

Clamor Grows in Britain: Let Robeson Sing Again!

By CLAUDIA JONES

LONDON, June 19.—Indignation at the threatened contempt citation of the House Un-American Committee against Paul Robeson is mounting daily among Britons of all persuasions, native as well as colonial. Significantly, the morning that this news reach-

ed London, Britain also learned that a Cypriot priest was secretly deported from the country for collecting funds to aid victims of the struggle in Cyprus. A few days earlier, Commons debated the monstrous revelations of the lifetime jailings of 11-13-year-old African girls in Kenya. Hence, the oneness of the fight for freedom evoked the London Daily Worker to caption these headlined stories with the immortal words of Lord Byron "Yet freedom, yet thy banner, torn but flying, streams like thunderstorm against the wind..."

★
BECAUSE London is known as world "colonial" center one can get a cross-section reaction among colonials from such varied areas as the Gold Coast (Accra), Bombay, the Caribbean, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ceylon. As is true indeed of white Britons even where there is disagreement with Robeson's ideas and associations—and these are far and few between there is anger against this new persecution and harassment against Robeson's courageous fight for his passport. It is not overstatement to observe once again that among all peoples, Robeson is universally regarded as one of the world's outstanding human beings, peace fighters and peoples' artist. Even among reactionary journalists there is sentiment that "the Americans are foolish not to set Robeson free and to grant him his passport" and a grudging admission of his unquestioned great art.

★
CLUE TO THIS spontaneous reaction, of course, is not only the high regard for Robeson, but the recognition by all peoples of the interconnection of his fight to their aspirations and realization of peace, freedom, human dignity, national independence everywhere in the world. This is particularly true among colored peoples, among Asians, Africans and West Indians. It is seen in their mutual recognition that Robeson is being persecuted not alone for his superb peace stand, but because, as a Negro-American, he dares to assert the inviolability of human dignity and equality for his people, the Negro people, with all other peoples.

A wide section of British public opinion has constantly voiced in organized fashion their opposition to Robeson's harassment and specific denial of his passport in resolu-



PAUL ROBESON

tions, conferences, concerts and other means from Scotland to Wales. Only recently, over 20,000 Yorkshire miners and families applauded cabled greetings from Paul Robeson at their 53rd Gala, one of the largest and most colorful affairs in many years. These greetings "from two generations of the Robeson family" sent by Robeson recalled his association with Yorkshire through a bust of him by the famous sculptor Epstein now in the New York Art Gallery.

★
AFTER reading the message, Mr. J. K. A. Machen, Yorkshire miners president declared: "We hear a lot of precepts and propaganda about freedom from certain quarters. A little bit of practice would help more."

Added to this was the withering attack by Gilbert Harding, Britain's outstanding radio and television personality who, after describing how the contempt citation threat to Robeson "makes people pale with anger" also declared: "It would seem a great pity that a republic founded on such high principles should now deny the very essence of liberties." Similarly outspoken comments voiced by Sir Richard Coppock, secretary of the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives: "There should be greater freedom in a country which is fighting for freedom. After all it is much more exciting to establish freedom for one's own people than to liberate others."

Martin Lawrence, well-known

operatic singer who has performed many of the songs made famous by Robeson stated: "I feel the utmost indignation at such treatment of a figure so beloved among artists and ordinary folk all over the world."

The influential Manchester Guardian's Washington correspondent wrote, in a news item captioned, "Diplomats Worried by Prosecution Threat."

"There is profound concern in the diplomatic community here over the possible contempt charges that may be brought against Mr. Robeson. The feeling is that the exact nature of his clash with the House Committee will never be made clear to the people in Asia and Africa. Instead, Mr. Robeson's great fame would be used by the Communist Party to accuse Congress and the American Government of practicing discrimination against Negroes." (Manchester Guardian, June 14, 1956).

★
APART FROM the necessity to reply to the last sentence of the Manchester Guardian's Washington correspondent's observation, as reflective of the old red herring, its importance lies in its candid admission that in diplomatic circles in Washington itself, the vindictive character of Paul Robeson's persecution, (as is true of others, Mr. Clark Foreman, Mr. Leonard Boudin, etc.) is a special attempt to use Robeson's own words to "gag" him at home and abroad particularly because of his implacable opposition to racism. And that this has been done in full knowledge of the numerous invitations he has received from many countries in Europe including Great Britain, as well as Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, which he is unable to accept because of denial of a passport.

Subsequent articles will forward concrete evidence of the reaction of African and Asian protests to this latest outrage of the Un-Americans. Astonishment is being expressed here when it is learned that none other than inveterate racist Eastland of Mississippi is chairman of the Internal Security subcommittee.

Suffice it to say that there is a growing feeling abroad that this new round of persecution against Paul Robeson, while indicative of the desperate rage by the McCarthys old and new, can be defeated by world wide protest.