Dr. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, the father of the modern Pan-African freedom movement, long-time crusader for Negro rights, world-renowned fighter for peace, and outstanding scholar, has joined the Communist Party of the U.S.A.

This would be a remarkable step for any man at the age of ninety-four, but in the case of Dr. Du Bois his action has a special significance. He has gone into the ranks of the Communists at a time when the ruling class of the U.S.A. has all but outlawed the Communist Party, when the powers-that-be falsely accuse every American Communist of being a "traitor" and "criminal conspirator", and Communists face penalties of up to five years' imprisonment for each day that they fail to register that they accept under oath this outrageous description. By so registering a Communist deprives himself automatically of the right to hold a passport or a job in any firm which has contract work with the government. As an "active Communist" Dr. Du Bois will face prosecution under the notorious Smith Act, under which the Communist leaders were jailed in 1949. In these circumstances Dr. Du Bois' action is no less than heroic.

Nor is this all. By expressing his will to be an active fighter for Communism, Dr. Du Bois has crowned his long life of service and struggle on behalf of his people and of all peoples.

I

Dr. Du Bois' decision was not fortuitous, nor was it impulsive. In his application for admission to membership of the Party, he said: "I have been long and slow in coming to this conclusion, but at last my mind is settled." Life is the greatest of all teachers, and it is a life of selfless struggle that has convinced Dr. Du Bois that the future belongs to Communism, and that by joining the Party he will help to bring about that glorious future.

He was born on February 23rd, 1868, only three years after the close of the American Civil War, and in the year in which the freed Negro men in the South got the vote for the first time. Had
it not been for the continuing oppression of the Negro people in the United States which was early thrust upon him, Dr. Du Bois believes that he would “have probably been an unquestioning worshipper at the shrine of the social order and economic development into which I was born”. He keenly watched race developments throughout the world, and the recurrent horror of lynchings were like a scar upon his soul. From 1885 to 1894 during Du Bois’ college days, 1,700 Negroes were lynched in the U.S.A. During Du Bois’ sixteen years as a teacher nearly 2,000 Negroes were publicly killed by mobs and not a single one of the murderers was punished. At the same time Negroes were being increasingly subjected to “Jim Crow” laws, which made them a subordinate caste.

Dr. Du Bois became determined to make a scientific study of whole question of race, and, in particular of the status of the American Negro. In 1896 he published his work *Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the U.S.A.*, and during the thirteen years that he was Professor of Economics and History at Atlanta University (1897-1910) he poured forth a series of studies on such topics as Negro mortality, urbanisation, the effort of Negroes to improve their lot, Negro artisans, Negro businessmen and Negro crime. These publications formed a current encyclopaedia on American Negro problems.

However, Dr. Du Bois soon realised that he could not be a cool, calm and detached scientist while Negroes were being lynched, murdered and starved. He therefore became an active participant in the fight for Negro rights. His open agitation on behalf of his people soon brought him into conflict with such “moderate” Negro leaders as Booker T. Washington, who decried political activities among Negroes and who advised the Negroes to acquiesce in their lot. Eventually, Du Bois convened a Conference to oppose Booker T. Washington’s methods of strangling criticism, and to organise the Negro people. As a result the “Niagara Movement” was organised in 1906, which propagated some of the plainest and strongest demands which had ever been voiced by Negroes, including a demand for the abolition of all distinctions based on race or colour.

By 1910, the “Niagara Movement” had been merged into a new organisation, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (N.A.A.C.P.). From the outset, Du Bois became one of the leading members of the N.A.A.C.P. and its Director of Publications and Research. From 1910-33 he was editor of a journal *The Crisis* which maintained a platform of radical thinking on the

*Dusk of Dawn* by W. E. B. Du Bois (1940), p. 27.
Negro question and which influenced many minds. His unpopular ideas were bitterly attacked and once the government suppressed the journal. It was as a result of the work of Du Bois and others that the U.S. Supreme Court was forced to restore democracy in the South and finally outlawed discrimination based on colour in public services.

While Du Bois was still a student the British, French, German and Belgian imperialists were pushing, looting and murdering their way into Africa. At first he did not question the picture which the capitalist press presented to the world of the advance of “civilisation” into darkest Africa. At that time he did not understand that the struggle of rising imperialism to grab the gold and diamonds of South Africa and later the copper, ivory, cocoa, tin and vegetable oils of other parts of Africa was determining political action in Europe and America.

Later, however, he saw clearly that the history of the turn of the century could be summed up in one word—imperialism. He saw white Europe dominating black Africa and yellow Asia through political power built on the economic control of labour, income and ideas. The echo of this imperialism in the United States was the expulsion of Negroes from democracy, their subjection to racial discrimination and wage-slavery. This led him to the conviction that the struggle for Negro rights in the U.S.A. and for the freedom and independence of Africa, was a common struggle against imperialism. He felt especially close to the struggles of the African peoples, because his great-great grandfather had come to America in the eighteenth century as an African slave.

So it was that he became a staunch supporter of the movement for African independence. When he learnt that the problems of Africa and the colour bar were going to be discussed at the Peace Congress after the First World War, but that no provision had been made for the Africans to speak for themselves, he determined to call in Paris a Pan-African Congress. He organised the Congress in February 1919, in the Grand Hotel, Paris. Fifty-seven delegates, including sixteen American Negroes, twenty West Indians and twelve Africans, and officials from France, Belgium and Portugal attended the Congress. The results of the meeting were small, but it had some influence. The Congress threw Du Bois into direct contact with the real crux of the problems of his time: the fight against imperialism.

Du Bois organised a Second Pan-African Congress from August 29th to September 6th, 1921, which attracted world-wide attention
and was better attended than the first Congress. There were 113 delegates from twenty-six different groups, including thirty-nine delegates from Africa itself. A third Pan-African Congress was attempted in 1923 and a fourth was held in New York in 1927, yet neither of these was as successful as the Second Congress.

These Congresses, planned and organised by Du Bois, were the historical forerunner of the mighty All-Africa Peoples' Conferences which have been held since 1958. From its small beginnings, Du Bois' idea of Pan-African unity has grown into a mighty force which is sweeping aside imperialism.

Du Bois has always regarded himself as a Socialist. In college he heard the name of Karl Marx, but read none of his works, nor heard them explained. At the University of Berlin, he heard much of those thinkers who had definitely answered the theories of Marx, but again he was not taught what Marx himself had said.

Nevertheless, he attended meetings of the Socialist Party and considered himself a Socialist. On his return to America he taught and studied for sixteen years. He explained the theory of socialism, but had still neither read nor heard much of Marxism.

Then he came to New York as an official of the N.A.A.C.P., and found that this was a capitalist-orientated body which expected support from rich philanthropists. But the N.A.A.C.P. also had a strong socialist element in its leadership. Following their advice he joined the Socialist Party in 1911, but he resigned the following year because he found himself unable to vote for the socialist ticket in the elections.

For the next twenty years he tried to develop a political way of life for himself and for his people. He attacked the Democrats and the Republicans for monopoly and for disfranchisement of Negroes; he attacked the Socialists for trying to segregate Southern Negro members; he praised the racial attitudes of the Communists but opposed their tactics in certain cases, and their advocacy of a Negro state.

At the same time he began to study Karl Marx and the Communists: he read Das Kapital and other Communist literature. He hailed the Russian Revolution of 1917. Finally, in 1926, he began a new effort. He visited the Soviet Union and reported that "never in my life have I been so stirred as by what I saw during two months in Russia".† He was deeply inspired by the spirit of the Soviet people to go forward in the face of all obstacles and establish a government of men, such as the world has never seen.

† ibid, p. 287.

The Great Depression and the Second World War disillusioned Du Bois of his belief that there might be some different solution half-way between capitalism and socialism. He reached the firm conclusion that capitalism is doomed, that it cannot reform itself, that it is heading for self-destruction. He became convinced, in his own words, that “Communism—the effort to give all men what they need and to ask of each the best they can contribute—is the only way of human life”.

For Africa, too, Du Bois became convinced that socialism and
Communism is the only path. In his inspiring message to the All-Africa Peoples’ Conference in Accra in December 1958, he said:

"... I would emphasise the fact that today Africa has no choice between capitalism and socialism. The whole world, including the capitalist countries, is moving towards socialism, inevitably, inexorably. You can choose between blocs of military alliances, you can choose between groups of political union, you cannot choose between socialism and private capitalism because private capitalism is doomed.

"... Today [the West] offers a compromise, but one of which you must beware. She offers to let some of your smarter and less scrupulous leaders become fellow-capitalists with the white exploiters if in turn they induce the nation’s masses to pay the awful cost.

"Strive against it with every fibre in your bodies and souls. A body of local private capitalists, even if they are black, can never free Africa; they will simply sell it into new slavery to old masters overseas."

Dr. Du Bois is filled with a burning conviction that Communism will triumph all over the world. To help bring about that day he has joined the Communist Party.

II

The Smith Act and the McCarran Act are part of a concerted attack by the American reactionaries in the first place against the Communist Party, but also against all progressive forces.

Last year the U.S. Supreme Court decided by a majority of five to four that the McCarran Act should be applied against the Party. This Act is used to order the Communist Party to register as an "action organisation" which is an "agent of a foreign power". Upholding these slanders against the American Communists, the Supreme Court has ordered the Communist leaders to list members and officers. For every day that they continue to refuse to register they are liable to the penalty of a prison sentence of five years and a fine of £3,365 per day ($10,000). Only a week need pass for more than a life term to accumulate. The Smith Act, which holds that every "active Communist" intends to teach the forcible overthrow of the U.S. government, is once again being applied to the Communists.

Du Bois has joined the Communists and other progressive forces in exposing these lies. On his ninetieth birthday he described contemporary American imperialism as follows:

"Today we are lying, stealing and killing. We call all this by finer names: Advertising, Free Enterprise and National Defence. But names in the end deceive no one; today we use science to help us deceive our fellows; we take wealth that we never earned and
we are devoting all our energies to kill, maim, and drive insane, 
men, women and children who dare refuse to do what we want done. 
"No nation threatens us. We threaten the world. . . ."

Kennedy's brother, the U.S. Attorney-General, in attempting to 
suppress the Communist Party, is acting as a millionaire to protect 
the millionaires, he is paving the way for a new attack on all pro-
gressive and peace forces in the U.S.A. But the U.S. Communists 
proudly joined by Comrade W. E. B. Du Bois are fighting these 
attacks with heroic courage.

We African freedom fighters can also do something: we can send 
resolutions and delegations to U.S. Embassies and telegrams to 
President Kennedy; above all, we can organise the African peoples 
into revolt against U.S. imperialism. Communists, trade unionists, 
and all fighters for liberation can throw their energies into a cam-
paign of support for the leaders and members of the Communist 
Party of the U.S.A. In doing this, they will be making a contribution 
to the cause of freedom in Africa and throughout the world by 
undermining the U.S. imperialists.

* * *

Every thinking fighter for his country's liberation will be deeply 
inspired by Comrade Du Bois' decision to join the Communist Party. 
Countless thousands will follow in his footsteps, building great 
Communist Parties which will lead the struggle for a free, socialist 
Africa. They will join Comrade Du Bois in the noble vow which he 
made on his ninetieth birthday:

"Socialism progresses and will progress . . . I believe in socialism; 
I seek a world where the ideals of communism will triumph— 
to each according to his need; from each according to his ability. 
For this I will work as long as I live. And I still live."

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