

THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

The Negro and the War

VI

Nevertheless, if even we are agreed on the necessity of uniting the Negro masses against the war many American Negroes will say: "I agree with the Socialist Workers Party that the 15,000,000 Negroes in America have as their natural allies the 150,000,000 Negroes in the world and the millions of Indians, Burmese, Ceylonese, etc. If we all join together, that would be an immense force acting on a world scale. It is true also that the imperialists are so hard pressed for men and forces that they are arming and training these millions of colonials. But nevertheless we remain only 15,000,000 out of a population of some 130,000,000 people. The Africans in Africa, the Indians, in India will be concerned with their own struggles. We wish them well. But how can we here struggle against the vast numbers and the great power that are opposed to us."

It is a very good question, and the answer to it brings us to the very heart of the matter. We shall have to examine this very carefully. Whenever a problem like that faces us we should examine it in all its aspects, then examine similar situations in foreign countries, look back into our own history, see where the circumstances are alike and where they differ, and then attempt a conclusion.

A Lesson from History

The best example that we can start with is what happened in America some 75 years ago, when the Negroes gained their freedom. If all the American whites were agreed upon the fact that the Negroes should continue to be slaves, then the 4,000,000 Negroes of that time and their descendants would have continued to be slaves until they died, for they would never have been able to free themselves against the enormous odds that were arrayed against them. But all the whites were not united. There was a great division between the whites themselves, between the merchants, the industrialists, and the bankers of the North on the one hand, and the slave-owners of the South on the other. That was a fierce quarrel that had been going on for many years, and at last it reached a stage where it could only be settled by force of arms.

It was this terrific quarrel that led to the Civil War. And Lincoln and the North found that they could not win their battle against the South except by bringing the Negroes in. Lincoln never intended at the beginning to free the Negroes. Yet all men who fight a battle and wish to win it seek their allies where they can find them. So he enrolled the Negroes in the Northern army, and finally declared their emancipation from slavery. That is one of the great lessons of the Civil War. The division among the whites, and the necessity for Lincoln to seek assistance from Negroes.

Class Stands Against Class

Let us now look at what is happening in Europe at the present day and during the last twenty-five years. Everyone knows that a very bitter civil war has just taken place in Spain. The Spanish workers and peasants were on one side. The Spanish capitalists, the bankers, the great landlords, and their followers were on the other side. It is true that some Moors from Africa took part on the side of Franco. But that has nothing to do with the fundamentals of the question. What we must note is that in Spain, where no Negroes live, the workers and the peasants on the one hand, all the poor, fought very fiercely against the rich owners of the country. Unfortunately the workers and peasants lost. Yet we see that in a country where all the population is of the same color the various classes can fight desperately to decide which class shall be master.

Let us take another example. The whole world has heard of how brutally the German fascists treat the German workers. The fascists murder the workers' leaders, throw them into concentration camps, beat up the workers in the streets, cut their wages down, and treat them in the most brutal manner. But no Negroes live in Germany. This is a matter between whites and whites. The white capitalist class is in mortal conflict with the white workers. Jews have nothing to do with this at all. If there was not a single Jew in Germany, the leaders of the German workers would still be in concentration camps, and the working-class movement stamped upon.

The same thing has happened in Italy, where the workers and poor peasants have had their leaders murdered and their organizations destroyed by Mussolini and his fascists.

Let us take one final example: Russia in 1917. There the workers and peasants fought the same civil war against the nobles, the landlords, and the capitalists. Only in this case, the Russian workers and peasants won. The land was divided among the peasants. The workers took over the factories and the workers' government was established.

The Situation in America

Here then it is clear that during the last few years, not to mention other great examples in history, there have been developing terrific clashes in country after country where the population is all of one color. In the case of Russia, the workers and peasants won. In others they have definitely lost, for the time being. In other countries, as in Great Britain and in France, this struggle, the continual struggle of the classes, goes on, although for the time being it is hidden by the war.

Now let us look at America of 1939 in the light of what we have just discussed. We saw that in America 75 years ago the division between sections of the white population in America resulted in one side calling the Negroes to join and assist them in their struggle. Through this means the Negroes gained their emancipation. Although at the present time it may seem that all the whites, or at least most of them, are against the Negroes, oppress them, and discrim-

Hitler-Stalin Complete Partitioning of Poland, Japanese in New Drive

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Throughout eastern Europe, in the Baltic and Balkan states, there was shivering apprehension over the application of the Kremlin's "peace" policy to them. In Rome the wavering Mussolini was obviously impressed by the Nazi-Soviet demonstration and by the seeming impotence of the Allies on the western front. He still, however, made no move to burn any bridges in any direction.

There can be no doubt that the developments in Poland so far, taken together with the Soviet-Japanese truce, are proceeding according to deliberate plan. But the partners to this plan trust each other about as much as crooked gamblers. Stalin's march into Poland is not a march of liberation for the Ukrainians but a march for the self-protection of Stalin. A Stalin-dominated buffer state will fulfill the conditions of the Nazi-Soviet understanding so succinctly defined by Trotsky when he held this combination "needs distance" to work.

Masses Not Informed

It is not accidental that the Soviet masses learned of the troop movements hours after they had actually begun. These actions have nothing in common with the interests of the Russian people. They are concerned solely with the interests of the oligarchy that rules the Kremlin.

Despite his act of war, Stalin has proclaimed his continued neutrality and will probably sit tight on his new Polish domain until Hitler's hordes tear off another piece of southeastern Europe of which he can claim a share.

In both the military and diplomatic sense, the Allied camp is at the moment stymied and will consequently do as little as possible to aggravate their position. The next move, as usual, is Hitler's and all signs point to the Rumanian frontier as the next locale for the further development of the Hitler-Stalin "peace offensive" in Eastern Europe.

WORKERS' FORUM

ORIENT NOT SUFFICIENTLY DISCUSSED IN APPEAL

The question of the Orient in relation to United States imperialist aims is an aspect of the current world war crisis which deserves more than the almost total silence which the Socialist Appeal has accorded it since the beginning of the German-Polish crisis. We have repeated that the American imperialists' dream must be one of world domination; this means (1) the reduction of our European rivals to impotency and (2) an extensive program for an even larger navy and a huge conscript army for occupation in China.

George Stern, in his article in the Appeal, September 9, said, "The pressure on Britain in China has ceased. . . . His was the only comment on Japan appearing lately. There were two United Press dispatches which both prove the incorrectness of this statement and justify more attention to the question in our press:

World-Telegram, September 6—"The Japanese government has asked Britain and France to withdraw their army and naval forces from China 'on their own volition'."

Daily News, September 8—"This move might intensify tension between Japan and the United States if it should result in attempts by Japan to take over foreign concessions in China."

"The Navy ordered the aircraft carrier Langely to Manila, ostensibly to aid in the enforcement of Philippine neutrality. Unofficial observers believed this step, coupled with the fact that the main body of the American fleet remained concentrated in Pacific waters, was an indication that the United States stood ready to protect its traditional interests and policies in the Far East."

The Daily News followed this up with an editorial on September 11 demanding a naval blockade of Japan by Britain and the United States (i.e., the U.S.) to last until ". . . Japan pulled its armies out of China."

The perspective of a war with Japan (plus perhaps Germany and Russia as allies) means a long war, a considerable period of preparation. This preparation would necessitate more

dictatorial methods at home to crush opposition to greater exploitation and conscription. If a military dictatorship were chosen, what better course could be followed than that already indicated by Roosevelt in declaring a "limited" national emergency—even seeing to it that there was a real national emergency, that we were at war. But this war would not be declared primarily to save our stake in Europe by aiding militarily the bloc we have helped economically, no, its main purpose would be the creation of home conditions favorable for the launching of a long range program for the conquest of the Orient as a step to world domination. The war in Europe would be merely a precondition to such conquest for it would result in the utter exhaustion of our European rivals; it would be the occasion for our own armaments expansion.

This perspective could mean a declaration of war by the United States much sooner than the only perspective to which we are at present committed, i.e., a development similar to that of the last war—entering to save our stake. Our stake is much larger this time and I believe this perspective should be considered as another possibility, though not yet a probability. Walter O'Rourke

A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR OPEN AIR MEETINGS

I submit this suggestion for open air branch meetings.

At a regular hour, regular street corner, regular night, have one comrade give a fifteen minute to half hour talk on the "News of the Week," seen from the viewpoint of the workers. He would have to be well-prepared, be able to give a good Marxist interpretation of that week's news, and would have to stick to his subject—the news of the week.

The great success of bourgeois news weeklies, newspaper and radio commentators, indicates that such a regular feature of our outdoor meetings could attract many workers to come regularly to listen. Of course, it would flop if it were sloppily given, not prepared in advance, or not given by a well-informed comrade. Let the other speakers be spontaneous, and wander all over the field of

imate against them, yet we can take it as certain that the same struggle which we have seen working itself out in the various countries of Europe is taking place in America today. Sooner or later the workers and farmers of America, who are now fighting against the landlords and capitalists in unions, on the WPA, in struggles for better relief, will ultimately be driven to the same civil war that we have seen take place in country after country during the last 25 years. A Negro therefore who is looking at the political situation, not as it appears on the surface, but is seeing into the realities of the struggle between the classes, can have confidence in the future. He will realize that all white America is not solid. There is a tremendous division, a great split opening up. We can already see the signs of it very clearly. And as this struggle approaches and then actually flares out into the inevitable civil war, Negroes can be certain that many white workers and farmers who today are prejudiced will seek their assistance in the same way that Lincoln did when he wanted Negro help. Negroes in the last Civil War made one great step forward and so, in this coming civil war, the workers' revolution, Negroes have a great chance to complete their long journey to full freedom.

(Continued in Next Issue)

TURNING PWA INTO WAR INSTRUMENT

Troop shelters, not houses! That's the new slogan of Roosevelt's PWA!

It's launched by John M. Carmody, federal boss of PWA, WPA, and the other works administrations, and now an unofficial member of the Cabinet.

On a visit to New York Carmody said "that American participation in the European war might revolutionize the character of public spending on capital projects."

But Carmody isn't waiting for participation.

"Mr. Carmody said that cantonnements for the shelter of troops would have to be built immediately. He pointed out that the government would have to widen highways between 'procurement centers'—cities like New York, Philadelphia and Boston—to facilitate the transport of troops and the shipment of war materials.

"To what extent military expenditures would divert money from the present program of highway construction, low-cost housing projects, rural electrification and other public enterprises Mr. Carmody did not say." (N.Y. Herald-Tribune, Sept. 12) We can't guess.

WALL STREET ENGINEERS PRICE RISE

Councilmanic Candidates of SWP Pledge Fight on Profiteers

(Continued from Page 1) hundreds of millions of dollars they reaped in profits in the last World War and they hope to plunge the country into this new blood-bath in order to repeat that experience so lucrative to their bank vaults.

Warehouses Full "But Wall Street overlooks no cranny from which to wring profits no matter how flimsy the pretext. That is why the prices of foodstuffs have taken a spectacular jump. This artificial price rise is particularly criminal in view of the fact that there are enough reserves in the warehouses from Maine to California to feed and clothe the entire nation for a long time to come even if all the factories were closed down and not another crop harvested.

"But prices will not come down one cent so long as the working class does not organize to bring them down. Housewives must organize neighborhood groups in order to exercise their power of boycott and to demonstrate at the grocery stores through which Wall Street puts its squeeze on the worker's dinner table.

Signatures Needed "Every worker must intensify his efforts to put the candidates of the Socialist Workers Party on the ballot. Only through militant political action is it possible to organize a campaign powerful enough to bring prices finally down to a level which the average working class family can afford. Only the Socialist Workers Party so far has clearly taken a positive stand 100 per cent against the war and the greed for profits which is back of the war.

"Our preliminary campaign to gain the necessary number of nominating signatures is going forward despite all the obstacles placed in our path by sources connected with Wall Street such as Tammany Hall. "If we are elected we will immediately launch a militant campaign from the vantage point of the City Council against this criminal and completely unwarranted hoisting of prices."

BOSS PARTIES UNITE BEHIND ROOSEVELT

(Continued from Page 1) American masses for concentration in his war-mongering plans.

Will Act Quickly One of the main purposes of the White House Conference is to arrive at ways and means for jamming through the war-making legislation without too much discussion by opponents of it and above all with such speed that the American masses shall have as little time as possible for making their vigorous protests heard. The carefully-worded Washington dispatches are themselves compelled to acknowledge that "there will be some indecision among the 534 men and women fresh from constituencies which, all agree, dearly want peace."

The isolationists, so-called, precisely because they cannot and do not want to set into motion the only real force that can put a decisive spoke in the imperialist war plans of Roosevelt and Co.—the mass action of the American workers and farmers—are not expected to put up an effective fight against the President's program.

That can be done only by the united and militant action of the organized movement of workers and farmers, demanding the right to a popular referendum before the declaration of war, and an end to the secret diplomacy practised by the government in its campaign to precipitate the United States into a world slaughter aimed to achieve control of the world by the Wall Street gang.

A REQUEST

All available copies of Vol. 3 No. 9 of this year's Appeal are needed for purposes of binding. We would appreciate it if Appeal readers would send in as many copies of this issue as they may have available.

G-MEN GO AFTER WAR OPPONENTS

(Special to the Socialist Appeal)

MINNEAPOLIS—Two Minneapolis boys who were passing out anti-war literature in St. Paul September 13 were arrested by the police and closely questioned by Frank Murphy's FBI men before being released. The cops and the G-men lectured them, warning them against "rabble rousing."

The boys, Hugh Reichard, 21, and Herbert Gardner, had conceived the idea of printing and distributing posters and stickers with the slogan, "War is Hell! Why not mind our own business."

The pair said they did this with the idea of arousing public opinion against the war in Europe. They said they hated war and could see no reason for this country's entrance into the European conflict, and were afraid this country might be dragged in "if we didn't succeed in rousing public opinion against it."

The New Deal's FBI doesn't like the youth to oppose the "proq suq pææsooof puw" (read cast to the nation's cops to stop "subversive propaganda," by which he means anything that tells the people about the war he is preparing and opposes the war.

the class struggle present and future, but let this comrade stick to his subject, confine himself within his time limit, and be ready at his regular hour (say 10 o'clock when a crowd has been gathered). A sales talk for the Appeal could immediately follow.

Revolutionary greetings, Chris Andrews

STRANGER THAN FICTION

To the Socialist Appeal: One of the old San Francisco Reds called up the Stalinist International Bookshop the other day and asked: "Have you people got that new book entitled 'Fascism, the Hope of the World,' by Joseph Stalin?" The man at the phone said, "Why, I hadn't heard of it, just hold the line a minute." Then he called to a comrade in the next room and could be heard saying, "Hey, Bill, somebody on the phone wants to know if we have a new book entitled 'Fascism the Hope of the World,' by Joseph Stalin." The caller could not hear what the other fellow replied, but the man on the phone came back and said, "Hello, hello—Why, no, we haven't got that book yet, but if you will leave your phone number, we will call you when it comes in. The old Marxist thanked him and hung up, convinced that anything can happen these days. EL BOOTH

San Francisco

Harlem Mass Meeting
"THE NEGRO AND WAR"
Wed., Sept. 27, 8 p.m.
at the Y.M.C.A.

SPEAKERS:
E. R. McKinney
Rueben Plankett
Nathan Gould
Stanley B. Jobs
ADMISSION FREE

The WAR DEAL

By DWIGHT MACDONALD

II

Social Consciousness in Steel

When Europe went to war in 1914, the American steel industry lost no time in squeezing the last drop of profit from its strategic situation. As Allied orders poured in, prices soared, profits rose to unheard-of figures. Even after the United States entered the war, steel prices were maintained at prices high enough to yield huge profits. After vainly appealing to the steelmasters' "patriotism," the Wilson Administration was driven to threaten nationalization. This bluff, which every one knew the government had no intention of backing up, failed to move the steel industry. As Judge Gary, its spokesman, coldly remarked in March of 1918, just as the Germans were getting their last and most nearly successful "break-through" under way: "The steelmakers must have reasonable profits in order to do their duty." Profits first, then patriotism.

In the opening weeks of this war, we find an amazing reversal of this policy. Overnight, as German guns roared in Poland and German torpedoes sent British ships to the bottom, a "buyers market" in American steel changed into a "sellers market." Orders from Europe began to pour in—for rails, for pipe, for scrap iron, light steel, and a hundred other types of non-military steel products. (The Neutrality Act forbids sale of munitions, but every ton of rails exported to a belligerent country releases that much of its own productive capacity for munition making.) The reaction to this flood of export orders was unexpected. On September 15, the Steel Corporation's chief subsidiary, Carnegie-Illinois, announced that prices on light steel for the last quarter of the year would be the same as they had been in the third quarter. This policy of no price increases so far has been followed by the other major companies in publishing their last-quarter prices. And this is in spite not only of a rush of new business but also of a rapid rise in the prices of such raw materials as pig iron, spiegeleisen, and ferromanganese.

"Industrial Statesmanship"

The N. Y. Times, announcing this seven-days' wonder, comments that "while this policy reflects the known desires of the Administration in Washington and takes into account the nationwide fear of high prices," it is by no means popular with many steel men, "particularly those of senior rank." It is not customary in the steel business for the "known desires of the Administration" to be deferred to, nor have the steel barons in the past shown any concern over high prices—quite the contrary. Why this excess of social consciousness?

The Times' explanation is as puzzling as the fact itself: "The new that the price of steel has an important bearing on the national wage and price structure. . . . was held to be a more important argument against an immediate price advance than the sudden change from a buyers' to a sellers' market in the last fortnight, allowing prospects for handsome profits after a long period of lean earnings. . . . The steel industry has given evidence of industrial statesmanship which is quite at variance with the traditions and experience of former periods of prosperity."

It is clear that something much more potent than "industrial statesmanship" must have induced the steel companies to temporarily forego "handsome profits." This new policy is a particularly dramatic illustration of the institutional nature of both war and capitalism in the year 1939.

Towards State Capitalism

War in our time seems to have become such a gigantic social and economic enterprise, requiring such staggering capital investment and such a centralization of control, as to be beyond the grasp of even the most powerful private capitalist group or corporation. The problems raised by modern war, in neutral as well as in belligerent countries, can only be met by the state—acting, of course, as the agent, trustee, and executive committee of the bourgeoisie. Hence the lead taken by the Administration, not "Wall Street" in arranging war credits for the Allies in this country. And hence this renunciation on the part of the steel industry of its sacred "right" to charge all the traffic will bear—a renunciation of immediate, individual profits for the sake of the greater security of the entire economic system.

The Administration was the better able to persuade the steel industry to follow its lead because the present head of the U. S. Steel Corporation is a very different sort of industrialist from the stubborn and individualistic Judge Gary. When the House of Morgan two years ago put at the head of the Steel Corporation young E. R. Stettinius, son of a former Morgan partner, it served notice that a new era was beginning. For Stettinius has worked closely with the Roosevelt Administration ever since NRA days, and he has continued this "cooperation." He was inevitably chosen to head the War Resources Board recently set up by the War Deal. In Stettinius, the "Morgan man," the head of the nation's biggest industrial corporation, the White House intimate, one aspect of the War Deal—and right now the most obvious aspect—is symbolized.

But Stettinius is also symbolic of the changing nature of American big business. As stock ownership has become more and more widely scattered, the conception of "ownership" has become increasingly vague. What Walter Rathenau wrote in 1918 of the then more advanced German capitalist system, is now applicable to our own: "The claims to ownership are subdivided in such a fashion, and are so mobile, that the enterprise assumes an independent life, as if it belonged to no one. It takes an objective existence, such as in earlier days was embodied only in church and state, in a municipal corporation, in the life of a guild or religious order. . . . The depersonalization of ownership, the objectification of enterprise, the detachment of property from the possessor, leads to a point where the enterprise becomes transformed into an institution which resembles the state in character." (Quoted in Berle and Means' *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*.)

This development, of course, has not affected the social base of the bourgeoisie, which still remains in its control, through ownership, of the means of production. But it has had a great, and all too little realized, effect on the agencies through which the bourgeoisie maintains its class rule. This is true above all in the supreme crisis of war. American capitalism went into the last war with a laissez-faire philosophy—though already its economic foundations had been largely institutionalized. This war finds the state and the corporation, Washington and Wall Street grown much closer together—and the shock of war, the supreme crisis of any social system, has already in the brief space of two weeks enormously hastened the process of fusion, as the overnight replacement of the old reformist "brain trusters" with Wall Street's "men" in the top circles of the Administration dramatically indicates.

GUERIN'S FASCISM and BIG BUSINESS

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