

THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

The Negro and the War

VII

No, it is not Negroes alone who recognize that a war for democracy is a fraud, a deception, and a trap for the workers. Many workers in England, in France, in Belgium, and in America are daily becoming more clear in their minds about this war for democracy.

Negroes can hear many a white worker say: "What is this democracy that I must shed my blood for? It is true I have a vote. And I elect representatives to Congress. But what control have I really got over this country? When the capitalists want to go to war, the President decides. Representative Ludlow brings in an amendment to the Constitution which would give me the right to say a word on going to war. Let the people vote on war. By all means. But the president and Congress, both of them refuse. They are not going to have any consultation of the people by referendum vote to decide this question of life and death. So much for this fraud of democracy."

Many a white worker says, "Most of the people of this country would have been willing to allow the Spanish workers and peasants to buy arms from America in their fight against Franco. But the President who, like all capitalists, wanted to see Franco win, refused to allow this and showed that in any matter of importance it is the wish of the capitalists, the landlords, and the bankers which decides, and not the wishes of the large majority of the people."

Why Die for Capitalism!

More and more, white workers are beginning to say things like this.

"These capitalists keep babbling about this democracy. They say that if war comes I have to go and die for my country. But I have no country to die for. The only part of this country that is certainly mine is the 6 ft. by 2 ft. which will enclose me when I am dead. Morgan, DuPont, Rockefeller, Ford, the owners of big factories, the owners of big firms, the great landlords in the South, all these people have some of the country. They have something to die for. But what have I got for which I must shed my blood?"

"I am a working man. During the last ten years sometimes ten million, sometimes 20 million of us have been unemployed. When you add our dependents to this number, it means that thirty or forty million people have been living in misery and starvation for ten years. When will this crisis stop? This continuous crisis, this poverty, is not necessary. There is food enough for everyone. And the factories, if they worked, could supply clothes enough for everyone. And the building trade could build enough houses for everyone to live decently. But, no. This system under which we live cannot employ the people and cannot use the great factories, the mines, and all the means of production which are now available. The system, this capitalist system, is obviously bankrupt. If it were not bankrupt, if it could work anymore, you would not have these millions of idle men on the one hand, and on the other this vast amount of idle capital. What the devil is the use of this democracy if it has always a quarter and sometimes one-third of the population starving."

"Before I die for my country, I must have a country to live for. I am not a coward. I am prepared to fight for my country, but it is not Hitler or Mussolini who have this country in which I live. I know well enough the people who have it and who mismanage it in such a way that one small section of the population is rolling in wealth while most of the others can barely live on what they earn and still another section earns nothing at all, and has to spend many hours hanging around relief bureaus begging for a few cents. If anybody is prepared to fight, to put an end to this state of affairs, I am ready to go along with them and shed my blood for that. But why the devil should I go to fight so that Roosevelt and the capitalists should dominate Latin America or China and make still more money for themselves? That is their capitalist war. This is not my war."

For a Workers' War

It is white workers today, not Negroes, who say all this. For instance, the Socialist Workers' Party members, most of whom are white, for years have said as follows: "The capitalists talk about democracy. In Germany there was this same democracy, and as soon as the capitalists found that the workers were mobilizing to put an end to the injustices and crimes of capitalism, they subsidized Hitler, that gangster, they destroyed democracy, and installed fascism in its place. They did the same thing in Italy. They did the same thing in Spain. We know these fellows here well enough to know that all the time they are talking about democracy they are thinking of all the property which they own. And as soon as ever they feel that their property is in danger they are going to subsidize their fascist bands and treat me no better than the workers in Germany, Italy, and Spain. So that I shall oppose this war of theirs as best I can, and when I get the chance I shall abolish this unjust bankrupt system and change things. My war is a war to help the workers and farmers of this country take it over from those who have it. Our enemy is not in foreign countries but is here in this very country. And to my fellow workers in Germany, in Italy, in Britain, in Japan, in China, we say this: "We have no enmity against you. You don't want to shoot me and I don't want to shoot you. I am going to try to change this bankrupt system in my country and I recommend to you to do the same."

"Many years ago Karl Marx, the great leader and teacher of the workers, said 'Workers of the world, unite!' That is the only doctrine for the workers. We have to unite today to destroy this system which causes so much unemployment

The Economic Consequence of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in the U. S. S. R.

By JOHN G. WRIGHT

The ratification of the Stalin-Hitler pact at the fourth session of the Supreme Council in Moscow was accompanied by the passage of two laws, one extending the conscription age and the other levying a stiff tax on collective and individual farmers. The connection between the extension of the military term of service and the Stalin-Hitler alliance is self-evident. But it does seem at first sight surprising that Stalin and his clique should have chosen the moment when they are faced with their first major historical test—war—to introduce the severest legislation in recent years against that section of the population to whom they have been catering the most, that is, the peasantry.

The new agricultural tax supersedes the law passed on May 31, 1934, the primary intent of which was to assuage the peasantry, and which placed a relatively light burden on them. The new law more than doubles the tax hitherto paid by collective farmers whose income is 2,000 rubles a year. Those whose income is higher will pay three, four, five and even six times the previous amount. Furthermore, the tax falls most heavily on income derived from "privately operated holdings, handicraft enterprises, and all other income derived outside the collectives." (Pravda, August 28.)

WHY THE LEGISLATION AT THIS TIME
Whereas the tax on collectives grades from 5% to 13.5% of the total, all income from other sources is subject to 11%—25% tax, and in some cases it is as high as 30%.

If I am not mistaken, it is the sharpest legislation enacted against the peasantry since the days of enforced collectivization. Legislation of this nature will hardly meet with the approval of the peasants, and Stalin knows it. Why then the law?

Is it because the kulak danger is abroad again? It is unquestionable that this danger exists. But even though the term "kulak" and "speculator" has reappeared in the Soviet

press, that is not the reason for Stalin's law. He has relied most heavily in recent years on the well-to-do peasant.

But the peasants, both in the collectives and outside, have again been accumulating grain and the flow of commodities from the city to the village has been far from adequate to impel the peasants to disgorge their grain hoards. There have been periodic shortages in the cities, but these have been winked at from above. Now Stalin must have foodstuffs not only for the cities but also to supply Hitler. Hence the sudden squeeze on the peasantry. Otherwise the Kremlin would be unable to live up to the terms of its agreement with Adolf Hitler, and assure the flow of foodstuffs into Germany. But to meet his obligations to Hitler, Stalin has had to deal his regime a blow internally, by alienating the peasantry.

STALIN MOVING TOWARD COLLISIONS WITH PEASANTS

It remains to be seen whether this initial law will produce the desired results. Whatever its effects, it can only act as a stop-gap. More and more grain will be required. The vast army already mobilized by Stalin will drain the accumulated grain reserves and place an additional strain on agriculture. Stalin has no other measures than administrative ones to rely upon for obtaining the foodstuffs for the cities, for the Red Army and—for Hitler. We can therefore forecast with certainty not only that increasingly harsh administrative measures will be applied but also that the Stalin regime is moving towards a head-on collision with the peasantry.

Will Stalin perhaps be able to lean on the proletariat? It is noteworthy that in recent days there has been no mention in the official press of the stringent labor laws passed last December. The Pravda no longer speaks of the need of enforcing them in order to bolster up industrial production, as was the case a few months ago. Early this year, the lag in production was explained above all by the laxity of factory managements in enforcing these laws.

Not that production has improved. Just the contrary. If in 1938 the output lagged some 33% behind the plan as compared with 1937, the production for the first 8 months in the current year has lagged almost as much behind the plan.

The failure to accomplish the plan for 1939 is openly admitted. One week prior to the con-

and misery, and leads the workers every few years into the self-destruction of imperialist war."

Side by Side with the White Worker

Now, this is what a certain number of workers are saying and what still more are thinking, though they are not very clear about it. And the vast majority of Negroes in this country who have still less cause than these whites to love democracy, should realize clearly that their allies are not only the oppressed Negroes and the oppressed colonial peoples, but these white workers who are as fed up with capitalist democracy as any Negro is.

The white workers joined up with the Negroes to fight in the C.I.O. Some in the C.I.O. are still prejudiced. Prejudice does not end in a day, but Negroes in the union know how much better things are for them now that the C.I.O. is enrolling both whites and Negroes without discrimination. But the fight against war is a hundred times as serious as the fight that was fought by the C.I.O. workers, and in this fight Negroes and whites will work together more closely and with more real equality than ever before. That is the lesson of history. In his determination not to be bamboozled into a war for democracy the Negro will find many true and firm allies among the whites—far more than he dreams of.

Continued in Next Issue

convocation of the Supreme Council, on August 22nd, Pravda stated editorially, "Despite the colossal assistance rendered by the party and the Government to the All-Union coal-bins—the Donbas—and other coal regions, they still function unsatisfactorily; the metallurgists fail systematically (sic) to fulfill the plan and in the oilfields the tempo of oil production have been lowered." Such is the condition in coal, oil and metal—the key industries!

Yet faced with this critical situation, the bureaucracy for the time being does not dare to apply the measures which were enacted only a few months ago and which were designed to overcome this very situation. Instead they have resurrected the old slogan of "Socialist Competition," which is being supplemented by feeble attempts to revive the ballyhoo about Stakhanovism. Failure to produce is nowadays being explained as due to the failure of the management to introduce Stakhanovist methods in the plants, mills and mines. This change of tone can be due only to sharp resistance by the workers to the labor laws and their enforcement. These laws have not stopped the enormous turnover of labor.

The People's Commissar of Heavy Machine Industry admitted that his particular branch was practically crippled by this turnover. "From January to May of the current year," states Commissar Malyshev, "the enterprises in our commissariat lost more than 3,000 workers a month." (Izvestiya, August 24.)

WAR INCREASES CONFLICT IN INDUSTRY

The army mobilization is not going to improve the conditions in labor supply. Furthermore, the few production indices that are still made public show that a sharp decline is again beginning to evince itself in industry. Now that the war has added its gigantic link to the developments and placed an ever-increasing burden on the country's productive machinery, the crisis in industry can only be aggravated.

If today the output in coal and oil is dropping, how will Stalin be able to supply Hitler with these items? He can do so only to the further damage of internal economic life.

Finally, the transport system, which collapsed so catastrophically last winter, is giving signs that it is about to fold up again. The railroads will hardly bear up under the additional demands of troop movements, army supplies, traffic to Germany, etc. Waterway transport, especially sea routes, have become indispensable to Stalin above all to meet his obligations to Hitler. The Baltic is the one avenue still open. Thus the fate of Estonia and other border countries with outlets to the Baltic becomes bound up with the inextricable web of the bureaucracy's difficulties. An assault upon Estonia is indicated by the traffic emergency.

It may well be asked: How much of a load can Stalin place on the shoulders of the Russian masses in order to fulfill his pledges to his latest imperialist ally, Nazi Germany?

At the very outbreak of the war, the Stalin regime finds itself in a blind alley. From every standpoint it is the weakest and most unstable regime in the world today.

Disgusted with the reactionary role of Stalinism, a group of Communist Party members in Fulton County, New York, last week resigned from the Party. We print below a statement to us by a spokesman for the group.

We wish to utilize the Socialist Appeal with the hope that we may reach some Communist Party members with our message.

Among those who commissioned me to write this letter are the Educational Director and the Membership Director of the Communist Party Branch of Fulton County, N.Y. (I was the Organizer of the Branch and the Literature Agent.) These are people who only yesterday were acknowledged as being the backbone of the movement here, people who gave most of their spare time to the Party, exposed themselves and built patiently a movement here which the reactionaries had to acknowledge and deal with.

Then the Soviet-German non-aggression pact was signed. This pact came as a thunderbolt to some of us, as a revelation and confirmation of doubts to others of us.

As the awful meaning of the pact began to seep into our minds and hearts, we became confused. Eagerly we read and re-read the Daily Worker, the

New Masses for reasonable explanations. But the unjustifiable cannot be justified. All the sophisms — for I refuse to call them arguments—of Browder & Co. appeared to us very shallow and funny.

Questions Not Answered

A meeting was called to discuss the pact. An important leader from New York happened to be in Gloversville to "enlighten" us poor provincials. Believing that there was still a little democracy left in the Party we asked embarrassing questions, which were never answered—instead we were told to have faith in the leadership of our "wise" Stalin, Molotov & Co. and be satisfied with the past record of our leaders.

Some of us, too sincere for our own good, would not be satisfied with that. Immediately the scene changed. We were told that we had become the victims of those "rotten, degenerate, fascist enemies of the workers," the Trotskyites.

The Chairman who had told me, the Organizer, time and time again that I would some day become "another Lenin or Stalin" and that he would trust me even with his life, looked at me in such a way I shall not forget, then looked at the other questioners and said significantly that he was waiting eagerly for the day of the Revolution when he could himself shoot

Union-Busters Return 50 New Indictments Against WPA Strikers

(Continued from Page 1)

The Northwest Organizer, official organ of the Teamsters Joint Council, points out that, "it becomes clearer than ever that the national administration is seizing upon the WPA strike in Minneapolis as a pretext for crippling the powerful local labor movement in preparation for America's entry into war."

The WPA Defense Committee had already obtained the release of 85 of the 92 victims so far arrested, 34 of whom were released on their own recognition. Only seven strikers remain in jail, all of them members of the Workers Alliance who rejected the defense services of the AFL committee, and chose to be defended by a CIO defense committee which so far has failed to function.

These facts answered the arrogant pretensions of the so-called CIO committee which whined that the AFL wasn't doing it right.

TOM GADDIS ARRESTED FOR STRIKE ROLE

An outstanding example of the vindictiveness of the federal government was the arrest this week of Tom Gaddis, managing editor of the Omaha General Drivers Union. He was arrested there for participation in the Minneapolis strike.

Boss Parties Skirt War Issue in N. Y. Election

(Continued from Page 1)

and support Wall Street's war, they court disaster.

"On the most burning issue of the day—WAR—they are as silent as if their tongues had been glued by direct bribery from Wall Street."

"They have not even decided to take up the cudgels against one of the most scandalous frauds perpetrated by any political machine in New York—

the LaGuardia fraud of paying Wall Street \$326,000,000 for subways already owned by the city.

Subway Scandal
"A party that is a working class party would espouse any reform movement, such as cleaning up this outrageous subway fraud."

"More than a month ago the Socialist Workers Party denounced this subway fraud in the following unequivocal language:

"On top of food-profiteering by the Wall Street war-mongers, these same sharks have now concocted a gigantic fraud by which they hope to raise the five-cent subway fare to the profit of Wall Street and at the expense of the people."

"LaGuardia has agreed to pay Wall Street \$326,000,000 for the subways which are already city-owned property!"

Against Wall Street
"The Socialist Workers Party demands that the IRT and the BMT subway and elevated lines be turned over to the city without paying one more cent to the Wall Street sharks who have already bled HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS out of these subway and elevated systems. Only in this way can the five-cent fare be guaranteed."

"EXPROPRIATE THE SUBWAYS! KEEP THE FIVE CENT FARE!"

"Does the silence of the leaders of the American Labor Party indicate that they are in favor of raising subway fares?"

"One thing is absolutely clear, and that is the necessity of assuring the appearance on the ballot of a 100 per cent anti-war party, a party that will fight tooth and nail against every attempt of the Wall Street sharks to gouge the public."

"We are pledged to fight war and fascism without quarter. We intend to launch that fight if elected with a struggle to lop off the siphon with which Wall Street has been draining the profits from the subway system since 1894."

"An end to imperialist war! Break Wall Street's stranglehold on public utilities!"

SEAMEN TIE-UP SHIPS IN PARTS ALL OVER WORLD

Seamen's strikes for war bonuses and insurance continued to spread throughout the world, according to press reports. Three liners were tied up in Holland because operators failed to concede these demands. American, Irish, British sailors already have participated in such walk-outs.

CANADA ARRESTS WAR OPPONENT

(Special to the Socialist Appeal)
TORONTO, Sept. 21. — Frank Watson, Canadian anti-war militant, was arrested earlier this week following a street corner speech he made denouncing Canada's participation in the imperialist war. Legal defense has been secured in his behalf. . . .

War---What For?

A Series of FOUR Friday Night Lectures

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29—8:30 P.M.
The First Imperialist Slaughter—1914-1918
Its Causes and Consequences

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6—8:30 P.M.
The Aftermath—The Versailles Treaty
The Peace Which Prepared the New War

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13—8:30 P.M.
The Advance of Fascism
Causes Underlying the Triumphs of Hitler and Mussolini

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20—8:30 P.M.
The World in Flames Again
The Real Meaning of the Present War

SPEAKER:
JAMES P. CANNON, National Secy. S.W.P.
IRVING PLAZA, Irving Place at 15th Street
Subscription for series: 75c • Individual lectures: 25c

Such is the result of Stalinist education. In Fulton County, thousands of miles away from Moscow, the same miserable and degrading spectacle of hatred and mud-slinging against idealistic young people who formerly were so much trusted by their Party comrades.

We knew very little of Trotskyism. So we decided that it was about time to investigate. We are doing this. In the meantime we are calling upon all sincere comrades who are working so hard in the Communist Party to think seriously and ask themselves this question: What are we giving our time and energy for? Is it to bring about a socialist republic where all the people can live decently and free, or are we actually helping to bring about a fascist — like dictatorship of lies, hatred and ignorance?

Fraternally yours,
FRED KELLER