

The Negro Question

By J. R. JOHNSON

(This week's column is written by Robert L. Birchman.)

On March 8 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People issued the following press release:

"NEW YORK—Mayor La Guardia was asked this week by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to open the way for the employment of qualified Negroes on the B.M.T. and I.R.T. subway lines, after the city takes over these lines under the proposed plan for a unified city-owned rapid transit system.

"The letter was sent to the Mayor on Tuesday, March 5, at the height of the controversy between La Guardia and officials of the Transport Workers Union over the Mayor's labor policy, after unification is completed.

"The Mayor has already stated that neither the right to strike nor the closed shop will be allowed after the city takes over the lines. To this policy the Transport Workers Union has strenuously objected.

"The N.A.A.C.P. letter, which expressed agreement with the Mayor's position in the union controversy, asked the Mayor to give special attention to the employment of 'qualified Negroes who do not have such status, because they have been denied opportunity to work at all, may be given opportunity for employment, as they are on the Independent Subway."

"Negroes are at present employed on the Independent Subway, which is city-owned, in the capacity of guards, conductors, motormen and station agents."

Shall Negroes Be Strikebreakers?

What is the NAACP saying? It is saying, in so many words, that the Negro people should support Mayor La Guardia against the Transport Workers Union. But, as everybody knows who is following this fight, it may result in a great transport strike in which the Transport Workers Union will have the backing of the New York trade union movement. Having said A, the NAACP must say B. It must, by the logic of its support of the mayor, propose that the Negroes should support the mayor against the strike. If the mayor calls for Negroes to work on the line during the strike, the NAACP should, logically, tell Negroes to go to work. That means STRIKE-BREAKING.

Where will such a policy get the Negro workers? Will the Negro workers thereby find jobs? But having served as strikebreakers in a great New York strike, the Negro workers will find that the same unionized workers who today—and there are many of them—have no race prejudice, consider the black man their brothers, and support him in his demands for a better life—these same workers will look upon the Negro worker as a willing strikebreaker. Such a policy would put the Negro workers back fifty years!

The NAACP is not doing a service to the Negro with such advice. This is one of the worst crimes ever perpetrated by the NAACP.

A Negro Answer to the NAACP

Fortunately, within the Negro community, the policy proposed by the NAACP has not gone unchallenged. Here is the comment made by the Boston Chronicle column, "Left Face," written by Martin Richardson:

"It is very true that the transport workers' unions have strayed a long way from playing ball with their darker-hued brethren-in-overalls. Like the printing trades unions, the railroad trainmen, the building-trades unions and a number of others—largely craft unions, invariably—the transport workers certainly have not leaned over backward welcoming colored members into their ranks. . . . But, he goes on, 'is the same thing true of the coal miners, the sheet metal and iron trades workers, the hotel and restaurant workers, or with the garment industry? Hasn't the general trend toward industrial unionization in the past five years brought Negroes into a closer harmony with white labor than it has ever enjoyed in this country or any other part of the world where numbers of us live? . . ."

"While white labor—and very frankly, colored labor, too—is just beginning to learn the hard lesson of unity, the lesson that has been so driven out of their minds for generations by employers who have most to gain by inter-labor strife, why now throw the whole process back to the levels of a few years ago when we were seldom regarded as anything other than tools with which the bosses could keep their preferred workers in line?"

"This is exactly what the NAACP will be letting itself do to the race if it persists in the unfortunate backing of Mayor La Guardia in his no-strike-no-closed-shop plan. La Guardia does not want a policeman's control of the workers on the subways for the purpose of creating any miraculous new benefits for the workers who do not belong to the transport workers union. He wants the Gestapo powers the easier to hamstring one of the strongest and most solid unions in New York. That way he can win most laurels in the least time for his operation of the subways."

The NAACP and all other organizations of the Negroes must cease immediately bargaining with La Guardia and bargain with the Transport Workers Union. Let them tell the Transport Workers Union that capable Negroes eligible for union membership be given both jobs and union cards. But at the same time let the organizations of the Negroes tell the Transport Workers and Labor as a whole that, as one of the most integral parts of the American labor movement, the Negro is solidly behind the workers, not the mayors and the bosses.

India's Left Wing Is on the March

By SHERMAN STANLEY

At the end of last week's session of the 5,000,000-strong Indian Nationalist Congress one clear fact had emerged from the deliberately confused reports appearing in the American press.

If not formally, then in reality, the Indian Nationalist movement is split. It is split sharply between its conservative, Gandhi-led right wing and its left-wing headed by ex-President of the Congress, Subhas Bose.

Hundreds of thousands of Indian workers, peasants and Congress organizers had travelled to Ramgarh from all parts of the Indian sub-continent to attend these historic sessions. They found that the sessions constituted one of the briefest Congress meetings ever held, lasting apparently less than three days. All of the work of the Congress was done prior to the full sessions by the Gandhi dominated Subjects Committee and Executive Committee.

The resolution of the Subjects Committee, adopted by the Congress delegates in great haste, called attention to Gandhi's unwillingness to begin an anti-war or independence campaign at this time. It therefore follows that the Congress can do nothing—until Gandhi chooses to be "willing."

Action Voted Down

All amendments—demanding a complete break with England, urging a revolutionary, mass action program and the launching of the independence campaign now—were voted down by the Gandhi followers. It was politely

hinted that no action by Gandhi and the Congress could be expected for at "least three months."

The meaning of this is that no action can ever be expected from Gandhi because if another three months droned by without anything occurring, the Congress will fall into an even more demoralized state than today and will lose all its support among the masses.

Emergence of Bose

Obviously, the most significant fact about the Ramgarh sessions was the dramatic emergence of the left wing nationalist, Subhas Bose.

Rump Session Acts

Speaking at the rump Congress session he organized in an adjoining field, Bose declared the aim of his Anti-Compromise Congress. "Before parting we must establish permanent machinery for waging an uncompromising war. The hope of this conference is that it will prelude a nationwide struggle along an all-India front."

As a first step in his program of action Bose organized a dramatic demonstration of 5,000 men and women which marched through the Gandhi Congress shouting, "Down with Compromise." The impotent supporters of Gandhi could only retort with "Long live Gandhi."

The split in the Congress ranks at Ramgarh and the emergence of an anti-compromise wing is a decisive event, to be welcomed and supported as a major step forward in the struggle against British imperialism.

NEWS OF SOVIET POLAND

FACTS FOUND BY READING BETWEEN THE LINES

The task of piecing together what is going on in the territory of former Poland occupied by the Red Army is extraordinarily difficult. One can read tens of thousands of words of "information" in the Stalinist press without finding an important fact about the new social structure there. On the other hand, most of the non-Stalinist reports are suspect, coming from bourgeois British, French and Polish sources. In general, one is reduced to taking from each source those items which are involuntary testimony for an estimate which that source is not friendly to.

Negative as this approach may seem, it nevertheless provides important material. For example, the numerous items in such British papers as the Manchester Guardian reporting executions of Polish and Ukrainian inhabitants on a large scale may be partially discounted as coming from a biased source, but when the same papers report many acts of kindness by Red Army soldiers, notably permitting Jews from Nazi Poland to escape into Soviet-held territory, it testifies to a significant spirit existing among the Red Army soldiers.

DISSECTING AN ITEM IN THE STALINIST PRESS

An example of gleaning information from the Stalinist press is provided by an article in the March 25 Daily Worker. It reports:

"The main achievement is the development of increasing numbers of new leaders. This can be seen in the composition

of the 55 deputies which these districts will send to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. Among them are 18 members of the Communist Party and 37 non-party people. They are men and women of labor and science—two industrial workers, 16 peasants and 17 government employees. Women play an important part in the public life of the liberated peoples. Twelve women were nominated for election to the highest governing body of the Soviet Union."

Since the same article begins, "Today the people . . . go to the polls to elect their representatives to the Supreme Soviet," we immediately gather what the "election" amounts to when, before the votes are cast, our informant can tell us who is elected! Out of 55, two are industrial workers—that speaks of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which thus piously carries out the Leninist conception that the industrial proletariat must lead the countryside. Stalin fears the proletariat above all. The 18 governmental employees as representatives of the toiling masses—that also tells us much.

One of the very few reports we have been able to find which bears evidence of objective description of the actual situation is that by Eugene Schreider, published in Lumiere, French radical weekly and reprinted here in the Living Age. Some salient paragraphs are worth quoting:

"SOCIALISM—WITH THE HELP OF MARTIAL LAW! "Most places are under martial

law. However, Sovietization is proceeding steadily, with everything that it implies, liquidation of capitalistic elements, that is to say, the merchants, landowners, and the 'Kulaks'; the systematic removal of former officials and municipal councils, the substitution of a workers' and peasants' militia for the Polish police.

"Komsomolskaya Pravda has stated that changes in administration have been made easy by the Polish authorities themselves. Blacklists were found containing the names of individuals suspected of harboring sympathies toward the Soviet regime. Thanks to these files, it was possible to organize quickly new cadres of 'activists' who are charged with maintaining the new regime. These new authorities, who had been saved from prison and persecution by the Red Army are at present conscientiously hunting down the remnants of the Polish aristocrats and proprietors of the large estates, most of whom had been surprised by the invasion. However the Soviet authorities are keeping a firm rein on these activities."

The last sentence has especial importance. Even these faithful activists may become dangerous to the Kremlin bureaucracy. We can also believe Komsomolskaya Pravda about the lucky find of these lists. Such lists as the Kremlin had of Polish Communists are of little value to it—several years ago when Stalin was courting Poland he dissolved the Polish Communist Party as "Polish-Fascist agents" and if he seeks these old Bolsheviks now, it will only be for the purpose of executing them as "Trotskyists." Meanwhile, from new elements, the bureaucracy hopes to create a subordinate staff in its own image.

"Existing peasant organizations are being used for establishing a sort of collective responsibility. They are being held responsible for agricultural work and have been given a hand in distributing Polish property. City administration is being run by a provisional organization composed of a chairman appointed by the Army and three members appointed by him. Usually one of the four is a member of the NKVD (usually known as the OGPU) and it is he who apparently is charged with the actual task of Sovietization, while his colleagues are occupied with everyday routine problems."

ITALIANIZATION WITH A SMALL "I"

Socialized crime, my correspondent continues, "is only one sample of the process of Italianization to which all activity, great or small, must submit itself under Mussolini. The complete list is staggering. Fascism has made everything in Italy Italian (with a small i). The countersignature of Mussolini must be on everything, including crime.

"He has Italianized Art and artists. . . . While the professors and the critics quietly wait for the New Italian Renaissance, which like Prosperity in America is always just around the corner in Italy, to make its appearance, they gratefully acknowledge the one mighty contribution to 'art' in modern Italy—Mussolini's National Academy.

"He has Italianized the banditti of the South, and it would surprise romantic tourist ladies to know how easily these desperate orphans suffered themselves to be regimented.

"He has Italianized Catholicism which, especially in the South, has always been the bitter enemy of the State.

"He has Italianized the Catholics. He did not have to Italianize the Jews, who are still the best (most chauvinist) Italians in Italy and who owe whatever unpopularity they have enjoyed in modern Italy to precisely that reason. (Now, of course, even the anti-Italianism of the people has become 'Italian,' i.e., anti-semitic.)

"He has Italianized the clericals. He has Italianized the anti-clericals. He has Italianized paganism (the patriotic paganism of the disciples of D'Annunzio), cynicism (the patriotic Peglers of Italy) and papism—if not the Pope himself. He has Italianized the unhappy shades of Machiavelli, Dante and Caesar and all the other ghosts unwary enough to roam the Italian earth. He has Italianized Italy's share of Heaven and Italy's share of Hell."

STALIN FEARS RED ARMY CONTACTS WITH MASSES

"Before casting the life of the occupied regions into the Soviet mold, authorities are studying reactions, attempting to gain the confidence of the 'suspect' working elements and intellectuals. It is interesting to note that measures have been taken to prevent contact between the Red Army and the masses of workers and Jews affiliated with the Socialist International."

In sending the Red Army beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union, Stalin has set in motion forces that the bureaucracy will not be able to stifle. Not the least of these will be the questions that occur to many Red Army soldiers as they are called to repress the very workers and peasants whom they came to "liberate." The Red Army soldiers, not a collection of robots as the bourgeoisie would have us believe, cannot escape being stirred and shaken by their experience and their contact with workers and peasants from the world outside.

THEY'LL NEVER RETURN TO CAPITALISM!

The lot of the workers and peasants of Soviet Poland is a clear-cut one. They now resume the struggle for liberty and bread upon a higher plane. With capitalist property relations destroyed by the Red Army, the Ukrainians, Poles, and White Russians will fight now for Socialist autonomy and freedom from the Kremlin—but never to go back to the old Poland of feudal landlords, militarists, and bankers.

The exiled and defeated Polish capitalists well understand this. That is why on December 1, 1939, even after two months of Nazi atrocities in Nazi Poland, well-publicized throughout the world, the Manchester Guardian correspondent reported, "Leading Poles fear Russian rule even more than German." These "leading Poles" realize that the workers and peasants who now know the benefits of collectivized property, even under the Stalinist stranglehold, will never go back to capitalist exploitation.

"SPARKS IN THE NEWS" In Italy Only Fascists May Commit Crimes

By DWIGHT MACDONALD

This column has often dealt with that significant problem of our times: the increasing intervention of the state power into social and economic life. Recently I received a letter from a reader, Egildo Mattina, which interestingly documents this process as it has been going on in Italy under Il Duce. It takes as its text this sentence from a news report: "The Director General of Police in Rome recently presented to Mussolini statistics tending to prove the progressive diminishment year by year of crime in Italy."

Il Duce Socializes Crime

"The cause of this diminishment of crime under Fascism," writes Mr. Mattina, "is to be found in the peculiarities of that system of state management, whereby the Government tends to absorb all criminal tendencies to itself, making anti-social crime not only hazardous but unprofitable—as compared to the rich rewards in 'socialized' crime. Fascism dares not tolerate independent criminal activity any more than it can tolerate a 'free' press. Hence all criminal activity must conform strictly to the party line or suffer outlawry.

"This development is especially interesting because of the fact that in Italy (except for the most advanced sections of the North) criminal activity has always traditionally been carried on not by criminals but rather by outlaws. In enumerating the achievements of Mussolini, his admirers triumphantly list 'the wiping out of the horrible Mafia—to which we might add the Camorra, brigandage, and all the other ragged tatters of feudalism surviving in the South. Mussolini, the bitter enemy of feudalism, like the great Napoleon, has stamped them all out.

"It was not so heroic an achievement. The Mafia and the Camorra were no match for the capitalist police forces of Rome and Lombardy and Piedmont. To do the banditti justice, they were shrewd enough to realize this, and so, where they could, they donned the black shirt and became ardent Fascisti, rightly surmising it the next best thing to being a Maffista or Camorrista. Thus the Mafia 'disappeared' by the process of assimilation. The same is true of crime in general. For them both, it was merely a case of reinstatement in a more modern form: the police force of Sicily is now a regular Society of Old Maffistas. This is what they call Progress."

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WHY LOVESTONITES WON'T DEBATE

Our readers will recall that we issued a challenge to the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist party, the Lovestonites and other supporters of Finland against the Soviet Union. The only one to respond was the Lovestone group; and it quickly developed that they responded merely to make the record, and not to actually go through with a debate.

We proposed that a debate be held between authoritative representatives of the two organizations. In accordance with that proposal we proposed as our speaker James P. Cannon, our National Secretary. We informed the Lovestonites that we were ready to accept as their speaker either Jay Lovestone or Bertram D. Wolfe, their two most representative spokesmen. But instead they offered only Will Herberg, one of the lesser lights in their organization and a person unknown to the wide strata of the advanced New York workers. For the purpose of attracting a representative crowd of radical workers, their proposal was absurd. We insisted on Lovestone or Wolfe. They refused.

We do not care to go through with a debate with somebody whom Lovestone can repudiate tomorrow. We want the Finnish patriotism of the Lovestonites to be defended by an authoritative spokesman. We are ready to have the debate on that basis at any time.

Stalinists In the C. I. O.—the Growing Break Between Them and John L. Lewis

By E. R. FRANK

The Stalinists poisoned the whole labor movement, in the "People's Front" period, with their fantastic, lying propaganda that the population of the country was divided between "progressives" and "reactionaries" and that it was the sole duty of the labor movement to support the "progressives" and oppose the "reactionaries." The Stalinist propaganda, however, did not change the reality.

The capitalists still run the United States. The bankers and industrialists still own the country's economic resources and wealth, gobble up the hog's share of its national income and constitute what Woodrow Wilson once called the "invisible government"—the real government—of the United States.

The Roosevelt administration is identical with all previous administrations in this fundamental quality: that it is the political agent of America's ruling class—the capitalists who own and run the country. It is only on this cold practical class basis that it is possible to understand why Roosevelt tolerated the Stalinists during the "People's Front" period and why he bitterly opposes them today. Roosevelt understood the Stalinist party. He knew that it was not a genuine socialist movement, but merely the venaal tool of the rotten Stalinist bureaucracy.

Unofficially allied with England and France, the United States was lined up against Germany. That is why, the minute the Hitler-Stalin Pact was announced, Roosevelt and the capitalists launched a campaign to mobilize the full force of "public opinion" for a furious assault upon the Stalinist party. The end of the "People's Front" thus saw the end of the popularity of the Stalinist party with official public opinion. From a "bandwagon" movement, the Stalinists were converted into pariahs and social outcasts.

That meant a change in relations between the Stalinists and Lewis. The official leadership of the CIO, like the leadership of the AFL, is tied to the capitalist class by a thousands different threads and connections. The whole top leadership of the CIO, to a man, believes in the eternal existence of the capitalist system in the same way as a small town banker in Iowa. These labor leaders have been correctly described as the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class."

LEWIS-STALINIST ALLIANCE FROM 1936-1939

At the time of the Stalin-Hitler pact, Lewis had been in an alliance with the Stalinists for more than three years. He had thereby secured the aid of their well-oiled national machine in his early organizing activities. He thought he could use them and outsmart

them. Throughout this period, Lewis constantly received indignant protests of the union membership against the union-wrecking activities of the Stalinist crew. The West Coast sailors and firemen protested against the wrecking of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific. A petition signed by four powerful unions of Los Angeles, the ILGWU, the Auto Workers, the Rubber Workers and the SW-OC, submitted a detailed account of the autocratic rule and union-wrecking activities of Bridges and his crew, and demanded the removal of Bridges as CIO West Coast director. Beginning with 1938, the factional maneuvers of the Stalinists in the Auto Workers' Union became a national scandal, etc., etc. Lewis heard all of these protests, received all of these requests and petitions, but did not budge an inch.

In addition Lewis was well aware of the rotten union agreements that the Stalinists signed in the NMU, the Longshoreman's Union, etc., etc.—agreements which were a disgrace to the labor movement. Lewis knew of the hounding and expulsion of union militants, in the West Coast office workers, in the east coast NMU, in the Gulf NMU, where Curran practically wrecked the local unions in order to rid himself of a rank and file opposition. Lewis was cognizant of these facts, but he forgave and forgot. He was so liberal, as to even condone outright scabbing, as occurred last year, when Bridges led a crew of workers through the picket lines of the Sailors Union of the Pacific. Why not? Judging by Lewis's own labor record and methods, he probably considered all these practices as wholly legitimate and certainly permissible.

LEWIS' BREAK WITH THE STALINISTS BEGINS

But when the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed and the American Communist Party found itself under ferocious attack of all official "public opinion"—that neither Lewis nor Hillman nor Murray could ignore or tolerate. That called for action! Lewis decided then and there that the bloc with the Stalinists must be broken.

Of course, great democrats that they are, these labor leaders did not bother to inform anybody of their decision. The San Francisco CIO convention, meeting two months after the signing of the pact, proceeded about its business, without Lewis giving the delegates so much as a hint that a drastic revision in policy was forthcoming. The only inkling that something was brewing came at the end of the convention, when neither Bridges or Curran were elected as Vice-Presidents, positions they deserved, from the point of view of the prominence and importance of their unions.

WHY THE PURGE PROCEEDS SLOWLY

Since the Executive Board meeting, the purge of the Stalin-

ists has proceeded very slowly and hesitatingly. Lewis has discovered that it is not easy to drive the Stalinists out of the CIO. The Stalinists have been working in the new CIO unions from the ground up and have entrenched themselves in numerous strategic positions of influence and power. In many of these unions, as in the National Maritime Union, the West Coast Longshoreman, the Agricultural Workers, the United Electrical & Radio Workers, the white collar unions, the Furriers, etc., they control the entire union apparatus from top to bottom—the key locals as well as the International offices.

It is obviously impossible for Lewis to just walk in and purge the Stalinists in these unions without, at the same time, wrecking the unions. Lewis cannot afford to adopt such an adventurist policy at this time, in view of the fight with the AFL as well as the employers' anti-union offensive.

While Lewis has definitely broken with the Stalinists, the Stalinists are still trying to patch up their alliance with Lewis. They have not as yet changed their People's Front policy of hypocynacy and groveling before Lewis. To this day, every local Stalinist official prefaces every speech by a tribute to Lewis—the great leader who can do no wrong. This belly-crawling policy aims to hide behind Lewis' skirts, while pushing through in the unions the new Stalinist line.

The Stalinists are temporarily aided in these attempts, because of the episodic disagreement between Lewis and Hillman on the CIO attitude towards Roosevelt and the war crisis. The differences between Lewis and Hillman, however, are temporary and unimportant. They resolve themselves merely into a question of tactics.

BUT THE PURGE WILL GO ON

But the differences between Lewis and the Stalinists are profound and fundamental. Lewis is a labor lieutenant of the American capitalist class. His labor bureaucracy rests upon American capitalism. The Stalinist party is the American agency of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Between the two lies an unbridgeable gulf.

Lewis, and this is true of his whole machine, has so little class-consciousness that he is, right now, cooperating with the FBI, the detested anti-labor G-men, in order to gain a temporary factional advantage over the rival AFL unions. Lewis will hesitate infinitely less, as the war crisis sharpens and the army moves to jam the unions into the strait-jacket of the war machine, to cooperate with these same G-men to purge every Stalinist, big and small, out of the CIO.

(The fourth article of this series will appear next week.)

Greet the Delegates TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION of the Socialist Workers Party at the DINNER Sunday, April 7, 1940 DINNER SERVED 7 P.M. Beethoven Hall 210 East 5th St., N. Y. C. PRICE \$1.00 All reservations must be in not later than Saturday, April 6. Call ALgonquin 4-8547 or mail reservations to 116 University Place.