

THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

Industry and the Negro

Then came the Civil War. Every Negro should know by now why the Civil War took place. The capitalists and their allies of the North were fighting for control of American economy and of the Federal Government. The Southern slave-owners wanted to maintain that control. Every new State added to the union meant more representatives and more power to one side or the other. If a new state was a slave-state then the slave-owners gained more power at Washington. If the new state was a state based on free labor, then Lincoln and the Northern capitalists gained more power. So that for years there was always a quarrel whenever a new state was to be added to the Union.

But the slave-owners were in a jam, not only politically but economically as well. To make profits at all they had to have new land. The huge plantations and their wasteful methods of cultivation exhausted the soil and periodically they had to extend the territory they controlled. So that when the North said, "No more new slave states" the slave owners replied, "If we do not get new territory our economy will collapse." And the next thing was the Civil War.

Lincoln would never have fought to free the slaves. He didn't intend to free slaves at all. But he found that he could not win unless he pulled the slaves powerfully over to his side. This he could do only by declaring the abolition of slavery.

International Labor Aided Emancipation

There was also another powerful current sweeping Lincoln toward the abolition of slavery in America. When the Civil War began, the British ruling class wanted to intervene on the side of the Southern slave owners. But the British working class, took the side of Lincoln. Led chiefly by Karl Marx, they maintained a powerful agitation in Britain, mass meetings, protests to Parliament, and open letters of support to Abraham Lincoln, etc. The British ruling class used to point to the fact that the North was not fighting any war to abolish slavery, for Lincoln himself had said so. But one of the strongest weapons in the working class anti-war agitation in Britain was this very argument, that the war of the North was a war for abolition. Lincoln, therefore, for the sake of his valuable working class allies in Great Britain, was further driven to declare the abolition of slavery in America. A Negro, therefore, who is really trying to get at the root of the Negro question today, cannot help drawing the following conclusions: "The actual question of color had very little to do with the abolition of slavery in America. Powerful economic and political forces were at work in America. The military assistance that the Negroes could give played a great part. And, finally, the international working class movement, in this case the British working class in particular, played a great part in Negro emancipation."

From this, such a Negro worker would be justified in thinking that if color played so little part in that great event it is not at all unlikely that in the great events of today, color and race, which in everyday affairs seem to occupy so large a place, will in reality at the decisive moment, prove as unimportant as they did in the Civil War.

Negroes Enter the Factories

How does that apply in recent history? The biggest event that has taken place in the history of the American Negroes since the Civil War is the great migration of millions of Negroes from the South to the North that began in 1915. Between 1915 and 1923, 1,200,000 Negroes came from the South to the North. The Negro gained a place for himself in industry. Now, ten thousand workers in a factory have infinitely more capacity to struggle for better wages, better living conditions, and an extension of their democratic rights than fifty thousand farmers scattered over the countryside. Thus the entry of millions of Negro workers into industry, particularly in the North, marked a decisive stage in the development of the American Negro. But how did it happen? Was it because the white employers had listened to some preachers and had been converted to the view that Negroes should have a better chance in life? Nothing of the sort.

What happened was that Northern industry was faced with a tremendous opportunity for expansion due to the war. At the same time the stream of immigrants from Europe was cut short, because instead of working or coming to America to work these Germans, Austrians, Italians, and others had to spend their time and strength massacring each other for the profits of their imperialist masters. Our American capitalists, therefore, not only took Negroes into their factories but sent hundreds of agents into the South offering Negroes free passage into the North and promising them a happy life. The Negro population of New York rose from 91,000 in 1910 to 327,000 in 1930, while over the same period the Negro population of Detroit rose from 5,700 to 120,000. This meant millions of dollars more in the pockets of Negro wage earners. Negroes were able to get much better education and opportunities for development. Negroes living in cities were better able to organize and fight for social and political equality. To serve the needs of these Negroes a greater number of Negro doctors, teachers, and other professional men was needed.

Of course we know that the Negroes still continue to suffer under heavy discrimination. But the fact remains that this migration and opportunity to enter into industry was a great step forward. And it had nothing to do with color. A great economic and social change was taking place in the country as a whole; great numbers of Negroes were swept along by it, and thus had an opportunity to improve their position.

The Next Step Forward

What was the next great step forward of the Negroes? It came in 1937 with the organization of the CIO. Here again we see that the decisive factor was not the question of race but the question of economic and social and political change, affecting American society as a whole. Up to 1937 the American Federation of Labor, representing on the whole the more privileged sections of the American working class, kept Negroes out of its ranks. But with the great crisis of 1929, American labor entered into a new phase of existence. One of the most important results of this shake-up was the organization of all workers in industrial unions, particularly the semi-skilled and the unskilled. The CIO was essentially the organization of the poorer types of workers. But the CIO organizers found that if they were to organize the workers in an industry as a whole they could not leave out the Negroes. In the packing-houses in Chicago and elsewhere the employers had deliberately brought Negroes into industry in order to use them against the white workers. Obviously these new CIO unions, to win their battles, had to have the Negroes in. And today, 1939, we can see hundreds of thousands of Negroes in the new unions, firmly knit with the white workers and gaining many of the great advantages that come to all workers who carry on militant struggles in workers' organizations. This does not mean that prejudice and discrimination have been wiped away, even in the best of the new unions. But it means that a great step forward has been made. And here again the decisive factor was not color.

On the Eve of Great Upheavals

It may seem to an individual Negro that it is the color of his skin that is making all the difference. But this is true only to a limited extent. From an examination of history it can be stated with confidence that the Negroes as a whole, millions of them, have made strides forward owing to great economic, social, and political changes which were powerful enough to sweep aside the barriers of color. And this should teach us a great lesson for the future.

All human society today stands at the crossroads. Europe is plunged into a great war. In the Far East, Japan and China have been fighting for two years. America is visibly preparing to enter into the war. What is the cause of all this universal confusion? The cause is one thing and one thing only: the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. There are in America today over thirty million people starving in the midst of plenty. The capitalist system can no longer function, neither here nor elsewhere. The capitalists did not solve

AN INTERVIEW WITH A COMRADE CEYLONESE MASSES WANT NO PART OF THE BOSSES' WAR

A comrade from the island of Ceylon representing the Ceylonese Socialist Party which is conducting a struggle for the independence of their country from the British imperialists had the following to say when interviewed by the Socialist Appeal:

Ceylon's 6,000,000 workers and peasants are absolutely opposed to giving any sort of support to England in the present imperialist war. The reason for this is simple.

"This war is not being fought for democracy. This war is fought for who shall have the privilege of standing on our necks and exploiting our people. Ceylon, one of the colonies of the British and French Empires, is a bone over which the imperialist dogs are fighting. The people of the colonies will have nothing to do with either gang."

"Whatever democratic liberties we had won during the course of the last three and a half years were being smashed by the British 'democrats' who feared the tremendous growth of our liberation movement. The English have organized an illegal terrorist militia which they are beginning to employ against the workers' and peasants' unions throughout Ceylon. The British-appointed Governor General has suspended the constitution and now governs by military decree, in the fashion of Hitler."

"If the Sinhalese people were able to express themselves by means of a democratic vote 80-90 percent would vote to break away from the British Empire which they feel is strangling them. But since this right is not given to them they must employ other means to obtain their freedom."

"And this is where the work of our Party, the Ceylon Socialist Party, comes in. We are definitely opposed to the Second (Social Democratic) International which endorses the war aims of the Allied imperialists. Likewise, we denounce the policy of the Third (Stalinist) International which is for the defense of

one imperialist bloc as against the other. Our policy is the policy of internationalism—that is, the workers of every country must act independently of their rulers and oppressors. They must fight for their own freedom and for socialism.

"It is our belief that the colonial peoples will be the first to raise the banner of revolt against this imperialist war. When that time comes we know that class conscious American workers will be of real aid to us in assuring our victory. From what I have observed in America, the Socialist Workers Party is the only anti-war, revolutionary party that is preparing to lead the workers to socialism. We socialists and revolutionists of Ceylon wish to extend our fraternal greetings."

N. M. U. Bureaucrats Stand in Way Of Winning Seamen's Real Demands

By SIDNEY MOORE

(Continued from Last Issue)

There is at present a sharp disproportion between the working conditions, the economic standards of the maritime working class and their organized power, their will to struggle for such concrete demands and their answering militancy. Actually a frightened and conservative officialdom is resting like a dead weight upon the power and resources of the seamen.

Witness the peculiar and supposedly practical method of putting the main emphasis on "secondary" picketing at such important centers as gasoline stations during the recent Tanker strike. Also the "practical" strike tactic of allowing union crews to sail vessels that were using the "hot oil" loaded from scab-run tanker ships.

Witness the militant caliber of the present officialdom by how quickly they bowed when the Maritime Commission barked and threw them a bone for a "war-bonus" in the form of a 25 percent increase in wages. An agreement that settled nothing but only increased the resentment of the rank and file and the belligerence of the administration-shipowners union-busting alliance.

Shifting the Blame As always, whenever a battle is lost, the officialdom blames it upon the "non-understanding" and "backward" membership.

There is soon coming the day when these despicable insults to the militancy of the membership will not go unanswered. Time and time again, these maritime workers have demonstrated a willingness "to go down the line" for their demands and always the Stalinists went down first without even a fight.

The present officialdom, trying vainly to act as a conciliatory medium between the steamship owners - administration alliance and the crisis by the last war. The post-war crises have been more devastating than the pre-war ones. We are today on the eve of economic, social, and political upheavals infinitely greater than anything that took place in America during the Civil War. And in those upheavals color is not going to play any very great part. American society today, as society in all parts of the world, faces two alternatives. Either the workers and the poor farmers will get together in unions and political organizations and take over capitalist property, establishing the socialist system. Or, on the other hand, the capitalists will organize fascist bands, smash the workers' organizations, and by this means insure their profits and the continuance of the capitalist system. That is the great conflict in the world today. It is a conflict in which the Negro must and will play his part. In America the white workers, as has been shown in the organization of the CIO, will in time seek the assistance of the Negroes against the capitalists as certainly as Lincoln had to seek it against the Southern slave-owners. But whereas Lincoln and the Northern capitalists were rich and powerful and their Negro allies were poor, today the Negroes and the whites are members of the same class. For this reason, in the course of the struggle and after it, the barriers of race prejudice will be much more easily overcome than they were seventy-five years ago.

On the international scale the workers of Great Britain and France, for instance, may feel today little solidarity with Negroes in Africa. But when they find themselves in deadly struggle with British and French landlords and capitalists they will welcome the news that the Negroes in Africa are striking at the brothers and sons and cousins of the European ruling classes, who oppress the Negroes in the colonies. It is to such great crises in human history that the whole world is moving today.

A Negro, therefore, who is turned back from a job because he is black will not lose courage. Instead he will see in what direction history is moving and, by means of political activity and industrial organization, he will try to assist those forces which make for greater solidarity among workers and farmers. That is the road along which we have to travel. It may seem slow, and it may seem also that it does not answer the immediate problems of the day. But there is no other road. And today the historical process is not at all slow. History is moving very fast. That is why it is necessary to know where we came from, where we are, and, infinitely more important, in what direction we are moving.

Stalin's Fake 'Left Turn' Masks Reactionary Foreign Policy

(Continued from Page 1)

It stood prior to Aug. 23, except that the place then occupied by England and France is now taken by Germany. Then Germany was the "aggressor", now England and France are the "aggressors"! Then the "peace-loving" powers were England and France, now Hitler is the peace-lover!

The same false methodology of making a fundamental distinction between the two imperialist camps is used today as before. Aug. 23, only the distinction is now made in favor of Hitler.

Molotov and Dimitrov Whitewash Hitler

Molotov's Oct. 31 speech officially indicated the new line. "Today, as far as the European great powers are concerned, Germany is in the position of a State that is striving for the earliest termination of the war and for peace, while Britain and France, which but yesterday were declaring against aggression, are in favor of continuing the war and are opposed to the conclusion of peace. The roles, as you see, are changing." (Daily Worker, Nov. 1).

This estimate received its full-dress formulation by Dimitrov, two days later. He developed a "theory" of "two stages" in the war. "In the first stage", Hitler was the aggressor. "Now, on the other

hand, the imperialists of Britain and France have passed over to the offensive, have hurled their peoples into war against Germany. . . . it is the British and French imperialists who have now come forward as the most zealous supporters of the continuation and further incitement of war."

The manifesto of the Communist International, in accordance with this theory of "two stages", directs all its fire against the democratic imperialists and has not a word of criticism of Hitler! Having served its purpose for six weeks, the view that all the belligerents are "equally guilty" is now dropped. Now only France and England are held to be culprits.

Comintern Struggles on Hitler's Behalf

The manifesto calls for struggle against England and France—but not against Hitler. Its formulations are carefully tailored for this purpose: "Take a stand against those who favor continuation of the war"—and the Comintern says that Hitler is for peace. "No support for the policy of the ruling classes directed towards continuation and spread of the imperialist slaughter." But, by obvious implication, support for the policy of the ruling classes directed against continuation of the slaughter, i.e., support for Hitler. Such are the key slogans of the manifesto of the Comintern.

Browder, applying the line to America, repeats it like a phonograph record. "At this moment," he says, "the responsibility for continuing this war lies, before all, upon the British and French imperialists."

We have cited the sections of the latest documents which make clear what the new line means: support of Hitler, masked as support of his "peace" policy. However, even dressed up with the "two stages" theory of Dimitrov, that line would be too unpalatable a dose for even the members of the Communist parties, not to speak of the impossibility of selling this line to the masses outside the Stalinist organizations.

Sweetening Stalin's Peppery Dish

The line is therefore encased in radical language such as the Stalinists have not employed since 1933. It is offered in a casing of talk about the "socialist revolution", the "bankruptcy of capitalism", etc. This radical verbiage has no other function than to serve as sugar-coating, as ornamentation, to the decidedly bitter, utilitarian core: support of Hitler in the present war. The radical coating is what the judges call obiter dicta: words and opinions which are irrelevant and separable from the practical conclusion which is embodied in a judge's decision.

The radical sugar-coating is, indeed, in flagrant contradiction to the practical conclusion reached. For example, Dimitrov quotes this from Lenin: "The character of the war depends not on who attacked and on whose side the 'enemy' is, but on which class is waging the war, what policy is being continued by the given war." If this very correct quotation from Lenin were more than sugar-coating for the document, it would be impossible for Dimitrov to go on to talk of two stages, in one of which Germany was the aggressor and the present one in which England and France are the aggressors. For what is Lenin saying? He is denying, repudiating, the concept of "aggressor"; he doesn't care who attacked.

For this very reason, Lenin refused to make any distinction between the two warring imperialist camps. That Germany made peace with the Soviet Union in March, 1918, and that a few months later both Austro-Hungary and Germany were seeking peace while the Allies pressed for a victorious conclusion—this made no difference whatsoever to Lenin in characterizing both camps as imperialist warring camps, and calling for class war against both camps. Dimitrov has the effrontery to quote Lenin for window-dressing, all the better to advocate a policy which is the opposite of that which Lenin advocated!

The radical sugar-coating is also in flagrant contradiction to the truth. "The Communists," says the manifesto, "have always fought against such a war. They warned the working people again and again that the ruling classes were preparing a destructive and bloody slaughter for hundreds of millions of people." But as late as Sept. 17, a few short weeks ago, the Stalinists, as we have seen, were still touting this war as a war for democracy!

Why the Press Passes this Counterfeit

The radical sugar-coating resembles the revolutionary policy of Lenin just about as much as the commodity sold in a house of prostitution resembles love. The Stalinists are, nevertheless, not alone in peddling this counterfeit as the real coin. They are being ably supported in this obscene business by the capitalist press. "Reds urge world revolt", says the New York Times headline, and the other papers differ only in being more sensational. Why are they so insistent upon helping the Stalinists pass off this counterfeit? For one reason only: the Stalinists are hopelessly vulnerable to repression, being identified by the masses as a tool of Hitler; the Stalinists are labelled revolutionaries by the capitalists, precisely in order to assault all real revolutionaries. As the Stalinists made an amalgam between revolutionaries and fascists in order to destroy the revolutionaries in the purges, the capitalists are making an amalgam between Stalinists and revolutionaries in order to attempt to destroy the revolutionaries.

A Balance Sheet of the Peoples Front

The capitalists are everywhere on the offensive against the revolutionaries. This is a period of stark reaction, no question about it. That it is such a period, the Stalinists have made possible as far as they can within their power. In closing their books for the peoples front period, the Stalinists are constrained to mention all their former partners in crime. Browder says: "The president and his administration . . . makes use of its former prestige among the masses to secure their acceptance of the program of Wall Street." But who provided Roosevelt with his "former" prestige? Who contributed more zealously than the Stalinists? Who concealed his every crime until today? Who called his WPA slashes the work of others, who supported his "neutrality" and armament program, marshalled the trade unions under his banners, etc.? Dimitrov says: "The Social-Democratic, Democratic and Radical funkies of the bourgeoisie are brazenly distorting the anti-fascist slogans of the peoples front and are using them to deceive the masses." But the slogans are not distorted, they are the slogans of the peoples front—written by the Stalinists during the last five years, and the Stalinists, by uniting with these "funkies of the bourgeoisie" in the peoples front and the French government, gave these funkies a new lease on life, helped them smash the French working class.

"The peoples front tactics pursued in recent years", says Dimitrov, "helped the Spanish people to wage an armed struggle for two and a half years"—and, as history testifies, doomed that struggle to defeat. "It made it possible", Dimitrov goes on, "for the proletariat of France to obtain considerable social gains"—where are the gains? The peoples front movement, Dimitrov has the effrontery to say, "made it possible to postpone for a time the outbreak of the European war." Was that the effect of the peoples front votes—including the votes of the Stalinists—for military loans to Poland, for French armaments, for Daladier as premier? The Stalinists change their line, but not its predominant characteristic: a fabric of foul, brazen lies.

Thanks to the Stalinists and their Social-Democratic and bourgeois allies in the peoples front, the masses of Europe were delivered bound hand and foot to the war-makers.

Now the Stalinists change . . . war camps. That is the only change they make: from one imperialist camp to the other.

The Third Camp

Against both these camps the irreconcilable war of the working class must be waged. Not in alliance with either of these camps, but in deadly conflict against both of them, will the masses of the world secure their emancipation from war and all the other evils of capitalism. Neither the camp of Hitler-Stalin nor that of Daladier-Chamberlain-Roosevelt! The third camp, the camp of revolutionary struggle against war—that is the place for the workers of the world.

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A GIFT FOR VOROSHILOV

The German Nazi press has reported the following:
"Field Marshal Goering presents an Airplane to the Russian Minister of War Voroshilov." (headline)
"MOSCOW, Oct. 10 (TO)—A German plane of the 'Fieseler-Storch' type, piloted by members of the German Air Corps, landed at the local airfield. It was sent to the Soviet Minister of War Voroshilov as a gift by Field Marshal Goering."
Goering will now, in all probability, be rewarded with the Order of Stalin.

Russian Opposition Bulletin

The current issue of the Russian Opposition Bulletin is now available at the following book stores in New York City: Labor Book Shop, 116 University Pl.; Foreign News Depot, Times Bldg.; Meisel's Book Store, 278 Grand St.; Biederman's Book Store, 2nd Ave. & 12th St.; newstand, 3rd Ave. & 14th St., (NW).
This 32-page Bulletin contains 12 articles by Leon Trotsky, including: The USSR in War, Stalin—Agent of Hitler, The Enigma of the USSR, and others of extreme importance. Readers of Russian cannot afford to miss this issue.

ANNOUNCEMENT

CELEBRATE THE 22nd ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION at the Lower East Side Anniversary Social Refreshments—music by Stanton—games—prizes and surprises. 163 Norfolk St., (14th St. cross-town bus to Stanton St.) Nov. 11, 1939 Contribution—15c.
HEADQUARTERS Opening Social, Joe Hill Unit Y.P.S.L. invites all comrades and friends to a gala affair. Community Sing, Folk Dancing, Professional Magician. Sat., Nov. 11, 8:30, 4370 Broadway (186 St.) Washington Heights Youth Center. Admission 20c.