

THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

The Greatest Event in History

A revolution is the greatest event in the history of any society, and the Russian Revolution is the greatest of all revolutions. By this uprising, the workers and peasants of Russia shattered the capitalist system on one-sixth of the world's surface and took the road to socialism. On November 8, 1917, the night after the seizure of power, Lenin rose to address the Soviet congress. Gripping the rails before him he spoke the memorable words, "We shall now begin the construction of the socialist order." On that same night and from that same platform, was sounded the call for the world revolution, uttered many times before, but now, because it came from the leaders of the first workers' state in history, reverberating across the oceans and mountains from continent to continent. It was heard in Central Europe and in Central Asia, by millions of Indians and Chinese, heard too by the most oppressed people in the world, the Negroes in Africa, in the West Indies, and in the United States of America.

A few days ago the revolution achieved its twenty-second anniversary. Broken and besmirched, attacked from without and betrayed from within, yet it lives. From the great peaks scaled in its early years, it has fallen far. But it remains a banner and a banner, a banner torn and bedraggled, stained with crimes and blood, carried by treacherous hands, but still a symbol of the greatest effort yet made by downtrodden humanity to rid the world of economic exploitation and political tyranny. To rid the world, not only Russia. Today Negroes, weighed down by still heavier burdens than those they carried on November 7, 1917 must celebrate that never-to-be-forgotten anniversary, must reflect on what the Russian Revolution has meant and still means, to them and to all mankind.

It Shook the Foundations of Imperialism

Twenty-two years ago the great majority of Negroes in Africa and their brothers and sisters in America were little more than slaves, nourishing that hope of freedom which is unquenchable in the hearts of men, but feeding it on the illusions and misconceptions and impotence bred of white domination and the steel walls of imperialist slavery. But the Russian Revolution in 1917 razed to the ground one great fortress of world imperialism, and so shook the whole structure that today, twenty-two years after, it still rocks on its foundations. In the years that followed 1917, the Communist International carried the great message of the world revolution and the example of Russia to the millions of Negroes throughout the world. Negroes for the first time understood that for them, as for all the exploited and oppressed, there was a road out and upward, understood that they were not alone, that in France and in Britain, in Belgium and in America, all over the world, there were millions of workers and peasants whose enemy was their enemy, whose aim was their aim, whose destiny was their destiny, not only to destroy tyrants and oppressors, but to destroy the system which gave them birth, not only to overthrow imperialism but to create the socialist society.

The Russian Revolution, the Communist International that grew out of it, by precept of brilliant propaganda and fearless agitation, by example of heroic struggle and self-sacrifice, taught the lessons of imperialist barbarism, of the necessity for proletarian revolutions in the imperialist nations, and national independence in the colonial countries; preached and practiced the unity of all the oppressed, irrespective of religion or race, indefatigably pointed to the two roads that lay before all mankind—imperialist war and capitalist reaction, or victorious socialism in Europe and America and the independence of Asia and Africa.

A Blow at Colonial Exploitation

There are Negroes who have seen and still see little for their people in the propagation of revolutionary doctrines. They are either selfish or ignorant—selfish because they are anxious only to preserve and extend the mean profits and paltry prestige they have managed to scrape together for themselves; or they are ignorant, not with the ignorance of the masses, which comes from lack of opportunity and which the great school of the class struggle can correct, but learnedly ignorant through too complete an acceptance of imperialist education which is designed to blind and not to open the eyes of the masses, to perpetuate and not to destroy the imperialist system. Let those Negroes who talk so superficially about "Reds" explain why the British government, when Anthony Eden visited Moscow in 1935, demanded as the first condition of British friendship with Russia the discontinuance of revolutionary propaganda in India, in the West Indies, and in Africa. These British imperialists, with the experience of three centuries, know the condition of the people they so mercilessly exploit. They felt and still feel the shock of the Russian Revolution, at home in Britain, and in every corner of their empire. They know that, in Africa for instance, there has arisen no threat to their power during the three hundred years it has lasted, so strong as that represented by a few thousand copies of a Bolshevik paper circulating among the Negroes, and a few men working devotedly to build a Bolshevik party. They can foresee the overwhelming power of the Negro masses when mobilized behind such a party. They know what this revolution will mean to their power and their profits and their privileges. They therefore curse the Russian Revolution and the day it was born.

No Southern capitalist or plantation owner celebrates the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Should a Negro in the South walk down a public street carrying a banner marked "Long Live the Russian Revolution," he might be lynched before he had gone fifty yards. And why? Because it stands for the destruction of the rotting capitalist system, with its unnecessary poverty and degradation, its imperialist war and its fascist dictatorships, its class domination and racial persecution. Every Negro with an ounce of political understanding or a spark of revolt against oppression will recognize the significance and celebrate the anniversary of the October Revolution in Russia.

The Fourth International Carries On

True, we have seen the revolution outraged and degraded. We have seen, rising out of the ruins of Bolshevism in Russia, the monstrosity of Stalinism. We have seen the Communist International change from the valiant defender of the international working class into the mere tool of Stalin's foreign policy. The development and decline of the Russian Revolution are described elsewhere in this issue, and in many of our books and pamphlets. But the principles of the world revolution, which first assumed flesh and blood in 1917, still remain. Today a new international, the Fourth, maintains the tradition and works for the goal. Though we condemn and ceaselessly expose Stalin and all his works, we celebrate the Russian anniversary and we call upon the Negroes and all workers to celebrate with us.

By a curious trick of fortune, Leon Trotsky, whose name is inseparably associated with Lenin's as the leadership that guided the revolution to success, was born on November 7th, the anniversary of the revolution. This year he celebrates his sixtieth birthday. History is the struggle of economic and social forces expressing themselves in the words and actions of men. And sometimes the life of a single individual epitomizes the history of a movement. Second only to Lenin, Trotsky was at the head of the Russian Revolution during the great days of October, the war of intervention, the founding of the Soviet state, and the organization of the Communist International. But with the decline of the revolution, he found himself leading the opposition to the bureaucracy of Stalin. He was driven out of Russia and exiled to Turkey. His children and family have been systematically exterminated. He has been slandered as no other man in history has been slandered. He has been driven from country to country and for years has been guarded night and day to save him from Stalin's assassins. All for one reason only. Because he remains today as he has always been, the enemy of capitalist society, the organizer and theoretician of the world revolution, and the unsparring opponent of the bureaucracy which has betrayed the great revolution; concerned not with personal revenge nor the lust for power but with the liberation of the workers and farmers in all countries from capitalist chains and slavery.

He has written little specifically on the Negro question, as he has written little, for instance, on the Indian question. The circumstances of his life and the necessities of the struggle have compelled him to devote most of his attention to the great centers of prole-

HAVING A GOOD TIME!



Walter B. Chrysler—sipping champagne. Workers in his auto plants are striking to maintain decent living standards—against inhuman speed-up, and for union conditions.

GOLDMAN ENDS G-MAN COACHED SUCCESSFUL SPEAKING TOUR IN WPA TRIAL GOV'T WITNESS

At the conclusion of a speaking tour for the Socialist Workers Party that took him throughout the eastern and Middle Western states, Albert Goldman, well-known labor attorney, declared that his lectures on the European war, the first stages of which he personally experienced in France early this fall, had been received with the greatest interest by hundreds of workers.

Goldman, whose tour began on the east coast and wound up in the Twin Cities, stated that his largest meetings had been in Minneapolis and at the University of Minnesota.

Speaks to Negroes
His most interesting lecture, Goldman related, took place in the Negro district of Chicago, where a large body of Negro sympathizers of the Socialist Workers Party turned out to hear him.

Speaking on the attitude of the French workers to the war, Goldman pointed out at his lectures that although the workers hated the idea of going off to the trenches in the service of their imperialism, they saw no way out of their dilemma because both the Socialist and Communist parties had no program for fighting against the war. The working class parties, Goldman explained at his meetings, far from fighting against the war, were divided among themselves as to which imperialist camp to support.

Goldman dealt at length with the program of the French Communist party, tracing its gyrations from Popular Frontism to support of the Stalin-Hitler alliance.

Great Interest
Great interest was manifested at each of his meetings, Goldman stated, when he called upon the workers to learn the tragic lessons of their European brothers. "I called upon the advance guard of the American workers to do in this country what the German, French and English workers failed to do," Goldman went on. "I called upon them to

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organize themselves against the war and to join the Socialist Workers Party, the party of proletarian revolution."

U.S. District Attorney Anderson indicated he will call more than 150 witnesses, and it therefore appears that a month will pass before the government concludes its case. The feeling was growing among labor leaders that Anderson is seeking to pad the case with such a mountain of "evidence" that the cost of an appeal would be almost prohibitive to organized labor. In case of appeal, the defense must pay for the printing of a transcript of all testimony.

Sentence Deferred
On Saturday, Federal Judge Joyce announced he "was deferring indefinitely" the sentencing of the eight workers convicted in the first two trials. The judge stated he would postpone sentence at least until he receives reports from probation officers and possibly until all WPA strike defendants have been tried.

The judge's action was taken to indicate some hesitation in government circles concerning next moves. The fight that Minnesota labor is putting up, and the support it is receiving throughout the country, has the government worried.

FIGHT AGAINST THE WAR;

organize themselves against the war and to join the Socialist Workers Party, the party of proletarian revolution."

tarian revolution in Europe. But he has always seen and taught that the struggle in the last analysis is one, that the blows he gave and directed at world imperialism in any country, weakened the whole system and thereby facilitated the victory of Indians in India and Negroes in Africa and America. If today the Socialist Workers Party has placed work among the American Negroes as one of the most important tasks before it, and has a clear program and policy on the problems of the Negro, it owes much to his insistence on the importance of the Negro to the American revolution, his sympathy with their oppression, his boundless faith in their power to struggle, their will to conquer, their capacity to aid in the creation of the socialist society. Negroes will join with us in celebrating his anniversary and to wish him and his wife Natalia, his devoted helper, many years of life and health to continue their work, of such importance to us today and to the generations yet to come.

This joint anniversary bears for all Negroes a special significance at this time. It comes at a moment when the imperialist barbarians are engaged once more in their periodic orgies of destruction and slaughter, when the masters of Russia have allied themselves with the imperialist criminals, when hopes of liberation seem faint and distant. But in the early days of 1917 just such a pall seemed to rest on the poor and oppressed in all countries everywhere. Yet that gloom was the prelude to such an uprising of the masses as had never been seen before. Negroes were unprepared then. Today, thanks to the Russian Revolution, they and all others who suffer with them can see more clearly. Knowledge is power. Let us celebrate these anniversaries, not only in memory of the great deeds that have been done but of the still greater tasks that face us in the days that are ahead. Negroes more than all others have nothing to lose but their chains. They more than all others will play their part in the destruction of capitalist society for they have most to

The Needle in the Haystack—Or The War Aims of the British Capitalist

Lord Halifax was selected to make the long awaited statement on British war aims, and the choice is not without political significance. Like all the recent rulers of England, a country with a long-established political system and a mature ruling class, Halifax conforms to some special national characteristic. Ramsay MacDonald was par excellence the labor leader kissing the hem of the aristocracy's garment. Baldwin was the jolly country squire. Neville Chamberlain is the business man (he was prepared to bargain away everything, except of course, the British Empire). War-monger Churchill (the English Roosevelt) was brought into the Cabinet only when war began, and over the radio he tells

the British public stirring tales of the U-boats sunk by the British navy. Halifax is preeminently the churchman. Unlike some other British magnates, Halifax believes in God like hell, and is a pillar of the Church of England. He is also a pillar of the British Empire, and he defends them both. For ordinary men this might present some difficulty. Not for Halifax. For him God, the Church of England, and the British Empire are all one, one in three and three in one. This war-aims business is "damned awkward, don't you know." So the Cabinet put up Halifax to deal with it. "What is the real purpose of our struggle?" Halifax admits

that people in many quarters are asking that the allies should define "with greater precision what are sometimes called war aims."

"Sometimes." Halifax obviously does not like the term war aims. God forbid. It sounds as if the British were actually fighting for something. The British are fighting, according to Halifax, for nothing. They are fighting for what the Church of England fights for: "in defense of freedom . . . we are fighting for peace . . . security . . . against the substitution of brute force for law . . . sanctity of treaties . . . disregard for the pledged word." Almost the ten commandments complete.

SERMONS ON DEMOCRACY
Britain, says Halifax, does not wish to interfere in Germany's affairs. "But when the challenge in the sphere of international relations is sharpened, as today in Germany, by the denial to men and women of elementary human rights . . ." then, then what? Is he for a "democratic" Germany? This sanctimonious scoundrel hasn't even the nerve to go that far. "Democratic" Germany means workers' political parties and agitation for socialism, and God knows what else. Halifax takes refuge in the liturgy of his beloved Church: "We are therefore fighting to maintain the rule of law and the quality of mercy in dealings between man and man . . ."

Labor Offered Nothing, Stays Away from Polls In Tuesday's Elections

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nothing but a few pious speeches when they get into office. Their attraction wears off, and no one pays them any more attention.

New Deal Gone
Insofar as general trends could be observed, conservatism and reaction made undoubted gains. Here, too, this result can be attributed to the wearing thin of the liberal, progressive and pseudo-radical disguises of the servants of capitalism. Nothing is left of the New Deal in reality, and less and less of it remains in the minds of those who once were fooled by it. Under such circumstances, with no outlet to the left, more openly conservative candidates could get into office by machine methods.

The defeat of the pension plans in both Ohio and California was reaction's most dramatic and notable victory. "Thirty dollars every Thursday" lost in California by approximately a million votes, far greater than any commentator had predicted. This defeat seems to have resulted from the following causes: In the first place, the pension plans, especially the California plan, were so full of economic holes that, in spite of the legitimacy and progressive nature of their aims, their opponents had a substantial basis in fact for propaganda against them.

Secondly, the official leadership of both the Ohio and California movements was in the hands, to a considerable extent, of shady promoters who taught their followers to put all faith in the promises of politicians of the two major boss parties. The politicians, after being themselves elected last year by pension votes, light-heartedly broke their promises, as they always do.

This was most plainly illustrated by Governor Olson of California who, after allowing himself to be regarded as the Messiah of the pension movement, made a vicious attack against it on the eve of the election.

Third, the labor movement in both states, though more or less supporting the pension movement, was ambiguous and half-hearted in its attitude, and made no effort to take the leadership away from the charlatans and, by putting the plans on a sound basis and conducting a vigorous struggle, to transform the movement into a serious popular offensive.

Some Exceptions
The only important partial exceptions shown to the general trend of the elections might seem

MINN'SOTA LABOR GETTING TOO HOT FOR GOVERNMENT

Labor, organ of the 21 railroad unions, predicted in its Nov. 7 issue that the present trial of WPA workers in Minneapolis would be the last, although over 100 other defendants are awaiting trial. The great fight that Minnesota labor is putting up is apparently getting too hot for the government.

"It was reported on the highest authority," states Labor, "that these would be the last relievers to go on trial. . . . Organized labor in Minnesota, which is backing the strikers with all its resources, will appeal the convictions of the men already tried. That will place the matter in the hands of Solicitor General Jackson, and if he doesn't move for dismissal of the cases careful observers in Washington will be greatly surprised. . . ."

ARREST GROUP ASKING RELIEF FOR NEEDY MAN

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tration brought no results. The committee of union members remained and insisted that the case be heard. Again the police were called and again the committee was arrested. It was this second arrest that brought the seven suspended sentences.

Gets Food
The action of the union has already brought partial success. David Sporn was granted a food allotment by the home relief bureau. His rent, however, still has not been granted, and the union committee intends to continue the vigorous fight it has put up until the rent is paid.

But after all, there is a war on. They are fighting about something. Colonies? The Baltic states? Road to India? The markets of Eastern Europe? Italy's claims on France? Near East? Middle East? Far East? Not a word. He does say earlier that the British hope "as far as we can, to repair the damage wrought by Germany upon her weaker neighbors."

That is the straw by which the Poles and the Czechs are to save themselves from drowning. Halifax is concerned about the British Empire. For the rest, "as far as we can."

SHORT ON CONCRETE, SHORT ON ABSTRACT

But if he is short on the concrete, he is long on the abstract. "Acquiescence is dishonor . . . my own conscience . . . supreme dishonour. . . ." Two lines lower, "supreme dishonour," and two lines lower, "The supreme dishonour of the German Government is now open to the world." So now Hitler knows, the dishonorable rascal.

As he goes on, Parson Halifax becomes inspired: "human equality, self-respect and mutual tolerance." He hopes that after the war the British will be "better equipped in spirit" for the new life: "in this matter, as indeed in all life, it is finally the spiritual side that counts." He actually refers to the doctrine of the atonement. "To many it seems strange that we should look to force with all its suffering to bring redemption." And again, "annihilation of spiritual values," and "those hours in which we strengthen ourselves to take up high resolutions. . . ."

These, according to Halifax, are the war aims of the British Government. This is the bilge that Halifax has the nerve to read in a broadcast to the world as the reply of the British Government to the question people "in many quarters" are asking.

Who chooses to say he believes this, can do so. There may be workers backward enough to be taken in by this sermon. We doubt it. But all American proponents of a war for "democracy," like the New Leader and others, when they say they believe it, they lie in their dirty throats and the words should choke them. Halifax is fighting for the land and the factories of Britain, for the 100 billion dollars of investments abroad, for the right to exploit 500 million starving colonialists, to crush the German challenge to Britain's imperial supremacy. We can judge of the corruption, and rottenness of the British system by the supreme inanity of the defense its rulers make for it. But, as the example of India shows today, and as the British workers will show tomorrow, people aren't swallowing that sort of dope any more.

AGAIN—"THE WAR TO END WAR"
What about peace? He is fighting for peace, he says. But how do we know that we will not have to fight for it again? We fought for it the last time and didn't get it. Halifax takes care of that: "With this purpose in view we shall use all our influence, when the time comes, in the building of a new world in which the nations will not permit insane armed rivalry to deny their hopes of fuller life, and future confidence not be forever overcome by grim foreboding of disaster."

As the poet says, "But who is this and what is here?" We seem to have met this gentleman before. Indeed we have. He is our old friend, "the war to end war," but dressed up in clerical coat, collar turned back, and uttering the meaningless mouthings of an Oxford cleric. As is fitting, For Halifax is vice-chancellor of Oxford University, joint stronghold of British capital and British piety.

What is this new international order going to look like? Halifax does not know and says so. "We have no idea what the shape of the post-war world will be." All

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