

The Negro Struggle

By ALBERT PARKER

Lenin and the Negroes

Those who are interested in the struggle of the Negro people for full equality have special reason to remember Lenin on this anniversary of his death.

For Lenin, more than any other man of our time, contributed toward an understanding and solution of the problems facing the Negro people. And his contributions were not only in a general sense, but in a specific sense as well; not only on a national, but on a world scale; not only in the sphere of general politics, but in the internal sphere of the revolutionary movement.

It is the general program of Leninism which will guide the workers, colored and white, to their victory over the capitalist system and put an end to its wars, fascism, unemployment, racial discrimination. Lenin taught that the workers must take power away from the bosses: take away their power to hire and fire, their power to control the factories and discriminate against Negroes in hiring and classification of work; take away their control of the armed forces through their mercenary hirelings, the officer caste, whom they train to Jim Crow the Negro; take away their control of the press, the schools, the church, the movies, all of which they use to perpetuate the system of "white supremacy," and thus keep white and colored workers divided and the bosses in power.

Workers, said Lenin, take power into your own hands. Set up your own government, run it yourselves in your own interests. That is the only way to do away with war, unemployment, racial and national divisions.

And the Soviet Union of Lenin's time showed that this was true, that it was only under workers' power that the many different racial and national groups of that country could live together in peace and equality.

Lenin's greatest contribution in this field was in connection with the colonial and national question, that is, the solution of the world Negro problem.

What Lenin Taught Us

In his famous theses on this task, adopted at the Second Congress of the Third International, he analyzed the failure of the radical movements of the past to understand this problem. "The Second International failed to appreciate the importance of the colonial question. For them the world did not exist outside of Europe. They could not see the necessity of co-ordinating the revolutionary movement of Europe with those in the non-European countries. Instead of giving moral and material help to the revolutionary movement in the colonies, the members of the Second International themselves became imperialists."

Lenin pointed out that as long as the capitalists in the imperialist countries could squeeze and bleed super-profits out of the natives in the colonies, they would be strong enough at home to resist the workers and remain in power and that, consequently, the workers in these advanced countries must help and strengthen the struggles of the colonies against their joint enemy and oppressor, the imperialists.

It was Lenin's teachings, therefore, which developed the comradely attitude of the revolutionary workers toward the millions of oppressed colored peoples throughout the world, and made them understand the necessity of assisting in every way the struggle of the colored peoples for independence.

Stalin and the Negroes

The Communist International, which has degenerated under Stalin from the vanguard of the revolution to the watchdog of the bureaucrats in the Kremlin, still pretends to honor the memory and carry out the teachings of Lenin. There is no better yardstick for measuring the hypocrisy of the Stalinists than contrasting their practice on the colonial question with Lenin's teachings.

During the period 1935-39, when they were waging the democratic imperialists to get a pact with Stalin, they dropped the colonial peoples overboard. "Instead of giving moral and material help," they ignored or sabotaged the struggles in the colonies, because they wanted to get the good will of the capitalists who oppress these colonies. In the quotation above, Lenin used the strongest terms in denouncing the Second International for doing this. We can be sure that his language would have been no more gentle about Stalin's shipping of oil to Italy during the invasion of Ethiopia.

For All Races!

Just as Lenin clarified the attitude of the revolutionary movement toward the colonial people, so did he revolutionize its attitude toward the colored people in the capitalist countries. Here is what he said on it in the Statutes, adopted by the Communist International's Second Congress.

"The Communist International once forever breaks with the traditions of the Second International which in reality only recognized the white race. The Communist International makes it its task to emancipate the workers of the entire world. The ranks of the Communist International fraternally unites men of all colors: white, yellow, and black—the toilers of the entire world."

This was of especial significance for us here in the United States, where the Negro people, who form so large a proportion of the exploited population, had been completely overlooked or only formally recognized in the propaganda and organizational work of the Socialist Party, in much the same way that its parent body, the Second International, had treated the colonial question.

It is necessary to support the movement for real equality among the American Negroes. Lenin pointed out in the theses on the colonial question, and thereby he opened the eyes of the American revolutionists to the unbreakable connection between the struggle of the Negroes for equality and the struggle for the social revolution.

Lenin On The Platform ---- By Leon Trotsky

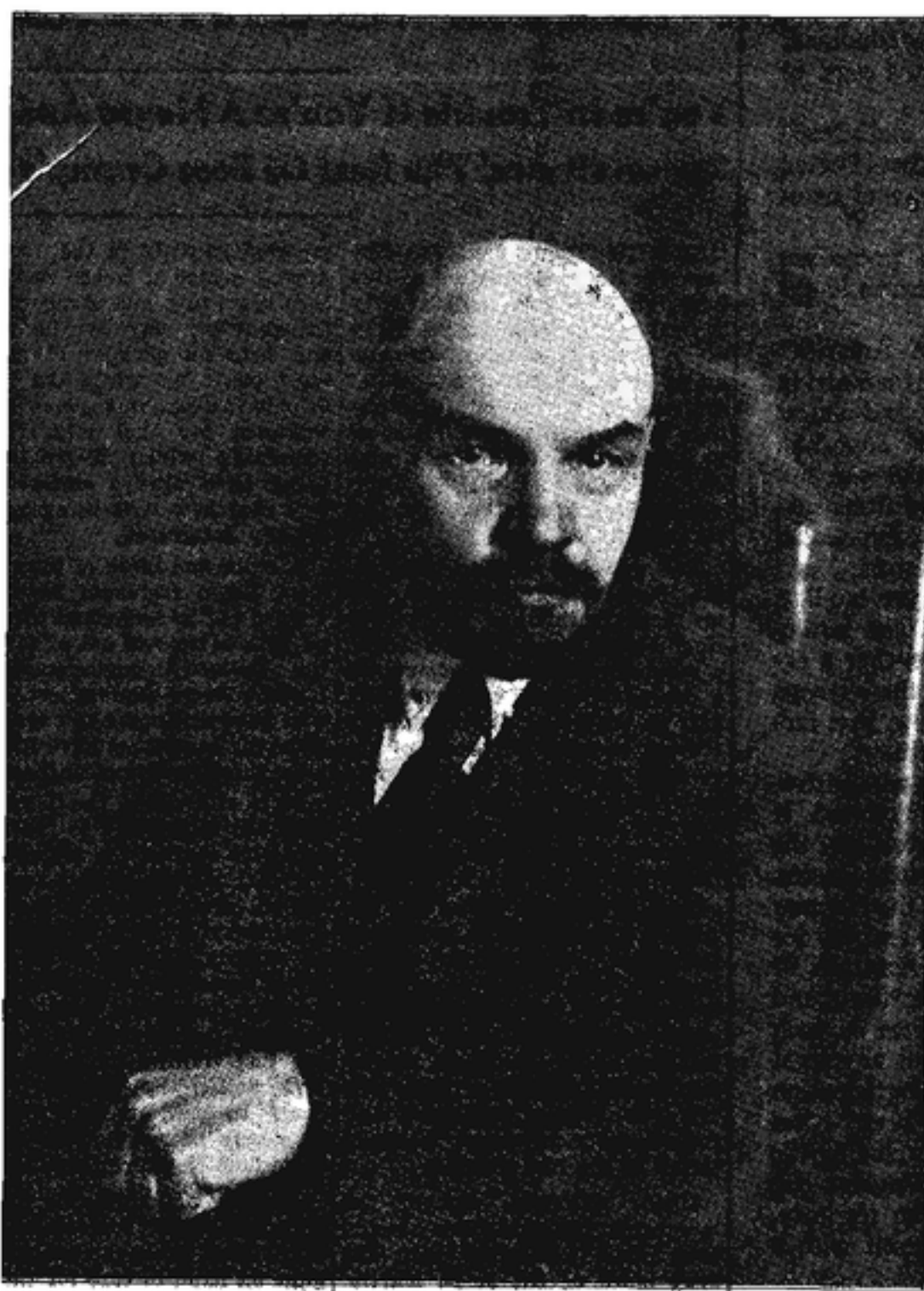
This is the first anniversary of Lenin's death that Trotsky is not alive to commemorate. Trotsky wrote the following article shortly after Lenin's death, during Trotsky's convalescence from a serious illness. Trotsky's article was published in Moscow in 1924 by the State Publishing House, as part of a volume, "On Lenin, Materials for a Biographer".

After the October revolution many photographs of Lenin were taken and movies were also made. His voice was recorded on the phonograph. His speeches were transcribed by stenographers and were then published. All the elements of Vladimir Ilyich are thus available. But they remain only—the elements. The living personality consists of the unrepeatable and always dynamic combination of these elements.

I am trying to evoke Lenin in my mind with a fresh eye and fresh ear, as if seeing and hearing him on the platform for the first time, and I see a strong, pliant figure of medium height and I hear an even, fluent voice speaking very rapidly, with a slight lisp, without interruptions, almost without a pause and, in the initial stages, without any special inflection.

The introductory phrases are, as a rule, general, the tone is that of probing; the speaker's entire figure seems not to have found its equilibrium as yet; the gesture has yet to take shape, the eyes seem to gaze inwardly; the features of the face appear sullen and even exasperated—the idea is probing for an approach to the audience. This introductory phase lasts for a longer or shorter period of time, depending upon the audience, the topic, the speaker's mood. But now the speaker has found the trail. The theme begins to unfold. The upper part of his body tilts forward, the thumbs slide under the armpits into the vest. And this twofold movement immediately causes the head and the hands to jut forward. The head does not, in and of itself, seem large on this well-knit, strong, not-tall and rhythmic body. But the forehead and the ridges on the bald skull appear enormous. The hands are very agile but not fidgety or nervous. The wrists are broad, chunky, "plebian", strong. They, like the entire body, denote dependability and virile good nature. Before this can be perceived, however, the speaker must catch fire internally, as he exposes an opponent's cunning ruse, or succeeds himself in laying a trap. Then from beneath the mighty canopy of forehead and skull the Leninist eyes appear (which were just barely caught by a lucky photograph taken in 1919). Even an indifferent listener, catching this glance for the first time will become on guard and sit up in expectation. In such moments the angular cheek bones were illumined and softened by a profoundly shrewd indulgence, behind which could be sensed a vast knowledge of men, of inter-relationships and situations—down to nethermost subsoil. The lower part of his face with its reddish-gray growth seemed to remain in the shadows. The voice became softer, more flexible and—at times—slyly ingratiating.

But now the speaker is bringing up a possible objection of an opponent or citing a vicious quotation from an enemy's article. Before he proceeds to analyze the hostile idea, he gives you to understand that the objection is groundless, superficial or false. He disengages his fingers from behind the vest, tilts his body



back a little, retreats a few short paces, as if to make room for a running start and—either ironically, or with a look of despair—shrugs his steep shoulders, spreads his hands with the thumbs expressively extended. He always prefaces a refutation by condemning his opponent, deriding or disgracing him—depending on the opponent and the circumstances. It is as if the listener were forewarned what sort of proof to expect, and how to attune his mind. Then the logical offensive is launched. The left hand either seeks out again the vest, or more frequently the trouser pocket. The right accompanies the logic of the exposition and beats off its rhythm. When ever necessary, the left hand lends assistance. The speaker heads toward his audience, strides to the very edge of the platform, leans forward and with rounded gestures of his hands moulds his words. This means that the central idea, the main point of the entire speech has been reached.

If opponents are present in the audience, the speaker is greeted from time to time with critical or hostile heckling. Nine times out of ten these remain unanswered. The speaker intends to say what he has to say; say it to those whom he is addressing; in whatever way he feels it must be said. He is not to be sidetracked by chance remarks. Hasty wit is alien to his concentrated thought. Following hostile exclamations his voice only becomes more harsh, his sentences more compact and aggressive, the formulations grow sharper, the gestures more abrupt. He catches up the hostile heckle only if it coincides with the general trend of his ideas,

and can aid him to reach the necessary conclusions more quickly. Then his answers are entirely unexpected and annihilating in their simplicity. Pointblank he lays bare a situation which, according to all expectations, he should have sought to camouflage. The Mensheviks went through this experience more than once during the initial period of the revolution when charges of violations of democracy still had a ring of novelty. "Our newspapers have been shut down!" "Of course! But unfortunately not all of them as yet. They will all be shut down presently. The dictatorship of the proletariat will destroy at its very roots this shameful traffic in bougeois opium!" The speaker has straightened up. Both hands are in the pockets. There is not even a hint of posing, in the voice not a trace of oratorical modulation—instead the entire figure, the angle of the head, the compressed lips, the cheek bones, the slightly hoarse timbre of the voice all radiate an indomitable confidence in his correctness and his truth. "If you want to fight, then, come on, let's really fight."

Whenever the speaker lashes out not at an enemy but at one of "his own", it can be felt both in the gestures and the voice. The most frenzied attack in these cases preserves the character of "bringing to reason". Occasionally the speaker's voice breaks off on a high note. This happens whenever he swoops down on "a friend", exposes him, tries to put him to shame, proves that the opponent understands exactly nothing and is unable to adduce so much as a scintilla in support of his objections. It is on these "exactly nothings" and "scintillas" that the voice now and then rises to a falsetto and breaks off, and this unexpectedly invests the angriest tirade with a semblance of good nature.

The speaker has completely thought out his idea in advance down to the ultimate, practical conclusion—the idea, but not the presentation, not the form of presentation, with the exception, perhaps of the most succinct, most pertinent and juiciest expressions and coined words which thereupon enter into the political life of the party and of the country as the ringing medium of exchange. The construction of the sentences is as a rule massive, clause accumulates on clause like geological strata, or on the contrary, a clause imbeds itself in the previous one. These constructions are a trial to the stenographers, and then to the editors. But through these massive phrases the intense and imperious idea cuts a strong and reliable highway for itself.

It is really true that the speaker is a profoundly educated Marxist, a theoretician and an economist, a man of enormous erudition? Why, it seems, at least every now and then, that some extraordinary self-taught man is speaking, who arrived at these conclusions through his own efforts, pondered all this in his own brain, in his own way, without any scientific equipment, without a scientific terminology and is now presenting it in his own manner. Why? Because the speaker has thought out the problem not only for himself but also for the mass, he has carried his mind through the experience of the masses and has completely removed from his presentation the theoretical scaffolding, which he had himself utilized when first approaching the problem.

It so happens, by the way, that on occasion the speaker ascends too swiftly on the ladder

of his thoughts, skipping two and three rungs at a time. This happens whenever a particular conclusion is all too clear to him, is of great practical urgency and the audience must become acquainted with it as quickly as possible. But now he has sensed that the listeners cannot keep up with him, that the bond between him and the audience has been disrupted. He immediately takes himself in hand and with a single leap descends in order to begin his ascent anew but this time with a more tranquil and measured stride. The voice itself, free of any extra strain, becomes altered and subtly persuasive. The construction of the speech naturally suffers from this duplication. But is a speech designed for its construction? Is there any worth-while logic in a speech other than the logic which compels action?

And when the orator arrives for a second time at his conclusion, this time bringing all his listeners along, not losing a single one on the way, a rejoicing at the satisfactory culmination of the intense labor of the collective mind can be physically felt in the hall. It remains to tap the conclusion twice or thrice more in order to reinforce it; give it a simple, lucid and pictorial expression for memory's sake; and then it is permissible to take a breathing spell, joke and laugh a little, so that the collective mind is better able in the interim to absorb its new conquest.

Lenin's oratorical humor is as simple as all his other devices, if it is possible to speak of devices in this connection. In Lenin's speeches there is no self-sufficient wit, nor word-play but there is the joke, a salty, accessible to the masses, in the real sense of the term, a folk-joke. If there is nothing too alarming about the political situation, if the audience is predominantly "his own" then the speaker is not averse to a little "horse-play" in passing. The audience heartily welcomes the sly-simple adage, the good natured-merciless characterization, sensing that this, too, is intended not as a flourish but to serve the self-same goal.

When the speaker is about to jest, the lower part of his face becomes more prominent, especially the mouth capable of infectious laughter. The lines of forehead and skull seem to soften, the eyes stop boring like gimlets and twinkle with a merry light, the lips become more pronounced, the intensity of the virile idea is softened with a love for living and humaneness.

In Lenin's speeches, as in all his work, the outstanding trait is purposefulness. The speaker is not engaged in constructing a speech but in guiding toward a specific conclusion—action. He approaches his audience in diverse ways; he explains, he reasons, he shames, he jokes, again he reasons and once again explains. What unifies his speech is not a formal plan but a clear, practical goal, rigidly delineated for the current period, which must imbed itself in the consciousness of the audience as a splinter enters the flesh. His humor is likewise subordinated to this. The joke is utilitarian. The colorful newly-coined word has its practical purpose: to spur on some, to curb others. Among these are *Khovstom* (tail-endism) and *peredyshka* (breathing spell), and *Smychka* (alliance with the peasantry) and *drachka* (inner-party squabble) and *komchvanstvo* (communist snobbery) and scores of others which have not been perpetuated. Before he gets to such a word the speaker circles around as if in search of a suitable spot. Once that is located he affixes the nail, gauges the distance properly, takes a full swing and brings the hammer down on the head once, twice, ten times until the nail is driven in so firmly that it becomes difficult to dislodge it once the necessity for it no longer exists. When that occasion arises, Lenin will, uttering an adage, have to tap this nail from the right and from the left in order to loosen it, and tear it out and cast it into discard among the archives—to the great sorrow of those who had grown accustomed to it.

But now the speech draws to its conclusion. The balance sheet has been taken, the conclusions have been driven home securely. The speaker looks like a worker who is tired but whose job has been completed. From time to time he passes his hand over the naked skull beaded with perspiration. The voice loses its intensity like a fire dying down. The speech may now be concluded. But one need not expect a peroration, without which it would seem hardly possible to leave the platform. Others could not do it, but Lenin can. He does not conclude his speech oratorically. He finishes his work and puts a period. "If we understand this, if we do it, then we shall surely conquer."—such, not unfrequently, is the closing phrase. Or, "This is what we must set as our goal, not in words but in action." And sometimes, simply: "This is all I wanted to say to you." And nothing more. And such a conclusion is in complete harmony, with the nature of Lenin's eloquence and with Lenin's own nature, and it in no way chills the audience. On the contrary, it is precisely after such an "ineffective", "drab" ending that the audience seems, once again to grasp in a single eruption everything that Lenin gave in his speech, and bursts into stormy, grateful, ecstatic applause.

But having quickly picked up his slips of paper Lenin has already left the platform in order to escape the inevitable. His head is slightly drawn into his shoulders, chin down, the eyes withdrawn behind the brows, the moustache bristling almost angrily on an upper lip which curls upward in dissatisfaction. The applause mounts wave upon wave. Long Live Lenin... Leader... Ilyich... The never-to-be-duplicated head shimmer in the electric light amid the wild waves of applause. And when it seems that the whirlwind of enthusiasm has reached its highest intensity, suddenly through the roar the tumult and the handclaps, some youthful, shrill, happy and ecstatic voice cuts like a siren through a storm: Long Live Ilyich! And somewhere from the profoundest, palpating innermost depths of solidarity, love and enthusiasm a veritable cyclone rises in answer, a universal, indivisible roof-splitting shriek-shout: LONG LIVE LENIN!

April, 1924

Lenin's "Secret Weapon"

By FELIX MORROW

V. I. Lenin died on January 21, 1924, at the age of 54. He left behind him the most gigantic heritage ever bequeathed by one man. Nor is that heritage only in the Soviet Union and in his books and the minds of revolutionists; it is also in the minds and hearts of hundreds of millions of people in the capitalist world whom one would not ordinarily call revolutionists.

Yes, there are hundreds of millions under capitalist rulers who know that Lenin was opposed to the World War and branded as traitors to the working class those "socialists" who supported it; that he and Trotsky successfully led the October revolution and founded the Soviet Union as a workers' state. And, without being able to formulate it, these hundreds of millions know that the socialist revolution led by Lenin put an end to the first World War; in the midst of the hopelessness of the second World War they are hoping for another Lenin to lead them in putting an end to this war.

Let us keep clearly in our thoughts these hundreds of millions of the people as we commemorate the 17th anniversary of Lenin's passing. Our Memorial to Lenin is no empty ritual; that kind of mummery we leave to those who keep the dried mummy of Lenin on display in Moscow. We have much more pressing work. We have the profound responsibility of finding our way to the minds and hearts of those hundreds of millions who remember Lenin in their own way. We must ask ourselves: "What would Lenin have said to them today?" And equally important: "What would Lenin have learned from them today?" For Lenin could teach so richly precisely because he learned so fully from the masses whom he taught how to overthrow their oppressors.

"Say what is." Lenin never lied to or flattered the masses. In 1941 as in 1914 he would have told them the truth. Lenin wrote on November 1, 1914: "Imperialism has placed the fate of European

thing one learns in approaching Lenin but, more likely, the last. Especially difficult to grasp is it for those who merely read Lenin and do not try to carry out his theories in the actual life of the revolutionary party. On the other hand, workers who read but little but who devote their lives to the revolutionary party indicate often a profound understanding of Lenin's theory of the party. For Lenin's idea of the party is practical; it works; for serious revolutionists it becomes the only conceivable method of functioning in the working class; they find it hard to imagine why all real revolutionists did not hit upon Lenin's idea of the party.

WHY THE GERMAN REVOLUTION FAILED

Yet the terrible record of history tells us that there were great revolutionists who failed to grasp Lenin's conception and, because of that, led into the abyss revolutions which had every objective possibility of success. The German revolution of 1918 was thrown back because Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg and their associates, Leo Jogiches, Frank Mehring and Clara Zetkin failed to understand the Leninist concept of the revolutionary party. I make this statement not on my own authority but on that of our German comrades, who have had many bitter years to ponder the causes of the defeat of the German working class. All other causes they trace back to the mistaken notion of the role of the party held by the German left.

As early as 1904 Rosa Luxemburg saw that the leadership of the German Social Democratic party were conservatives and not revolutionists; as early as 1910, she and Liebknecht saw that Kautsky, leader of the "center" wing of the party and the international theorist of socialism, was made of the same stuff as the conserva-

tives. It is from 1910 that the German left begins. In all this they saw more clearly than Lenin, whose illusions concerning Kautsky were not shaken until the war began.

The German left was equal to the Bolsheviks in revolutionary courage in the struggle against the imperialism war. As a matter of historical fact, the most inspiring revolutionary act of the first three years of the war was Liebknecht's May Day speech of 1916. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky (though he had been President of the Petersburg Soviet in 1905) were as widely known or beloved among the great masses as were Liebknecht and Luxemburg.

Yet Lenin and Trotsky made the revolution, while Karl and Rosa and their comrades of Spartacus were without representation of any kind in the first German Congress of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils (soviets) and were murdered with impunity by Junker officers. Why? Superficial historians and anti-Leninists have tried to find the explanation in the difference between Russian and German conditions. The truth is quite simple. The German left did not begin to build a party in 1904, when Luxemburg realized the degeneration of the official leadership; nor did the German left begin to build a party in 1910, when she and Liebknecht correctly estimated Kautsky's degeneration; nor did they begin to build in 1914, when the full scope of that degeneration

* Max Shachtman, for instance, in *New Internationalist*, May, 1938. The German comrades appropriately answered him. *New Internationalist*, February, 1939. The reader interested in the roots of Shachtman's later degeneration will find them, in part, in his failure to understand the fundamental difference between the party conceptions of Lenin and Luxemburg.