

The Negro Question
by Robert L. Birchman

Is Ethiopian Revolt Growing?

A dispatch from London to the Chicago Defender of July 13 gives details of Ethiopian struggle against Italian armies which, if true, are a very significant development in the colonial struggle for freedom. Ordinarily such a dispatch, date-lined from London, would have to be taken with a grain of salt, for the British naturally are interested in painting a picture of Italy in difficulties. But this particular dispatch cannot be dismissed as British propaganda, for it is written by George Padmore, West Indian Negro, who is an irreconcilable defender of colonial peoples against British imperialism. Padmore during the same week-end sent a dispatch to the Pittsburgh Courier which reports that the Senegalese soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk to England have refused to join the British-sponsored French Legion under General de Gaulle and have chosen to return to Africa. Dispatches like that are not sent by British propagandists!

"Mussolini, despite all reports to the contrary," writes Padmore, "is faced with serious and ever-increasing trouble in Ethiopia. Since his declaration of war, Ethiopian patriots have increased their offensive against Italian garrisons in various parts of Ethiopia."

"These men, far from being discouraged and disorganized rabble that Italian propaganda makes them out to be, are a disciplined guerrilla force, capable of swift movement and deadly attacking power on lines of communications."

"Most of them are armed with modern weapons, the greater part of which they themselves have seized from Italian columns and convoys raised at night..."

"What is significant is that there are many Italians operating with the Ethiopian guerillas. Although native forces are mainly officered by their own fellow countrymen, they have an ever-growing number of Italians with them and, according to my informant, there is much discontent among the ranks of Italian unemployed (in the colonies)..."

"There are also thousands of Italian native soldiers, especially Somalis, deserters from the fascist forces, now fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Ethiopians."

If Padmore has accurately sifted his information, this resurgence of Ethiopian struggle is a serious threat to Italy.

Roosevelt Branded Jim-Crow

Perhaps nothing makes clearer the difference between the special problems of the Negro workers and those of the white workers than their respective relations to the army and navy. The class-conscious white worker has already advanced to the point where he should be fighting for universal military training under control of the trade unions, for workers' officers, and against conscription and enlistment under government control. The advanced Negro worker, on the other hand, still has the task of fighting for the right of Negroes to enlist in the army and navy—a right which the advanced white worker will, of course, support.

A bitter attack on Roosevelt as a jim-crow president appears in the July 13 issue of the Pittsburgh Courier. It says in part:

"The Editor of the Pittsburgh Courier requests an appointment for the purpose of discussing the jim-crow system in the armed forces of the nation that relegates colored citizens to the category of servants and laborers..."

"But the President's secretary replies that the Chief Executive is too busy to 'permit an appointment,' and insults the intelligence of the Editor and the millions for whom he speaks by pretending that the vicious jim-crow system exists because there is such a small turnover in existing jim-crow military organizations that there is no room for more Negroes..."

"No matter how busy colored people will be next year, they will have to help pay the billions that have recently been appropriated for the support of the national defense machine. To put it mildly, they do not consider it a democratic procedure to take their money for the upkeep of an institution which they are scarcely permitted to enter and in which they are prevented from exercising full opportunity."

"They cannot reconcile the wholesale discouragement of Negro applicants for Army and Navy enlistment with the frantic drive for white recruits..."

"They are unable to see why some of the new warships which their money is helping to build cannot be manned by colored citizens in the face of so much talk about our 'people's Navy'..."

"They feel that the President should sit down and frankly discuss this matter with one who represents them and has led the fight for them, make some definite statement about it one way or the other, and do something as commander-in-chief of the armed forces that would lead them to have confidence in his good intentions."

"But the President's secretary writes that he is 'too busy'."

"It is well to mention that eight years ago Mr. Hoover was also 'too busy'."

Negro Printers Get Union Charter

The North American Printing Pressmen and Assistants Union (AFL) granted a charter to some 20 Negro printers and pressmen of Atlanta, Georgia last month and thereby partially bettered a shameful situation created by the International Typographical Union. The ITU had refused to grant these Negroes a charter or membership in other locals; an appeal to the last national convention of the ITU to remove a jim-crow clause from its constitution was unsuccessful. For nearly two years this ugly situation lasted.

Finally the pressmen's international came through with a charter.

This is an important step in breaking down ily-white unionism in the South. But we hope that another group of Negroes in another Southern city starts pounding on the doors of the ITU. The next fight will, we hope, be conducted with more publicity. The Atlanta group fought with a little too much privacy.

Democrats Offer Four More Years of Crisis

(Continued from Page 1)
sighted businessmen who saw eye to eye with Roosevelt on foreign policy.

The maximum of support must be arranged as quickly as possible for France and England, America's fortresses in Europe, Wall Street agreed, and continuity of Roosevelt in office was a minor price to pay for continuity and acceleration of his foreign policy. On June 10, the day Roosevelt made his Charlottesville speech, pledging "the material resources of this nation" to the aid of England and France, he unquestionably had the backing of the most powerful sections of the capitalist class. Had the situation remained as it was that day, the November elections would have been a walk-away.

New Foreign Perspective

But the situation quickly changed. France capitulated, and the possibility of Britain holding out became slight. In that eventuality, the American capitalist class had to drop the perspective of immediate aid to Germany's opponents. For without Britain and France as fortresses from which to fight Germany, America had to think of a different kind of a war and of a different time perspective.

Instead of preoccupying itself with providing arms for France and Britain, American imperialism must think now first of tightly organizing the entire Western Hemisphere as its base of operations. Instead of the problem of sending to England and France as many airplanes and munitions as could be manufactured within the next few months, the exclusion of England and France from American calculations meant that the war problem becomes one of a longer view, of organizing America as the direct challenger of German imperialism.

Roosevelt Now Dispensable

That changed perspective toppled Roosevelt from his pedestal as the man of the hour. That changed perspective transformed the Republican convention from the gloom of its preliminaries to a new-born hope of success by the time Willkie was nominated. The lavish praise heaped upon Roosevelt by Wall Street spokesmen during the early days of June was turned off like a faucet; after all, if they were going to have a little time to prepare for the struggle for world supremacy, these big businessmen would prefer to have one of their own men in the White House and not a fidgety agent who, moreover, was losing his mass appeal.

Furthermore, the new perspective involves the need for "peaceful" maneuvers with Hitlerized Europe; Roosevelt is too hope-

lessly labeled as a friend of Hitler's foes; a man starting with a clean slate would be more useful in the preliminary rounds of the coming world battles.

Roosevelt Recognizes Change

The changed perspective for foreign policy had to be recognized by Roosevelt himself, before the convention opened. His July 10 message to Congress contained that lawyer's formula: "we will not send our men to take part in European wars." Though, upon examination, it is meaningless as a commitment against sending soldiers overseas—he could still send them for American wars!—it would never have been uttered by Roosevelt had the situation not changed so drastically since his Charlottesville speech exactly a month before. Bankhead and Barkley's speeches followed suit.

Unable to offer the masses more than a continuation of their present plight, and shorn of their talking-point of an immediate national emergency—no wonder the delegates at Chicago were none too enthusiastic.

Best None Too Good

They drafted Roosevelt because he was still their best candidate; who else could they put up? But they had the distinct feeling that their best was none too good in the new situation. Twice Roosevelt had provided the best-possible fig leaf for their party—that incredible bloc of Southern poll-tax Bourbons, corrupt big-city machines and workers' votes.

But all they could offer the working masses, now, was maintenance of the status quo. That isn't much. And the more far-seeing of the delegates understood it well enough. Even if the workers don't have a real alternative—a Labor Party—they can still vote with their feet. If enough of them do, Willkie will be elected. That very real possibility haunted the Democratic convention.

Behind the Lines

British Maneuver to Stave Off Japanese Action Before German Assault

by GEORGE STERN

On the eve of the German attack on the British Isles, Britain is maneuvering in a hasty and desperate effort to ward off Japanese blows on its wholly unprotected Asiatic flank. Last week the Japanese, dazzled by the prospects opened up for them by the disappearance of British power from the East, began putting the heat on. Their first step was to choke off the Burma supply route to China, just as they have already closed the rail and road links between French Indochina and the Chinese southwest.

Japanese forces began ringing the south China British citadel of Hongkong. The British authorities there, thrown into a real panic, started evacuating their women and children. On July 13 the British yielded and announced that

Will Workers Vote For Roosevelt?

Will the great majority of the workers vote for Roosevelt? At first glance this may seem to be a simple question. There is no Labor Party, thanks to the trade union bureaucracy. To vote for Norman Thomas cannot but seem pointless even to militant workers; for the Socialist party of Thomas offers them neither a militant program of immediate tasks nor a revolutionary way out; its middle-class gentility makes it alien to the workers. As for voting for Browder, the realization that the Communist party is not a free agent for workers' action, but an obedient tool of the Kremlin, used for reactionary ends, has pervaded the militant workers. Too many of them have seen the reactionary role of the Stalinists in the trade unions.

Faced, then, by little more than a choice between Roosevelt and Willkie, won't the workers vote for Roosevelt? Even if the distinction between the two is slight—and the masses in the trade unions understand this better than they are given credit for—what else is there for the workers to do except to vote for Roosevelt?

So it might seem. But we venture to say that at least some of the shrewd analysts in the Democratic machine are not so sure.

LESSONS OF THE OHIO PRIMARIES

The recent primaries in the heavily industrialized state of Ohio have given these analysts food for thought. In the chief proletarian centers of that state, labor-indorsed men uniformly failed to win the primaries. Despite the backing of the CIO and AFL (in some cases of both), they were defeated by openly reactionary candidates. They could easily have been elected by the masses of workers who were registered in previous elections as Democrats.

The difference between the labor-indorsed candidates and their opponents was not sufficiently inspiring to galvanize the workers to go and vote for the men their union leaders designated as "friends of labor." In previous elections, notably in 1936, they had heeded the exhortations of their union leaders and voted—

for "friends of labor" like Governor Davey who broke the "little steel" strike shortly afterward with the use of the National Guard. This time the exhortations fell on deaf ears.

They could only have been brought out to the primaries if they were being asked to support bona-fide labor candidates—and that could only mean a Labor Party. Anything less than that, even a union-card-holding Democrat, wasn't enough to bring them out.

FARMER-LABOR DEFEAT SHOULD TROUBLE DEMOCRATS

Minnesota trade unionists can offer testimony which can only add to the fears of the Democrats. With the onset of the economic crisis, Governor Olson led the Farmer-Labor Party to one victory after another. After his death his successor in the party, Governor Benson, was able to score an enormous electoral majority. When Benson ran for reelection against the Stassen Republican machine in 1938 the Benson machine took for granted an easy victory. Didn't they have the support of the labor movement and the farmers?

The progressive trade union leaders in Minneapolis knew better. They warned the Farmer-Labor politicians, but the latter dismissed the warnings with irritated contempt. The Socialist Workers Party of Minnesota issued an "Open Letter to Governor Benson," warning that the workers and farmers were not going to assure the election. We pointed out that the watered-down program of the Farmer-Labor Party—by that time it was little more than a left wing of the Democrats, working with them nationally in return for state support—was not going to inspire the workers and farmers to turn out for Benson. Only a radical re-

orientation of the Farmer-Labor party, a new program of bold demands on behalf of the unemployed and the farmers, could win the election.

Benson's "brain trust" rejected these proposals. They took the labor movement for granted, as something they had in their pocket.

So the Farmer-Laborites concentrated their attention on the more prosperous farmers, the main group they were worried about.

Stassen won the election by a whopping majority. The more prosperous farmers voted for him despite all the efforts of Benson. The neglected workers and poorer farmers either did not vote at all or, particularly in the rural sections, voted for Stassen.

What is more, an analysis of solid working class wards in Minneapolis showed that good union men, militants, had in many cases voted for Stassen. Men who would not dream of violating a union decision in the economic field, men who were ready to go on the picket line at a moment's notice, had voted against the unions' appeals. Why? It is hard to put it in a few words. They were sick of Benson, outraged by his disloyalty toward the unions, disgusted by his pretense of being a friend of labor. That Stassen would be no better they could well understand. But faced with a choice between the two, they got even with the s-o-b who had already been the governor.

The atmosphere around the Democratic campaign today is reminiscent of Benson's 1932 campaign. The alert analysts of the Democratic party will be losing many a night's sleep worrying about this problem—a problem which is insoluble for any capitalist party or, for that matter, for any party committed to the existing system.

Social Democrats Try Hard to Blur Lesson of France

By FELIX MORROW
If you read the labor and liberal press, you have been reading three basically differing stories about the events in France: (1) the bourgeois-democratic and social-democratic—these two tell essentially the same story; (2) that told by the Stalinists; (3) the story which we, the revolutionary Marxists, tell.

The differences between our account of the French debacle and those of the Stalinists and social democrats are not merely one of "interpretation." Facts, as Lenin used to say, are stubborn things; some facts, if true, make impossible a given interpretation of the events. Hence no one can, with a wave of his hand about differing interpretations, avoid the task of determining what the facts are; he must then accept only that interpretation which flows from those facts.

In the coming weeks I shall deal with the Stalinists. Here I wish to add a few comments to what I said last week about the falsification of the facts about France by the social democrats. To its previous lies the latest New Leader, organ of the Social Democratic Federation, adds new distortions.

A New Alibi For French "Democracy"

The New Leader, apparently recovering somewhat from the hysteria induced by the transformation into fascists of its idols of yesterday, no longer repeats such obviously fantastic lies as the one about a "fascist putsch," which was its previous explanation for the transformation of French democracy into totalitarianism. Its July 13 issue attempts a more subtle apology for the French bourgeoisie.

Here are typical paragraphs:
"This week, to a world mourning defeat after defeat of democratic forces, came the heartening news that Leon Blum, Paul Reynaud swathed in bandages, and scores of other French democratic leaders were in Vichy fighting to keep alive the French tradition of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

"The attempt to force upon the country a fascist constitution with the consent of a rump parliament met its first resistance from a group of deputies and senators headed by Herriot, president of the Chamber, who succeeded in forcing the government to submit the constitution to a plebiscite. This in itself may save the Third Republic, but it is symptomatic of the coming political battles in France, the consequences of which may be profound."

"Herriot also took the lead in repelling the shameful plan of the counter-revolutionary government to throw a sop to Berlin and Rome by trying Daladier, Mandel and other political leaders for alleged responsibility for the war. Leon Blum, one of the men upon whom the hatred of the reaction is centered, appeared challengingly at Vichy, ready to face the music and give battle."

It is easy enough to show that this stuff is compounded of untruths and half-truths. For example: Herriot's "leadership" against fascism actually consisted of (1) complete silence on his part as he presided at the Chamber of Deputies' session which ratified the totalitarian proposals; (2) at the subsequent joint session of the Chamber and the Senate, Herriot was so r-r-revolutionary as . . . to register his abstention on the vote; (3) if it was so wonderful for Herriot to defend Daladier, then Laval is also wonderful, for according to a July 10 A.P. report Laval defended Daladier and other absentees, and complained that they had been prevented from participating by the armistice commission's refusal to provide transportation from North Africa.

But untruths about this individual or that is not the main crime committed in the New Leader accounts. The main crime is that these accounts deliberately seek to evoke, with references to Herriot, Blum, Reynaud, the impression that—though defeated and with a few defections—the "democratic leaders" of yesterday substantially remain alive today. At all costs the "New Leader" will not tell the simple fact: that the same French bourgeoisie which held power yesterday by leaning on the workers' organizations, today holds power by leaning on Hitler and a French military dictatorship—but yesterday and today it is the same French bourgeoisie. At all costs the "Marxists" of the New Leader will not use the Marxian categories of classes: for them there is no bourgeoisie, there are only "democrats" and "fascists." That yesterday's democrats become today's fascists—that is something which the New Leader seeks to suppress as much as it can, for central to its ideology is the myth that there is an impenetrable wall between bourgeois democracy and fascism.

New Leader's Method

As in other aspects of their degeneracy, the method employed in the above quotations by the social democrats is identical with that employed by the Stalinists. In China, for example, the Comintern swore by Chiang-Kai-Shek in 1925-27; then Chiang ceased to lean on the Comintern, changing to leaning on the imperialists; whereupon Wang-ching-wei took Chiang's place in the plaudits of the Comintern; when Wang capitulated to Chiang, the Comintern transferred its praise to the banner of the (bourgeois) Kuomintang. In America the same business is taking place with Roosevelt and John L. Lewis.

The same method is employed by the social democrats. Yesterday they swore by Weygand and Petain; now these are traitors, and the praise goes to Herriot and Reynaud; if tomorrow these capitulate, maybe General de Gaulle (whom nobody ever heard of until June 15) will remain; if not, some bourgeois democrat might still be found; if not, there will always be Blum, as for the Stalinists there are always the Browders.

The method consists of avoiding like the plague all fundamental Marxist categories: bourgeoisie and proletariat, the nature of bourgeois democracy, the nature of imperialism, the nature of this epoch of the death agony of capitalism. Instead, Stalinism and social democracy are content with two fundamental categories: "good men" and "bad men."

Youth Congress Shows Stalinists Preparing to Drop "Anti-War" Line

The half-turn taken by the Stalinists, publicly recorded at the American Youth Congress sessions at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, July 3-7, was reported in last week's Appeal. Some further details now available may help to indicate the exact significance of this latest Stalinist move.

The new Stalinist orientation was significant not only for what it said, but also for what it did not say. The Stalinist fraction's "Declaration of the American Youth Congress on National Defense" includes no specific pronouncement against economic aid to the British. It makes no attack upon the tremendous ten billion dollar defense program, and does not even mention Roosevelt's name where, formerly, he would be the focal point of attack as the leader of the pro-war orientation.

In the midst of fears expressed about the danger of American involvement in war, there suddenly springs out of the document a denunciation of "proposals for American participation in a new Munich at the expense of the people of our own and other lands." That is, pure "collective security" stuff of the 1935-1939 vintage!

The key sections of the "Declaration" are best understood in the light of the circumstance in which it was introduced.

The one specific peace activity proposed for the American Youth Congress, anti-conscription, was under discussion. (It looks at this writing as though the Democratic convention is going to take this proposal for its own!) Joseph Lash, spokesman for the pro-Roosevelt forces, was arguing that the anti-conscription resolution did not provide for emergencies, such as invasion of the country.

STALINISTS MEET LASH HALF WAY—AND MORE

It was then that Mac Weiss, Young Communist League president, proposed that the anti-conscription resolution be prefaced by the "declaration on national defense." That was more than satisfactory to Lash, for here are the two key paragraphs in the "declaration":

"We declare our readiness to contribute to the great task of defending our country and our democratic rights against any

attack of enemies from within, as in France. We are prepared to support whatever measures may be necessary for such defense of our nation and our inalienable rights and liberties to which we are entitled under the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights."

"In any war in which our country may be engaged, we—the youth—will be the first to suffer, the first to shed our blood, the first to die. Our readiness to make every sacrifice in a just cause gives us the right to insist that we shall be called upon to make such sacrifice only in a just cause. It gives us the right to insist that our needs and aspirations, our aims and ideals be incorporated into the heart of any program elaborated for the defense of our country."

There is the meat of the declaration: leaving the way open to finding a just cause—under the present, capitalist government of the United States—for which it is O.K. to die. Stalin and Roosevelt or Roosevelt's successor, when they agree on that just cause, will dictate it to a willing American Youth Congress.

MEANWHILE THE LINE COMBINES IRRECONCILABLES

Pending that Stalin-Roosevelt agreement, the American Youth Congress, like all other Stalinist institutions, will continue to peddle a mixture of the post-Hitler pact "anti-war" line and broad hints of the coming new line.

A grotesque example provided by the Youth Congress in its resolution on the colonies. It achieves the feat of combining Roosevelt's line of opposing transfer of colonies from one power to another (i.e., from Britain and France to Germany), with a "demand" for colonial independence! It resolves "that the Sixth American Youth Congress stands opposed to the transfer of colonies from one power to another, and supports the fight of colonial peoples to secure their independence." That "and" connects two absolutely incompatible propositions! It is therefore the fitting symbol of the present stage of the Stalinist line.

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