

The Negro Question

By J. R. JOHNSON

"LABOR WITH A WHITE SKIN CANNOT EMANCIPATE ITSELF WHERE LABOR WITH A BLACK SKIN IS BRANDED" — KARL MARX.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. This famous tale of the holy scripture was re-enacted once more in 1932. You remember what happened in the Gospels. The Pharisee was the man who boasted of what he had done. He had paid his dues, he fasted so many days a week. He thanked God that he was a righteous man and not a scoundrel like the damned publican. But the publican didn't pretend, he didn't say he had done this and that and the other. He said he was a sinner. That's all. He begged for mercy, it is true, but that isn't important for us.

Twentieth-Century Pharisees

Look at the New Dealers. These Pharisees have for years been telling the whole world and Negroes what fine fellows they are. The Negroes should love them. They are the men for "true" democracy; they want to build a new world of righteousness and peace, in which the lion will lie down with the lamb, in which the Southern plantation-owner will give a square deal to the sharecropper. They say, "Discriminate against the Negro? Not we. Look how many Negroes there are in the WPA white-collar jobs and working in relief bureaus, etc. We thank God," say the New Dealers, "that we are not like other men, even as these Republicans."

Now comes a fine exposure of these righteous rascals. A few days ago Miles Paige, a Negro Magistrate in Harlem, was named by Mayor LaGuardia for a seat on the Special Sessions bench at \$12,000 a year. The Negro press as usual hails this as proof of the "great progress" of Negroes. It is proof of nothing of the kind. No Negro who knows the history of his race needs any proof of its capacity to fill any office in this country. Furthermore, Paige's appointment does not raise the income of one Negro sharecropper or one Negro factory worker or one Negro unemployed. And these are the people with whom we are chiefly concerned. Appointments like this one of Paige cannot lift the great mass of oppressed Negroes. When the great masses of Negroes move, they will create opportunities for ten thousand Paiges. That is not to say that such appointments are not to be supported not only by Negroes but by the whole labor movement. The Negroes have a right to posts everywhere. The Socialist Workers Party, for instance, condemns those who join the bourgeois army. But as for the right of Negroes to join the army if they want to, and on equal terms with the whites—that we support.

Where's the Catch?

But now comes a mystery. Paige was to be seated on Tuesday, January 2nd, but the ceremony was postponed indefinitely. The *Amsterdam News* of January 13 gives us some indication why.

LaGuardia is flirting with the New Dealers, with an eye to the presidential elections. He is typical of them, with his large words and small concessions. But since the Harlem riots of 1935, La Guardia has a wholesome respect for Harlem Negroes. And since Lehman defeated Dewey only by the aid of the Negroes' vote, all these progressive fakery are at their wits' end to keep the Negro vote. So LaGuardia runs around in Harlem, he has lunch with Bill Robinson sitting near him, he builds a housing project or two (where fifty are needed), and he appoints Negroes to posts they have not held before. First Justice Bolin. And now Paige.

But behold! Roosevelt in Washington lives only by grace of those Southern landlords, without whom the Democratic Party is nothing. These fellows are not going to stand for any vice-president or cabinet minister who is a "nigger-lover." So Washington warns LaGuardia. He is leaning too heavily towards the Negro race. You cannot discriminate in favor of Negroes, you know. One judge every twenty years or so is enough. If you go on like that you discredit yourself, and your future with us of the Democratic Party is gloomy. Hence, says the *Amsterdam News*, Paige's appointment still awaits confirmation.

Tweddledum and . . .

So here we are, my friends, the "little flower" of "democracy" and the New Deal, herald angels of equality between man and man, conspiring to save their immortal souls and to placate the viciousness of Southern reactionaries at the expense of one Negro being made a judge—one Negro, be it noted.

Here and there a Negro may squeeze into an appointment. But salvation for the race from any of these Republicans or Democrats who have systematically deceived the Negro people for seventy-five years? No. The Republicans make no promises. The New Dealers make them but do not mean it. And that is the only difference between them.

"NEITHER KING NOR FUEHRER"

United Press and Associated Press dispatches from London, dated January 2, repeated at face value a crude British slander linking the Irish Republicans with the Nazis. "I. R. A. reported seeking Nazi Aid" was the headline over the story in the *New York World Telegram* and the *Post*.

The alleged evidence cited in the story to justify the imputation that fighters for a free Ireland were inviting Nazi aid was that headquarters of the outlawed I. R. A. had sent questionnaires to all its units asking: "What part would you play in event of an invasion in this country?"

The dispatch thereupon identified the implication that the Irish Republicans would not defend the country against invasion with the proposition that the Republicans would collaborate with Nazi Germany in an invasion.

This is an old slander against Irish Republicans. It was best answered, in 1916, when James Connolly displayed outside the headquarters of the Transport Workers Union in Dublin, the famous slogan: "Neither King Nor Kaiser!" The only Ireland to be defended, said Connolly, was an Ireland free of British rulers and their Irish lackeys.

Some Pertinent History-Past and Present

"POOR LITTLE FINLAND"

By CHRIS ANDREWS

In 1930 a Fascist movement, the Lappo movement, broke out in Finland. Writes Jackson, ". . . the very classes which had been legality's greatest champions were the first to encourage terrorism. Gone was the belief in individual liberties; clergymen preached intolerance as a Christian duty, democrats urged the disenfranchisement of a large proportion of their fellow citizens, the farmers—(read "farm owners"—C.A.), individualists to a man, conspired to end the rights of speech and public meeting."

The Fascists attacked workers' meetings, smashed labor printing presses, kidnapped two left-wing members of the Diet from a Communist meeting, and brutally beat them. The leader of the Social Democratic Party was kidnapped—even a bourgeois politician, ex-President Stahberg, was kidnapped by a reactionary General. The General, arrested, admitted his guilt and was freed.

As a result of the Fascist agitation, the Communist Party was again proscribed in 1930 and its 23 Diet members arrested.

The Finnish Fascists rose up on the wave of mass unrest resulting from the economic crisis that had begun in Finland by 1928—a bad crop year. The crippled labor movement could not give aid or firm leadership to the suffering peasantry; the corrupt social-democratic leaders would not; the Fascists sought support among the peasants, ably assisted in this by the skilled agitators of the Lutheran clergy. This parasitic group, living off the peasantry, well understand the dynamics of the class struggle. As the liberal historian, Jackson, ruefully records, "The clergy supplied the most unforgiving

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JOBS NOT BATTLESHIPS! by Dwight Macdonald is a simple and direct message of 16 pages to the New York workers, particularly the jobless—and sells for one penny.

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Program of Action
Why there is a reactionary drive on relief standards and for war expenditures, and what the jobless must do, are told in language everyone can understand.

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among the White leaders in the Civil War".

From the bankers came 15,000,000 marks for Fascist expenses. The former Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Kurt Waldheim (now the "hero" of the Finnish "waist-line" defense) was placed in charge of organizing attacks against working class leaders and newspapers. Heavy sums came from the timber exporters, facing a decline in world demand for timber, and planning to recoup by still further cutting the wages of their laborers. Last but not the least source of strength for Finnish Fascism was the richest section of the Cooperative Movement, the SOK, the Finnish Cooperative Wholesale Society.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE COOPERATIVES

The appearance of a section of the Finnish Cooperative movement will startle only those people who have been taken in by the "middle way" propaganda, peddled extensively in the United States in recent years.

The SOK, founded in 1904, later split apart when trade union elements of the cities classed with the rural membership. The latter refused to hire only trade union members in the factories and stores of SOK, and insisted on the right to employ scabs. The trade union workers withdrew, forming OTK, the Progressive Cooperatives, predominantly a consumers' organization.

SOK buys and manufactures food, clothing, and household utensils and is predominantly a producers' cooperative. In the Finnish Fascist movement of the early thirties, SOK saw a two-fold opportunity—to smash its competitor and to protect itself against the demands of the trade union movement, once again increasing in strength and militancy.

One of the results of the Fascist agitation was precisely that—suppression by the government of the trade union federation with its 90,000 members in 1930—for "treasonable activities". Dissolved before by the bourgeoisie in 1918, the unions had been slowly fighting their way back. After 1930 the Fascist

movement receded; with the lightening of the economic crisis the bourgeoisie concluded that it could dispense with the services of the Fascist movement, and the unions have been permitted to begin again their laborious development.

Where will those 90,000 class-conscious men be today—(not their corrupt social-democratic officials but the workers?)—and all the other thousands of unorganized laborers who saw their right to have unions twice ruthlessly destroyed by the governing class? Will they be enthusiastic volunteers today in the army of the Finnish bourgeoisie?

Just like capitalist United States, capitalist Finland passed through the world depression at the expense of its working class and peasantry—and just like capitalist United States, capitalist Finland now enjoys "prosperity"—at the top.

The capitalists have the same characteristics everywhere—one being bland equanimity in the face of the suffering of the masses. Even Professor Jackson, admiral of Finland's government, Finland's cooperatives, and Finland's steam baths, is forced to admit of Finland's recovery:

"The benefits of debt reduction and capital improvement were naturally felt by the rich rather than by the poor. Bankers and shareholders prospered, substantial industrial fortunes were made, especially in cellulose, but the poor did not receive a proportionate share in the national prosperity. The revival of industry brought the unemployed back to work, but not at the old rate of pay."

The English Midland Bank Review finds in Finland, ". . . a general standard of living lower than might have been justified by the actual expansion of current trade". (WPA and relief workers, does this remind you of anything?)

EXPLODING MYTHS ABOUT THE PEASANTS

The capitalist press tells us tirelessly that Finland is a nation of happy "land-owners". The Marxist, understanding Finland to be an agricultural country imprisoned in the permanent crisis of world agriculture, looks for

the lie underneath the capitalist testimony.

What has happened to the Finnish peasantry and rural poor who fought so desperately and bravely at the side of their city brothers in the proletarian insurrection of 1918? Did their defeat and massacre by the enraged bourgeoisie prepare the way for the bettering of their living conditions—by the same triumphant bourgeoisie?

Finland is 90 per cent woods and forest area and only 7 per cent cultivable. Of Finland's population of 3,800,000—over 2,000,000 fight for life and existence in the sphere of agriculture.

Finnish Government statistics tell us that of the farm population (1929) 61.6 per cent were "farm owners". Farm laborers and tenant farmers represent "only" 39.4 per cent. (Of these farm laborers, please remember this. The Finnish 8-hour law, now being ballyhooed the world over by the defenders of the Finnish bourgeoisie, does not apply to agriculture—i.e., it does not apply to the majority of the toilers!)

The Finnish bourgeoisie publish very incomplete unemployment figures—nothing for the nation as a whole. But in what they do publish occurs a very peculiar classification—the "unemployed land-owner". How does a "land-owner" become "unemployed"?

The census figures of Finland—the latest figures are those for 1929—report to us 285,390 farm families "owning land". Evidently a prosperous, contented peasantry—until we break the figures down.

37,987 "land-owning families" work from 1/2 acre to 2 1/2 acres—no more. From this they live.

40,114 "land-owning" families work from 5 acres to 7 1/2 acres—no more.

108,642 "land-owning" families work from 7 1/2 acres to 25 acres—no more.

In other words, 218,736 families (76.5 per cent of the "land-owning" peasantry) before the depression in 1929 were struggling for a bare subsistence on "farms" ranging from 25 acres in size for the most fortunate down to "farms" of 1/2 acre. On this economic base the Finnish

peasant must fight for a living for himself and his family.

TIMBER FORTUNES MADE FROM THESE PEASANTS

We can now understand the government statistics concerning "unemployed land-owners". In order to live at all, thousands upon thousands of the poverty-stricken peasantry must go to seek employment during the winter months in the lumber camps and the saw mills, side by side with the agricultural laborer. In this way they can add enough to their miserable income to eke out a living for the rest of the year.

For the timber capitalists, enjoying the exploitation of Finland's most valuable resources, this arrangement is excellent. It guarantees a plentiful supply of desperate laborers; it guarantees a low wage rate.

The government reports in its "Finland Year Book" (1936) that 45 per cent of the labor force in the timber industry consists of such "land-owners".

When the wages paid in the timber industry fell during the depression—from 1,959,000,000 marks (average before 1929)—to 788,000,000 (average during 1930-1932), this represented a slash of more than 50 per cent in the income that the peasantry and agricultural laborers received from this source. Meantime credit for farmers became much dearer—of vital importance to a peasantry where 80 per cent of farmers' debts consist of short term loans at an interest rate averaging 8 1/2 per cent.

Books kept by 802 farms, large and prosperous enough to require the keeping of books, indicated that the farmer's return on his investment between 1932 and 1934, fluctuated between 3.5 per cent to 4.6 per cent. It was natural then that the peasantry, unable to pay the interest rates on the money they borrowed to get their land in the first place, should have rapidly lost their "ownership" during the depression. Sales of farms at public auction were as prevalent in "happy" Finland as in our Middle West.

(Continued next week)

substitution of capitalist allies for the world working class. By his pact with Hitler and his brazen attempt to justify it as a "brilliant victory" Stalin alienated still further the sympathy and support of the world workers for the USSR. Already the consequences of this pact have forced Stalin to move westward and bureaucratically impose the Soviet regime upon the eastern part of Poland, with Finland now on the list. And these "victories," no matter what their temporary military advantages may be, including even the fact that Stalin is compelled to socialize property in the occupied territories, when compared with the blow to the world revolution of which these acts are in essence a substitution, can only mean that Stalin has brought the hour of direst danger to the Soviet Union appreciably close. The mere fact that the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact proved to be the signal for actual opening of hostilities in the second world war is evidence enough of that.

HIS LATEST AND MOST "BRILLIANT" VICTORY

As a final "brilliant victory" of Stalinist policy, England and the other Allied powers and their satellites have seized upon the invasion of Finland as an opportunity for laying the basis for military intervention against the USSR. Soldiers are being sent to join the Finnish bourgeois armies, funds and arms, the sinews of war, are pouring into Finland for use against the Soviet Union. The Allies have made the most of the opening provided by Stalin and are now whipping up a tremendous campaign of sympathy for "poor little Finland" and hatred for Russian "imperialism."

Thus Stalin has helped the forces of blackest reaction deal a stiff blow against the distinction in the mind of the working class between Soviet forms and capitalist forms of property.

Stalin can well chalk down 1939 as a banner year of "brilliant victories." The catastrophic defeat in Spain alone would do that and entitle him to place 1939 even above the year 1926 in which he brought the British general strike to a disastrous end, 1927-28 when he strangled the Chinese revolution, and 1933 when he succeeded in binding the hands of the German workers so tightly that not a finger was lifted against the Nazis as they chopped down the German labor movement and marched into power.

The year 1939 has proved to be the hit that the only title Stalin deserves is that which Trotsky long ago gave him: "Stalin—organizer of defeats."

Fundamentally this pact was only another capitulation forced on Stalin by his abandonment of the policy of world revolution and his

A 'Marxist' Alibi For the Jingoes On Finland

By FELIX MORROW

During the first world war the jingo social democratic parties spoke in terms little different than those of their capitalist rulers. However, in each country the brazen jingoes carried, as protection on their left flanks, spokesmen and groups whose task it was to justify the war, or at least to justify the "socialist" jingoism, in pseudo-Marxist language. This division of labor was an important factor in preventing for a long time a break-away of the masses from the jingo to a revolutionary position. Workers discontented with Scheidemann could be taken in tow by Kautsky. Ramsay MacDonald caught those moving away from the British Labor Party. And so on.

The thing is already being repeated here in one small instance. It is instructive to describe it.

At its Jan. 6 meeting the American Labor Party state committee adopted a jingo resolution for American government aid to Finland, in line with the previous pro-Ally stand taken by the A.L.P. The Norman Thomas socialists and the Lovestoneites voted for both resolutions.

But many needle-trades workers are anti-Stalinist, yet believe there is something dear to the working class in the Soviet Union which is worth defending. These workers do not take well to the stand of the A.L.P. leaders, who have been enemies of the Soviet Union from its first days. So . . . the Lovestoneites undertake the task of taking these workers into camp. As usual, this type of job goes to Will Herberg.

Ostensibly he agrees with these workers. "We want to defend what remains of the Russian Revolution, the economic foundations, the nationalized economy, from the danger of restoration of private capitalism. "Defend how and against whom? Of course, against invaders and forces of restoration. But also against the Stalin dictatorship." (*Workers Age*, Jan. 13)

So far, so good. One begins to wonder how Herberg is going to reconcile these correct statements with the A.L.P. position.

A Pickpocket's Kind of Skill

The fact is that Herberg makes no attempt to reconcile the two. Having presumably satisfied the questioning workers by agreeing with them that there is a basic working class stake in the Soviet Union worthy of defense, he then simply goes on to drop that stake from his further calculations. It is a bit of sleight of hand. It is illuminating to quote him:

"Easy victory for the Russian invader in Finland—which hardly seems possible any longer—would immensely strengthen the totalitarian dictatorship in Russia; any sort of victory would operate to some degree in the same direction. Victory for the Russian invader would greatly stimulate the predatory appetites of the new Stalin imperialism and would further demoralize what remains of the Russian Revolution. Hence (! ! !) a Stalin victory in Finland would most emphatically not serve the best interests of the Russian people or of world socialism.

"The inescapable conclusion of all this is that the 'defense of the Soviet Union' has no meaning whatever for international socialism at the present (!) moment, in connection with the invasion of Finland. It may (!) arise again as a significant slogan tomorrow (!), or it may not. Certainly it has no significance today."

How He Does It

The sleight of hand comes with the "hence" in the first paragraph. That Stalin cannot defend the Soviet Union, that successful defense of the Soviet Union requires the overthrow of Stalin by the workers, that the strengthening of the totalitarian dictatorship is bad for world socialism—all this we said already at a time when, for saying it, we were denounced by the Lovestoneites as enemies of the Soviet Union. But what follows from these facts? That Stalin's overthrow by the workers is imperative. This, and nothing more. There does NOT follow from this the consciously dishonest piece of sleight of hand that "Hence a Stalin victory in Finland would most emphatically not serve" etc.

The Russian workers, aided by the international proletariat, must and will overthrow Stalin. But until then? Until then, if we are loyal to the cause of socialism, we defend the Soviet Union against the capitalist world. The working class efforts for his overthrow must be redoubled. But his overthrow can have meaning only if in the interim we defend the Soviet Union against its capitalist enemies. The defeat of Stalin by the capitalists means capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union. Not a political revolution will come in the wake of invading capitalist armies, but the overturn of the national economy.

That is what the lackeys of imperialism, the A.L.P. leaders, want. That is not what the workers want. The role of the Lovestoneites is to mollify the workers—and support the A.L.P. leaders.

Roosevelt, Daladier, Chamberlain, Hoover, the Scandinavian rulers, etc., etc., want to defeat the Soviet Union for the benefit of the capitalist world—that, I hope, nobody will deny. From somewhere in the capacious pockets of the imperialist juggernaut comes the squeak of Lovestone-Thomas and their European similars: "we want the Finnish armies to defeat the Soviet Union for the benefit of socialism." Is this not the exact counterpart of the spectacle of the "left" British Labor Party and French Socialist Party leaders proclaiming that they support the war against Germany for very different objectives than those of Chamberlain and Daladier?

Is the analogy unfair? Then let somebody explain why.

Are Norman Thomas and Lovestone prepared to defend their patriotic position before working class audiences, in debate with Trotskyist spokesmen? We, for our part, would more than welcome coming to grips with these people.