

tell me exactly, from your own knowledge, what happened at the end of this five-minute period.

MR. LOTITO: At the end of the five-minute period? Well, I was talking to this policeman there, and the first thing I knew I got clubbed, while I was talking to him.

SENATOR LA FOLLETTE: And then what happened?

MR. LOTITO: I got clubbed and I went down, and my flag fell down, and I went to pick up the flag again, to get up, and I got clubbed the second time. I was like a top, you know, spinning. I was dizzy. So I put my hand to my head, and there was blood all over. I started to crawl away, and half running and half crawling and I didn't know what I was doing, to tell you the truth. After I got up, why there was shots, and everything I heard, I didn't know which way to run. Anyway, I retreated back that way.

SENATOR LA FOLLETTE: You mean back toward Sam's Place?

MR. LOTITO: And then I got shot in the leg.

SENATOR LA FOLLETTE: How far away were you from the place where you had been standing talking to the police when you were shot in the leg, would you say?

MR. LOTITO: Oh, I got quite a ways from there, all right.

SENATOR LA FOLLETTE: Can you approximate how far?

MR. LOTITO: Maybe thirty or forty yards away I got.

This is just a page of testimony, chosen at random. There are far more harrowing details that might be listed, but the point is this: all the details necessary are in that record. There are reports of thousands of eye-witnesses.

Newspaper reporters on the scene saw what happened. And if that were not enough, in addition to the still photographers, the Paramount News people took down a detailed photographic record of the whole affair.

IN OTHER words, the newspapers knew the facts of the case. They could not plead ignorance, even the carefully conditioned ignorance which allows them to interpret events abroad as they please. With all that, they too acted, with very few exceptions, as if they were part of the combine behind Tom Girdler. They lied about what had occurred outside the Republic Steel plant. They lied hugely and in unison, although they departed from the truth on many different levels.

The Chicago *Tribune*, for example, was overt and completely unabashed. It described the unarmed men and women and children as "lusting for blood." It raised a Red-scare which was sedulously promoted by the rest of the "carrion press," by the Hearsts, Pattersons and their fellow hate-mongers. The more respectable journals doubted that the police had indulged in provocation and pointed out that force was a necessary ingredient to the preservation of law and order. One looked in vain in such papers as the New York *Times* and the New York *Herald Tribune* for editorials describing Tom Girdler, or his private police, as murderers—or even editorials reproaching them in much milder terms. No criminal action was ever taken to

seek justice for the men who had died in Chicago—or for the men who died in Youngstown in the steel disputes which followed. Only the few independent newspapers and the labor press kept the issue alive and fought for justice—and there too is a remarkable parallel to what happened before in the Haymarket Affair.

SOME of the background to the Memorial Day Massacre has been presented here. It was shown that the massacre itself was both a part and a focal point in the pattern of open-shop violence. The strange, wild, tragic and disordered years of the third decade of the twentieth century, here in America, were not unproductive. Out of depression and despair came the greatest organization of labor this country ever knew—the industrial unionism of the CIO.

The America of today is not and cannot ever be the America of a decade ago. And those who would turn back the clock to the days of open-shop violence will have to reckon with the new power of organized labor. The CIO is not the organizing-infant it once was. The AFL is learning, if slowly, the value of labor unity. Even though the press is no more faithful, by and large, to the truth today than ten years ago, the American people have learned a good deal. And if such an incident as that in Chicago occurs again, it is wholly possible that those responsible will have to face the anger of millions instead of thousands.

THE BLACK MAHDI

Fifty years ago he drove the British out of the Sudan; today his son appears in England. A chapter from Africa's long fight for freedom.

By W. E. B. DU BOIS

THE Prime Minister of Great Britain has recently received in audience a Sudanese, whom the British have knighted — Sir Sayed Abdul Rahaman Mohammed Ahmed el Mahdi Pasha. But for one of his six names, outside his titles, the world might fail to recall the identity of this religious leader of the Sudan, *i.e.*, Land of the Blacks. That significant name is "El Mahdi," the Redeemer.

Mahdis have appeared from time to time among the Mohammedans, like that leader of the Fatimids in the eleventh century who swooped down from Morocco and conquered Egypt and eventually Syria, Sicily and the Hejaz. But the Mahdi of the nineteenth century was the black Mohammed Ahmed from Dongola. He arose to power in a day of turmoil in the Sudan. The Negro Fung had estab-

lished the great state of Dafur on the upper Nile, and sought to divide Ethiopia between themselves and the mixed Arabs and Asiatics then dominant in Egypt. Here they ruled from 1500 to 1800. In the nineteenth century Mehemet Ali, who had seized power in Egypt and murdered the Mamelukes, sent his son into the Sudan to conquer the Fung. This son founded Khartoum, but was killed by the ene-

my in 1822. Mehemet Ali wreaked bloody vengeance on the blacks and finally in conjunction with the ivory merchants prepared to join in the lucrative ivory and slave trade in 1839.

The ivory trade was based on the demand for ivory for piano keys, billiard balls and ornaments in England and America. These countries furnished firearms and other capital for the trade. Arabs and Negroes explored Central Africa for elephants to furnish the tusks. These tusks were loaded on the backs of porters forced into service from the local Central African tribes and brought to the East Coast of Africa or down the Nile. Once their burden of ivory was unloaded, instead of paying or returning the porters, the Arabs and Egyptians sold them into slavery.

This atrocious exploitation to furnish luxury items for rich Americans and Englishmen reduced the Sudan to unparalleled turmoil and misery in the nineteenth century. Great Britain blamed Arab and Negro slavery for all this and on that argument extended the British Empire under the pretext of suppressing slavery. But the slave dealers were under the dictation of Mehemet Ali and other allies of Britain and the trade continued. The Sudanese themselves had no doubt as to where the blame lay. Driven to despair, they declared Holy War against Christians under one of their religious leaders, Mohammed Ahmed, who proclaimed himself the "Mahdi," or Redeemer. He was set upon by English and Egyptians when he revolted in 1881, but aided by the Dinka Negroes saved Kordofan, in 1883, where he massacred the English army, led by Kicks Pasha. He gathered a large number of followers and in 1885 attacked Khartoum.

In Khartoum at this time was one Chinese Gordon. This singular soldier of fortune sold his ability to organize murder and pillage to the highest bidder anywhere in the world. In China he had helped to put down the rebels who were fighting desperately to save their country from Europe. He had offered his services to Leopold of Belgium to enslave the natives of the Congo, when the English, who were determined to reduce Egypt to British rule, bid for his services and secured them. Gordon was a religious fanatic who got drunk and prayed and had illegitimate colored children. But he bore the English banner of emanci-

pating the slaves, although as a matter of fact he permitted the slave trade in the Sudan in order to pacify the Egyptians.

The wild hordes of the Mahdi burst into Khartoum and killed Chinese Gordon. Both British and Egyptians fled wildly out of the Sudan and for thirteen years did not dare return. The Mahdi died in 1886, but his successor, called the Khalifa, continued his victorious rule.

NO REAL history of this era of the Sudan has ever been written, nor has any adequate social study ever been made. We have had to depend on the folklore of British imperialism, which represents the Mahdi as a cruel and barbarous fanatic forcing slavery on blacks whom the English finally rescued with machine-guns — under

Kitchener — in 1896. But the facts do not uphold this theory. England did not return to the Sudan in 1897 for any philanthropic reasons but because she saw her investments in danger and the political power back of those investments about to be attacked.

When driven out of the Sudan in 1885, England had been compelled to give up her designs upon Ethiopia. Thereupon she encouraged Italy in an attempt to annex Ethiopia. Ethiopia had been beset by the Khalifa and her king killed; but the successor of that king, Menelik, aided by France and Italy, restored his rule and held back the Khalifa. Italy thereupon demanded as payment virtual control of Ethiopia by a deceptive treaty. The black Lion of Judah roared and thoroughly trounced Italy at Adua. Here



"Haitian," sculpture by Jason Seley.

American-British Art Center.

now suddenly appeared in Africa two triumphant black nations, the Sudanese and Ethiopia. Not only this, but France, which had refused to join England in dominating Egypt, and had aided Ethiopia, now was on the point of renewing her imperialist dreams. She swept secretly across North Africa and was not only approaching the Nile Valley but made alliance with Ethiopia.

The English imperialists were aroused. Gold discoveries had been added to the diamonds of South Africa, and Cape to Cairo was not merely a dream—it was a vast and increasing investment manipulated by Cecil Rhodes. Every effort was made to stir up British imperialistic enthusiasm. Gordon appeared as a martyr to emancipation. The “Little Englanders” were bitterly ridiculed, and Kitchener, armed with the latest machine-guns and other weapons of war, was hastened to Africa against the dervishes, while Egypt was encouraged to join in reconquest of “her” Sudan.

Kitchener conquered, slaughtering 27,000 Sudanese. He dug up the dead bones of the Mahdi and contemptuously threw them on the ground. Britain cheered wildly but never forgot “Cape-to-Cairo” Kitchener. He hastened down to Fashoda, where a little French army had appeared after a long march from West Africa. He offered the French surrender or war. France submitted and the Sudan reappeared under the dubious title of the “Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.”

TODAY, fifty years later, after two world wars which the imperialism of the nineteenth century hatched, and which have nearly overthrown European civilization, there appears in England the son of the black Mahdi of the nineteenth century. What does he ask? He demands that in the treaty by which Great Britain recognizes the independence of Egypt, this recognition shall not include the Sudan as belonging to Egypt. Going away back to the invasion of Nubia by Selim of Egypt in 1617, the son of the Mahdi declared that Egypt and the Sudan had been independent countries under treaty of alliance despite the lawless slave raids and oppression of Mehemet Ali. That for five thousand years previously, the Land of the Blacks had never been conquered by the pharaohs of Egypt, the kings of Assyria, Alexander the Great, the Empire of Rome, the Mohammedans, the Turks or even

DOCTRINE ON WINGS

Aviation News, among the most influential periodicals in the aviation field, reports in its May 5, 1947 issue that by the middle of the summer 2,000 planes now stored on the West Coast will be “depickled” and flown “either to eastern Army bases or delivered to friendly foreign countries in a move viewed as having politico-economic significance.” Hundreds of B-29 bombers are being readied for the flight from California. “Such reactivation gives indication that air services are taking the wrappings off their ‘big stick’—the heavy bomber—to lend weight to State Department negotiations in Europe. . . . The San Bernadino, Spokane, and Rome bases—elaborately equipped with shops and supply depots—will not be declared ‘surplus’. They are to be kept on a stand-by basis, capable of being restored in seventy-two hours.”

the great Saladin. Only after the final overthrow of the Mahdi and the Khalifa did the Sudanese submit to unwilling rule under the English and Egyptians, who still call the Sudanese slaves.

The situation is curiously complicated today. British and European capital have developed the water-power of the Sudan upon which the very life of Egypt depends. Moreover, the Egyptians have done little to placate or attract the Sudanese. The ruling caste in Egypt remains Asiatic, although the Negro blood of the Fellahin throughout Egypt is plainly apparent. Yet few persons of Negro blood reach high position in Egypt either in politics, science or society. In other words, a color line is apparent in Egypt—not the legal caste of the United States, nor the deeply imbedded custom as in British dominions—but nevertheless clear and obvious.

The English, on the other hand, have cultivated the Sudanese. They have given them in Gordon College, and other schools, secondary education enabling them to fill the civil service

with Sudanese rather than Egyptians. And as in West Africa and the West Indies, the British have dangled before the Sudanese the promise of eventual autonomy. They have distributed a few knighthoods and ribbons of distinction; but they have carefully limited higher training, and encouraged few blacks to enter English universities.

But in Egypt the agitation for independence from England and for democracy in Egypt has been carried on by students, and among this group Negro blood is widespread. Now that real Egyptian independence is in sight, the radicals want the cooperation of the Sudanese. But the Sudanese are divided. Some led by the son of the Mahdi do not trust the Egyptians. They see in Egypt a poverty and degradation among the poor peasants which is perhaps the worst on earth. Still believing in the honesty of the English, they demand an independent Sudan with autonomy in the near future. The British hesitate; they fear the wrath of investors, the hate of Egypt and the real menace of a holy war, which El Mahdi boldly threatens.

As it is clear that Egypt cannot be held in political subjection forever, the British have undoubtedly deliberately promised the Sudanese autonomy. But, complain the Egyptians bitterly, this would be a pistol aimed at our heads, especially since the English will still hold the investments and dominate the Sudan as a British colony. What will a promise of freedom for the Sudan be worth even under the socialist Labor government?

Here we can see in tragic outline the mess which capitalism has forced upon the modern world. Without plan or foresight, save to make private profit as huge and fast as possible, millions of people today stand tied hand and foot. Britain cannot apply socialism to Africa lest she antagonize the most powerful elements in her society; Egypt cannot be free, because her freedom involves the continued slavery of the Sudan; the Sudan cannot be independent, because her autonomy threatens the bread and butter of Egypt, through British investment. Moreover a successful, free Sudan would loose in Central Africa a force which would in time surely drive the land monopolists of Kenya into the sea and reverberate in that Rhodesia and South Africa where capitalism and human slavery are today building their last and strongest bulwarks.

review and comment



THE BROADAXE OF SINCLAIR LEWIS

America's veteran novelist cuts down some big timber in the backwoods of Jim Crow.

By HOWARD FAST

KINGSBLOOD ROYAL, by Sinclair Lewis. Random House. \$3.

AS LONG ago as the long, long past, when the war you spoke about meant the war to save democracy, or to make the world safe for it, as some said, and the Model T was a fact, not a legend, and you knew people whom Attorney General Palmer had put in jail and were still there, I heard it said, in a monotonous singsong that has not improved with the years, "Sinclair Lewis can't write." Blessed be those who tell the doers what they can or cannot do! That time in the long, long ago was a time when reading was an adventure, each book a new door into a new world—and after these twenty years or so, how sweet and bitter and merciless and fine the taste of *Babbitt* and *Mainstreet* and *Elmer Gantry* still is!

But Sinclair Lewis can't write, as I've discovered after reading three or four reviews of his new piece of literary dynamite, *Kingsblood Royal*. This poor, benighted man, who won a Nobel Prize for literature more than a decade ago, who has twenty novels to his credit, who numbers his readers by the millions, who is read by more millions in twenty other languages, had just gone along merrily these past thirty years under the illusion that he was a writer. Well, so have I—and I consider him a damned good writer, a hell of a writer, and I think that his new book, in terms of choice of content, in terms of the problem he set for himself, in terms of broad understanding of the forces at work in our society, is the most vigorous and positive thing he has ever turned out.

Show me your writer of sixty and better, with four decades of continuous

work behind him, who can match it! Where the young hopefuls of the Thirties—Steinbeck and Dos Passos and Saroyan and Farrell and so many others—have rotted into a spongy and frightful literary hopelessness, this old man—I speak of years, not of heart and mind—meets the challenge of our times, tears off the sick mask of race hatred, and writes as savage an indictment of monopoly-fostered Jim Crow as our literary scene has witnessed.

Young Neil Kingsblood, as you have surely heard by now, is that paragon of all any American could want to be—a war veteran with a Purple Heart and a game leg, tall, handsome, red-headed, white—put that in quotes—

To combat the reactionary offensive against culture and explore the problems of a people's culture a conference on Marxism and American Culture will be held at the Jefferson School, New York, June 6-7-8, under the auspices of NEW MASSES and Mainstream. Participating in the conference, in addition to the editorial boards of the two publications, will be invited guests from among workers in the various cultural fields. We urge our readers to watch in future issues of NEW MASSES for the publication of some of the conference material.

Protestant, job in a bank, nice house in the suburbs, beautiful wife, blond and beautiful little daughter, accepted, respected, not only of the new master race but of the master race within the master race. His game leg rules out sports, so he turns to genealogy as a hobby. The family likes to think that it stems from a bastard child of the Eighth Henry, and with a golden vision of what royal blood—even filtered through bastardry—would mean in a Minnesota town like Grand Republic, they send young Neil out researching into his past.

There he finds royal blood, right enough, in the person of a great-great-grandfather, Xavier Pic, a man as royal and noble and enduring as any who has walked on this earth, a pioneer, an opener of roads—and also a full-blooded Negro. That makes young Neil one-sixteenth Negro; that also makes for a situation pregnant with possibility, and it makes for a book you will not want to put down until the last page.

BUT after all, what makes for the difference? I've described a situation—in modern terminology, a gimmick—not so different from those invented by other writers. Laura Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement* also exercised a gimmick, and her book was an important magazine piece, hardly much more. Lewis' book is a great deal more. If he had been content with the situation and all the situational possibilities obvious to it, the reviewers of the kept press would have had no bone to pick with him. It would have been: "Good old Red is at it again"; and hardly anyone would have reminded us that Lewis never could write.

But Lewis was not content with the surface situational possibilities. Once he had inserted the scalpel and opened Jim Crow to his inquisitive, incisive and unsentimental gaze, he discovered the putrid decay underneath—and then, like Neil Kingsblood, he made his choice and waded in. Step by step, Sinclair Lewis moved along this strange new road he had chosen. Knowing him and his method of work, I can appreciate how he must have studied, worked, inquired, fought with his material, and pursued the truth through the maze of falsehood, legend and slander that American society has created around the Negro people.

But he followed where the road led him, and he came to certain conclusions, and it is these conclusions