, ll. 50, 54, 104-105, 122-123, 138-139, 154, 159-163; "Draft Resolution on the Allegations Concerning Comrade Smith," RGASPI, f. 531, op. 2, d. 60, ll. 70-71; ll. 16-17.

get the "wrong impression" from his observation or openly believe there was any validity to it, and become outwardly "antagonistic" towards Soviet workers? The dominant response of black American ILS students to Marr's "theory" about the existence of racism among the Soviet toiling masses revealed that they had a vested interest in actively supporting or defending the image of the Soviet Union as a country without racism, silently agreeing with it, or silently disagreeing with it. Whether or not they sincerely believed the image to be fact or a reflection of reality is immaterial.[50] That image and the antiracist discourse which produced it had allowed them to voice their complaints to high-ranking Soviet officials about the acts of racism that many white American Communists had committed, and as the following section shows, allowed their counterparts in KUTV to even voice similar criticisms about aspects of Soviet society. Thus Marr's statement was not just a breach of an idealistic, abstract antiracist discourse, but was a direct affront to the real, practical although admittedly limited power that it afforded black American students over their white colleagues when the latter did not treat them as equals. No wonder they came to its defense.

V.

A discussion about the existence of racism in the U.S.S.R. was not confined to the ILS during the early 1930s. At the beginning of January 1933, fifteen black American and African students of KUTV sent a carefully crafted letter to the ECCI, in which they shrewdly invoked the master narrative of Soviet antiracism in order to criticize several elements of Soviet society as racist.[51] Although it may seem that just by lodging these

[50] See the reference to Francine Hirsch's work in note 8.

complaints students were calling into question as a farce the image of the U.S.S.R. as a society without racism, this act of criticism in itself actually constituted an "affirmative gesture" of that image and the antiracist discourse, which produced it.[52] The first set of complaints pertained to the offensive manner in which peoples of African descent were represented primarily in plays then showing in Soviet theaters. The second set, which they connected to the first, concerned the white chauvinistic acts that individual Soviet citizens had committed against some of them. The students ended their letter by rather strategically arguing that because they disbelieved bourgeois leaders' propaganda that the Comintern had forsaken black workers, and were convinced of the Soviet state's intolerance of American racism as proven in the Stalingrad trial and Scottsboro protest, they expected their complaints to be addressed expediently. By invoking what this study has shown were the two foundational or defining elements of Soviet antiracism, the KUTV students reminded Soviet leaders that they were entitled to expect nothing less from them. Accordingly, shortly thereafter, on 19 January 1933, the secretary of the ECCI, Dmitri Manuilsky, convened a meeting at the university during which he listened to the students expound upon the concerns that they had raised in their letter.[53]

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[51] They also criticized the living conditions at KUTV, about which a group of black American students who preceded them also complained. See, for example, "Dokladnaia zapiska negritianskikh tovarishchei KUTV," RGASPI, f. 495, op. 155, d. 65, ll. 2-3; "To the American Political Bureau," ll. 8-9; and "William Wilson, Dictation, 21.8.28," ll. 10-12. These types of complaints were common among foreign students in Moscow universities into the late Soviet era.

[52] For the basis of this argument, see Jochen Hellbeck, "Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia," *Kritika*, 1 (Winter 2000): 71-96.

[53] The letter was signed by James Jochen (the alias of Jomo Kenyatta), Johnson, Greenwood, Martin Nelson, Wallace Daniels, Robert, Sonney, Hilton, Wells, John Smith, Charlie Lafayette, Morris, Bennett, Jim Green, and Hamilton; "V Komintern," RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 15-21 (for rumors about the Comintern's retreat, see ll. 16, 18). Regarding the Stalingrad trial the students wrote, "when in the summer of 1930 an American in Stalingrad attacked a Negro worker only because he was a Negro, the Soviet court ruled to expel this American who was imbued with imperialist ideology from the borders of the Soviet

While citing briefly the offensive manner in which black peoples were depicted in *The Negro* (*Negr*), an adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* then showing at the Kamernyi (Chamber) Theater,[54] the two plays that KUTV students identified as having an especially pernicious affect on how Soviet citizens perceived them were *Geisha*, at the Obozrenii (Revue) Theater, and Natalia Satz's *The Negro Child and the Monkey* (*Negritenok i Obez'iana*) at the Children's Theater. As they emphasized, the way peoples of African descent were portrayed particularly in *Geisha* – as having bright red lips and large white eyes and teeth – in no way resembled them in reality. Although there were blacks of numerous backgrounds in the school, they added, none of them looked like those shown on stage.[55] The students deliberately made sure to emphasize their awareness that the intentions of the directors were not malicious, but that they were trying "to show the Russian workers how the class of capitalists exploited negroes." However, they contended that because most Russians' perception of either black

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Union. The trade unions as well as other workers' organizations which contained a sizable number of foreign workers, unanimously acknowledged the correctness of the court's decision (l. 15)."

[54] As mentioned in chapter four, a well-publicized Scottsboro protest meeting was held during the intermission of *The Negro* in this theater on 5 July 1931.

[55] The students also noted that certain toothpaste and shoe-polish advertisements also depicted black people in this extremely insulting manner, but did not elucidate about them at the meeting. Images of black adults and children with overly exaggerated large lips were pervasive in various Soviet journals, newspapers, and cartoons throughout the 1930s, including those designed for children. As the KUTV students argued, these images looked nothing like the photographs and more sophisticated sketches of black Americans or Africans that also appeared in these mediums (see for example the images cited in chapter two) during this era. For a few examples of these blatantly racist images, see *Krokodil* (7 September 1931): 7; *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 11 May 1935, p. 3; and a cartoon in *Murzilka*, no. 9 (1937): 17 that features blacks as half-clothed, barefooted cannibals with not only large lips, but also round, clown-like noses, and large white eyes. The image in *Vecherniaia Moskva* was taken from a new children's cartoon by Mosfilm called *Zhuravka*, after its main character, a young crane. In the paper, Zhuravka who is getting ready to leave the U.S.S.R. is shown "bidding farewell to a Negro" (who is barefoot and wearing little clothing). The objective of printing both the overtly racist and non-racist but still exploitative images of black adults and children (sometimes journals like *Murzilka* and *Internatsional'nyi Maiak* even printed a large photo of an African or black American boy on the cover) was to foster the impression that they were welcome in and lived in the Soviet Union. For perhaps one of the most obvious attempts at this, see the cover of *Internatsional'nyi Maiak*, nos. 31-32 (November 1931), with black American male workers skillfully superimposed in a

Americans or Africans was through books and plays from capitalist countries which distorted their appearances to reflect the white hegemonic notions that they were beasts, Soviet citizens needed to be exposed to more accurate portrayals of black people.[56]

Their specific objections to the popular play, *The Negro Child and the Monkey*, as suggested by its title, concerned the negative association it propagated between black people and monkeys. Particularly disturbing, the production depicted the young black protagonist as a mute who spoke with his hands and emitted sounds similar to those of a monkey.[57] They suggested the play be renamed *The Negro and His Pet*, and the main character be portrayed speaking an African language, like Bantu or Hausa, which the students stressed were no less complex than Russian. To highlight the imperative nature of these changes, they emphasized that Russian children called them "monkeys" when

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photomontage of Russian workers which makes it appear as though they are standing side by side with the latter.

[56] "Stenogram of the Conversation of Comrade Manuilsky with students of the Ninth Sector of KUTV from 19 January 1933," RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 1-13 (esp. ll. 1, 3, 7). The English composer Sidney Jones' operetta *The Geisha* also contained offensive lyrical references to Chinese and Japanese people.

[57] The play which Natal'ia Sats explained was written and designed for children who ranged between the ages of six to eight was about the friendship between Nagua, a young black child and Yirka, a monkey who had saved his life. When a circus owner captures Yirka, Nagua travels to Moscow to rescue him where he finds that the Soviet people are a friend to black worker. Sats claimed that the reason why there was no speaking in the play was because the children would not be unable to understand the language(s) that black peoples speak. Thus she created a character called the "Nice Negro Girl" (played in the 1930s by N.V. Ostapova) who spoke Russian and served as a narrator who explained what was going on to the children. The audience was encouraged to write letters to both Sats known to the children as "Auntie Natasha" as well as the "Nice Negro Girl" to tell them how much they enjoyed the production. For scenes, photographs, and letters regarding the play, see *The Moscow Theatre for Children* (Moscow: Co-operative Publishing Soxiety of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1934), esp. pp. 30-34, 37. The *Negro Child and the Monkey* was also staged, with the help of Sats, in children theaters in various European countries. See Natal'ia Sats, *Sketches From My Life* (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1979). The play was also a children's book. See Sergei Rozanov and Natal'ia Sats, *Negritenok i obez'iana* (Moskva: Gosizdat, 1930). In contrast to the students' complaints Langston Hughes noted in his autobiography that, "Soviet ideology did not favor picturing colored people in subservient or clownish roles on the stage, for which I was grateful." He explained that he had tried to attend *The Negro Child and the Monkey*, which "concerned a handsome little Negro boy, presented most sympathetically, I was told" but that the Children's Theater was always packed and adults were only admitted when accompanied by a child. See *I Wonder As I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), pp. 200-201.

walking down the street while adults asked them, "How do you Negroes speak with each other?"[58]

Black American and African KUTV students also raised concerns about a Russian-English dictionary, which defined the word "negro" as "nigger" and "negro child" as "pickaninny." They posited that a dictionary which uses such disdainful, contemptuous terms in describing peoples of African descent, should be banned from publication in the first workers' state.[59] They emphasized the urgency of eliminating these remnants of white chauvinism, because if the black bourgeois nationalist leaders in the U.S. found out about them, then they would make it even more difficult for the CPUSA to mobilize black workers to embrace the image of Soviet antiracism. This line of argument further illuminates that KUTV students, especially black Americans, were highlighting the inconsistencies in this image not to call its existence into question, but rather to strengthen it or protect it against any possible criticism from detractors in the U.S. who would exploit them to denounce the image as myth.[60]

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[58] RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 2-3, 7-8, 12, 16. The students maintained that even in the U.S. the practice of painting black people to look like monkeys was becoming less common; "Resolutions in Connection with the Derogatory Portrayal of Negroes in the Cultural Institutes of the Soviet Union," RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 26-27. On the racist association between peoples of African descent and apes, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 452-459; and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), pp. 29-32, 235-239, 490-497. The *Moscow Daily News* reported that William Bullitt attended and enjoyed a performance of *The Negro and the Monkey* on 4 September 1934; "Yesterday's Festival Play," *Moscow Daily News*, 5 September 1934, p. 1; Ed Falkowski, "Moscow Children Find Their Wonderland," *ibid.*, 11 September 1934, p. 2. In January 1935, Paul Robeson also attended the play which he reportedly praised and spoke at length afterwards with Natal'ia Sats; "Paul Robeson Visits Children's Theater," *ibid.*, 4 January 1935, p. 1.

[59] The 1995 unabridged Oxford Russian-English dictionary defines "black child" as "pickaninny."

[60] RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 2, 8. Donald Bogle argues that historically the term "pickaninny" has meant a child of African descent who "was a harmless, little screwball creation whose eyes popped, whose hair stood on end with the least excitement, and whose antics were pleasant and diverting"; *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, pp. 7-8. On the pervasive use of these and similar derogatory terms in U.S. newspapers and leading literary magazines, see Rayford W. Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), pp. 215-274.

Contrary to this notion of Soviet racial equality, two African students, Pierre Kalmek (Robert) and Edwin Mofutsanyana (Greenwood), testified to having confronted an inordinate amount of racism in the Soviet Union. Kalmek stated that as a sailor he had traveled throughout Europe, "but nowhere did I see such chauvinism as in the Soviet Union. Why did I come here," he queried, "because I heard a lot and read in newspapers, that the U.S.S.R. was the homeland of oppressed peoples, a country without chauvinism." But disappointingly, "I have encountered more chauvinism than in the capitalist countries. I was in Italy, India, and other countries. No one there ever spat at me as they spat here in Moscow at me around three-four times." Kalmek claimed that this had occurred to him recently at the AMO factory, and that on one occasion a woman came up to him and said: "Who is this? Is this a monkey?" Even in KUTV, he explained, a woman pointed at him, laughed, and told her children, "This is a Negro." Mofutsanyana asserted that he had had similar experiences. He emphasized that he had less of a problem with Russian children saying, "come look at the Negro" while he was walking down the street, because children were instinctively curious. But when it came to their parents he was not as tolerant. He related that when he was returning from a demonstration commemorating the October Revolution some adults had remarked, "Look at the Negro. Why is he so black? Probably because he does not bathe." Mofutsanyana stressed his extreme disappointment that Soviet citizens were unable to distinguish themselves from the inhabitants of capitalist countries in terms of their attitudes towards peoples of African descent.[61]

Other students claimed that their experiences had been very different from those that Kalmek and Mofutsanyana described, and took particular offense, perhaps just as

[61] RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 8-9.

much as Manuilsky, at Kalmek's contention that the Soviet Union was the most racist country in the world. Walter Lewis (Wells) from Birmingham, Alabama, for example, emphasized that although he had lived in the Soviet Union for more than two years and traveled around the country, he had never confronted racism. Besides the fact that no one had ever spat at him, in general he found Russian workers to be very sympathetic towards peoples of African descent. As Lewis conjectured, the Soviet citizens whom Kalmek confronted had possibly picked up some prejudices towards black people through books and plays from capitalist countries, like *Geisha*, which he reiterated, for this reason, needed to be removed from the repertoire.[62]

An African student, Nikin Sobia (Hilton), similarly scoffed at Kalmek's assertion that the Soviet Union was the "most chauvinistic country in the world," explaining that he had come from a country where blacks suffered tremendous oppression. In regards to the woman calling him a "Negro," Sobia questioned whether Kalmek would have considered it chauvinism had she not spoken to him at all. Sobia reminded Kalmek that the U.S.S.R. had always defended black people and cited the Scottsboro affair as the most obvious and most recent example. John Hyde Rhoden (Dewing), another black American student from Birmingham, Alabama was equally vocal in arguing that Kalmek had had "no right" to make the assertion that the U.S.S.R. was more racist than any capitalist

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[62] Ibid., l. 5. For the verification of "Wells" as Walter Lewis, see "Spisok studentov sektora 'A' sektsii No 9 (Negry)," RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 439, l. 6. Lewis (b. 1900) arrived at KUTV on 15 October 1930 from Alabama as a semiliterate metal worker who had just become a member of the CPUSA that year. His progress report dated 25 May 1933, noted that "he knows that the revolution is necessary and that he would fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it is difficult for him to understand issues of everyday work and struggles"; RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 440, ll. 3-4. Robin Kelley who made no mention that Lewis was sent to the ILS described him as "a newly recruited black steel worker from Montgomery," who spoke at TUUL's first mass meeting in Birmingham on 23 March 1930 and at another on 22 May 1930. Kelley also claims that the Party endorsed Lewis for Alabama governor in the 1930 elections but this would have made it difficult for him to have arrived at KUTV on 15 October 1930, thereby suggesting he was either out of the race early or school officials got the date of his arrival wrong. See Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, pp. 14-15, 17.

country. According to Rhoden, during his two years in the Soviet Union he had never encountered the white chauvinism experienced by Kalmek. When Russian workers came up and asked him and his fellow black colleagues why they were black, Rhoden argued that it was simply because they had never before seen peoples of African descent and wanted to become acquainted with them. Like Sobia, Rhoden pointed to the way in which the Russian workers protested the Scottsboro death sentence to underscore the absurdity of Kalmek's description of the U.S.S.R. as a bastion of racial hostility.[63] A third black American, Roddy Lister (Johnson) challenged Kalmek to state specifically how he was defining racism because he like most of his black student comrades found Kalmek's characterization of the Soviet Union entirely unfounded and outrageous. As an example, Lister elucidated that in his view racism consisted of blacks being forbidden from riding on the tram or other forms of public transportation with whites, which was the case in the United States but not in the U.S.S.R..[64]

Judging from his response, Dmitri Manuilsky did not have a problem with KUTV students criticizing the representation of peoples of African descent in plays and books since they stayed within the proper boundaries of challenging the master narrative of Soviet antiracism to correct some of its inconsistencies or shortcomings. It comes as little surprise that he was less tolerant of Kalmek and Mofutsanyana's charges that the Soviet Union was the most racist country in the world, because these clearly crossed the

[63] As part of this statement Sobia referred to MOPR as the "true defender of the oppressed"; RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 6-8. For the verification of "Dewing" as John Hyde Rhoden, see RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 439, l. 6. Rhoden (b. 1904) was identified as a chauffer with a lower level education from Birmingham, Alabama, who had joined the CPUSA in early 1930 and arrived at KUTV on 27 October 1930. He was evaluated as having better theoretical training (though with several shortcomings), and being more capable than Lewis but that he, like the latter, had strong tendencies towards sectarianism and did not want to work with reformist-minded students; RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 440, l. 4.

line between challenging the master narrative and questioning its validity. Just as the ECCI investigative commission had reprimanded John Marr for making white chauvinism "an ideology of all whites including even the workers of the Soviet Union" rather than "a class weapon of the imperialist bourgeoisie," Manuilsky condemned Kalmek's claim as dialectically impossible because there was no economic basis for chauvinism to even exist in the Soviet Union. Then, taking a tactic similar to that which Roddy Lister had pursued, the secretary of the ECCI contrasted the pervasiveness of institutional or state-sponsored racism in the capitalist and colonial countries with its absence in the U.S.S.R., asking Kalmek to provide him with just one example of rights that white people had in the Soviet Union which black people were denied. He emphasized that in Central Africa, English workers earned twice as much as African laborers, and that in the U.S. "whites have the privilege to lynch negroes, but negroes do not have the right to lynch whites." This, he argued, was white chauvinism. Manuilsky belabored this point further by asking him "do we have here a difference between salaries of negro and white workers? Do we have the right to lynch Negro citizens?"[65]

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[64] RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, l. 10. For the verification of "Johnson" as Roddy Lister, see RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 439, l. 6. CPUSA records list Lister from Cleveland; RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1869, l. 59v.

[65] RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 10-11, 14. Similar to Manuilsky and Roddy Lister, in the testimonials printed in Soviet and Comintern publications some black Americans supported the image of the Soviet Union as a society without racism by speaking of its lack of racism primarily in terms of "official" or state-sponsored racism while omitting any mention of its "sociological" variant. For example, in a 1933 article in the *Moscow Daily News* Wallace Daniels (a KUTV student who had signed the ECCI letter and was present during the 19 January 1933 meeting) asserted that, "there is nothing like racial chauvinism or prejudice in the Soviet republic." He supported his claim by explaining that, "the Negro in the Soviet Union is never hustled out of a hotel, bag and baggage. Nor does he hear, 'You'll have to find a seat in the other coach when you get to the next stop,' one of the many orders he receives in the United States. He is not afraid of lynching or Jim-Crowism because he ventures into forbidden territory, or refuses to give up his seat in a coach when a white man happens to desire it.'" The impressions of J. Brown printed in the *Workers News* in 1931 were strikingly similar: "in the Soviet Union there is no lynching, no signs in the streetcars saying this side is closed, no Jim Crow signs in the railroad stations. . . I can go where I want, to shows or moving pictures, and there are no signs saying that this side is for the colored." See Wallace Daniels, "The Negro Feels at Home in the U.S.S.R.," *Moscow Daily News*, 11 February 1933, p. 2; and J. Brown, "Only in the Soviet Union Can Negroes Live Free," *Workers News*, 7 November 1931, p. 4.

Kalmek briefly interjected to admit that if he had told a militsia officer that a Russian worker had spat at him, then he would have immediately apprehended the offender. However, he claimed that this only reinforced his point: white chauvinism was a problem among the populace not the Soviet state. Maniulsky responded by first claiming that much of the behavior that Kalmek and a few other African students had identified as "chauvinism" among some Russians was not chauvinism. He contended that in some cases they were confusing white chauvinism with what historically European visitors had termed Russian or "Asiatic" barbarity, that is, Russians' general failure to adhere to the putative notion of "European politeness," whereby "civilized" people believed it was discourteous to speak in a direct manner towards each other. As Manuilsky put it, until recently Russia had been quite a "backward" country, "we never saw colored races." Thus, instead of acting as if they had seen peoples of African descent before, Russians were going to say and ask whatever was on their minds when they did see them. In regards to Russian children, Manuilsky posited that their behavior was universal so that if he went to Africa the children there would undoubtedly stare and yell things at him because he looked differently than them.

Similar to ILS Party officials during the fall 1931, Manuilsky also addressed Kalmek's indictment of the Soviet populace by admitting that some "remnants" of white chauvinism continued to exist among the toiling masses, but that unlike the leaders of capitalist countries, Soviet authorities were mobilizing all their resources towards eradicating them. He urged the students not to lose sight of what they were up against in attempting to fulfill this goal, particularly, the legacy of centuries of tsarist rule which included bloody pogroms against Jews, widespread anti-Semitic propaganda, and ethnic

conflict between Armenians and Turks. As evidence that Moscow was committed to realizing this objective at "all costs," he cited the Stalingrad trial and deliberately distorted Lemuel Lewis' position as an "ordinary mechanic" who was notorious for drinking, starting fights, and missing work, to one of the Traktorostroi's "leading specialists." It of course made the Soviet state's unwavering insistence on expelling an American for "refus[ing] to sit in the same cafeteria with a Negro worker" more impressive by recreating him as a "leading specialist" at the industrial giant rather than a habitually inebriated rank-and-file laborer. Yet Manuilsky could have more effectively reinforced his overall argument that Soviet leaders had made significant progress in imbuing an antiracist consciousness within the populace, by mentioning the union-wide support that the American racists' expulsion was depicted as having, which was what the students themselves had mentioned in their letter to the ECCI. Thus, while the latter had invoked the memory of the Stalingrad trial in order to prompt Soviet leaders to fulfill their role in upholding the public transcript of Soviet antiracism by organizing this meeting and listening to their complaints, Manuilsky had cited it at its end to remind them that they were doing their absolute best to make the U.S.S.R. that raceless society which it promised them.[66]

[66] Manuilsky obviously erred in stating that Lewis was expelled from the country because he had objected to eating in the same cafeteria as Robert Robinson. Unlike Manuilsky, the students had gotten all the details correct; RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 441, ll. 11-12. Yet it seems as though the specific details of the trial were unimportant to its perpetuation in Soviet antiracist lore. As an example, the children's journal *Murzilka* included a rendition of it in a short story which omitted the names of those involved in the trial, the exact Soviet tractor factory where it occurred, and similarly placed the attack as occurring in the cafeteria. See "Rasskazy pro fashistov i pro pionerov," *Murzilka*, no. 9 (1933): 7-11 (esp. 11). Interestingly, by November 1936, the details of the Stalingrad assault had become so convoluted that a Russian tour guide allegedly told a white American student from Oklahoma who was disbelieving of Soviet claims to racial equality, that three white Americans had recently been banished from the U.S.S.R. at the behest of Russian workers because they had assaulted their black foreman. See Ida Murphy, "Most Impressive Country is Russia, Wis. Student Says," *Afro-American*, 14 November 1936, p. 18.

Significantly, three black American students who participated in the meeting, apart from Manuilsky, were most vocal in criticizing Kalmek for attacking the image of the Soviet Union as a country without racism. The two men from Alabama, obviously no strangers to racism and especially Jim Crowism, were especially passionate in insisting that they had each lived in the Soviet Union for over two years and never confronted the racism that Kalmek and the other African students said that they encountered. Were the experiences of the black American students really that different from their African colleagues, or were they merely not being as "honest" about them? As Jochen Hellbeck, a scholar of Soviet history argues, it is dangerous to automatically dismiss any voice that speaks positively about the Soviet Union as a "performance" or an exercise in propaganda while treating those that speak negatively as the only "authentic" expressions.[67] Lewis' and Rhoden's progress reports dated 25 May 1933, four months after the meeting with Manuilsky, strongly suggest that the two men were being forthright about their experiences since school officials noted that neither of them showed particular interest in returning home any time soon.[68] Although historically, they had little contact with peoples of African descent, it is not unreasonable to assume that Soviet citizens may have perceived and treated black American students differently from Africans simply because of the former's association with the wealth, power, and Western "civilization" of the United States as opposed to the European subjugation of the putative "Dark Continent" of Africa.

More than this, black Americans may have been treated differently because Soviet antiracism of the early 1930s centered mostly around them, it privileged them by making

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[67] See note 71.

a rejection of U.S. racial norms its primary focus. The Stalingrad trial and the Scottsboro protest concerned defending black Americans, not Africans from racism in the Soviet Union and United States, respectively. Although European imperialism and its racial atrocities were clearly condemned, Soviet antiracism had not yet developed a strong anti-colonial focus which it would come to assume after the Second World War, when Soviet leaders sought to spread socialism to the former colonial countries and opened the doors of Moscow State University to African students and established Patrice Lumumba Friendship University.[69] This is not to erroneously claim that black Americans failed to encounter any form of racism in the U.S.S.R. during the 1930s, but rather to suggest that their African colleagues possibly experienced it at a higher incidence (as they would into the post-Communist era). Thus black American students' defense of the Soviet Union's image as a society without racism can be attributed to their status as its primary beneficiaries in terms of their treatment in Soviet society and their right to command respect from their white American colleagues, circumstances which perhaps implicitly pressured U.S. leaders.[70]

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[68] See RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 440, ll. 3-4.

[69] Soviet authorities' stated purpose in educating and training Africans was to eradicate the legacy of Western imperialism. See, for example, *Two Universities: An Account of the Life and Work of Lumumba Friendship University and Moscow State University* (Moscow: Novosti, 1963); *The Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow* (Moscow: Novosti, 1973); and Seymour M. Rosen, *The Development of Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1973).

[70] Soviet leaders' strategic interest in doing well by African students during the latter half of the twentieth century, which meant scholarships, generous stipends, free medical care, housing, winter clothing, and physical protection, undoubtedly helped counteract some of the discrimination that they received from Soviet citizens and even lower level administrators. With the fall of Communism and consequent removal of that strategic international interest (on the part of central leaders), the existence of African students in Moscow immediately became and has remained entirely unbearable. Newspaper articles documenting the discrimination against African students in Moscow are numerous. See, for example, "Where 'Living While Black' Means Living in Fear," *The New York Times*, 3 May 2002, p. A4; Seth Mydans, "African Students' Harsh Lesson: Russian Racism," *ibid.*, 18 December 2003, pp. A1, A4; and Megan Merrill, "African Refugees Making a 2nd Escape," *The Moscow Times*, 22 May 2003, pp. 1, 4.

CONCLUSION

It is rather ironic that racism was such a major problem in a school which was supposed to be a bastion of internationalism. The conduct of white American International Lenin students revealed their complete ignorance and/or underestimation of the importance of Leninist nationality policy and, particularly, Lenin's formula for internationalism. The initial response of the commission of the school's nucleus bureau of the CPSU was equally unbefitting of individuals in charge of operating the International Lenin School. Rather than directing the students back to the path of internationalism, officials drove the American student body further away from it. Upon intervening, Comintern authorities found it most disturbing that the white American students believed that just because they were members of the Communist Party and had perhaps spent some time in the United States organizing black workers or fighting against the Ku Klux Klan, it was impossible for them to be guilty of white chauvinism. If they had met the unapologetic white American racists at the Stalingrad Traktorostroi during the summer 1930 in the form of Lemuel Lewis, William Brown, and the members of the factory's American committee, then during the fall 1931 at Moscow's International Lenin School, they met the putative enlightened, class-conscious white Americans who committed racist acts both consciously and unconsciously and vehemently denied doing so. Soviet authorities therefore discovered that white Americans with a Party card were just as dangerous as those wearing the proverbial white robe and hood, because the former were supposed to be the white Americans whom black workers could trust.

A major emphasis of the Soviet Scottsboro protest was that in the United States, the physical and legal lynching of black American men was based on the false pretext of

defending white women's honor from the mythical sexually rapacious black rapist. White American ILS students either failed to realize or refused to acknowledge that their anxieties about and contempt for relations between black male Communists and white women, which they reacted to by segregating themselves, adopting an aloof attitude towards, and spreading rumors, were rooted in the same racist doctrine that was responsible for Scottsboro and other forms of lynching against black men that they nominally protested as members of the CPUSA. Why did Comintern leaders even allow these students to remain in the ILS? White American Communists posed a real challenge to the ECCI. Comintern authorities could not just expel them from either the school or Party as they had expelled from the country roughly twenty of the white American workers in Stalingrad, because these men and women were supposedly the best representatives of the United States branch of the Communist Party. Soviet leaders needed to make some type of concerted effort to transform these future leaders of the CPUSA into the internationally-minded, supremely conscious individuals that they needed to be if the international proletarian revolution ever had any chance of succeeding.

By admitting a larger number of black American students into the ILS at one time in 1931 than had previously been the case, neither ILS nor Comintern officials anticipated having to deal with numerous manifestations of U.S. racism. What was even more unexpected was that this larger contingent of black students would themselves not act as a cohesive, monolithic group but that hostilities would develop among them. Although this hostility was oftentimes due to nothing more than personality conflicts, authorities insisted on attributing it to the mistrust that white students had cultivated in

black Communists by committing repeated acts of white chauvinism. Regardless of whether the charges were substantiated, they completely discounted any possibility that a black student could have overemphasized the danger of black nationalism to the detriment of the struggle against racism. This is especially interesting when considering that they had historically encountered Bolsheviks who encouraged Great Russian chauvinism and overemphasized the fight against non-Russian nationalism, despite the fact that they belonged to a non-Russian nationality.

This chapter has illuminated how black American Communists in Moscow effectively used Soviet antiracism and, specifically, the image that Soviet authorities and workers had condemned en masse the Scottsboro legal lynching and the assault on Robert Robinson, as a means of empowerment. Black American students in the ILS and KUTV in other words, insisted that Soviet antiracism entitled them to protection from racism in the Soviet Union and invested them with the right to appeal to Comintern leaders and higher-ranking officials in the CPSU when it was not respected. The Stalingrad trial and the Scottsboro protest thus held white American Communists to a higher standard of conduct in their dealings with their black American colleagues in Moscow and even held Soviet leaders to a higher code of conduct in terms of their depiction of peoples of African descent in Soviet cultural institutions, the way they responded to the accusations of racism leveled against white American Communists, as well as their admissions policies to the Comintern universities. It was the activism of several black American KUTV students in 1930, that is, their use of the nascent antiracist discourse to which Leonard Patterson, John Brown, Charles White, and the others owe their sojourn to the ILS during the summer 1931.

When a white American student in the ILS and an African student in KUTV violated Soviet antiracism by claiming that Soviet workers were infected with racism, black American Communists in both institutions came to the defense of the Soviet Union's image as a country that had discovered the cure for racism. Some scholars might argue that the former two men were speaking honestly, that each was expressing his "authentic self" by publicly articulating dissent, while the latter were merely acting, and in the hidden transcript were making remarks similar to the white American and African. While this may have been true in some cases, it does mean it holds for all of them. We cannot discount all black American voices that hailed the Soviet Union as the fatherland of all workers, as performances.[71] Some of these black Americans who were overwhelmingly men may have actually encountered no racism in the Soviet Union or whatever they did experience paled significantly in comparison to the systematic degradation, disenfranchisement, physical violence, and segregation that they experienced in the United States.

Finally, it is important to note that in both the case of John Marr and Pierre Kalmek, Comintern and Party authorities admitted that "remnants" of racism existed among some Soviet citizens. What they objected to was that both men used these remnants to posit that all or most Soviet citizens were racists. Thus Soviet leaders were not making the unrealistic claim that the image of the Soviet Union as a country without racism was perfect in the early 1930s, but did seek recognition that they were putting forth significant effort towards making reality correspond as closely as possible with that image.

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[71] See Hellbeck, "Speaking Out," esp. pp. 74-75, 80-81, 84-85.

Epilogue: *Tsirk*

On nearly every occasion in which the topic of this dissertation was mentioned to a scholar of Russian history over the past two years, without fail s/he immediately responded by simply uttering the title of a 1936 Soviet film: *Tsirk* (*Circus*). As suggested by the response of these present day historians, Grigorii V. Aleksandrov's musical comedy about the acceptance of a white American woman and her black child into Soviet society is perhaps one of the few if not the only remnant of Soviet antiracism of the 1930s that has endured in popular memory.[1] Considered independently of the campaigns, congresses, court proceedings, newspaper articles, photographs, and cartoons outlined in the preceding pages, *Circus* merely appears as a fleeting aberration of Soviet leaders' interest in condemning American racial norms before it became a hard-line policy with the deterioration of US-Soviet relations following the Second World War. Yet although this film can be conceived as the culmination of interwar antiracism, before antifascism completely eclipsed it as the primary focus of Soviet propaganda, in other significant ways *Circus* constituted a departure from some of its more distinctive aspects and a retreat to less radical ones that reflected larger changes in Soviet society of the mid-1930s.[2]

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[1] A production of Mosfilm, *Circus* was released in fourteen Moscow movie theaters on 25 May 1936. It had made its debut, however, on 23 May 1936 at Gigant in the Gorky Park of Culture and Rest, which was then the largest Soviet theater with a seating capacity of 20,000. Aleksandrov based the film on a scenario by the Russian satirists Il'ia Ilf and Evgenii Petrov. See "Tsirk," *Izvestiia*, 23 May 1936, p. 4; and "Film Festival Will Mark Big Cinema's Opening May 23," *Moscow Daily News*, 23 May 1936, p. 4.

[2] For the US Embassy's assessment of the film, see "840.6/Enclosure No. 1 to Dispatch No. 1622 of May 27, 1936, from the American Embassy, Moscow USSR, to Secretary of State" in RG-84, MLR Number 363, USSR Embassy, 1936, vol. 35 (820-841.5).

Circus represents the second, but only successful attempt to give cinematographic expression to Soviet antiracism during the interwar era. The first was the ill-fated Mezhrabpom film mentioned in chapters four and five, *Black and White*. As disclosed simply by its title and the constituency of its cast, which brought twenty-two black Americans including Langston Hughes to Moscow in late June 1932, *Black and White* was emblematic of manifestations of Soviet antiracism of the first half of the 1930s which were motivated by the more aggressive, hard-line variant of Soviet antiracism characteristic of the Comintern's militant Third Period with its concomitant emphases on class struggle and the international revolutionary movement. Paradoxically, it was because this film was designed to expose explicitly the systematic racial discrimination against black American workers, and to place it in a historical context of racial bondage, that Comintern leaders were forced to cancel it in September 1932 out of fear of losing US diplomatic recognition which then appeared imminent.[3] In addition to the changes in Comintern and domestic policy which *Circus* certainly reflected that will be addressed

[3] "'Black and White,' New Film, Illustrates the Class Struggle in USA," *Moscow Daily News*, 28 June 1932, p. 4. Besides paying their salaries until their contracts expired on 26 October 1932, Comintern leaders gave the cast three options after canceling the film: leaving the country immediately; traveling to Central Asia to "study" the situation of the national minorities (the option Hughes and nine others selected); or taking a job in the USSR (the option Wayland Rudd, Homer Smith, and Lloyd Patterson chose). For Wayland Rudd who worked at the Meyerhold Theater, see Fred Hiatt, "The Ambivalent American," *Washington Post*, 10 July 1994, F1; and Wayland Rudd, "Russian and American Theatre," *Crisis* (September 1934): 267, 278. Homer Smith, a graduate of the University of Minnesota School of Journalism became a Moscow correspondent for the *Chicago Defender* and *Afro-American* under the pen name Chatwood Hall and a post office consultant and inspector for the Commissariat of Posts and Telegraphs. See, for example, "A Column from Moscow," *Chicago Defender*, 15, 22, 29 December 1934, pp. 10, 11, 8; and "U.S. Students Russia Condemn Separate Schools," *Afro-American*, 7 September 1935, p. 1. His autobiography, *Black Man in Red Russia* (1964), is an artifact of the public transcript of Soviet antiracism. Langston Hughes published a short book about his travels in *A Negro Looks at Central Asia* (Moscow: Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1933) while Constance White's public impressions can be found in "Soviet Changes a Negro Artist's Entire Attitude Toward Life," *Moscow Daily News*, 15 November 1932, p. 2.

below, the experience with *Black and White* undoubtedly affected the form that the second attempt at adopting Soviet antiracism to the silver screen assumed in May 1936.

Circus opens in a small American town where the local paper, ironically called the *Sunnyville News*, announced to residents on its front-page that the renowned circus performer, Marian Dixon, was at the center of a "scandal." An angry white mob is then shown chasing this young white American woman, who is carrying a baby, which it is later revealed was fathered by a black American man.[4] Dixon barely eludes the grasp of her stone-throwing white male pursuers by leaping onto a departing train on the "Southern Railway, USA." She falls fainting into a compartment where the white American man whom subsequently becomes her manager and the film's villain is sitting. The next scene shifts to the Soviet Union, where Dixon is making special appearances for five hundred dollars a month in the Moscow Circus. Although she quickly becomes a star, the young American woman fears that her "shameful" secret about her black son, Jimmy, who is now two years old, will be exposed. Neither she nor the abusive manager who is using the child to blackmail her into staying with him, realize that unlike the US, Soviet leaders and citizens have a superior, enlightened attitude towards race and interracial relationships. Dixon consequently passes off Jimmy as the son of a black American female domestic servant who lives with her in a lavish apartment overlooking Red Square.

By the time her contract expires with the Moscow Circus, Dixon does not want to return to the US. She has fallen in love with both the joyfulness of Soviet society,

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[4] Lyubov' Orlova who was the star of Aleksandrov's *Cheerful Fellows* [*Veselye rebiata*] (1934) played Marian Dixon. Orlova starred in two other of Aleksandrov's films after *Circus* including *Volga-Volga* (1938).

apropos of Stalin's declaration that "Life has become more joyous, comrades," as well as with Martynov, a handsome Russian circus performer whose powerful physique contrasts sharply with the puny frame of the immoral American manager who wears inflatable padding underneath his suit in order to increase the size of his shoulders and chest. Dixon, who initially tricks the latter into thinking that she is returning with him to the US, absconds to the circus to perform a new act with Martynov. When the villain discovers her duplicity, he rushes back to the circus and announces to the audience that Dixon is the mother of a black child whom he brings out and displays before them. While Dixon hides out of fear that she is going to be mobbed, Jimmy is taken from the villain by the circus' audience which consists of representatives from several of the Soviet national republics who sing him lullabies in their native languages. The final two people featured singing to Jimmy are a young white woman with blonde hair and a dark-skinned black man who is clearly African. Martynov tells Dixon that her black son does not diminish his love for her, and the last scene features the happy couple participating in the May Day parade on Red Square. Dixon's face is radiant with the love she has for the new joyous life that the USSR has bestowed upon her, and she together with the other participants enthusiastically sing the "Song of the Motherland."[5]

In an interview with the *Moscow Daily News* in May 1935, a year before filming and releasing *Circus*, Aleksandrov explained that by addressing "'the relations between a white woman and a black man,'" the film was intended to highlight Soviet "'equality of

[5] For the glowing reviews of the film in the central press, see, for example, A. Timofeev, "Tsirk," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 21 May 1936, p. 3; "Successful New Film Comedy," *Moscow Daily News*, 24 May 1936, p. 3; "Zhizneradostnyi fil'm," *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 30 May 1936, p. 5; and "Tsirk," p. 4.

all peoples regardless of nationality or the color of their skins.'"[6] In this regard *Circus* is consistent with the Soviet antiracism detailed in this dissertation, which was designed to expose the hypocrisy of "civilized" American racial norms in order to glorify as enlightened the policies of the Soviet state (and the resulting antiracist consciousness of its citizenry). Yet despite having the same objective, *Circus* pursued its realization in a very different manner. While Soviet antiracism of the preceding years had been biased towards black American men, specifically depicting black male workers as the primary targets of US racism and the main beneficiaries of Soviet society's racelessness, *Circus* completely elides the black American man. Instead, it focuses entirely on how the "relations between a white woman and a black man" affected the white American woman, Marian Dixon, who finds refuge from American racial prejudice at the side of a Russian man in the USSR. The image of the white American woman as a victim of racism had not only been absent from Soviet antiracism of the early 1930s, but the visual and written depictions of lynch crowds and emphasis on dispelling the myth of the black rapist had underscored the important role that many white women played in perpetuating racial discrimination (a role that several female ILS students from 1931-1932 gave further credence).

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[6] "Soviet Hollywood Shows Wonders of Film Technique," *Moscow Daily News*, 18 May 1935, p. 3. In accordance with Aleksandrov's summarization of its main objective, the following year *Izvestiia* reported that after a group of sixteen black American visitors to Moscow viewed *Circus* (which included Adolph Hodge, a New York high school teacher, Professor Abram L. Davis of Howard University, Thyra Edwards of Chicago, and several doctors, teachers, and social workers) one of the group's members remarked that the film should be shown to every black man and woman so that they could see "that only in the free Soviet Union is complete equality of races and nations possible." See "Priezd gruppy amerikanskikh negrov," *Izvestiia*, 22 July 1936, p. 4. The *Moscow Daily News* also printed an article about and photographs of this contingent of black Americans; "Group of American Negroes Visits Moscow," *Moscow Daily News*, 22 July 1936, p. 4; and "American Negro Visitors," *ibid.*, 5 August 1936, p. 4. The US Embassy in Moscow kept the US Secretary of State aware of the group's activities; "840.6 /Moscow, August 1, 1936 Dispatch No. 1759," in RG-84, MLR Number 363, USSR Embassy, 1936, vol. 35 (820-841.5).

Circus therefore asks the viewer to sympathize with the plight of a white American woman who had showed some form of interest in a black American man, but discloses neither the identity nor name of that man. Was he a husband, friend, fellow circus performer, or casual lover? Had he been lynched, imprisoned, or had he managed to escape from the mob that would have certainly hunted him if it had chased Dixon? These were all questions that would have at least been addressed if not expounded upon had the film been made a few years earlier. In contrast, the sole evidence that this black American man even existed, since Dixon is never portrayed thinking about him, was his light-skinned son Jimmy who made one extended, non-speaking appearance at the film's end. On the one hand, the presence of the African man and his white female companion at the Moscow Circus can be read as symbolizing that the new Soviet Constitution's guarantee of national and racial equality would have rendered Jimmy's black American father an equal in the USSR.[7] However, on the other hand this interpretation is complicated by the fact that this interracial couple is featured only in the realm of the circus, and unlike Jimmy is not also included in the May Day parade on Red Square being carried by the grandfatherly circus director. Because fairs, carnivals, and circuses have historically constituted realms of liminality, where it has been acceptable to transgress or blur the gender, class, and racial boundaries that serve as the foundation of

[7] The Soviet press compared article 123 in the draft Constitution which guaranteed absolute racial equality with the policies of the Nazi German state and the bourgeois democracies of the US, France, and England. See, for example, "V strane rasovogo izuverstva," *Izvestiia*, 17 June 1936, p. 2; Iu. Shaksel', "Rasovoe uchenie, nauka i proletarskii internatsionalizm," *ibid.*, 18 June 1936, p. 2; and V. Liadova, "Fashizm-rasovaia nenavist', sotsializm-bratstvo narodov," *Trud*, 14 July 1936, p. 2. The draft of the new Constitution was released for union-wide "discussion" in June 1936 shortly after the film's release. See, for example, Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism As a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 158-206; and Ellen Wimberg, "Socialism, Democratism, and Criticism: The Soviet Press and the National Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution," *Soviet Studies* 44, no. 2 (1992): 313-332. For the celebrations surrounding the Constitution, see Karen

the putative social order,[8] it is not explicitly clear whether the equality of Jimmy's African American father would have bee upheld beyond the Big Top's world of illusions.

The portrayal of a white American mother, who was an affluent, non-industrial worker, as one of the film's two heroines – second only to the Soviet motherland which had afforded Dixon a life of happiness free from racism – reflected developments in Soviet society of the mid-1930s in which women's identity as mothers (regardless of class) and the female identity of the Soviet Union as the motherland were celebrated.[9] This official reemphasis on the importance of the family, motherhood, and children was further manifested in the film in the form of the numerous male-female couples which comprised the circus' audience and assumed a parental role by singing lullabies to Jimmy; in the remarks that the elderly Russian circus director made to Dixon that she could have as many children as she wanted: "black, white, even blue . . . because in our country we love all children"; and in the "Song of the Motherland" that Martynov taught Dixon early in the film, and which the new Soviet couple sings while parading across Red Square. As Karen Petrone argues, this song was intended to capture the intimate

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Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 175-202.

[8] See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 174-179, 187.

[9] In 1936 a new family law code encouraged women to bear more children, prohibited abortions unless the mother's life was endangered, promised job security and less onerous labor to pregnant women, and lengthened the period of maternity leave. In addition to the advocacy of pro-natalism, which was reflected in the pages of the all-union press where images of smiling mothers and their children, and women in general became ubiquitous, the wives-volunteer (*obshchestvennitsa*) movement mobilized the spouses of male engineers, Stakhanovites and Red Army officials since Soviet leaders held women responsible for maintaining their husbands' *kul'turnost* level. See, for example, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women and the Soviet State: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Susan E. Reid, "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 133-174; and Mary Buckley, "The Untold Story of the *Obshchestvennitsa* in the 1930s," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 4 (1996): 569-586.

connection that every male citizen was supposed to have with the motherland, which they were to love "'as we would a bride.'" This bond, symbolized in Martynov's relationship to his "bride" Dixon promised Soviet men "mastery of the motherland in exchange for her defense."[10] Perhaps for this reason, Dixon's black child was scripted to be a boy. Like Martynov, upon maturation into manhood he would defend and love the "motherland" because it had nurtured him and provided him with the opportunity to grow up without the threat of physical "harm," an opportunity which the multiethnic circus spectators had explicitly informed Jimmy of in their lullabies.

The film's elision of the black American man and father could be explained independent of race by the official societal emphasis on women as mothers, if it had also devoted some attention to the plight of black American women and/or mothers.[11] However, *Circus* replicated the trend of the Soviet antiracism discussed throughout this study by completely occluding black American women. It does not sanction an interracial union between a black American female and a white American or Russian man, and features only one unnamed black woman who has no lines, and thus no voice. Dixon's employment of this woman as her domestic servant, who appears in full maid's regalia, is presented in an unproblematic fashion; that is, simply as a way of life instead of signifying the racially discriminated status of black American women.[12] In this way, *Circus* implicitly perpetuates the contradictory sexualization of black American females

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[10] Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades*, pp. 54-55.

[11] To reflect her status as a heroine of the film, a status which she did not share with her black child, Dixon was featured in the overwhelming majority of promotional advertisements for *Circus* that appeared in the Moscow press, while Jimmy was not. See, for example, the advertisements on p. 4 in *Vecherniaia Moskva* on May 8, 11, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, and 23, 1936.

as inherently promiscuous and hence unsuitable wives, namely as "Jezebels," and simultaneous desexualization as the "Mammy" whose sole purpose and ambition in life was to raise and care for the children and domiciles of white women.[13]

The fact that Aleksandrov focused on Soviet tolerance rather than criminalisation of interracial relationships in order to glorify the state's policies as enlightened is not surprising when considering that since the early 1930s many black American men experienced what they at least publicly portrayed as a freedom previously unknown to them as a result of their ability to associate with and or marry white women (i.e. Russian, European, or American) in the USSR.[14] Yet at the same time, because these examples did exist of black American men who married and fathered children by white women in the Soviet Union, it is curious that the film sought to highlight Soviet society's enlightened character by essentially depicting a love story between a white American woman and a Russian man.[15] The most obvious example of this type of interracial union

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[12] On the history of black American female domestic workers, see Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic, 1985), esp. pp. 22-27, 127-134, 154-167, 205-208, 235-238, 256-260.

[13] For the historical coexistence of these stereotypical images, see Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), esp. pp. 27-61. See also Cheryl Thurber, "The Development of the Mammy Image and Mythology," in *Southern Women: Histories and Identities*, et al. eds. Virginia Bernhard (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), pp. 87-108; and Kenneth Goings, *Mammy and Uncle Mose: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1994).

[14] See *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union, 1930-1939*, 861.5017 – Living Conditions/354; Langston Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), pp. 65-66; Homer Smith, *Black Man in Red Russia* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing, 1964), pp. 56-57, 64-65; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), esp. p. 95 n. 8; "Russian Wife Like All Others, Says Robeson's Brother-in-Law," *Afro-American*, 21 September 1935, p. 10; and Jacqueline Trescott, "Notes of a Black Russian," *Washington Post*, 9 May 1992, B1. Throughout the 1930s, the CPUSA protested the arrests of black men who had violated laws prohibiting interracial marriages, which still existed in twenty-nine states. See, for example, "Faces Jail for Marrying White," *Daily Worker*, 7 August 1930, p. 3.

were the parents of James ("Jim") Patterson who played Dixon's two-year old son. "Jimmy's" father was black American Lloyd Patterson one of the cast members of *Black and White* who arrived in Moscow on 26 June 1932, and shortly thereafter married a Russian woman by whom he had three sons including James, the oldest, in 1933.[16] Moreover, around the time *Circus* was released in late May 1936, Jane Emery a white American woman and her husband, black American Communist Herbert Newton moved to the Soviet Union with their children, explicitly seeking refuge from the incessant racial persecution that they confronted in the US.[17]

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[15] Robert Robinson claimed that during the 1950s and 1960s the children of interracial unions faced virulent racism in *Black on Red: My 44 Years Inside the Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1988), esp. pp. 304-306. Yelena Khanga (b. 1963) who rose to the status of Russian celebrity during the 1990s as the host of the popular television talk show about sex called *Pro Eto* (About It) complicates this assertion by claiming that unlike black children in US schools, she was "'never made to feel less intelligent, less capable, less likely to achieve than my white schoolmates.'" Khanga's testimony is significant because she was born in the USSR, the daughter of a black American Jewish Moscow State student (Lily Golden) and a Tanzanian politician (Abdullah Khanga) and thus was not there on Moscow invitation, which would have entitled her to special treatment. Her grandfather on her mother's side was black American John Oliver Golden, a KUTV student during the 1920s who organized a group of black American agricultural experts to travel to Uzbekistan in late 1931 to help develop the cotton industry ("They Go To the Soviet Union," *Liberator*, 17 October 1931, p. 2.) Golden and Bertha Bialek, his Polish-born Jewish American second wife remained in the country after the expiration of their three-year work contract. According to Paula Garb's *They Came to Stay: North Americans in the U.S.S.R.* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), pp. 36-40, it was Lily's birth which convinced them that they could not return to the US. See Yelena Khanga, *Soul to Soul: A Black Russian American Family 1865-1992* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), esp. pp. 18-22. For Khanga's celebrity status, see Kate Baldwin's *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 253-262. For a nine-hundred page account of the children of African-Russian marriages, see Natal'ia Leonidovna Krylova, *Deti ot russko-afrikanskikh brakov: sud'by, kul'tura, budushchee* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

[16] Lloyd Patterson of Westfield, New Jersey was a graduate of Virginia's Hampton Institute where he specialized in interior decorating. In Moscow, he worked on the interior of the Metropol Hotel and designed sets for the Meyerhold Theater. He died during the Second World War working as a correspondent for Radio Moscow. James Patterson initially pursued a naval career. During the 1950s he began writing poetry, graduated from the Literary Institute, and had his work published in several Soviet journals, some of which can be found in James L. Patterson, *Rossiia. Afrika. Stikhi i poema* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1963). See Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1986), pp. 155, 160-161; and Smith, *Black Man in Red Russia*, pp. 64-65.

[17] Emery, a former University of Michigan student and daughter of a wealthy banker Col. had been forced to undergo a psychiatric evaluation after it had been publicly exposed in 1934 that she had married Newton; "In Russia They Can Rear Children Without Prejudice," *Afro-American*, 6 June 1936, p. 7. Newton's

In contrast to the varied examples of black American men and white women marrying and/or having children in the USSR during the first half of the 1930s, the case of a white American woman ending up in Moscow with her young black son, blackmailed by a conniving white American man, and completely unaware of Soviet promises of racial equality was utter fantasy. Why, therefore, did *Circus* deal with interracial relationships and seek to showcase Soviet racial and national equality in this circuitous manner? The most plausible explanation is that the depiction on the big screen of a love story between a black American man and a Russian or white American woman (not to mention a black American woman and a Russian or white American man), set in contemporary Soviet society, was too far for even leaders in Moscow to go in an effort to glorify their policies as enlightened. It could be alluded to or hinted at in the form of the interracial couple shown briefly in the final circus scene, but to allot it primary focus where character development was necessary was out of the question. In this way, *Circus* further exposes Soviet authorities' limitations in playing the "race" card in the decades between the wars.

But beyond mirroring the changes in gender relations in Soviet society during the mid-1930s, *Circus* reflects how the focus of Soviet propaganda was shifting by 1936 from antiracism to antifascism. This development was most clearly evidenced in the film's villain, who although he was supposed to be an American, bore no distinctively "American" features or mannerisms but was depicted Nazi-like in appearance and demeanor: stern, tall, and lanky with a wiry mustache, dark hair and eyes. This meant that Soviet spectators were portrayed rescuing Jimmy from the clutches of a villain who

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photograph had appeared in *Trud* six years earlier because he had been imprisoned on charges of violating an "old slaveowners law" regarding insurrection through his efforts to organize black workers in Atlanta;

could be easily and seemingly rather deliberately mistaken for a Nazi German. Therefore, the villainous manager, portrayed as utterly bewildered when the circus audience, director, and militsia laughed at his assertions that Dixon had committed a "racial crime" and had no right to live in "a civilized country among white people," represented the putatively "superior" Western capitalist societies that defined modern civilization in terms of a racial hierarchy.

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Although antifascism assumed precedence over antiracism as the main focus of Soviet propaganda during the second half of the 1930s, its rich visual imagery and discourse were not completely forgotten or discarded. It was arguably the legacy of interwar Soviet antiracism which enabled Nikita Khrushchev to impress the US Senator Hubert H. Humphrey by effortlessly espousing polished antiracist rhetoric during their extended meeting at the Kremlin on 1 December 1958 amidst the Berlin Crisis. Khrushchev's verbosity in speaking antiracism testified to the success of Soviet antiracist propaganda during the decades between the wars in not necessarily cultivating a sincere conviction against racial prejudice among Soviet officials and citizens, but instead of dominating the field of discourse, or inculcating in authorities and the populace the knowledge of what constituted the proper Soviet or enlightened response to racial injustice and violence. Moreover, dominating the discursive field did not mean establishing hegemony over it. The preceding chapters have illustrated that Soviet antiracism was not the result of any grand, systematic political design but emerged in a rather ad hoc fashion, having diverse contributors who discussed, amended, and criticized

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"Eshche shesterym grozit elektricheskii stul," *Trud*, 15 November 1930, p. 2.

the various manifestations that it assumed and the conduct which it required of citizens and leaders but still keeping constant the goal of glorifying as enlightened the policies of the Soviet state.

The inspiration for exploring the cultivation of the Soviet Union's image as a raceless society during the 1930s was begotten by the burgeoning of racism that has occurred in Russia and particularly Moscow since the collapse of Communism, which Russian leaders have generally met with alarming apathy. What was once presented as the only country whose leaders and citizens had transcended racism, where "whiteness" was portrayed as having been redefined to signify an antiracist, enlightened consciousness rather than a racially superior demeanor, has become one of the most dangerous places for peoples of color to visit let alone inhabit. While conceding the obvious that racism continued to exist in the USSR during the interwar era, this does not make the discourse of Soviet antiracism that officials in Moscow simultaneously promoted any less real or help to explain in any significant way the situation in modern Russia.

Rather in order to understand more fully the volatile racist atmosphere that has developed in the former "epicenter of antiracism," this study has sought to determine the specific means by which the image of the Soviet Union as a society without racism was constructed and maintained; the identity of its designers and contributors; and the reasons why it was emerged in the decade preceding the Second World War before it had become fashionable among leaders of the West to even define enlightenment and civilization in terms of a rejection of racism. On the one hand, it illuminates that Soviet leaders' espousal of antiracism had at least held them to some degree accountable for addressing

issues of race and racism in a manner unknown to contemporary US leaders and present day authorities of the Russian Federation. This thereby allowed black Americans to experience "another kind of 'freedom'" which although extremely problematic and contradictory in its own way as this dissertation has highlighted, was very different from that available to persons of color in the "'free' United States of America." But on the other hand, the ostensibly positive, antiracist images that it circulated of black Americans, who constituted the main focus of Soviet antiracism during the interwar era, were highly paternalistic. Similar to the non-Russian nationalities, they were primarily presented as heroes and victims; that is as victims of the debilitating racial discrimination endemic to American capitalism who despite their efforts to liberate themselves ultimately needed the beneficence of the Soviet socialist state and citizenry in order to effect its realization and thereby assume the status of heroes.

When I have mentioned black Americans and racism in briefly describing this dissertation, some scholars of Soviet history have not responded by citing *Tsirk*, but have instead responded by classifying it as a contribution to African American history and by concluding that I was an historian of the African American rather than the Soviet experience. To be sure, black Americans occupy a prominent and indeed integral role in this dissertation. Yet this was not so much by my own design but by that of Soviet leaders whom strategically privileged black Americans and particularly black men as the main focus and beneficiaries of Soviet antiracism during the interwar period. As a result of Soviet authorities' interest in using American racism as a means of (re)presenting their policies as supremely enlightened and superior to those of the putative "civilized" capitalist West, the history of the Soviet Union during the 1930s cannot completely be

divorced from a consideration of black Americans. To say that Soviet antiracism only affected in meaningful ways the black Americans who encountered it, overlooks how black Americans both directly and indirectly affected the Soviet Union's conception and identity as an emerging world power. Since Soviet leaders promoted the image of the USSR as a superior society through its ostensible inclusion rather than exclusion or subordination of "blackness," Soviet history should not be written to exclude or subordinate to a mere footnote the relationship between the Soviet state and black Americans.

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