

THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

What Do the Negroes Themselves Think About the War?

To this question a Marxist replies automatically. "Which class of Negro are you inquiring about? Do you mean Negro workers and farmers or the Negro petty bourgeoisie—the lawyers, the doctors, the small businessmen, the stage performers?" In the party pamphlet, "Why Negroes Should Oppose the War" (J. R. Johnson, 32 pages, 5c), there is a section on the Negro petty bourgeoisie and the war. There it is pointed out that because he has a standard of living higher than that of the average Negro workers, farmer, or unemployed, the Negro petty bourgeois act essentially as agents of American imperialism. To quote one passage from the pamphlet, (p. 22):

"And so, for the sake of the crumbs and bones that they get from the big table, they are quite prepared to sacrifice the interests of the majority of the Negroes. They are the most dangerous people. It is they who deceive the Negroes every time. They, despite their black skin, are no more than agents of the white imperialists. They are not saying much now, but when the time comes, they are going to shout for 'democracy' as loudly as the American ruling class. . . . Meetings will be held at which these Negro traitors will speak and agitate and do their best to bluff the Negro people to take part in a war and be deceived and maltreated just as they were in the last war for 'democracy.' The bait that they will dangle will be promises of a better world," etc., etc.

Now this is undoubtedly true. And we have evidence of it already. But the Negro petty bourgeoisie, unlike the white petty bourgeoisie, is cut off very sharply from participation in the general life of American capitalist society. American race prejudice, designed to keep the Negro in a state of subjection and to maintain a division between the Negro and the white workers, differentiates very little between the poor Negro and the middle-class Negro. Both suffer almost equally from racial discrimination. Thus the Negro petty-bourgeois press reflects the sentiments of the large masses of Negroes, even though, when things come to a showdown, it declares for the program and policy of American imperialism. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the writings of the Negro press on the war and the present international situation.

The Negro Press on the War

The Pittsburgh Courier is one of the best of the Negro weekly sheets. It fights some valiant battles for the Negro cause. It was one of the few Negro papers to wage a campaign on behalf of Negro entry into and support of the CIO, (one of the three greatest steps forward of the Negro in American history during the last hundred years.) The Courier has taken the lead in the struggle for the entry of Negro players into major-league baseball. It has battled for the right of Negroes to enter into the American army on the same conditions as the whites and for equal facilities in training as air pilots. The Socialist Workers Party, the Fourth International, are opposed to imperialist war. But the Socialist Workers Party fully supports the rights of Negroes to participate in American life with the fullest equality, including entry into the army. If any Negro is ass enough to wish to go to fight for American "democracy" of his own free will, it is his privilege to do so. The paper has a great reputation among the Negroes. It sells for ten cents which the poorer Negroes cannot pay. It maintains a large staff and is essentially the paper of the Negro petty bourgeoisie. The Pittsburgh Courier has on its staff Mr. George Schuyler, one of the most brilliant journalists in America (of whom more later). It is not in any sense of the word a revolutionary paper.

The Pittsburgh Courier has naturally been commenting on the war. What it says, and still more what it does not say, is of the utmost importance for the revolutionary movement.

On March 29, the Courier published a cartoon on the war entitled Ringside Seat. The cartoon showed two boxers, one labeled "Democracies" and the other "Dictatorships." The referee was a military-looking gentleman labeled "Imperialism." In the ringside seats were Africans, American Negroes, Mongolians, Pacific Islanders, and Malays. The chief editorial of that issue expressed the following sentiments:

"The 'democracies' and the 'dictatorships' are preparing to do BATTLE in the near future.

"The referee is IMPERIALISM, who stands ready to award the decision to the VICTOR.

"The stake is the right to EXPLOIT the darker peoples of the world.

"The audience consists of the vast MAJORITY of those who happen to be NON-WHITES.

"They have NO FAVORITE, because it makes NO DIFFERENCE to them which party WINS the fight.

"They are ONLY interested in the bout taking place AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."

Now this on the surface is a most bloodthirsty attitude. But the editorial had its very good reason for wishing this destruction:

"The AUDIENCE knows that the destruction of white civilization means the EMANCIPATION of colored people, and that explains why they eagerly await the opening gong."

The editorial is anxious for no essential difference as far as colored people are concerned between "democratic" imperialism and fascist imperialism. It explains this in detail:

"The democracies which now CONTROL the dark world have never extended DEMOCRACY to the dark world.

"THEIR meaning of democracy is for WHITE PEOPLE only, and just a FEW of them.

"The 'dictatorships' FRANKLY DECLARE that if they win THEY will do as the democracies HAVE DONE in the past.

"The democracies as frankly declare that IF they win they will CONTINUE to do as they HAVE BEEN doing."

An Indication of Revolutionary Instincts

Here is an astonishingly clear characterization of the real nature of the great forces which are now tearing civilization apart. Note particularly that sentence which states that even among the whites democracy is only for a few of them.

This clear vision into the fundamental nature of modern society, this rage at its pretences, this desire for emancipation at whatever cost, are what we mean by the revolutionary instinct of the Negroes. And this is why the Fourth International states that the place of the Negro is in the vanguard and not at the tail of the revolutionary movement.

The Courier editorial naturally makes a great error in thinking that the blacks can stand aside in the coming war. Colored people were compelled to fight in the last war. The Africans are being compelled to fight in this one, and if the workers of America, black and white, do not stop Roosevelt by working class action, then the American Negroes will be compelled to fight when American capitalism goes in.

The Petty Bourgeoisie Cannot Lead

The Courier makes a still greater error when it thinks that emancipation for Negroes can come from the mutual destruction of the groups of white imperialists, with the people of color just stepping in to gather up the spoils. The root of this monumental error lies in the neglect of that most important fact which the editorial noted—that even among the white people "democracy" is only for the few. That is the key to the emancipation of Negroes and the oppressed colonial peoples. The political battle is unity among both these groups who recognize that in essentials capitalist democracy is a fraud for all the working people, white and black, and offers them nothing but continual crises, fascist dictatorships, and ultimately imperialist war. That is the unshakable basis of the Fourth International.

But what we must note is this. If the Negro petty bourgeois expresses himself in these drastic terms about imperialist war, we can have some conception of what are the real sentiments of the great masses of Negroes in every country who feel upon their backs the unmitigated blows of capitalism.

For the Goose, Not the Gander

A particularly striking example of the state of justice in the United States is provided by contrasting the fate of the conspiracy indictments against Minneapolis WPA workers, and the conspiracy indictments against 52 coal mine owners in Harlan, Kentucky.

In the Kentucky situation, the federal government had issued the indictments after an 11-weeks' trial had shown that the coal bosses were guilty of perpetrating a reign of terror in which organizers were shadowed, beaten and fired upon; union meetings were dispersed, union sympathizers beaten and imprisoned and the son of a union organizer slain. But Harlan County is an old story in the United States—Harlan County is an outstanding example of the bosses' idea of industrial democracy.

Indictments against Bosses Are Dropped
Did the federal government press the indictments against the coal bosses? IT DID NOT. On October 2nd, this year the federal government moved for a dismissal of conspiracy charges against the fifty-two coal companies and operators named. And did the federal judge chime in with this move? HE DID. "The propriety and wisdom of the government's action (in moving for the dismissal of the indictments) seems so meritorious I have no other action to take," said Federal Judge Ford.

But in Minneapolis federal indictments for conspiracy are being placed against poor people, against jobless workers. It was these jobless workers who were sinned against by the government, who were shot at and gassed and wounded and slain and thrown in jail at outrageous bail and treated like felons.

Indictments against Workers Are Pressed
Yet, has the federal government moved for a dismissal of the indictments against the Minneapolis workers? IT HAS NOT. It is pressing them ever more harshly.

Justice is of two kinds in these so-called democratic United States. There is the kind of justice the employers receive. And there is the kind of justice the workers get.

It is this sort of "democracy" that the war-mongers are preparing to ask us to defend. Ugh!

(From the Northwest Organizer, October 12, 1939)

ALL'S FAIR AND SQUARE IN SPORTS—EXCEPT FOR NEGROES

(Special to the Socialist Appeal)
BOSTON—When Boston College locked horns with Florida this Saturday in an important intersectional gridiron contest, Lou Montgomery, star Boston back, watched the game from the stands. Mainstay of his team, Montgomery was yanked from the line-up days in advance.

Reason for his absence from the game is that Lou Montgomery, popularly known as the "Ebony Eel," is a Negro. Gil Dobie, Boston coach, according to the sports columnist of the Boston Evening American, withdrew Montgomery "as a sop to the ethnological prejudices of the Southern team."

Boston College might have resisted the "ethnological prejudices" of the Floridians by using the Negro back if only to affirm the principle of racial equality. Had the "ethnological prejudices" of the Southern team risen to the point where they refused to take the field, Boston College would have won by default. Injury to Montgomery, deliberately engineered by the chauvinist Southerners, would have had its desirable effect among the Boston rooters. Instead, under the increasing pressure of anti-Negro sentiment in this once classic city of Abolitionism, Montgomery was taken from the line-up.

That the color of skin is enough to upset the beauties of sport is another of the lessons to be assimilated in a study of contemporary American democracy.

Behind the Lines

(Continued from Page 1)
The Japanese have consequently announced their intention of going ahead next month with their puppet government plans. Just how much success they are likely to have can be gauged by their experiences of the past two years with the impotent regimes they have set up in different parts of China. They are, moreover, likely to be given even less time now to make their new creation look like something more than a badly-stuffed corpse.

Meanwhile Russia's intentions with respect to China remain studiously obscure. If it is true that hostilities have been or are about to be resumed on the Mongolian frontier and if it is true that Russian planes participated in last week's raid on Japanese-occupied Hankow, Stalin may be planning to implement his European diplomatic blitzkrieg with Far Eastern moves sooner than the Japanese, at least, had expected.

But can the Negro petty bourgeoisie give trustworthy revolutionary leadership? Can we trust it to correct itself and give the Negroes political leadership and organization necessary to translate this powerful revolutionary urge into concrete action against the war? Not at all. The outstanding characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie is instability, and in succeeding articles we shall see how the Negro petty bourgeoisie, while reflecting the tremendous revolutionary drive of the Negroes, is in reality one of the most dangerous forces misleading the Negroes in the present crisis.

HOOK COMMITTEE FORUM GOES IN FOR SOME DIGNIFIED AND DEMOCRATIC WAR-MONGERING

By TONY CHAPMAN

Assembling a not inconsiderable number of dignitaries, the Committee for Cultural Freedom, formerly the League Against Totalitarianism, held the first public meeting of its year-old career at Town Hall, Friday evening, October 14.

Apprehensive lest his guests compromise the Committee a little beyond the possibility of apology, Sidney Hook, chairman of the Committee and mainstay of its existence, warned the audience at the opening of the meeting that "Each speaker does not necessarily speak for the Committee for Cultural Freedom. Each speaker speaks for himself."

Big Hearted
Mr. Hook, who refused to take responsibility for the pronouncements of his guests, hypocritically attacked the Socialist Appeal as a "totalitarian midget" in view of the fact that its editors refused, said Mr. Hook, "to print a notice of the meeting because they didn't like what the speakers were going to say."

Mr. Hook, although anxiously warning the audience against the speakers, was nevertheless sufficiently ample-hearted to sponsor a meeting for them. But his anxiety could hardly have been unjustified, for among his celebrated guests were war-mongering college presidents and social democrats, and pro-war labor bureaucrats.

Although cultural freedom, such as it is under capitalism, is being rapidly extinguished everywhere under the heels of totalitarian war, the majority of speakers confined themselves to attacks upon Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Stalin's Russia.

Will Schlamm, social democrat, reported the news that cultural freedom does not exist in Nazi Germany.

Frances Winwar, declared that under Mussolini only second rate authors are able to flourish.

"Fresh" Wind

Dr. Harry D. Gideonse, president of Brooklyn College, intoned that "We are experiencing an Indian Summer of liberalism." Not many esoteric paragraphs later, Dr. Gideonse hopefully exclaimed that "A fresh wind has blown through progressive America." This exponent of cultural freedom indexed his cosmic views by reminding the audience that "Anyone interested in the maintenance of cultural freedom in America can learn more from the thoroughly native philosophy of John Dewey, Justice Brandeis or of Henry David Thoreau than from the deterministic theories of Karl Marx."

Walter G. Krivitsky, former Stalinist chief in the Red Army, in a fifteen minute speech, told the audience that Stalin is a totalitarian—a real revelation.

But of the menacing encroachments upon cultural freedom in the "democratic" nations no one had much to say. George Hartman, of Teachers College, did deplore the signs of cultural restrictions in England and France, but declared nevertheless that "Britain still preserves freedom, as one can see from the free debates in parliament." The freedom which the British workers enjoy now that totalitarian war is on the order of the day, Mr. Hartman explained away with the phrase that "The spirit of Hyde Park still lives."

Not one person attending the meeting could have learned from any of the speakers that the United States is being drawn into the world war, with a resultant abrogation of cultural, political, social and economic freedom. Indeed, not one speaker believed it politic to mention the inroads against cultural freedom already threatened in this country as a result of President Roosevelt's decree proclaiming a state of limited national emergency. Their silence on this point was painfully evident.

A Letter to the Appeal From Joseph Zack

Dear Sir:

In an edition of your publication (Trotskyite), of October 6, 1939, you are quite free in the epithets you use of condemning Ben Gitlow and myself for appearing before the Dies Committee. You raise the issue there of the possible suppression of the Communist Party in this country for no other purpose than to suppress it completely and entirely for their own benefit, the same as the Bund would do if they had a chance, the same as they have done in those countries where they have acquired power. I would prefer however, that they be "suppressed" by public ostracism rather than by any administrative measures, for it is obvious that the public and the workers in particular will come to the same conclusion as the resolution adopted by the American Labor Party, namely that they are "anti-democratic, anti-humanitarian, anti-labor and the servants of Stalin's dictatorship, brutal betrayers of the labor movement."

You know as well as I do that even the most reactionary democrat in this country is far more democratic than Stalin's mercenaries, who parade their alleged radicalism as a mere trap to the workers. The democracy in this country with all its faults and essentially capitalistic character does not depend on Mr. Dies or any other individuals. It is inherent in the system but the system of one party domination by the bureaucracy of all economic and political institutions has been revealed as the instrumentality to expropriate not only the capitalists, but to expropriate also the workers of all their rights. The workers cannot be expropriated of property which they do not own, but when they are expropriated of their rights, then a country becomes a huge concentration camp, regimented by a bureaucracy, organized into a totalitarian party. Under such a set-up, one or more individuals can engineer a despotism over all. This kind of slavery for which you too stand, explains better than anything your stand on this question and the nonsense of your polemic. I, and others, however, who see in Socialism a system which gives more rights to the mass-

In reference to the issue of the possible suppression of the Communist Party, I am of course in favor of fighting to the limit any movement that, if it would come to power, would suppress everyone else. I don't have to tell you that the Communist Party utilizes the available democracy in this country for no other purpose than to suppress it completely and entirely for their own benefit, the same as the Bund would do if they had a chance, the same as they have done in those countries where they have acquired power. I would prefer however, that they be "suppressed" by public ostracism rather than by any administrative measures, for it is obvious that the public and the workers in particular will come to the same conclusion as the resolution adopted by the American Labor Party, namely that they are "anti-democratic, anti-humanitarian, anti-labor and the servants of Stalin's dictatorship, brutal betrayers of the labor movement."

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es over all things, economic and political, shall and will remain intransigent opponents of the kind of slavery totalitarian parties and their splinter offsprings stand for. Therefore, far be it from me henceforth to sympathize with any of them, even if they get paid back in their own coin.

Very truly yours
JOSEPH ZACK
(See editorial page 4 for our answer.)

The WAR DEAL

By DWIGHT MACDONALD

This week I am turning over this department to the National Industrial Conference Board, a statistical and research agency financed by big business. In 1929 the Board published a volume entitled A Picture of World Economic Conditions at the Beginning of 1929. This was a most cheerful and optimistic work: the booming twenties were at their highest period of prosperity, war had been "outlawed" by the Kellogg Pact, and all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The speed and extent of the collapse of world capitalism since then is, of course, a dramatic proof of the superiority of Marxist to bourgeois economic theory. And an excellent index as to just how catastrophically world capitalism has gone to pieces in the last decade is to be found in the opening pages of this 1929 survey. So without further comment on my part—which would be merely gliding the lily—I turn over this column to the National Industrial Conference Board.

"A Universal Will to Maintain Peace"

"The year 1928," begins the first chapter, "has witnessed many noteworthy developments in the field of international relations and in economic and political conditions in individual countries. These developments have on the whole been favorable to a continuation of the progress which has been made in recent years towards a complete recovery from the numerous and deep-seated maladies caused by the unprecedented economic and political upheaval of ten years ago. The formation of the League of Nations; the creation of the World Court; the establishment of the Dawes Plan; the Disarmament Conference in Washington; the admission of Germany to the League; the conclusion of the Locarno treaties; and finally, the signing of the Multilateral Treaty for the Renunciation of War by the United States, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and ten other nations in Paris on August 27, 1928—all indicate that the nations of the world are replacing the old system of checks and balances, Eberts and defensive and offensive alliances by a new conception of international relations based on mutual understanding and a universal will to maintain peace.

Enter the "Practical Business Man"

"In their efforts to maintain harmonious relations among the nations, the governments have been materially assisted by private individuals. The work of diplomats and statesmen, of military experts and professional politicians is being supplemented by that of practical business men, leaders of industry and finance, economists and statisticians. At no other time in the history of the world has the cooperation of public officers and private enterprise been so intimate and so forceful as during the last few years. Often in the past, the conflict of commercial interests has been the cause of, or the excuse for, war largely because the representatives of industry and trade had no opportunity to sit around a table and discuss their difficulties in a friendly manner. The growing influence of private business on state policies is a most encouraging sign of our era. A business man knows that the prosperity of his business is bound up with the general prosperity of his country; and this principle he applies to international relations: the prosperity of his country can not be maintained at the expense of other nations. . . . The leaders of industry are trying to eliminate one of the causes of war—unreasonable and illegitimate competition for world markets.

Peace on Earth. . .

"The signing of the Multilateral Treaty for the Renunciation of War on August 27, 1928, by representatives of fifteen nations has been hailed throughout the world as a most significant contribution towards the advancement of peace. . . . As finally adopted and signed, the Treaty is a plain declaration on the part of the signatory powers that they 'condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.' . . .

"The right of all states to wage a defensive war is not denied by the Treaty, nor does the Treaty define what constitutes a defensive war. Each nation is . . . the sole judge of what constitutes the right of self defense and the necessity and extent of the same. . . . The Treaty does not restrict the right of France, for example, to fight for Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, or Yugoslavia, her allies. . . .

"The Treaty enunciates a great moral principle. . . . It would be useless to speculate what the practical value of the Treaty will be, but there seems to be no doubt that it is a step in the right direction. For this reason, the signing of the Anti-War treaty stands out as the most notable achievement of 1928.

"The Kellogg Treaty is also responsible for the negotiations for the conclusion of treaties of mutual friendship between Russia and her other neighbors, particularly with Poland. . . .

"On the basis of a detailed analysis of the whole field of Germany's economic life, the Agent General for Reparation Payments concludes that 'Fundamentally, confidence has been restored, and Germany has been re-established as a going concern on a relatively high level of economic activity.'

"Among the so-called Succession States, which came into existence as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, Czechoslovakia has shown the greatest economic power and political stability."

The "Practical Business Man" Again

It is only fair to say that the National Industrial Conference Board arrived at the conclusions quoted above in the most impeccably scientific manner. For each of these fantastic (as of 1939) misjudgements, there was the soundest statistical foundation. As President Alexander of the Board puts it in his Preface to the volume: "In the preparation of its publications, the National Industrial Conference Board avails itself of the experience and judgement of the business executives who compose its membership and of recognized authorities in special fields. . . . The publications of the Board thus finally represent the result of scientific investigation and broad business experience."

In other words, the National Industrial Conference Board is a solid, responsible scholarly institution which goes haywire only along lines approved of by the best business and statistical brains of the country. Its fantasies are not its own individual day-dreams but the hallucinations of the ruling class as a whole.

INCIDENT
And then there is the story of the man who went to a socialist meeting to boo the speakers and was just in time to see the meeting broken up by the cops. "But I'm an anti-socialist!" he protested, "I don't give a damn what kind of socialist you are," roared the copper, as he gave the man's skull another caress with his nightstick.

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