

silence between us, and when he still failed to draw a reply from me he shook his finger at me, threateningly, and said: "Remember, Sol, I warn

you!" But I was no longer afraid of Mr. Resnik.

In my pocket I clutched the new address.

*From "Immigrant Boy," a novel in progress. Mr. Suhl is a prominent Yiddish poet, author of "Yisroel Partisan," a novel in verse.*

## FM: TIME IS RUNNING OUT

A Guest Editorial by EUGENE KONECKY

RAYMOND RUBICAM, prominent public relations executive, wrote in *McCall's* magazine (January, 1947): "The collective impression derived from a large percentage of our press is of a gigantic advertising campaign for war . . . the scare of almost immediate war between Russia and the United States has had the vivid attention of much of the press."

The monopoly-owned press has, in the recent period, moved into the domain of radio broadcasting. The big business newspapers have, with the aid of the Congressional Un-American Committee, driven practically all progressive radio commentators and newscasters off the standard (AM) system. They have invaded the new FM system to the extent that forty percent of the licenses issued for FM stations have gone to newspaper interests.

Henry A. Wallace recently noted that Americans "have not cared enough for liberal commentators, liberal columnists and liberal newspapers to support them vigorously." There is some justification for this criticism. But it would be wrong to believe that public apathy is the cause of reaction's gains in the press and on the radio. It should be noted, in this connection, that there was considerable opinion in the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) discussions that measures ought to be taken to protect the people against lies and distortions of the news purveyed in the monopoly press. C. L. Sulzberger, of the *New York Times*, cynically replied that the people are responsible for press lies and perversions since they buy ("select") the newspapers guilty of these malpractices.

The truth is that the men of the trusts, the corporation and cartel owners and directors, disseminate these falsehoods through their control and misuse of communications. At the same time a heavy responsibility lies upon labor leaders and the labor press, as well as all other progressives, to carry on a relentless crusade to expose monopoly control of press and radio and to arouse the people to break that control.

It is a cold, hard fact, for instance, that only five short months remain for labor and other progressive groups to file applications for FM metropolitan stations. FM has been called "labor's second chance in radio." If a substantial number of new applications for labor and community FM stations are filed *before* July 1, 1947, the battle against the radio monopolists will be advanced. Failure to accomplish this will be a severe blow to democracy in radio. The widest support should be rallied for such stations, particularly the Peoples Radio Foundation in New York. Such an FM station serving the New York area would have national importance for all progressive Americans.

The fight for FM is part of the general fight to prevent monopoly from repressing the great technical advances made by scientists and engineers in this field. To extend radio democracy and the benefits of these new techniques is an urgent project. Letters from trade unions, people's groups and individuals to the Senate Small Business Committee and the Senate Committee on Education and Labor urging an investigation of newspaper and monopoly control of FM broadcasting will serve to slow down the trusts in their big grab for complete control of the airwaves.



Harari.

# HOW THE FREEDMEN FOUGHT FOR LAND

**Far from being dupes of demagogues, the ex-slaves knew what they wanted—and struggled to get it.**

**By W. H. KING**

**A**N IMPORTANT part of the ideology of every ruling class is the lie that the oppressed are incapable of managing their own affairs and that they will always look to their rulers for leadership. This argument was as often utilized by the apologists for Negro slavery as it is quoted today by the apostles of imperialism such as Jan Christian Smuts.

It is to our "objective" academic historians that we owe the prevalent false notion of the role of the Negro freedmen in the turbulent Reconstruction period after the Civil War. In every schoolchild's textbook, as well as in most histories on the university level, may be found a picture of the ex-slave standing helpless and bewildered before the crushing new problems thrust upon him by emancipation. The Negro people are portrayed as pawns in the battle between two other great powers, as "herds of senseless cattle" driven to the polls to vote on issues they did not understand. This representation was tailored to fit the ideology of oppression that grew up after the betrayal of Reconstruction in 1877. It provided arguments for those who were willing to retreat from the great issues of democracy raised by the Civil War, to "heal the breach" between North and South so that Northern capital could have the whole continent for its pasture. Even today, to every effort for Negro political rights comes the spurious reply, "Look what happened in Reconstruction times."

But the truth is being slowly dug out; a reevaluation of the Reconstruction period is taking place among those progressive historians unwilling to purvey the specious *Gone With The Wind* libels in place of honest scholarship. Leading the way are Negro historians such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson and Alrutheus A. Taylor, and the Marxist historians

James S. Allen and Herbert Aptheker; while the work of Francis B. Simkins and others is rousing even academic circles.

Far from being inert, or passive, or the credulous dupes of demagogues, the freedmen were vibrant with the burning issues of the day. The Negro masses thrust forward the most revolutionary program of all those struggling for the fullest realization of the democratic goals of radical Reconstruction. To the individual freedman, Reconstruction meant not merely the return of the rebellious states to the Union; it meant most profound alteration in his entire manner of life. The outcome of the Reconstruction struggles would decide how he would thereafter earn his livelihood as well as his relations to the soil, to his former masters, and to the other groups in the community. Every aspect of the freedman's conduct and total outlook, from his family life to his status as an American citizen, was at stake. It was this impact of the new freedom that stirred the Negro people to do what prejudiced historians have refused to believe possible of ex-slaves—to give lucid expression to their demands and take organized action toward their attainment.

That the Negro masses were aroused to their destiny as few other oppressed peoples have ever been aroused is a thousand times evident in the historical sources of the period. Contemporary travelers and newspaper accounts tell of the numberless freedmen's meetings and conventions spread to the most remote rural sections of the South. Picnics, parades, holiday jubilees and countless other occasions were utilized by the freedmen for mass demonstrations and animated political discussions. Not only the men, but the women and entire families flocked to participate. Harvest celebrations were utilized by rustic orators

to urge demands of the farm folk for land. Testimony before the Joint Congressional Committee on Reconstruction told of the frequency of the assemblages of freedmen from neighborhood plantations who met after work to thrash out their new problems together. For fear of attack meetings were often disguised as funerals; an interesting item in a small-town Tennessee newspaper related that the freedmen were "preaching the funerals of Negroes who died fifteen years ago." Spontaneous street-corner meetings among the Negro masses were frequently referred to by reporters traveling through the South.

**T**HE historical tasks of Reconstruction were to crush forever the slave power and to create the conditions for a democratic South. The slaveocracy had been routed on the battlefield, but its stranglehold upon Southern life had to be broken before the democratic forces could count their victory complete.

Upon whom could the nation rely to build the new South? The freedmen arose to demand that they be entrusted with that revolutionary task. They pointed out that they had been the greatest sufferers under the overseer's lash; they had fought loyally for the Union cause at "Port Hudson, Olustee, Milliken's Bend, Fort Wagner, in the death-haunted craters of the Petersburg mine, and on a hundred well-fought fields, having fully proved their patriotism. . . ." (from an *Address To The American People, by the Colored People of Virginia, 1865*). They knew in their bones the meaning of bondage and were the fiercest haters of the plantation system. The freedmen went on to show that the effective uprooting of the old rebel power could only be accomplished if the Negro people were enfranchised and given full political rights.

In demanding possession of the land these "backward" masses, whose horizon had ended with the cotton rows, hurled forth the most revolutionary slogan of the day. If their demands had been met, the great estates would have been broken up and democracy in the South would have rested upon the basis of small holdings of Negro and white farmers. The ugly aspects of the South of today would never have come into being.

The great radical leaders in Congress, Thaddeus Stevens and Charles