

# Revolution without hatred

by [Harold E. Fey](#)

September 11, 1963

*Washington, August 28*

Sore of foot but inspired in spirit, I was one of more than 200,000 people who marched and sang for freedom here today. The march was disciplined; throughout a long and wearisome day I saw not a single act of discourtesy, nor did I hear even one expression of irritation. But no one should be deceived by the serenity and orderliness of this mighty flow of men, women and children to the Lincoln Memorial. This march was an expression of deep purpose, and it resulted in still deeper resolution in support of civil rights "NOW!" People dressed in their Sunday best and others in work clothing, women carrying babies and fathers with young sons astride their shoulders, senior citizens and cripples with canes—and at least one man swinging along on crutches—all these marching souls were sustained by the conviction that their cause is just, that its time has come, that the Lord of history is behind that insistent, uncompromising "NOW."

On the day preceding the march I talked with a number of people on Capitol Hill, among them several congressmen. It is no exaggeration to say that their views on the march ranged from worry to fear and anger. Senator Thurmond's postmarch TV interview indicated that the obvious success of the enterprise had served to intensify his rejection of equal civil rights for Negroes, and it is probable that his reaction will be echoed by the Wallaces and Barnetts throughout the south. Such fear is understandable; the movement which marched today is designed to strip them of their power. The cheer which greeted the N.A.A.C.P.'s Roy Wilkins when he assured southern whites who support civil rights but fear to speak out that one goal of the Washington march was to emancipate *them* witnessed accurately to the breadth of the movement's purpose.

The message from Congress of Racial Equality leader James Farmer, relayed from a Louisiana jail by an associate, broadened the horizon of the march to include the world. He declared that freedom is indivisible, that success in the nonviolent

struggle for full civil rights for Negroes in the United States is necessary if this nation is to survive and do its share in extending freedom to all mankind.

Participation by the churches, Catholic, Jewish and Protestant, was everywhere evident and widely welcome. But like the participation by labor unions (most notable of which was that of the United Automobile Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers), church participation was supportive rather than dominant. Though the sponsoring organizations included the National Council of Churches, the National Conference of Catholics for Interracial Justice, the American Jewish Congress, the industrial union department of the A.F.L.—C.I.O. and the Negro American Labor Council, the march was staged primarily by the five major civil rights organizations—the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Urban League, the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee—which joined together for the first time in a major effort to speak to the Congress and the country. Chairman of the march was veteran A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and major spokesman for Negroes in the ranks of organized labor.

Attending the churchmen's breakfast held prior to the march were Catholic Archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle and Methodist Bishop John Wesley Lord of Washington; Presbyterian Eugene Carson Blake, acting chairman of the National Council of Churches' civil rights program; the United Church's Robert Spike, executive and coordinator of that program; Galen Weaver, director of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish continuing program which grew out of the Chicago conference on religion and race; Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum of the American Jewish Committee; and many others.

The Washington march was a religious event of first importance, and its effect will be felt far beyond the political arena. Its religious impact came through in every speech, ending with the stirring prophetic appeal by Martin Luther King, Jr., whom Chairman Randolph introduced as the "moral leader of the nation." It was evident in the addresses of Mathew Ahmann, who spoke for Catholics ("The wind of the racial revolution has finally bent the reeds of the conscience of our people"); Joachim Prinz, president of the American Jewish Congress and formerly a rabbi in Hitler's Berlin ("We have a complete sense of solidarity with the Negro people born of our painful historic experience. . . . America must not become a nation of onlookers, as Germany was under Hitler"); and Eugene Carson Blake ("Our churches have for long stood publicly for a nonsegregated church in a nonsegregated society, but they have

failed to put their own houses in order. We come, and late we come, to offer our bodies as a sacrifice unto God, which is our reasonable service. We come in faith that God will overrule hatreds and bring justice and liberty for all").

There were few marching delegations which did not include one or more clergymen. As the delegations moved in a broad stream flowing for hours down Independence and Constitution avenues, they chanted the freedom chant, sang "We Shall Overcome," often joined in spirituals or in Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic." But these were outward signs of religion on the march. The inner quality expressed in subtle ways one had to experience to appreciate. Such courtesy, quiet conviction, patience—yes, even joy—in the face of suffering, deprivation, and struggle against great odds would be impossible without deep faith. Together they attest to the immense power which can be generated by a revolution which explicitly and resolutely refuses to weaken itself by hatred.

Such a revolution is something new in the Western world. It is not surprising that its opponents find it difficult to understand and to measure. Even its friends and practitioners are surprised, as were the leaders of the Washington march, by the response it is capable of arousing among great masses of people, white as well as colored, educated as well as uneducated or poorly educated. The unprecedented TV coverage of the march was matched by the press generally; over 2,800 press passes were issued—indicating a greater coverage than for any previous Washington event, even presidential inaugurations.

It remains to be seen how soon and in what way Congress will respond. The presence of 150 congressmen on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial was a good sign, particularly in view of the fact that both houses were acting with unusual speed to avert an impending railroad strike. The Washington march will, I believe, advance and stiffen the resolve of the administration and the supporters of civil rights of both parties even more than it will rouse the determination of their opponents—thus improving the chances that a good measure will be voted.

Both sides are aware that the march on Washington can be repeated. If the present enlightened and principled leadership of the civil rights movement fails, if the democratic program of this revolution without hatred is defeated, another 200,000—or it might be 500,000—could march on Washington, led by leaders of a different sort who know how to manipulate hatred and violence for their own ends. That would really be a mob, as this assemblage was not, and it would bring about change. Nobody who saw this march can doubt that change is coming. It had better

come in the way this demonstration has indicated it should come. I believe it will come—is coming—that way.