

The Negro Question

By J. R. JOHNSON

Periodically one comes across statements in the Negro press, more often one hears remarks from individual Negroes, which betray with what facility some Negro politicians slip into racial chauvinism to cover political bankruptcy.

Roy Wilkins is the editor of The Crisis, writes a weekly column in the Amsterdam News, and is known everywhere as a "progressive" person. He, with other Negro intellectuals, was a great friend of the Stalinists in the days when they were rooting for "F.D.R.," throwing their cloaks in the mud for Eleanor Roosevelt to walk on, and fraternizing with Negro bishops and Father Divine as the future leaders of Negro emancipation.

The Bedfellows Part

Now the New Dealers are bitter. Eleanor, in particular, is very bitter. She says the Stalinists "ought to go to Russia." One day she will even send a letter to David Lasser of the Workers Alliance, resigning her honorary membership, unless Dave Lasser first expels her.

The Fourth International denounces and will continue to denounce the policies of Moscow, which remain the chief obstacle in the working class on the road of the world revolution and the emancipation of the workers.

What, however, is most revealing is the last paragraph of his column. In it he says: "Aside from everything else, this means that the dark brother in America, who had been hoping for the emergence of some international leadership sympathetic to his problems, must turn elsewhere, for the opportunism of the Stalinites is on a par with the opportunism of the Republican party."

Wilkins Deceives the Negroes

This is one of the most mischievous and despicable misstatements that could be made by a man in Wilkins' position. In what way have the Stalinists, scoundrels though they are, tossed the black brother overboard when they got what they wanted from him? Stalin and the bureaucrats exiled Trotsky, a white man, and murdered nearly every member of his family.

Now that they want to keep America from going to war with Hitler, they abuse Roosevelt, they curse the New Deal, they condemn capitalism, they use phrases about socialism, and they open up a big drive in Harlem to recapture the natural militancy of the Negroes.

But how can Wilkins say that they have specifically used the black man and now want to drop him when they have no more use for him? Wilkins has committed a great crime against the Negro people.

Why Wilkins Raises the Race Issue

Today, in the world crisis we face, we need unity in the working class, particularly between black and white. The workers may differ among themselves, this one Stalinist, the other one Socialist, another Trotskyite, etc. But against the capitalist class and their capitalist war we must be united.

Every Negro worker, with three hundred years of oppression behind him, is naturally inclined to see race prejudice in every political move. That is understandable. We must explain. Wilkins deliberately confuses. And why? Because he is not a Marxist; he is not a revolutionary. He is bourgeois to the bone.

In reality the racial traitor is not the Stalinist, who twists his policy for reactionary political reasons, but Wilkins himself. Yes, Wilkins himself, who uses the race issue to cover up his political bankruptcy.

A Page from Finnish History Wholesale Massacre of Finland's Workers Made 'Republic' Possible

By VICTOR SERGE

(Concluded from last week)

(Finland secured its independence as a result of the October Russian Revolution. Fatally misunderstanding the laws of the class struggle, the social democrats set up an "Ideal Democracy" which left untouched the property and, consequently, the power of the bourgeoisie. Kuusinen, who, at the head of the social democrats, led the Finnish workers to disaster then, is the same Kuusinen who now heads Stalin's hand-picked "government" in Finland. In both roles he exemplified his hostility to the real socialist revolution. Mannerheim, who led the Whites against the Reds in 1918, leads the Finnish Army today.—Editors.)

The bourgeoisie displayed much greater realism than the social democrats. It immediately set on foot a small White army, the backbone of which was the 27th Jaegers battalion of the German Army, composed of young Finns—about five thousand altogether. A former general of the Russian army, a Swede by birth, Mannerheim, took command of these troops and promised to "re-establish law and order in fifteen days."

At the beginning of hostilities the Red Guard was composed of only fifteen hundred poorly armed men. The Whites, who were masters of the Bothnian Gulf cities in addition to the agrarian provinces, took the offensive against a front that stretched from the Gulf of Bothnia to Lake Ladoga.

There were Russian garrisons in the cities of Sveaborg, Vyborg and Tammerfors. A section of the Baltic fleet was anchored in Helsingfors. Antonov-Ovseyenko, Smilga and Dybenko had formed Bolshevik organizations among these troops and sailors. The Russian garrison at Tammerfors, commanded by the revolutionary officer Svechnikov, repulsed Mannerheim's first attacks. Thus protected by the Russians, the Finnish Red Guard could have armed and organized. But at this moment the Brest-Litovsk treaty forced the Soviet Republic to withdraw its troops.

GERMANY TURNS THE TIDE OF BATTLE

There remained only a thousand or so volunteers incorporated in the Red Guard. Svechnikov together with a Finnish socialist, Ero Happonen, directed the operations. The government's

The year 1917 was the high tension point of the last war. The peoples of all the belligerents were war-weary, the armies were "fed up." There were strikes and peace demonstrations in Berlin, London, Paris. The socialist peace conferences of Stockholm and Zimmerwald that year dramatized the issue. The German fleet was paralyzed by a long drawn-out mutiny. In Russia the strikes and mutinies led to actual revolution. And in the spring of that fateful year the French Army was swept by a series of mutinies which, at their height, involved hundreds of thousands of men in sixteen army corps. The French Army reported 509 desertions in 1917. The 1917 total was 21,174. "So general was the riot," writes Liddell Hart in his History of the World War, "that, according to the Minister of War, only two divisions in the Champagne sector could be relied on fully, and in places the trenches were scarcely even guarded."

The immediate cause of the mutinies was the failure of the Nivelle offensive in April, 1917. General Robert Nivelle had succeeded the incompetent Joffre early in 1917 as the commander-in-chief of the French armies. Nivelle was a dashing soldier who won fame at Verdun and whose slogan was, "Speed! Force! Brutality!" (Not until too late was it discovered he was a romantic dreamer who liked to pose as a "man of action.") His right-hand man was General Mangin, known to his troops as "The Butcher."

NOTHING DISTURBS THE GENERAL'S PEACE OF MIND

Nivelle promised nothing less than a complete break-through and the speedy end of the war. He planned to smash the German lines "at a single stroke by a sudden attack in 24 or 48 hours" and to achieve "the destruction of the principal mass of the enemy." His reply to all doubters was the same: "La victoire est certain!" Nivelle was not at all perturbed when the Germans captured his complete plan of attack

efforts at organization, from January 15 until April 1, resulted in a workers' army of about sixty thousand men (thirty thousand of them in reserve), and in numerous partially successful battles.

The leader of the White government, Svinhufvud, obtained the help of the Kaiser. Twenty thousand German soldiers under von der Goltz disembarked at Hango, Helsingfors and Loviza, taking the Reds from the rear. The capture of Helsingfors, after a stubborn street battle in which the Germans and the Whites used workers' wives and children as a cover (one hundred were killed), was followed by ferocious reprisals. Artillery bombarded the Workers' House. A Swedish newspaper published the following information: "Forty Red women, who were said to be carrying arms, were led out on the ice and shot without trial." More than three hundred dead were picked up in the streets.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ASSURE THE WHITE VICTORY

The moderate tendency in the social democratic government, represented by Tanner, prevented rigorous measures against the Whites in the interior until it was too late. The courts frequently condemned counter-revolutionists to nothing more than a fine or to the mild pains of imprisonment. If there were any summary executions, they were entirely on the initiative of the Red Guard. The indecision of the government, differences among the leaders, refusal to push forward with the revolution, the half-heartedness of the agrarian reforms, and the effect of the Brest-Litovsk treaty weakened the Reds. The arrival of German troops demoralized them; at this moment Germany was at the height of her power.

Mannerheim surrounded Tammerfors, where ten thousand Reds under Russian officers resisted furiously. The city was taken house by house, after several days' battle. Two hundred Russians were shot. Several thousand of the besieged got away; two thousand were shot or massacred; five thousand were made prisoners.

At Tavestehus, between Tammerfors and Helsingfors, the decisive battle was fought. Twenty to twenty-five thousand Reds concentrated on this point, driven back from the North by Mannerheim and from the South by von der Goltz. Their retreat to the East was cut off. In defiance of orders they had brought their fa-

milies, and often all their meagre possessions with them. It was more a migration than an army. These masses, who easily became a rout, could hardly maneuver. The Whites raked them with shrapnel. Although surrounded, they fought heroically for two days before they surrendered. Several thousand of the men managed to open a retreat toward the East. The surrender was followed by a massacre. The killing of the wounded was the rule. There remained the ten thousand prisoners, who were interned. Vyborg fell on May 12. Several thousand of the Red Guard took refuge in Russia.

FINNISH "CULTURE" EXPRESSED TO THE DEFEATED WORKERS

The victors massacred the vanquished. Since ancient times class wars have always been the most frightful. There are no more bloody and atrocious victories than the victories of reactionary classes. Since the blood-bath inflicted on the Paris Commune by the French bourgeoisie, the world had not seen anything comparable to the horrors of Finland. From the first shot of the civil war, "belonging to a workers' organization in White territory meant arrest; to have been an official in such organization meant execution. The massacre of socialists reached such proportions that it ended by interesting no one." At Kummen, where 43 Red Guards fell in battle, nearly five hundred persons were executed. There were "hundreds" executed at Kotka, a town of thirteen thousand inhabitants. "They didn't even ask their names; they just led them away in groups."

At Raumo, according to a bourgeois newspaper, "five hundred prisoners captured on May 15 got the punishment they deserved the same day." "April 14 in Toeloe, a suburb of Helsingfors, two hundred Red Guards were killed with machine guns. . . . The Reds were hunted from house to house. Many women perished." At Sveaborg the public executions were set for Trinity Sunday. In the neighborhood of Lakhtis, where the Whites took thousands of prisoners, "the machine guns worked several hours a day." "On one day alone two hundred women were killed with dum-dum bullets; pieces of flesh flew in every direction."

At Vyborg six hundred Red Guards were lined up three deep in front of the fortress moat and coldly picked off with machine guns. Among the intellectuals

who were murdered we mention the editor of the Social Democrat, Jukho Raino, and the writer, Irmant Rantamala, who while being led to his execution by boat "threw himself overboard hoping to drown, but his coat preventing him from sinking. The Whites killed him in the water with gun fire." There are no figures on the total number massacred. Current estimates run between ten and twenty thousand.

"PEACE" TAKES ITS TOLL IN THE PRISONS

The official figures for the number of Red prisoners interned in concentration camps was seventy thousand. Famine, vermin and epidemic ravaged the prisons. A report signed by the well known Finnish doctor, R. Tigerchelt, stated that, "From July 6 to July 31, 1918, the number of prisoners in the Tammerfors concentration camp and the neighboring prison varied between 6,027 and 8,597. Of the prisoners, 2,347 died in these twenty-six days and the average mortality among the prisoners reached as high as 407 per 1,000 per week." On July 25, there were still 50,818 revolutionists in Finnish prisons. In September of the same year, 25,800 were still waiting trial.

For a time the bourgeoisie thought of exporting the "labor power" of its prisoners. A law was passed authorizing the shipment of those condemned to hard labor to foreign countries. Germany, depopulated by the war, was ready to exchange chemical and mineral products for this penal labor force. The German revolution halted the project.

This social purge continued for months in every section of the country. On May 16 warrants were sworn out for the former social democratic deputies who had remained in the country (the revolutionists had already perished or fled). Three of the deputies "committed suicide" in prison during the night of July 2. A dozen more were condemned to death. The supreme court upset this decision in January, 1919, and passed one death sentence, six sentences to life imprisonment, four twelve-year sentences one eleven-year, five ten-year, five nine-year, fifteen eight-year, and two seven-year sentences. "Many of those condemned," Kataya wrote, "were social democratic traitors to socialism, who had spent all their lives serving the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie revenged itself blindly." As usual, the White terror made no distinc-

tion between the reformists—whom the victorious bourgeoisie no longer needed—and the revolutionists.

With law and order re-established, the Finnish bourgeoisie began to consider a monarch to be chosen from the Hohenzollern family. The more and more precarious situation in Germany, however, put an end to the plan.

TO CRIPPLE THE WORKERS FOR MANY DECADES

It would not be an exaggeration to say that more than one hundred thousand Finnish workers were struck down by the White terror, either shot or given long sentences—altogether about one quarter of the working class. "Every organized worker has either been shot or imprisoned," write the Finnish communists in the early part of 1919.

This information permits us to make an important observation on the White terror, which has since been confirmed in Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, etc. The White terror is not to be explained by the frenzy of battle, or by the violence of class hatred, or by any other psychological factor. The war psychosis only plays a secondary role. In reality it is the result of a plan and of historical necessity. The victorious owning classes realize clearly that they can only assure their domination on the morrow of a great social battle by inflicting a blood-bath on the proletariat that will cripple it for years to come. And as the working class is much more numerous than the owning class, the number of victims must be very large.

The total extermination of all the advanced and intelligent elements of the proletariat is the objective of the White terror. Thus a defeated revolution—regardless of the circumstances—will always cost the proletariat infinitely more than a victorious revolution, no matter what hardships and sacrifices the latter may require.

One more observation. The slaughter in Finland took place in April, 1918. Until this time the Russian Revolution had shown magnanimity toward its enemies almost everywhere. It did not turn to the Red terror. We have mentioned bloody episodes during the civil war in the South, but they were exceptional. The victorious bourgeoisie of a tiny country, that was counted among the most advanced in Europe, reminded the Russian workers that Death to the Vanquished! is the law of social war.

In This Corner

by MAX SHACHTMAN

The Hue and Cry About 'Poor Little Finland'

Almost everybody is joining the pack in a hue and cry over Poor Little Finland. Mr. Hoover is collecting funds; President Roosevelt is granting a moratorium on the Finnish debt; Congressmen are yelping for a breaking off of relations with Russia; Alexander Kerensky is stoutly for the independence of Finland; the Finnish White Guards in this country are loading recruits for Finland on to ships; and the liberals and social democrats are pouring out a sea of tears on which to float the ships. The rear-guard is brought up smartly by Norman Thomas and the editor of his official organ, who are ready to fight it out for Finland to the death.

Without exception, all the "friends of Finland" are serving one objective: the whipping up of a chauvinistic war spirit for the "democratic" imperialists and for American participation in the world slaughter on their side.

Kerensky Somewhat Belated

As we recall it, Mr. Kerensky, head of the Russian Provisional Government some twenty-two years ago, was then not quite so strenuous in his demand for the independence of Finland from Muscovite rule. In fact, he fought both the Bolsheviks and the Finnish nationalists who demanded the right of self-determination for Finland. We further recall that it was the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky who, as soon as they were in power, promptly granted Finland its independence. Mr. Kerensky's love for Finland is a little—how shall we say?—belated.

Where Were Roosevelt & Co. Then?

We do not recall any very vigorous activity on the part of Messrs. Hoover, Roosevelt and Co. in behalf of Albania, Ethiopia, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Spain and other victims of reactionary assault.

When the imperialist gangsters were cutting up the world map to suit themselves, and without bothering to inquire of the wishes of those they were carving into greater empires, we heard barely a whisper from all the Congressmen, statesmen and other illustrious citizens of our Great Democracy. They did not then demand the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Italy or Germany. And for good reasons. Mussolini and Hitler were, after all, only doing what every imperialist nation, the United States included, has done throughout its existence, and continues to do.

But didn't the "liberals" and "socialists" of the New Leader and the Nation and the Socialist Call protest then? Yes, they protested when the fascist bandits carried out their abominations. But not even from them was there a word of protest against the similar abominations of the "democratic" bandits.

Not a murmur, for example, when France so graciously ceded to Turkey the Syrian province of Alexandretta a short time ago, purely for the purpose of winning Turkey to an alliance with Anglo-French imperialism. The people of Alexandretta, non-Turkish in their majority, were of course not consulted by either the Turks or the French, any more than the Syrians as a whole were ever consulted about being put under the heel of the French army and the French banks.

First Things First

The protestations of our great American patriots and war-mongers, from Hoover through Roosevelt to Gerry Allard would sound a spot more convincing if they prefaced their activity by a declaration that their first and main fight is against the violation of national independence and sovereignty which is perpetuated by their own ruling class, that is to say, by American imperialism in Puerto Rico, Samoa, the Philippine Islands and elsewhere.

And once they made such a declaration, it would be obligatory for them to add a similar statement with reference to their allies, that is, to those on whose side they are asking us to fight, England and France. They would have to say, it seems to us, that before they presume to say a word in protest against the violation of Finland's independence by Stalin, they denounce the continuing violation of the independence of India, Indo-China, Syria, Algiers, most of Africa and all the other colonies, protectorates and "spheres of influence" of British and French imperialism.

It goes without saying that they will do nothing of the kind. They are too busy working up the campaign for American participation in the war to bother with such trifles. How does the fate of a few hundred million Indians compare with so noble and idealistic a goal as making the world safe for democracy a second time?

It's all very clear and simple. You can commit any crime in the calendar of Stalin or Hitler or Mussolini on one condition: just call yourself a democrat. It will not only sanctify whatever you do, but constitute an unlimited license to condemn your opponent in world politics for doing exactly the same thing.

The mutinies were sporadic, spontaneous, without any centralized direction and largely without political leadership. They had more the character of sit-down strikes than of revolutionary overtures.

The mutineers demanded more pay, more frequent leaves, a relaxation of discipline. But their one simple, basic demand was that the war be stopped. "We have had enough." It was an eruption of deep human disgust with months and years of slaughtering and being slaughtered, of living like animals in burrows, of organized, senseless, barbaric destruction. "We have had enough." In his first report to the Council of War, General Petain, who replaced Nivelle as commander in chief, came to the point right away: the men want peace, he reported. "WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH."

(To be continued in next issue.)

2. . . At Least I Know Why I Am Dying!"

MUTINY!

The 1917 Mutinies in the French Army

by "Spartacus"

two weeks before the offensive was scheduled to begin. Even when, a few days later, a sergeant-major was captured by the Germans bearing on his person—either through gross blundering or actual treachery—the detailed order of attack of the French Fifth Army, Nivelle still refused to make any change in his plans. "Don't get hysterical," he advised his staff. "You won't find a Boche in those trenches. They only want to be off." And when, at the zero hour, aviators reported the German defenses had not been effectively destroyed by the bombardment, Mangin is said to have answered: "Poo! I said I would take my afternoon tea in Laon. Come along!"

They "came along." By nightfall of the first day, the French should have advanced six miles, according to Nivelle's plans. Their actual advance was six hundred yards, at terrible cost. "The attacking troops were trapped in a web of machine-gun fire," writes Hart. "The Senegalese broke and fled, even storming hospital trains in their anxiety to get away." And the Senegalese were shock troops. . . .

PRODIGAL LIBERALITY WITH WORKERS' BLOOD

The second day was almost as bad. And the third. And the fourth. However, writes T. H. Winttingham in Mutiny, "Nivelle persisted. His plans in ruins and his finest troops pounded into the reddened earth, he drove division after division into new attacks, almost as futile and disastrous as

the first. Divisions were not relieved. They died, and new divisions poured through them, until Craonne and the Chemin des Dames were won—a few miles of shell-scarred land."

According to Winston Churchill's The World Crisis, it was not Nivelle so much as Premier Lloyd George who insisted on continuing the massacre. When he learned that the French high command was about to admit failure and stop the slaughter, Lloyd George went to Paris and addressed to the wavering French "strenuous exhortations to continue the offensive." (Even staff officers cannot be as generous with other people's lives as a really idealistic liberal politician.)

THE POILUS TIRE OF DYING

"Upon the very day of the conference in Paris," writes Churchill, "there had occurred a deeply disquieting incident. A French division ordered into the line refused to march. . . . It was the first drop before the downpour."

This "first drop" was the 120th infantry regiment which on May 19 refused to leave its billets to go up to the front. The 128th infantry regiment was ordered the next day to take the place of the mutineers, and also refused. "Down with the war!" cried the ranks. "Death to those who are sending us to death!" "We've had enough of being killed!" "We'll hold the line but we won't attack!" Meetings were improvised. Soldier orators began to talk of ending the war, of the Russian

revolution, of Soviets. The electric current of revolt ran through the whole army, flaring up here and there, leaping from regiment to regiment. Soon whole divisions were "infected," then brigades, finally entire army corps. "Colonel Herbillion informs me of new mutinies," wrote President Poincare in his journal. "Men have refused to go into the trenches. . . . Order is menaced everywhere. . . . The fever is spreading. . . . At Dorfman a few days ago soldiers cried out: 'Vive la Revolution! Down with war!'"

TORTURED BODIES CRY: WE HAVE HAD ENOUGH!

In an excellent chapter on these world war mutinies in her book, M Day, Rose Stein quotes a description of a typical mutiny from a book by Jean de Pierrefeu, a French staff officer: "A regiment ordered to the front line had sent delegates to their Colonel to inform him that they refused to obey. At the same time, similar incidents occurred in other units. In one place, a collection of mutineers had fortified a village, formed a Soviet, appointed a leader, and set up a sort of independent government. They took provisions from the shopkeepers by regularly drawn up requisitions. Their delegates imposed conditions on the officers: increase of pay, regular leave periods, and guarantees that attacks would not be ordered before the enemy's trenches and wire had been destroyed.

"In another place, a general had been hustled and assaulted. Elsewhere, a regiment equipped with motor trucks, on which were mounted machine guns, had been stopped in the attempt to march on Paris. They had stated their intention of going to the Palais-Bourbon and presenting their demands to Parliament. These manifestations of revolt were accompanied by seditious shouts of 'Down with the war! Down with incapable leaders!' And the red flag was displayed."

IN PARIS FRONT, AN EXTREMELY INTERESTING JOURNAL OF THE WAR AS IT LOOKED TO AN "INSIDER" IN PARIS, MICHEL GORDAY DESCRIBES ANOTHER MUTINY:

"Four hundred men barricaded themselves in the village of Missy-le-Bois. They were surrounded by loyal cavalry. The soldiers were fed by the villagers. After four days, negotiations began. Then three soldiers, who were priests serving in the ranks (according to the Catholic who told me the story) broke out and denounced the organizers of the mutiny. . . . The whole company surrendered on the fifth day. Six men were shot. Picked troops carried out the execution."

These accounts are typical. The mutinies were orderly, the men showing that same capacity for spontaneous organization the Russian mutineers showed at La Courte. Except when they were attacked, there was no bloodshed. A general was tied up and forcibly taken into the front line trenches, a major was deprived publicly of his trousers, some officers were shut up in their quarters by the mutineers, others were told to go home. "The officers," writes Jean de Pierrefeu, "though no longer obeyed, were, with rare exceptions, respected. They were told: 'You have fought as well as we. We do not wish you any harm, but we have had enough. The war must stop.'"