

# Matter of Fact

## The New Negro Leader

By Joseph Alsop

PHILADELPHIA — At the tumultuous recent convention of the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People, the able, veteran NAACP leader, Roy Wilkins, confided to a friend, perhaps a little wearily:

"This is the year of the revolution. The Young Turks are taking over."

The most conspicuous of the Young Turks is almost certainly the new NAACP leader here in Philadelphia, Cecil Moore. Spend a few days here talking to people who know the civil rights story in this city, with its typical northern Negro ghetto. Then spend a few hours talking to Cecil Moore. You will learn that a profound change has come over the greatest single problem facing the United States at home.

To begin with, the quite sudden emergence of Moore marks a sudden shift in style that speaks volumes in itself. The old style is typified by Roy Wilkins, whose quiet dignity, reasonableness in discussion, and personal trustworthiness could not be disputed by the most rabid Southern segregationist — if any such allowed himself to be exposed to Wilkins.

But whereas Wilkins is sober, undramatic, and the very opposite of flash, Moore is vivid, violent, intensely dramatic, almost too highly colored in everything he wears and says and does. His aim, plainly, is not to inspire confidence in his white interlocutors. His aim, rather, is to excite and stir his own people.

To an extraordinary degree, he has done just that since he took over the NAACP leadership in Philadelphia about a year ago. This vigorous former Marine was then a rather obscure

figure — a defeated congressional candidate, a busy but not enormously successful lawyer, a junior personage in the civil rights movement.

When he assumed the leadership here, the older established NAACP was on the verge of losing its popular support in Philadelphia to the more militant Congress of Racial Equality, and a contest in militancy was the essence of the decisive episode in Moore's rise to power.

CORE HAS picketed a city building project employing the rigidly segregated craft unions of the construction industry. The city had backed down. Whereupon Moore and the NAACP picketed a comparable project of the Philadelphia School Board. The Board did not back down. And days of violence and actual bloodshed ensued before the School Board was forced to accept most of Moore's terms.

Since that time, he has been waging an uninterrupted war on two fronts — against anti-Negro discrimination in all forms, but also against all the older Negro leaders of Philadelphia who have not accepted him as the unchallenged and unique spokesman and strategist of the Negro people here. Some of the aspects of this second war have been pretty bizarre.

"You know how I deal with them," he said to me, with an enormous grin, when I asked him what he did about Communists trying to infiltrate his picket lines. "I just set the amazons on them. If I used men, they'd howl about a 'goon squad.' But some women are just as strong as men, so we've got us some amazons."

By common consent, far from universally given with joy, Moore has attained his object. Among Philadelphia's Negro masses, at least, he is now accepted as a unique spokesman and strategist. His secret is to give the poorer Negroes, crowded in their hideous slums, a sense of doors being battered open

and ways of escape from their predicament being provided by main force.

"If we weren't militant, the people wouldn't follow," he told me. "You've got to be militant, or you aren't a leader nowadays."

Moore's militancy, which has endeared him to the Negro masses, has also shocked many people in the white community of Philadelphia, including a good many liberal white civil-righters for whom Moore shows open contempt. Yet it is very clear indeed that other white communities besides Philadelphia are going to have to learn to live with Negro militancy. The shift in leadership-style which has appeared here in fact reflects a deep shift in the American Negro community's mood.

Furthermore, the new leader that the Philadelphia Negro community has now thrown up is a personality worthy of his role. Moore's energy is astonishing. His courage is impressive. His wiliness is great, as those amazons testify. He is not merely wily, either; he is exceptionally intelligent, and he passionately believes in his cause.

In truth, once Moore's militancy has been accepted as an inescapable fact, there are only two main questions about this interesting man. He will certainly be sorely tempted to become a self-serving exploiter of his own people, in the manner of Rep. Adam Clayton Powell. Only time can tell whether Moore has the needed qualities to resist this temptation.

Being the kind of man he is, Moore will also be greatly tempted to cross the fine line dividing militancy from excess, thereby damaging his people and his cause by consolidating a hostile white majority. But once again, time alone can give the answer to this second question, which is so supremely important to the whole Negro movement.

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