

The Negro Question
By J. R. JOHNSON

"LABOR WITH A WHITE SKIN CANNOT EMANCIPATE ITSELF WHERE LABOR WITH A BLACK SKIN IS BRANDED" - KARL MARX.

Ethiopia 1935, Finland 1939. What is being done for "brave little Finland," and what was not done for Ethiopia, is causing some bitter reflections among Negroes. P. L. Prattis, Pittsburgh Courier columnist, expresses a widespread sentiment in the issue of December 16th:

"England is reported sending airplanes and other equipment to Finland. Did she send any to Ethiopia? . . . The United States is eager to play a hand. Recall our ambassador from Russia, our indignant leadership demands. All right. Recall the ambassador. Let us do anything we can to show our disapproval of Russia. But what did we do about the Ethiopians? Did anybody demand that we recall our ambassador to Italy? Did anybody become concerned enough to urge that we try to help Ethiopia? Indeed not!" This is his conclusion. And he began:

"However hopeful dark people may try to be, things are happening every day to show us just how hopeless is our cause and plight. Nobody cares a great deal about us. That doesn't mean just in the United States nor does it mean dark people in the United States alone. It means that in the entire world in which we live the folk with dark skin aren't considered. Maybe this obvious, but sometimes things happen that make you feel it all the more keenly. If you are looking out over the world, incidents, tragic incidents, occur which get you down."

No Time For Tears!

Mr. Prattis's tears do not deserve even the loan of a dirty handkerchief. Negroes have shed many tears in the past, with good cause, but if in 1939 they are going to shed new tears whenever they have new proof of the treachery of what Mr. Prattis calls "England" and "the United States," then they had better all trek to the Grand Canyon and sit in a row on both sides. There they can appoint Prattis tear-master and cry to their hearts' content without the risk of causing floods.

What infinite stupidity is this! Who expects England to be friendly to an African state? England is the greatest oppressor of Negroes that history has known. Today England is chief jailer over sixty million blacks in Africa. Of the twenty billion British dollars invested overseas, five billion are invested in Africa. That is the only interest England has in Africa.

Come nearer home. Let Prattis dry his tear-filled eyes and look about him. Doesn't he read his own article, his own paper? Has he read the history of the Negro people in America? Presumably, before he started to cry so much he used to. Did Abe Lincoln love Negroes or hate slave owners? Prattis knows. And yet he comes weeping and wailing because the United States government didn't help Ethiopia and now helps "poor little Finland."

Aesop Knew the Answer

Let Mr. Prattis buy a copy of Aesop's fables. There are many copies for children, with large print, which he will be able to read despite his present infirmity. On page 1 he will decipher the following fable: "Once upon a time there were lots of lambs and a few tigers. Every day each tiger would eat a lamb, and sometimes the tigers would fight with each other as to who should have a fat, juicy lamb. One day one of the tigers ate a little black lamb. Whereupon another little black lamb (his name was Prattis) called all the other black lambs together and, his eyes streaming with tears, said, 'Isn't it a shame? Those tigers over there allowed this bad tiger to eat up this poor black lamb. It is because he is black. Boo-hoo!'"

England and France, by which we mean British imperialism and French imperialism, stood by and watched Italian imperialism rape Ethiopia. Why? Simply because it is the nature of imperialism to gorge its appetites on all colonial countries. What they were quarreling about was not whether the little black lamb should be eaten, but who should get the choice parts.

In 1936 a great revolution of the workers and peasants burst in Spain. Germany and Italy pounced on Spain, to help Franco and gain concessions for themselves. And what did the other imperialist tigers do? Chamberlain, the British Tory, declared for non-intervention. So did Blum, the French labor leader. Roosevelt, the New Dealer, clapped an embargo on arms to Spain. Stalin, the bureaucrat and murderer of Bolsheviks and Bolsheviks, sold some arms to Spain—but on the condition that the workers and peasants would not abolish landlords and capitalists. You have only to look at a map to see how dangerous it was for British and French imperialism to have German and Italian imperialism dominant in Spain. But the "democratic" imperialists were prepared to allow even that, rather than give arms to the workers and peasants, who might conquer Franco and transform "democratic" Spain into socialist Spain.

Not a Color Question

Then Britain and France sold out Czechoslovakia. Suppose someone had said, "It is because the Czechs are white." Wouldn't Prattis have laughed at him as an idiot?

But by this time Germany was becoming too strong. So that these tigers, who didn't lift a finger for "Poor little Ethiopia," or "Poor little Spain," or "Poor little Czechoslovakia," are now weeping almost as much as Prattis over "Poor little Finland." Back of this there is another more fundamental cause. All imperialists (Hitler included) hate Stalin. So when they yell "Poor little Finland," what they mean is "Down with Russia." But one way or the other, it is all a matter of imperialist power.

And any Negro who seeks to defend Finland against Russia, along with Roosevelt, Hoover, Mussolini, and the rest, is making himself the ignorant tool of imperialism. That is the truth. And all the tears of Mr. Prattis will not wash out a word of it. The moment you begin to look at world politics from the point of view of black against white, you end up either in the imperialist camp of loot and slaughter or the Prattis camp of tears and despair.

There is a third camp. Turn your back on imperialist politics. Follow the road to the socialist revolution. A long road? A hard road? Yes. But is there any other road? The workers and peasants in Czechoslovakia, in Spain, in Ethiopia, looked for help to the imperialists. And where are they today?

Indian Left Wing Flays Ghandi

By SHERMAN STANLEY

The struggle of India's 375,000,000 people for their freedom from British tyranny is centered today in the struggle between the contending wings of the Indian Nationalist Congress.

The conservative right wing, headed by Mahatma Gandhi, indulged in much radical talk and threats for a while, but has again staged a treacherous retreat and is doing its utmost to prevent any action. Utilizing the false grounds that the country is not prepared for a campaign of civil disobedience, Gandhi is pushing for further negotiation with the British authorities.

Subhas Chandra Bose, former president of the Congress, spokesman for the left-wing Nationalists, has lately issued a statement blasting Gandhi and his supporters from stem to stern. It is one of the bitterest denunciations of the Gandhi leadership ever to be made. In his statement Bose accused Gandhi of sabotaging the desire of the Indian people to struggle and of dissipating the revolutionary energies of the masses.

Of still greater significance was Bose's statement that the Congress left wing would not go along with the Gandhists unless they immediately adopted a program for action. Bose stated that the left wing would go forward on its own, regardless of Gandhi's attempted sabotage. He likewise accused Gandhi—and correctly so—of more violently opposing the Congress radicals than the British imperialists.

(Concluded from last week)

We have seen that the immediate cause of the mutinies which paralyzed the French Army in the spring of 1917 was the disastrous failure of the Nivelle offensive. To gain a few miles in Champagne, 100,000 French soldiers died and 150,000 were wounded. As World War standards went, this was "not so bad." But General Nivelle had raised high hopes in the army with his promises of a complete break-through and the end of the war. This time the incompetence of the General Staff was more glaringly revealed than usual.

The army was thoroughly fed up with the slaughter by 1917, utterly war-weary. Truck drivers on the Verdun road had a hard time keeping from running over infantrymen, who would try to get in their way. "Won't you just break a leg for me, old chap?" they would plead. Troop trains began arriving at the front with "VIVE LA PAIX!" and "TO THE SLAUGHTER-HOUSE!" chanted on their sides. Corday, in Paris Front, tells about a company of young recruits marching through a French village "baa-ing like sheep." Astonished, the villagers asked why the strange noises. "What do you expect?" was the answer. "Aren't they taking us to the killing pens?"

Morale had been going down in the army since 1914. That year there were 509 desertions; in 1917 there were 21,174 officially recorded. On February 28, a month and a half before the offensive began, General Nivelle wrote that more illegal tracts had been seized among the troops in the fifteen days just past than in the last three months of 1916. "I feel that severe measures must be taken to prevent pacifist agitation from seriously undermining the morale of the troops."

The War Ministry took "severe measures." Leaves were cancelled—it was on their leaves that the troops became "infected" with pacifist and revolutionary ideas. Mail from home was held up. But these measures made the situation worse. One of the reasons the troops finally mutinied was simply in order to get back home again and see their families. For years now letters from home had told of increasing misery and privation. Governmental allowances to soldiers' families were niggardly, as was the soldiers' pay. The mutinies were "strikes" against not only useless slaughter but also against subhuman living standards forced on the masses by the wartime government. Cutting off leaves thus merely aggravated the unrest in the army.

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION INSPIRES MUTINIES

Another serious miscalculation by the authorities was in respect to the February revolution in Russia. When the Czar was overthrown and a respectable bourgeois democratic government set up, the Allied propagandists joyfully hailed the event. Czarism had always embarrassed them, and now they could welcome "the new Russian democracy" into the idealistic fraternity making war against "Kaiserism." The authorities, therefore, not only allowed

Stalinist Hold Slipping in CIO

(Continued from Page 1)

A third blow for the Stalinists was the defection of the top leaders of the Communist Party fraction of Local 22 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York. Expelled from the Communist Party were: Ben Gerjoy, Sol Lipniak, Hyman Grossman, Meyer Kravetz—all business agents; Morris Rosenberg, executive board member and Abe Fell and Isidore Gross—adjustors.

The official C. P. statement on the expulsion accuses the expelled of "wavering in the face of the war danger." The statement of the expelled counters with an accusation that the Stalinists demanded they put their party interests over the interests of the union. Neither statement tells the story.

End of the "United Front"

The statement of the expelled says nothing about the Stalin-Hitler pact, nor about Stalin's invasion of Finland, nor about their stand on the pro-ally resolution of the American Labor Party. But their opposition to the Stalinists is a direct result of these events. Up until the Stalin-Hitler pact and the new turn of the Communist party the expelled business agents, following the Stalinist line, were in a united front administration with the Lovestoneite manager of the local, Charles S. Zimmerman. They were preparing a united front slate again with Zimmerman prior to the Stalin-Hitler pact. Under the conditions of the "new

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

MUTINIES!
The 1917 Mutinies in the French Army
by "Spartacus"

beyond the front-line trenches—they did not know that they were in no man's land. The escort was withdrawn, and the French artillery began to hammer to pulp into the earth these two hundred and fifty men. Steel and high explosive and the halting shrapnel came first, German machine guns woke as their sentries reported a raid, then French machine guns, rifles, even bayonets finished the tragedy. . . .

LABOR UNIONS SAVED LIVES OF MUTINEERS

The great pressure which the workers' organizations were able to exert on the rare occasions when they established contact with the troops, is dramatically shown in the case of two non-commissioned officers who were condemned to death.

"I had to reprove these men," explained Paul Painleve, War Minister, "because their execution would have provoked a general strike in the great city of Saint-Etienne against which the Government would have been defenseless for lack of police. One of the condemned is a member of the Teachers Federation of the

CONCESSIONS—AND SEVERE REPRESSIONS

General Petain, who replaced Nivelle as commander-in-chief, granted many of the immediate demands: "more leaves, better rations, more pay for the soldiers' families at home. He made a personal tour of the entire front, assuring the troops that no more offensives would be required—for the present, at least. These concessions he combined with some severe repressions, "to make an example." He demanded and got from President Poincare a special order allowing the army courts martial to condemn and execute men without granting an appeal to the civil authorities.

The official number of executions was small, only twenty-three. But there is reason to believe Petain found other and even more terrible means. Wintringham tells this story, taken from Barbusse, who insists it is one of many such instances:

"Several battalions had mutinied, near Soissons, had taken and then had been surrounded and disarmed. Two hundred and fifty were chosen at random, taken in trucks round and round about until they did not know where they were, and then marched under escort to a quiet part of the front. They were told to wait at a point

Prosperity Is Here! Don't You Know It Yet?

Prosperity came back to this country last month. Industrial production in November broke all records, soaring to 125 in terms of the Federal Reserve Board's official index. In the boom year of 1929 the index was 119.

BUT labor-saving machinery, other technological advances and, last but not least, new methods of speed-up which squeeze the most out of a workingman in the shortest possible time, make it possible for the bosses to produce more today than in 1929 with fewer and fewer workers. In addition, the sons and daughters of the workmen insist on being born and growing up.

So, the new peak of production means—

At least ten million eating their hearts out for non-existent jobs—

Less relief than ever since 1932—

Hunger and outright starvation in every part of the country.

But what are you kicking about? Prosperity is here—for the bosses.

Which Way Now?

By breaking with the Stalinists, the business agents took a step in the right direction. But that was an easy step at a time when Stalinism is as popular as a crateful of skunks. The question is: where do they stand today? Obviously, their denial of the infamous Stalinist charge is true. The C. P. charged they had "deserted to the camp of the Lovestoneites, Trotskyites, and Social Democrats, the pro-war, Red-baiting stooges of the bosses and the Dies Committee against the best interests of the working class." Only an Egyptian contortionist could possibly get into all those camps at the same time—and even he would have his difficulties.

Having denounced the Stalinists, the expelled business agents

owe the class conscious workers an answer on their position towards the social patriots of the I. L. G. W. administration. Have you broken with the Stalinist war camp to join the camp of the Allies and Roosevelt? Or have you joined the Third Camp of struggle against imperialist war?

The progressive workers will judge all those who break from Stalinism by their answer to these questions.

Loire and the other is one of the most important members of the Bourse de Travail of Saint-Etienne."

The mutinies had one important result: it was over a year before the French high command dared to send its troops into another major offensive. The mutineers failed to make either peace or a revolution, but the uprising is an inspiring episode in the long history of mass rebellion. And the hundreds of thousands of poilus who faced court martial and execution to make their protest known, could say, with the anonymous mutineer who told his comrades: "If they shoot me, at least I shall know why I am dying."

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The British promise of material aid to Finland,

like the farcical expulsion of Russia from the League of Nations, has primarily different aims for the moment. The countries of Southeastern Europe are teetering uncertainly between the German and the Anglo-French camps. The miserable, reactionary bourgeoisie of these countries is saying to itself: If England and France do as little for us as they did for Poland or are doing for Finland, then we might as well go over as servants of Hitler before he crushes us completely and dismisses us even as servants. The "democratic" gestures of aid to the Finnish bourgeoisie are calculated to reassure the Balkan vassals of London and Paris, to encourage greater resistance to Hitler's encroachments.

At the same time, Stalin is being warned: Don't go much further; don't tighten your alliance with Hitler. We are still capable of making it hot for you, if not today then tomorrow, unless you break with Berlin and join us, as we proposed last August.

The warning is not entirely purposeless. But Stalin will part with Hitler only when Hitler has ceased to be a menace to him. And Hitler will cease to be a menace only if the "democracies" reduce his military capacities by a series of successful battles.

Like Chamberlain, Roosevelt is not only warning Stalin to break with Hitler, but at least as important as that, he is warning him not to make an alliance with Japan for the subjugation of China, which would temporarily protect Stalin's eastern flank and turn over most of China to the Japanese—to the exclusion of American imperialism. At the same time, Ambassador Drew tells Tokyo that Washington will not tolerate an alliance with Moscow at the expense of "China" (read: of U. S. imperialist interests in China).

As always in such cases, Finland is a mere pawn of all the imperialist bandits, and its cause a pious fraud on their lips. Not only its socialist interests but its democratic right to independence are defended in reality only by us revolutionary internationalists.

In This Corner
by MAX SHACHTMAN

The Diplomatic Double-Cross

Although the second World War has been on for more than three months, it would be a mistake to suppose that the present division of the two camps and their supporters is so fixed that the line will not be crossed in either direction for the duration of the fighting. Quite the contrary. One of the reasons why large-scale hostilities have been so slow in developing between the two camps is that each of them is rather reluctant to engage the other decisively before having exhausted all possibilities of further alignment and realignment. Both sides are making desperate attempts to cajole or coerce into alliance those countries which have not yet definitely committed their sympathies and those which have committed them but not very firmly.

More plainly, at no time in modern history has the dirty diplomatic game of duplicity, of double and triple cross, been played so feverishly as today. At no time has trust of the peoples been so cynically abused, their ideals and aspirations so cunningly subverted, their lives so cold-bloodedly used as pawns, as at the present.

Take the single case of Stalin's invasion of Finland.

The Italian fascists, for example, worked up a veritable passion over the war, organized semi-official pro-Finnish demonstrations, and even sent or promised to send a few airplanes to the Finns. Why? Because of their devotion to the sacred cause of national independence and the sovereign integrity of small nations? The sad ghosts of Ethiopia and Albania would laugh out of court anyone stupid or cynical enough to ascribe such lofty motives to Mussolini.

Despite his uneasy alliance with Hitler, Mussolini knows that the Nazis and, for that matter, Stalin, have a yellow eye on the Danubian and Balkan countries. His "gesture" to Finland is Mussolini's way of telling Moscow and Berlin: "Keep your dirty pig's snout out of my cabbage patch" (as Stalin would say). "Or else, please see to it that I get another patch, else I may yield to the ardent advance of my Anglo-French savior." At the same time, he is saying quite unobscurely to countries like Rumania, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey: "Resist the Germans; resist the Russians; you will find in me a real ally and protector. The help I merely promise to Finland will be very substantial in your case."

Much the same practical objective is pursued by England and France. To be sure, one of the aims—by no means without importance—of the democratic demagogues is to exploit Stalin's criminal invasion for the purpose of discrediting the name of communism in the eyes of the masses, who are rightly outraged by the latest abomination of the Kremlin gangsters. The demagogues of course know that Stalin and his acts have as little in common with communism, with revolutionary Marxism, as Hitler has with socialism, but this does not prevent them from making the most out of the situation for their own reactionary ends.

While England and France are just as little concerned with the right of self-determination as Italy (see India, Indo-China, etc.), they are interested in blackmailing or blackjacking the Hitler-Stalin alliance into two parts. For a series of reasons that need not be dwelled upon here, they did not succeed in getting Hitler to play the role of "super-Wrangell", of spearhead of the imperialist intervention into the Soviet Union—at least not at this stage. If they could isolate Hitler and make him their tool without the expense and risk of a world war, so much the better. Hence the alternate wooing and threatening of Hitler's Moscow partner. An example of the wooing was what was tantamount to the British whitewash of Stalin's invasion of Poland, much to the discomfort and anger of the ludicrous remnants of the Polish "government" in France. An example of the threatening is the way England and France have "rallied" to Finland. While practically nothing is excluded from possibility in these hectic and changeable times, it is most unlikely at the present stage that the "democracies" will launch a war against Stalin.

The British promise of material aid to Finland, like the farcical expulsion of Russia from the League of Nations, has primarily different aims for the moment. The countries of Southeastern Europe are teetering uncertainly between the German and the Anglo-French camps. The miserable, reactionary bourgeoisie of these countries is saying to itself: If England and France do as little for us as they did for Poland or are doing for Finland, then we might as well go over as servants of Hitler before he crushes us completely and dismisses us even as servants. The "democratic" gestures of aid to the Finnish bourgeoisie are calculated to reassure the Balkan vassals of London and Paris, to encourage greater resistance to Hitler's encroachments.

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