

THE STRUGGLE FOR NEGRO EQUALITY

By John Saunders
and Albert Parker

With an Introduction by Charles Jackson

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Introduction

Reading this pamphlet lifted a blinding fog of bewilderment and discouragement through which I, because I am a Negro, had been forced to searchingly feel my way as long as I can remember.

When I learned of the program set forth in here, then, for the first time, was the real basic *cause* of this repulsive racial prejudice made clear to me—this prejudice which, solely because of the color of my skin, had loomed up around me on a hundred sides and in a hundred forms and thus constantly interfered with my doing the things I wanted to do and going the places I wanted to go.

The rock-bottom explanation, however, set forth in this booklet, struck me as being so clearly the downright truth that the solution to the whole color question seemed plain as day even before I had come to that part where it was to be discussed.

And speaking of solutions, the authors not only point out the real job that has to be done but they give a concise layout of *how* it can be done.

Another useful section contains analyses of other programs which many Negroes still follow and the reasons why these programs, alone, cannot bring the complete equality which we deserve and which we mean to have.

I am firmly convinced that when a substantial number of Negro workers read this pamphlet, or, when a substantial number of Negro workers become acquainted with and subscribe to the program it presents, there will be a definite shortening of the time during which we have to further endure that degrading status of second-class citizenship forced upon us in this capitalist "democracy," the America of today.

CHARLES JACKSON

February 8, 1945.

THE STRUGGLE FOR NEGRO EQUALITY

The Negro Under Capitalism

THE SOURCE OF PREJUDICE

Scientific research proves that race prejudice is not hereditary. No one is born with it, not even the worst cracker in the South. It is generally non-existent among children before they enter the primary schools. It arises and flourishes as the result of miseducation of the child by the school system, the press, the radio, the motion pictures—in short, by the entire propaganda, educational and informational machinery of present day society.

This is a fact of vital significance. For since it is possible to implant a child with race prejudices, it is equally possible to train him from the very beginning to believe in and practice race equality.

It can likewise be shown that people with the same background and training, of the same color and nationality, may develop entirely different attitudes on this question. For example, two white brothers go to the same school and grow up in the same environment; one is unable to escape the influence of his miseducation and consequently regards Negroes as inferior, refusing to associate with them as equals, while the other is able by experience and observation to overcome the effects of his training and is completely free of prejudice toward Negroes.

In other words, even people who have been trained wrong can escape the effects of such training or can be re-educated properly. The best example of this in recent years is the inspiring way in which white workers from the South united with Negro workers on the picket lines in Detroit and Flint and together established the great United Auto Workers Union. The same thing is generally true of the development of the CIO as a whole.

While these facts indicate that prejudice against the Negro in

this country can be eliminated, they do not explain how it arose or why it is deliberately maintained. To find the answer to these questions, it is necessary to look back and examine the conditions under which the Negro was brought to this country—the system of chattel slavery which existed from the beginning of American colonization until almost 80 years ago.

The system of slavery was introduced in all parts of the country. But it made little headway in the North as compared to the South, and after the nation won its independence from Britain, the Northern states began gradually to abolish it and to emancipate the slaves. The Southern states, however, insisted on writing into the Constitution guarantees for the slave system and even for the importation of more slaves.

SLAVERY AND THE INFERIORITY MYTH

The reason for this was not that the Northern rulers and political spokesmen were more humane than their Southern brothers. It was simply that there were different kinds of economy in the two sections of the country. In the North the ruling class was engaged in trading and manufacturing; it based itself on the system of wage labor, and had little use for slave labor, which was too unskilled for its purposes and required too great an outlay of the capital it wished to use for investing in factories, machinery, etc. The Southern economy, on the other hand, was agricultural, based on the rice, sugar, tobacco and later cotton plantations, which required at that time, when the means of cultivating the soil were still comparatively crude, a large and regular supply of unskilled labor that by enslavement could be prevented from departing to other regions of the country to strike out on their own.

Economic interest—the greater profits to be made from the cultivation of the plantations by slave labor than by wage labor—was, therefore, responsible for the establishment and the expansion of the slave system in the South. But the fact that an oppressive society benefits a small minority of rulers is not sufficient to guarantee its maintenance. Also required are force—and “moral” justification.

The slave traders and the Southern planters who were their chief customers seized the Negro slaves and held them by force. They justified their practices by teaching that it was “the word of God” for them to rescue the poor benighted heathen from savagery and bring them the benefits of civilization. It was in the slaves’ own interests to be transplanted to a Christian country, they

said—and if the slaves did not realize the truth of this, it was cited as only another sign of their ignorance and backwardness. It was the self-asserted God-given duty of the Southern planters to care for the slaves as wards and incidentally to put them to work at productive labor.

Thus arose the great lie of Negro inferiority. It flew in the face of all the facts, distorted the history and ignored the culture and contributions of the African peoples. But it was proclaimed by the ruling class, codified in law, sanctified by the church, taught in the schools. And it was nourished by the treatment of the Negro slave—he was denied an education, denied the opportunity to express or develop his talents, denied everything but the obligation to work for his master in the fields and propagate new generations of slaves.

The Civil War was the climax of a long struggle to decide whether the nation's domestic and foreign policies were to be dominated by the manufacturers of the North or the plantation owners of the South; to decide which productive system, wage labor or slave labor, was to be dominant as the country expanded westward. In the course of winning the war, the Northern manufacturers found they had to abolish the system of chattel slavery.

The slaves were freed and for a few years after the Civil War, during the period of Reconstruction (1865-76), while the capitalist conquerors were still at odds with the Southern planters, the Negroes were afforded opportunities to compete on equal terms with the whites. Despite the handicaps of their training under slavery, the Negroes demonstrated by what they accomplished in these years that they were the equals of the whites in every sphere of human activity.

NEW USE FOR THE OLD MYTH

But racial prejudice against the Negro did not disappear with the abolition of slavery. Previously the function of the "Negro inferiority" myth had been to justify and bolster the slave system; now it was retained for use by the class which had become the most powerful group in the nation, the industrial capitalist class, forerunner of the modern monopoly capitalists.

Capitalism is a system under which the employers, owning the means of production, pay wages to workers to produce commodities to be sold at a profit. Today this system brings only misery to most of mankind, but in its early stages it played a progressive role: expanding production, developing labor-saving devices, increasing the productivity of labor, building new industries and

railroads to make possible a more intensive exploitation of the nation's natural resources and raw materials.

Capitalism cannot exist without a large labor force to work at the machines and turn the wheels of industry. The development of capitalism therefore brings with it the growth of a new class, the workers. Although the working class was numerically far greater and potentially far stronger than the capitalists, it lacked—and to a certain extent, still lacks—a sufficient understanding of its historical task, the abolition of the capitalist system and the establishment of a new society which will end the exploitation of man by man.

The capitalists, on the other hand, were and are fully conscious of their class interests. They may compete among themselves for business and profits, very viciously on occasions, but they are always ready to join together against the working class and to use every possible agency for protecting their rule and their profits.

While not yet as class-conscious as their exploiters, the workers were from the very beginning driven, by the terrible working and living conditions to which they were subjected, to try to improve their working and living conditions, to get higher pay, a shorter work-week, etc. This inevitably brought the workers into conflict with the capitalists who, always trying to increase profits, always trying to lower wages, raise the number of working hours and generally speed up the workers.

A WEAPON OF THE EMPLOYERS

This struggle between the two chief classes over the division of the national income—which will continue as long as capitalism exists—assumes different forms in different periods, depending on the strength and class-consciousness of the contending camps. Sometimes, within a given plant or industry, it is a strike by the workers or a lockout by the employers; sometimes, on a nation-wide scale, it is a revolutionary struggle for socialism by the workers or a counter-revolutionary attempt by the employers to establish a fascist dictatorship; sometimes, on the world arena, it is the war between a workers' state and a capitalist state.

Different weapons are used by the opposing classes at different stages in this struggle. But at all times, at all stages, whether locally or nationally or internationally, a basic requirement for the victory of the working class is the unity and solidarity of its forces. Similarly, the numerically weaker capitalists always try to weaken the workers' forces by dividing them.

“Divide and rule” is not a new device for oppressors, but under the capitalists its use has been magnified more and extended further

than ever before in history. Divide the masses, set them quarreling and fighting among themselves, teach them to hate and suspect and envy each other so that they will be blinded to the need for uniting in defense of their common interests—this is the policy of the ruling classes everywhere in the world today. It is applied not only within nations but between nations as in the present war where the masses of the different countries are urged to hate and distrust each other.

Following this policy, the rulers and their agents deliberately seek to create, sharpen and extend antagonisms that will divide the working people by age, young against old; by sex, male against female; by religion, Christian against Jew, Protestant against Catholic; by craft, skilled worker against unskilled worker, professional worker against laborer; by nationality, native against foreign-born; and, of course, by color, white against black or brown or yellow.

WHY NEGROES ARE HARDEST HIT

But why is it, many people will ask, that the Negro is especially singled out for discrimination? First of all, we must understand that Negroes are not the only victims of prejudice. In countries where there are virtually no Negroes, as in Germany, Big Business has found other scapegoats, the Jews. In some countries where most of the population is colored, as in South America, there is little or no discrimination because of color.

When this country was expanding westward and capitalism was beginning to create great industries, there was often an acute shortage of labor and the employers used to send scouts to Europe to find cheap labor for their factories. When the Irish workers first came here and accepted lower wages than the native Americans were receiving, they were for some time the object of much prejudice. Bad feeling was created in the same way later between the Irish and the newly arrived Italians; between both of them and the newly arrived Poles, and so on.

The employers took advantage of these antagonisms and benefitted financially from them. But since the slaves were freed, the employers have concentrated their attention on discrimination because of color for that is the easiest kind to foster. A person's national background is difficult to determine among second-generation Americans and it is hard to judge one's religion at a glance. In Germany the Nazis had to make the Jews wear a yellow star on their clothing. But it is quite easy in most cases to recognize a person's color. That is why in certain parts of the world discrimination against the Negro is used more than other forms of prejudice.

Color discrimination strikes not only at the Negroes but also at

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the Mexicans, Chinese, Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, Japanese, Indians, West Indians and other minorities in this country who can generally be singled out by the color of their skin. For the same reason and in much the same way it is practiced in other parts of the world—by the British imperialists against the masses of India, by the Japanese imperialists against the Koreans, by the Dutch imperialists against the East Indians, by the French imperialists against the Arabs. The Negro's struggle in the United States is not an isolated fight, but part of the international struggle for equality by all the oppressed and exploited colored peoples who constitute the great majority of humanity.

OTHER EVILS OF CAPITALISM

If racial discrimination were the only evil of capitalism, it might indeed be difficult to destroy it. But, as we have indicated, Negroes are not the only victims of this system. The white workers also are exploited by the ruling class. Furthermore, capitalism in its present stage has become the breeder of other evils—imperialism, chronic unemployment, war, fascism. This unfortunately means tremendous suffering for all the masses, the undermining of whatever security and liberties they have won. But it also means, since all the toiling people are vitally affected by these by-products of capitalism, that the Negroes are provided with allies in the struggle against their oppressors.

In its early period capitalism played a progressive role. Despite occasional breakdowns, the system built up the nation's economy. Each depression was followed by a new and greater upswing in the production of the necessities of life. But now, in the period of the decline of capitalism on a world scale, each depression is worse than the previous one, longer and more devastating, and the periods of "prosperity" are shorter. Indeed it now appears that capitalism can guarantee capacity or near-capacity production only in time of war or preparation for war.

Under the capitalist system the workers make commodities, such as food, shoes, clothing. They get back only part of what they produce, in the form of wages; the employers get the rest, the profit. With their wages the workers are unable to buy back all that has been produced, and "extra" goods begin to pile up in the employers' warehouses. The employers cannot sell this surplus to the workers and they cannot use it all themselves; their only interest is profits, and when they don't get profits, they see no use in continuing to keep the factories open, so they shut them down. This is how the profit system creates depressions and breadlines.

Unable to sell the surplus at home, the employers try to sell it abroad. Since the other industrially advanced countries have the same problem, the employers turn to the predominantly agricultural countries, the colonies, seeking to find there new markets for the commodities they cannot sell at home, as well as sources of cheap raw materials and fields for the investment of the surplus capital which they accumulated from the exploitation of the workers at home. To make sure that there will be no interference from other countries with their super-exploitation of the colonies, the employers either seize them and set up political control, as Britain did in India, or they use their economic power to dominate the colonies, as the United States employers do in many Latin-American countries. This oppression of the colonial peoples and this exploitation of their resources are known as imperialism.

But since all the great capitalist nations are desirous of finding such profitable markets abroad, there is a constant economic and political struggle among them over which shall extract the colonial super-profits. And since the world is already divided up among the great nations, who are ready to fight to keep their spoils, this rivalry results in wars for the redivision of the world such as we are now witnessing for the second time in 25 years.

At the same time the employers, competing with each other in the world market and trying to maintain or increase their profits at home, try to lower the production costs of their commodities by cutting wages and lengthening the work-week. They can accomplish this only by stifling all opposition to wage cuts, only by destroying all the workers' organizations that resist this process—in other words, only by entering on the road to fascism.

THE NEGRO IN THE POST-WAR WORLD

The United States is the richest, most powerful capitalist country in the world. But no more than the others has it been able to escape the processes of decay which are inherent in capitalism and are developing ever more rapidly in this period. As in the other capitalist nations, here too greater and greater power and wealth are accumulated in the hands of the monopoly corporations and heavier restrictions are set on the rights of the masses.

In its youth capitalism was able to grant concessions: democratic liberties to certain sections of the masses, and slightly higher wages to the more skilled layers of the working class. Today, capitalism is in its death agony. To exist it must snatch back the few concessions it was able to give in the past; it must depress the living standards of all the workers; it must destroy the democratic

rights of all the masses. No capitalist nation in the epoch of imperialism is immune from this process which is speeded up in war-time but was in operation before the war and will not be eliminated after the war if the capitalists remain in power. The United States capitalists follow in the footsteps of their German brothers, although at a different tempo.

Keeping in mind this background, Negroes will be best able to appreciate what capitalism in this country has to offer them. When the trend is toward the destruction of all democratic rights, when more regimentation is in store for the masses as a whole, Negroes have little to hope for from the capitalist system. When the employers are trying to take away the few democratic rights of the white workers, there is little chance that they will willingly extend new rights to the Negroes. The events of the last decade clearly indicate that under capitalism the prospect is not for Negroes to be raised to the status of the white workers but rather for the white workers to be driven down to the status of the Negroes. And if fascist reaction triumphs, the Negro's status will become even more intolerable than it is today. Negroes can learn from the fate of the Jews in Europe, who made some gains during the period of capitalism's rise only to be forcibly deprived of them when capitalism assumed the political form of fascism. Like the Jewish scapegoat in Germany, the Negro may face loss of whatever citizenship rights he now possesses, deportation, mass slaughter and extermination.

Even assuming that the termination of the war is not followed by the victory of fascism at home, it will surely be followed sooner or later by the most catastrophic depression the world has ever seen. Today Negro unemployment has reached a new low point, although it is still greater than that of any other able-bodied group in the country. Most Negroes have the jobs formerly held by white workers who went into the armed forces or war production plants; and those Negroes who work in war plants are generally confined to the worst and lowest paying jobs. In short, Negroes do not have job equality today; most of their present jobs were secured as the result of manpower shortages and shifts. This is bad enough today, in a period of frozen wages, heavy taxes and rising living costs. But it will become much worse in the post-war period. Most war production will be discontinued; many workers will be shifted back to peacetime production; millions of soldiers will come home and try to regain the jobs they left. Being the last hired, the Negroes will be the first fired, the first squeezed out of jobs, the first turned out on the streets.

ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

A study of the nature of modern capitalism teaches the Negro that he is the victim of capitalism in more than one sense, and that he has allies—in the white worker, in the colonial toiler—whose interests drive them also to a struggle against capitalism. But such a study would be incomplete if it did not also teach him to understand the role of the government in capitalist society.

The schools teach and the press asserts that the government is an instrument representing the interest of all the people, of all the classes. But this "government impartiality" is only a myth, like the myth of "racial superiority." The truth is that the government is the instrument, the agent, the executive committee of the ruling class. It may not always estimate the situation correctly, but it always tries to act in the benefit of the ruling class. When it goes to war, when it "appeases" a foreign rival; when it passes a law, when it decides not to pass a law; when it makes a concession to the masses, when it bitterly attacks the organizations and living standards of the masses—always, and under all conditions, it tries to protect the interests of the ruling class and to maintain the capitalist system.

This is demonstrated also by the government's attitude toward the Negro. When the slaveholders were the ruling class, the government upheld the institution of slavery and furthered the domestic and foreign policy of the slaveholders. When the industrial capitalists took over the government, it limited the power of the slaveholders and finally abolished slavery. For a few years after the Civil War, while it suited the interest of the capitalist class, the government even protected the rights of the Negroes in the South and sharply curtailed the "white supremacy" activities of the former slaveholders. When the capitalists came to an agreement with the planters at the end of the Reconstruction period, the government turned its eyes the other way and let the Ku Klux Klan and other terroristic groups smash the democratic rights of the Negroes and reduce them to the status of second-class citizens.

Today the government continues the same policy. In violation of its own laws and constitution it refuses to grant the justified demands of the Negro people. Despite the needs of the war machine and war propaganda, it fears to alter the pattern of Jim Crowism which so well serves the needs of the ruling class. By its subservience to this pattern the government itself even becomes the transmitter of racial prejudice—as in the case of the armed forces, where it segregates Negro from white and in many cases

instills the ideas of racial superiority for the first time in the minds of white youth who were brought up and went to school alongside of Negroes in non-Southern communities.

The policies and practices of the government vitally concern all the workers, but they have an extra significance for the Negro militants. For the struggle to achieve equality is a struggle not only against the capitalists and their propaganda but also to replace the capitalist government with a new kind of government which will represent the interests of the working people, white and Negro.

Emancipation Through Socialism

A WORKERS' AND FARMERS' GOVERNMENT

The Socialist Workers Party proposes to lead the working people of this country in the struggle to replace the present capitalist system with a new socialist society. Only socialism will guarantee an end to racial prejudice and discrimination as well as to imperialist war, unemployment, fascist reaction, and colonial oppression.

What we propose can be stated quite briefly. A Workers' and Farmers' Government will be established, replacing the present capitalist government. The factories, mines, railroads and other means of production will be taken away from the handful of employers and will thereafter belong to all the people. The industries will be managed and operated by committees democratically elected by the masses. They will operate under a system of planned production for the purpose of producing the things the people need, not for the purpose of producing profits. Production, once the strangling hand of the employers is removed, will reach new heights. The increased output of nationalized industry and the introduction of new and improved machinery and inventions will enable the people to have more and more of the things they need, and will make possible a gradual reduction in the work-week. Each person will be called on to contribute a fair amount of labor in return for which he will be entitled to his share of the things needed. The needs of those too old or too young to work will be provided for by the government.

The power of the capitalists will become a thing of the past—like other people they will have to do an honest day's work. And with their power will go the crazy anarchy and planlessness of

economic life, including unemployment. There will be no shutting down of factories merely because a handful of exploiters is not making enough profits to satisfy them. The more production, the higher the standard of living of all the people. There is a whole new world to build—decent housing, more roads, more washing machines. And when these are built, the people will work less hours and have more time for cultural and intellectual and scientific pursuits. The power to increase production will then be not a curse, but a boon to mankind.

AN END TO CAPITALIST EVILS

Imperialist war and rivalry will be eliminated for all time. Socialist nations will have no interest in fighting each other, but only in cooperation, in the exchange of goods and raw materials. The industrially advanced nations will have no interest in oppressing and exploiting the colonies, but will do everything in their power to build up and industrialize these nations, something which the imperialists never did or tried to do. The industrialization of the so-called backward nations will raise the living standards of the masses of the whole world. The great waste of lives and armaments which have characterized the twentieth century will be looked back on in the same way that we today look back on barbarism or the superstitions of the Middle Ages. There will be no imperialist wars because there will be no imperialist nations and because there will be no class to benefit from such wars.

Similarly the threat of fascism will be erased. Fascism, being only another form of capitalist rule, possible only while the employers have economic and political power, will be swept away with all the other poisons and rubbish of the profit system. Democracy, true democracy, the rule of the great majority through the Workers' and Farmers' Government, will give way to a classless society governed by and for all the people.

And most important, for the purposes of the present discussion, a Workers' and Farmers' Government will guarantee full social, economic and political equality to the Negro people and all other minorities, and will lead to the complete abolition of racial prejudice. It will truly inaugurate, in this sphere as in all others, the brotherhood of man, the equality of all peoples.

RACE RELATIONS IN A WORKERS' STATE

A Workers' and Farmers' Government will be able to come to power, in the first place, only with the united support of a substantial majority of the people. This will necessarily include the

great majority of the Negro and other oppressed toilers. This unity, in aim and action, of the masses will be the greatest asset of the new government, and on coming to power the government will act quickly to maintain and strengthen it.

Among the very first moves of the workers' state, therefore, will be the abolition of all kinds of inequalities which could divide the masses, weaken the popular basis of the new government and deflect it from the road to socialism. To carry out its aims and in self-defense, as it were, the Workers' and Farmers' Government will immediately enact a law prohibiting all types of discrimination.

And the new government will enforce such laws. It could never build toward socialism if it failed to do so; it could never gain the support of the oppressed people of other countries if it failed to do so; its personnel would be recalled in short order if it failed to do so. It must be firmly borne in mind that a Workers' and Farmers' Government would have no interest in not carrying out its promises regarding racial equality. No one in the government or in the new ruling class would have anything to gain—and all would stand to lose much—if racial discrimination continued. Today the government tolerates and even encourages Jim Crowism because it furthers the economic and political interests of the capitalists to keep the masses divided. But that situation could not obtain in a workers' state which would necessarily have to arouse the enthusiasm and initiative of the broadest sections of the masses for the socialist tasks ahead.

What we have been trying to show here, for the benefit of the most skeptical people, is that the logic of the situation as well as self-interest will compel the new government to adopt and enforce these laws. Actually the new government will not have to be prodded to take these steps; on the contrary, it will willingly and eagerly do all this, for it will be a government representing and reflecting the interests and aspirations of the revolutionary masses, just as the present government represents and reflects the interests of the capitalists.

WHAT A WORKERS' STATE WILL DO

Most clearly will this be demonstrated by the other actions the government will take, for it will by no means confine its efforts in this field to the adoption and enforcement of a law prohibiting racial discrimination. For the first time in this country's history Negroes will assume their rightful place in the government, on state and local governing bodies, on the basis of full equality, holding posts solely on the basis of their ability. The day of "Negro ad-

visers" to government officials will be done. Segregation in the armed forces will end immediately; Jim Crow schools and housing projects and restrictive marriage laws will be abolished simultaneously. By these and other measures the government will show in practice and by example that no discrimination or segregation will be tolerated in the new society.

But the best guarantee for the future will be the measures taken by the government in the field of education, the importance of which was stressed at the very beginning of this pamphlet. For the first time the major instruments of education, information and propaganda will be controlled by representatives of the working class, and they will be used to the hilt in educating the population to the meaning, source and adverse effects of racial prejudice, to the need for equality, to the achievements and contributions of the minority groups from the beginning of American history and especially in the making of the socialist revolution which would have been impossible without their active support and collaboration. Just as the radio, the press, the movies and literature in modern society pound away at the masses, crudely or subtly filling them with false ideas and prejudices, so will the Workers' and Farmers' Government utilize these instruments to tell the masses the truth, to wipe out prejudices, to forge the bonds of inter-racial solidarity.

And in the schools the youth, not yet prejudiced, will receive an education in this field entirely different from that given children under capitalism. From the very beginning of their consciousness they will be brought up to believe in the equality of man.

As the result of such education of both the youth and the adults, it will be hard, a generation after the revolution, for many people to understand how racial prejudice had held sway for so many years in American life. If remembered at all 50 years after the establishment of the Workers' and Farmers' Government, it will be primarily in the books of the scientists and scholars who will study it as a mysterious weapon of the former ruling class in the dim, dead past.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The principles of scientific socialism were first worked out by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels almost 100 years ago. From their studies of capitalism, then still in its early stages, they were able to perceive the forces within capitalism which would inevitably lead to its degeneration and decay. Their studies also showed them that the development of the productive forces by capitalism would lay the material foundations for a new socialist society and would create a new powerful class, the working class, which alone could

lead in building that new society. Marx and Engels did not stop there. They also worked out practical methods by which the socialist revolution could be achieved, and they stressed the need for joint struggle by all the masses of all races and nations. Marx was the author of the famous lines: "Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded."

The principles of Marxism, developed and amplified in the light of modern conditions, were first put into effect by the Russian Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, and supported by the great mass of the Russian workers and working farmers, who overthrew Czarism and capitalism and established a workers' state. The history of the Soviet Union in the last quarter century has shown for all time that the world can get along without the capitalists—as a matter of fact, that it can get along much better without them. Starting with a backward and broken down economy and a largely illiterate population, surrounded by hostile capitalist countries, weakened by the Stalinist bureaucracy which later seized control of the government, the workers' state was nevertheless able to make economic progress that amazed the world and to make advances in the field of racial and nationality relations which have never yet been equalled anywhere.

WHAT THE BOLSHEVIKS DID

An examination of Soviet history, of its great liberating policies under Lenin and Trotsky, and of all the crimes and betrayals of the Stalinists, cannot be undertaken in this pamphlet, although they are subjects of vital significance to all fighters for a new world. What we do wish briefly to discuss here, however, is the workers' state's treatment of race and nationality problems.

Czarist Russia was a prison-house of nations. Within its borders were 165 different races and nationalities, speaking 150 different languages and dialects and believing in many different religions. The various minority groups, comprising 57% of the population, were oppressed by the Great Russian "master" race. Superstition and ignorance flourished everywhere; minority groups were forced to adopt the alien language and customs imposed on them by the Czar. The Russian rulers had unlimited opportunities to set off one race against another. Pogroms and attacks against Jews, Armenians and other racial minorities were a common occurrence. Only present day India with the religious and racial prejudices stirred up by the British imperialists can be compared to Czarist Russia.

The Bolsheviks had little difficulty in carrying out their promise to eliminate race prejudices. In its own ranks the party had been

preaching racial equality from the first days of its existence. The common struggle for socialism cemented the bond among the millions of Russian toilers of all nationalities and races. When the power of the capitalists was finally removed, it was a relatively simple task to end racial discrimination.

The socialist principle of absolute equality of peoples and races was everywhere applied. Full equality and autonomy up to the point of separation were granted to the many nationalities. The workers' state voluntarily gave up Russian imperialist holdings and privileges. It recognized no superiority of one race over another; it recognized no second-class citizenship with regard to race; it destroyed forever the myth of racial inferiority; it gave the lie once and for all to those who maintained that people of different language, religion, culture and race could not live side by side in amity.

Today nothing amazes the Soviet visitor to this country so much as the barbaric institution of Jim Crow. So natural has it become for the various peoples in the Soviet Union to respect one another, their traditions and cultures, that not even Stalin's counter-revolutionary policies have been able to destroy many of the gains made by the minorities. This conquest of the revolution accounts in great part for the unity of the Soviet masses in their resistance to the Nazi invader—in sharp contrast to the attitude of the colonial masses in the Far East, who refused to support their British and Dutch oppressors against the Japanese imperialists.

THE PROBLEM OF THE SOUTH—

What a workers' state could do in the former empire of the Czars, the more enlightened and more culturally advanced American workers will certainly be able to achieve in this country. It is not our intention to minimize the problems that will face us, especially in the South, where racial equality must be guaranteed before it can be permanently secured anywhere else in the country. But we have good reason for believing that even the problem of the South will be solved by a Workers' and Farmers' Government.

In the first place, the revolution will not have to contend with what is still known as "the solid South." Even today, conditions, traditions and ideas are undergoing important changes in this area. The South is still largely conservative, looking back to the past rather than ahead to the future. But like the rest of the country it is reacting as it necessarily must to the contradictions and evils of capitalist society. The agricultural South is becoming industrialized; it still lags behind the rest of the country, but it now has important

industries and a growing industrial working class; the pauperization of the toiling farmers and sharecroppers creates new areas of discontent with things as they are.

There is still much to be done, but the workers of the South are beginning to be organized into unions, many of them in the industrial unions of the CIO. These workers are beginning to learn in action that their real enemy is the capitalist class; as time goes on they will realize increasingly that their own standards can never be substantially raised as long as the Negro workers are unorganized and that unless they change their own attitudes the Negroes can be used by the capitalists to lower the standards of the white workers. Lifelong prejudices and misconceptions come into conflict with the basic economic needs of the labor movement, and in the end the prejudices will be discarded because they hamper the daily struggles for a better life. Already where Negroes have been admitted into the unions, white workers who were brought up in the atmosphere of bigotry have learned in practice that the Negroes are the best fighters for the union and they have begun to alter their ideas.

In some parts of the South this process of slow change is more evident than in others, but everywhere it is at work. The South is not solid; it is composed of exploiters and exploited and the class struggle breaks through, and everywhere white workers are beginning to reconsider and change their ideas. When the socialist revolution comes, millions of white Southern workers and sharecroppers will take their stand with the workers elsewhere, and they will learn in the process of the struggle for a Workers' and Farmers' Government that their own interests coincide with those of the Negro people.

But it would be foolish to assert that prejudices will disappear overnight in the South. While millions will abandon their old bias, a good number of people will be unable to do so immediately. In that case the Workers' and Farmers' Government, determined to safeguard the rights of all minorities, will not hesitate to take measures in the South at least as vigorous as those undertaken by the Republican administration immediately after the conclusion of the Civil War.

It was in those years, the Reconstruction period, 1865-76, that the Negroes attained the greatest share of democratic rights they have ever had in the South. To keep the former slaveholders in subjection, the federal government, pushed forward by the Radical Republicans, set up a military dictatorship in the South. But the Northern capitalists had no intention of going all the way, as they

showed by their refusal to divide up the land among the Negroes and poor whites. On the contrary, they intended to share in the exploitation of the South, and once they had come to an agreement with the planters, whereby the planters recognized the dominance of the capitalist power, they withdrew their troops and the Southern ruling class by violence and legislation took away the Negroes' rights. Since then the Northern employers and bankers have invested a considerable amount of capital in the South and they oppose any fundamental changes in the Jim Crow pattern for such changes would menace their profits and investments as much as they would those of the Southern rulers. For the same reasons the federal government which once took half-hearted measures to protect the Negroes' rights can no longer be expected to do anything but maintain things as they are.

—AND HOW WE'LL SOLVE IT

What the federal government of the 1860's began and then abandoned, the Workers' and Farmers' Government will carry through to completion. It will enjoy great prestige among the Southern masses for it will give the land to the landless, it will place industry in the hands of the workers, it will develop and expand production, it will bring security to the toilers for the first time. To such a government the Southern masses will listen with respect and confidence. Furthermore, the educational program which the Workers' and Farmers' Government will undertake everywhere will have special effect in the South to whom the revolution will immediately bring so many blessings and advances. The government will have millions of supporters among the white workers, as a result of the experiences of the pre-revolutionary period, and these supporters will teach the others by example and propaganda that equality for minorities must be respected and upheld; consequently, the efforts of the government to abolish Jim Crow will not appear the work of a foreign and hostile body, as the federal government 75 years ago appeared to be, and will receive a far more favorable response.

As for those who refuse to listen to the Workers' and Farmers' Government and its Southern supporters, they will be dealt with firmly. The government will distinguish between those agents of the former ruling class who will undoubtedly try to use the race issue to rally support for the overthrow of the Workers' and Farmers' Government and those who are misguided and confused by such propaganda and lingering prejudices. But it will deal firmly with all of them. This mixture of socialist construction, patient education and firmness against prejudice will solve the problems of the South.

Other Parties And Programs

THE CAPITALIST PARTIES

Most Negro militants, including those who do not yet agree with us that socialism alone can end racial discrimination, have already learned through their own experience that they can get no aid at all from the two capitalist parties either in the daily struggle to improve the Negroes' conditions or in the major struggle to end Jim Crowism for good.

For many years after the Civil War the great majority of the Negro voters supported the Republican Party because they associated it with the fight to abolish slavery. Even after the Republicans restored control of the South to the plantation owners; even after the Republican Party became the party of monopoly capitalism out to exploit and oppress the workers of the whole world; even though the Republican politicians offered the Negroes nothing but some stale promises and speeches about Lincoln and the emancipation of the slaves on election day; even though the Republicans for a long time controlled both houses of Congress and the White House and failed to pass any legislation on behalf of the Negroes—even then the Negroes continued to support the Republicans because they saw no alternative but the Democratic Party, instrument of the "white supremacy" South.

But the great depression beginning in 1929 upset this pattern as it did so many other things. Always at the bottom of the economic ladder, the Negroes were driven still lower and when the Northern Democrat, Roosevelt, promised to remember the forgotten man with a new deal, a majority of the Negroes disregarded the speeches about Lincoln and voted for the first time for the Democrats. But the New Deal was unable to solve any of the basic economic problems and although Negro unemployment has diminished, that is the result of the war and not of any change in the Negro's status. Roosevelt has sponsored only one measure specifically affecting the Negro in more than ten years in office—Executive order No. 8802, establishing the Fair Employment Practice Committee—and then only in an effort to head off a proposed Negro march on Washington in the middle of 1941. Even this measure was inadequate and largely ineffective.

Roosevelt's administration today depends more on the Southern reactionary wing of the Democratic Party than it did at the begin-

ning of the New Deal—and consequently he makes more concessions to it than ever before. Similarly the Republicans, looking for allies in the South, turn not to the white and Negro masses but to the powerful poll taxers and advocates of keeping the Negro “in his place.” Almost everyone knows of the examples of the anti-lynch and anti-poll tax bills but it is worthwhile to mention them again for they well illustrate the attitude of the capitalist parties toward the Negro. In the 1920’s when the Republicans ran Washington, and in the 1930-40’s when the Democrats were in full control of the government, bills were introduced to make lynching a federal crime and to abolish the payment of poll taxes in federal elections. On every occasion these bills were buried in committee and when forced out of committee by mass pressure were filibustered to death. Never once did the Republican presidents lift a finger to get these bills passed. And Roosevelt, who is notorious as a speechmaker about the blessings of democracy, who knows how to seek public support when he wants something passed, has been as mum on these questions as the sphinx.

The fact is plain for all to see: Parties which today speak for the capitalists in this country can only be the enemies of social, economic and political progress. Parties which refuse to grant concessions on lynching and disfranchisement will inevitably oppose all other measures in the interests of the masses, Negro and white. Parties which refuse to grant such concessions will fight to the death against efforts to end Jim Crowism altogether. Such parties must be fought, not supported.

THE MIDDLE-CLASS NEGROES

The fundamental struggle is between the outright capitalist parties on the one side and the party representing the socialist revolution on the other. But in between stand many other parties and groups offering different programs, all of which must be analyzed and understood if the fight against Jim Crow is to be successful. For this fight requires not only militancy and aggressiveness, but also and above all a correct program.

Between the capitalist and working classes stands another important group in modern society which we can refer to here as the middle class. Large in numbers, but lacking the economic power of the capitalists and the cohesiveness of the workers whose very work brings them together and teaches them how to cooperate, the middle class is a vacillating force, reacting to the pressure of the capitalists on the one side, to the pressure of the workers on the other. Generally speaking, however, and except when the workers

take positive revolutionary measures, the middle class swings along behind the employers, who control the nation's economic might and instruments of propaganda. Because it is being wiped out gradually by the monopolists, the middle class wants reforms and gradual changes even while it supports the continued existence of the profit system.

All Negroes are discriminated against in this country, but some of them—they used to be called “the talented tenth”—have been able to lift themselves up to the status of the middle class: white collar and professional workers, lawyers, preachers, doctors, etc. They want certain changes in society and they push themselves forward as the leaders of movements and the authors of programs designed to bring about reforms under capitalism. Because they are generally the best educated and the most articulate Negroes, they assume an importance out of proportion to their actual numbers and often present an obstacle to the organization of the Negro masses for militant action. In their ranks will be found all kinds of people and programs—ranging from servile Uncle Toms, treacherous demagogues and opportunists all the way over to elements sincerely wanting to solve the most pressing problems of the Negro people.

Among them you will find the “segregationists,” who admit that segregation is not nice but who argue that it should be accepted on the ground that a Jim Crow school is better than no school at all. The effect of their propaganda is to blunt the militancy and aggressiveness of the masses, thus guaranteeing that there will be no unsegregated schools and incidentally guaranteeing the jobs of these treacherous rascals. Fortunately the following of such people among the Negroes is growing ever smaller.

Then there are those—call them either reformists or liberals—who warn that Rome was not built in a day and that haste should be made slowly, that you've got to learn how to crawl before you can walk. These experts at crawling declare that the Negroes must not antagonize the powers that be, that they must appeal to the reason of the ruling class. If Negroes “fly off the handle,” they warn, they get nowhere; while if they maintain their Christian patience, things get better and better gradually. They are fond of telling about how much progress has been made since the 1860's and will quote you long lists about the number of schools then as compared with now. The effect of their talk is to lull and intimidate the Negro masses, discouraging them from taking the road of militant struggle which alone can bring real progress.

THE "NEGRO NATIONALISTS"

Not to be overlooked, despite their currently diminishing prestige, are the self-styled "Negro nationalists." These gentlemen know how to talk militantly, particularly do they know how to exploit the Negro's natural distrust of "white people"—natural because they have been betrayed so often by the white rulers, politicians and their agents. Beware of the white men, they shout, they are all the same, they all want to oppress you, they are none of them to be trusted, white worker or white boss. They try to make the Negroes forget that they comprise but one-tenth of the population, that without allies, and powerful allies at that, they will never be able to break the chains of Jim Crow. These people stand as an obstacle to an alliance of the white workers with the Negroes, to the organization of the Negroes into the trade unions, to a fighting solidarity against the common enemy. Their counsel leads to a blind alley, to the isolation of the Negroes from their natural allies, to objectively aiding the capitalists in keeping the workers divided.

Equally dangerous are the scoundrels who warn "but you've got to wait until after the war"—and most of the types described above fall into this category. When the masses hear the government talking about "a war for democracy" and see society in a crisis, and when they want to take advantage of favorable conditions to make some gains in their own status, the leaders who support the war echo the false after-the-war promises of their masters and seek to prevent independent mass action at a time when it can be most effective. In words some of these people may concede the need for militant struggle, but they do so only to place themselves in positions of leadership where in action they can prevent militancy. They know that it will be harder to make gains after the war; if they are afraid to fight now, they will be afraid to fight later; they cannot be trusted either now or later.

Of course there will also be found among middle-class Negroes a considerable number who are actually ready to put up a fight, honest elements who are looking for the way out. These people should be welcomed into the common struggle, but because of their background and connections the Negro masses should watch them closely, making sure that they accept a program of militancy and that they abide by the responsibilities of such acceptance.

THE STALINISTS

Many advanced Negroes who had become thoroughly fed up with the capitalist parties turned with hope and expectation to the Communist Party, believing that this was the party of the Russian

Revolution which had abolished the profit system and struck such a crushing blow to race discrimination in Russia, and believing that this party was seeking to do the same in this country. True enough, it once was that kind of party, but that was many years ago when the Communist International was led by Lenin and Trotsky. Since the rise of Stalinism, however, the Communist Party has been revolutionary in name and by claim only. International socialism was no longer the goal of the bureaucrats who entrenched themselves in the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin almost 20 years ago. For a while they continued to make revolutionary speeches, but they had lost confidence in the masses of the world and they began to rely for the continued existence of the Soviet Union on alliances with the imperialist governments. The Communist Parties of the world were transformed under Stalin's domination from free and democratic instruments of the revolution into slavish tools of the false and reactionary foreign policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Those who objected to Stalin's ruinous policies were expelled and later imprisoned and murdered.

Thus, when Stalin was trying to effect an alliance with the Roosevelt administration during 1935-39, the Stalinists soft-pedaled and held back the militant struggle of the workers against their employers, of the unemployed against the government, of the Negro masses against their oppressors. For to do otherwise, they reasoned, would be to antagonize the employers and the administration and thus possibly interfere with the signing of a Stalin-Roosevelt pact, which the Stalinists placed before all other considerations.

When the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed in 1939 and the Second World War was begun, the Stalinists in Germany were told to discontinue their struggle against Hitler. Because they feared that the United States government would declare war against the Soviet Union, they changed their line and, adopting a pseudo-anti-war policy, began to denounce the Roosevelt administration as imperialist war-mongers; they suddenly remembered again that the workers were being exploited and the Negroes Jim-Crowed. This went on until the middle of 1941 when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union and Stalin was again an ally of Roosevelt. The Stalinists sharply reversed their line once more; Roosevelt was again hailed as a great progressive and humanitarian; they told the workers to speed up production and make sacrifices for the war, which they now described as a people's war; they told the Negroes that "Hitler is the main enemy" and the "foes of Negro rights in this country should be considered as secondary."

Their treacherous policies during this period can be illustrated by their attitude toward the Negro March-On-Washington Movement which was preparing for a demonstration in the capital on July 1, 1941. Before June 22, the date of Hitler's attack, they denounced the movement and its leader, A. Philip Randolph, for being pro-war and conservative. After June 22, they remained silent when Randolph called off the march and then they began to attack him as an anti-war enemy of national unity because he continued to talk about the need for militant Negro action.

A correct characterization of their present policies was made recently by one who is not a revolutionist but a respected union official and Negro leader, Willard S. Townsend, international president of the United Transport Service Employes Union, CIO, who wrote in the March 1943 issue of the Red Caps union newspaper:

"We have no quarrel with those honest intellectuals, progressives and radicals whose sincerity of opinion and sacrifices have created many of the bright spots in the history of our movement. We do, however, emphatically question the unwholesome role being played by a completely dishonest clique of union power-politicians, the 'Communists.' . . .

"To us, the present 'party line' of the [Stalinist] carpet-baggers on the Negro question in America is indistinguishable from that of many of our Southern poll-taxers or Uncle Toms. They wrap their reactionary positions in a red flag and yell 'unity.' In the open they spout fire-eating but harmless phrases about 'freedom and equality of opportunity' for Negroes, but behind closed doors they are sabotaging every decent effort and impulse on the part of independent liberals and trade unionists to push for an immediate and adequate solution of these problems."

The Stalinists are dangerous because they pretend to continue the tradition of Marx and Lenin, because they know how to make pseudo-revolutionary speeches for the purpose of covering reactionary policies. Their treachery has disillusioned thousands of militant Negroes with Marxism and has lost them for the socialist struggle. They must be fought relentlessly for their policies are based not on the interests of the American working class—or of the workers anywhere else for that matter, including those of the Soviet Union—but on the interests of the reactionary Stalinist bureaucracy which has weakened the Soviet Union and is concerned only with safeguarding its own privileges and power.

It cannot be repeated too often that Stalinism and the struggle for international socialism have nothing in common. Marxism is

dead in the Communist Party, but it still lives in this country. It has been kept alive by the followers of Lenin and Trotsky who were expelled from the Communist Party for adhering to Marxist principles and who are now gathered together on a world scale in the Fourth International and on a national scale in the Trotskyist organization in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party, which follows in the footsteps of the Bolshevik party.

The Socialist Workers Party opposes the capitalist parties, the middle-class misleaders and the Stalinist traitors. It teaches that class division and exploitation foster and perpetuate all kinds of class and race prejudices and that the way to eradicate these prejudices is by destroying the economic basis of class division. It declares that the time to fight is now and always; that the way to fight is militantly, with every weapon and by every means that will raise the class-consciousness, self-confidence and solidarity of the masses; that the goal to fight for is a Workers' and Farmers' Government and socialism.

Activities of the Socialist Workers Party

DAILY WORK IN THE UNIONS

Socialism alone can solve the basic problems of the Negro and white workers. But this does not mean that they can sit back, ignoring their daily problems and intolerable conditions, and wait for the sun of socialism to shine. If they were to do this, present conditions would become worse and we would never get socialism. Socialism does not fall from the sky like manna; it is obtained only as the result of struggle. In the course of their fight against Jim Crow and capitalist attacks on union rights and conditions, the Negro people and their white allies learn to recognize their real enemy and to understand the need for a complete change of society. For this reason and because it wants to safeguard the rights and conditions of the masses, without which further progress is difficult, the Socialist Workers Party advocates and participates in the daily militant struggles of the masses on all fronts, including the Jim Crow front.

Generally speaking, the most important arena for the daily struggles and the education of the masses is the trade union movement, for there we find the decisive sections of the working class and the greatest opportunities for educating them. The trade un-

ions are not perfect organizations; under capitalism they reflect to one degree or another the backwardness and confusion and misunderstandings which capitalist society introduces among the masses. But they are the workers' own organizations, built with much sacrifice and suffering, and reflect the workers' aspirations for a better life; they are the organizations where the most militant workers are to be found working together to solve their problems. For these reasons we work within them, helping to build them, to protect them against the class enemy, to raise the level of understanding of their members, and to recruit the most advanced and responsible members into our party.

Even when the unions adopt a wrong position on certain questions, we do not turn our backs on them but remain there patiently working to improve things and bearing in mind that their errors are the result of capitalist pressure and miseducation. We regard the unions as our organizations, as the organizations of our class, and when things go wrong within them, we strive to reform them and to restore them to the proper path.

This is true even in connection with unions which for one reason or another refuse to accept Negroes as members or as members with equal rights. Some people might think that the advanced and class-conscious white workers should withdraw from such organizations; but if they were to do that then they would be conceding and thus assuring the victory of capitalist pressure and ideas within them—and that our party refuses to do anywhere and anytime. Even in these organizations our members continue to work, adjusting our tactics according to the situation, and trying to show the workers the right path.

HOW WE FIGHT JIM CROW

We cannot pretend that it is always very easy for our members, cooperating with other workers in the plants who agree with us on this question, to change the opinions and attitudes of white workers subjected to anti-Negro propaganda all their lives. But we know from our experience in this work that it is not too difficult to be accomplished. For we know what the problem really is and we enter into this work with some very clear ideas and arguments on our side. We know, for example, that the only reason capitalist propaganda is able to make headway among the white workers is that it appeals to their self-interest, that it turns the white workers against Negro equality by teaching that it would threaten their jobs, etc.

Our task therefore is to answer the capitalist propaganda by showing that discrimination against Negroes hurts the interests of the white workers. We show them how such discrimination divides and weakens the union movement. We remind them how discrimination in the past turned the Negro people against the unions and enabled the bosses to use the Negroes as scabs against the workers when they sought to get higher pay for themselves. In other words, we show them concretely that it is in their own interest, as individuals and as unionists, to take the Negroes into the unions and to enable them to work in the plants on the basis of equality. This is a powerful argument and our experiences have shown that it is an effective one.

While breaking down the barriers in this way can usually be best done by our white members, an equally important kind of work is carried on by our Negro comrades. While the advanced white workers educate their less enlightened white fellow-workers to the need for combating Jim Crow, the advanced Negroes educate the other Negro workers to the need for joining the common anti-capitalist struggle for economic gains. Our Negro comrades persuade their fellow-workers to join the unions and to play an active and leading part there. Most white workers know very little about Negroes; our job is to show them that the Negroes are dependable union members and worthwhile allies against the employers; more than anything else this helps to eradicate feelings of suspicion on the part of union men formerly prejudiced against Negroes. And by making good unionists of the Negro workers we make it possible to build the progressive forces of the unions and to elect the kind of union leaders who will be responsive to the wishes of the members.

In addition our comrades, both white and Negro, prove in action that they can be depended on to shoulder their part of the burden in the everyday struggle against Jim Crow; they fight against all forms of discrimination in the plant; they demand that Negroes be hired, that they be given skilled jobs on the basis of seniority; they get the unions to pass resolutions against Negro discrimination and they help wherever possible to set up committees in the plants to implement these resolutions, etc. The work is sometimes very difficult, but our comrades never shirk it. They welcome it because they realize it is a necessary part of the struggle to build the workers' economic organizations and the revolutionary party. Our experiences have shown us that a few people with a correct program and tactics can do a lot in this field. As our party grows, as the class-consciousness of the workers develops, we will be able to do

much more. Meanwhile, every success won in the plants and the unions makes it easier to advance elsewhere in society. This was demonstrated in Detroit in 1942 when the CIO played an important part in the fight to save the Sojourner Truth housing project for the Negro people.

WORK IN NEGRO ORGANIZATIONS

Needless to say, our anti-Jim Crow activity is not confined to the unions but is carried on in all possible fields to the extent that our forces permit, and particularly within the national and local Negro organizations, both in "mixed" organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and in all-Negro organizations such as the March-On-Washington Movement.

Our activities in such organizations are somewhat like those within the unions, with the exception of course that we don't have to convince the members of the need for fighting Jim Crow. We seek loyally to build the organizations, to further their progressive aims, to extend their struggles, to educate their members and where possible to recruit them to the Socialist Workers Party. We advocate militant mass action and the need for close cooperation and links with the labor movement. At the same time we try to get the unions to support the struggles of these Negro organizations.

Our support of these organizations in no way includes agreement with the false ideas or the essentially conservative methods of most of their leaders. Where necessary, we do not hesitate, in a constructive manner, of course, to criticize their mistakes and to urge on the members the need for adopting a fully-rounded militant program and electing leaders to carry out that program. We oppose all bureaucratic tendencies within the ranks of the leadership and advocate full democracy in deciding the policies of the organization. We do all this not in the interest of factional opposition, but for the purpose of strengthening these organizations and making them more effective instruments of the struggle against discrimination and segregation.

BUILD AN INDEPENDENT LABOR PARTY

We Trotskyists also stress the need for political action against the forces that foster Jim Crow. Equality can never be achieved until Big Business is defeated on the political front. In addition to organizing and uniting the Negro and white masses on the economic field, we seek to break them away from the domination of the capitalist parties and to lead them onto the road of independent

political action. Without militant politics, the Negro masses must fight with one hand tied behind them. Leaders who oppose independent political action by the Negro and white masses are helping to ensure the political domination of the capitalists which in turn ensures the continuance of Jim Crow.

For these reasons we advocate the formation of an independent labor party, based on the trade unions and embracing the militant Negro organizations. Such a party, controlled by the workers and running workers for political office, could do much to advance the daily struggles of the workers, including the struggle against Jim Crow. Such a party would unquestionably fight the Democrats and Republicans in Congress for the enactment of anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation, and would have a real interest in putting teeth into measures to halt discrimination in employment.

OUR INNER PARTY RELATIONS

This pamphlet would be wholly incomplete without a warning as to its inadequacies and without some comment on the inner party life and relations of the Socialist Workers Party.

Lack of space makes it impossible for us to enter into a discussion of all the ideas of our party. In this pamphlet we have given only the sketchiest kind of outline of what we believe and what we stand for, and have necessarily dealt chiefly with the questions relating to the Negro struggle for equality. Our aim is not to make bookworms or full-time scholars of our members and sympathizers, but knowledge is strength and we seek to strengthen and educate the workers within and without our party for the great tasks ahead. The serious Negro militant who wants to emancipate his class and his race will find this pamphlet only an introduction to the great school of Marxism.

He will want to read much more, to learn more about the workings of capitalist society and the class struggle, to become better acquainted with the principles, strategy and tactics of the revolutionary party. He will find these in the great works of our teachers, in the press and pamphlets of our party, by holding discussions with our members and by attending the lectures and classes arranged for workers who want to learn so that they can become better fighters. And he will find these above all within the ranks of the party, by participation as a member in its activities.

Our party, in the forefront of the struggle against Jim Crow in society, naturally is a bitter enemy of all prejudice within its own ranks. We tolerate no expressions of racial superiority or practices

of bias by any of our members. We vigilantly educate all our new members as to the meaning of prejudice and seek to eradicate all white chauvinistic ideas which they may bring with them when they join our organization. The race relations within our party are the forerunner of race relations in the future society. In its ranks the class-conscious Negro feels perfectly at home.

As the influence of our party spreads, the principles of race equality which it preaches and practices at all times will spread along with it. Wider and wider circles will embrace these ideas until with the victory of socialism all race prejudice will be ended. This is not a dream or illusion. It is the achievable goal of a party that is completely realistic in its approach. Its teachers, Marx and Engels, pointed the way. Their disciples, Lenin and Trotsky, put this program into effect. Our task is much simpler. We need only to adhere to their program and adjust our tactics to present day conditions in this country. There is no other road for the Negro militant except as a fighter in the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party.

The Anti-Negro Terror in Detroit

(Statement by the National Committee, Socialist Workers Party,
printed in *The Militant*, July 3, 1943)

A series of assaults upon the Negro people throughout the country has reached a bloody climax in Detroit. This latest ferocious lynch attack murdered 24 Negroes, beat and injured hundreds, struck terror into the hearts of Detroit's community of almost 200,000 Negroes. This was not a "race riot" but an unprovoked attack by "white supremacy" mobs.

The hoodlums who constituted the lynch mobs in Detroit operated with comparative immunity. That is proven, not only by the many eye-witness accounts testifying that the police either tolerated or directly aided the mobsters, but also by the official figures showing that 85% of those arrested were Negroes. Emboldened by their success, the hoodlums are undoubtedly ready for further lynch attacks against the Negro people.

It is unfortunately all too plain that the anti-Negro elements have made advances in their aim of keeping the Negro "in his place" and halting his struggle for equality and emancipation. Large numbers of Negroes have been terrorized and intimidated. Many others are becoming attracted toward "Negro nationalist" sentiments and feel hostility towards white people as a whole. There is great danger that these Negro workers will turn away in distrust and despair from the trade union movement.

The attacks on the Negroes threaten the unity of the working class. And this threat to labor unity comes at the very moment when the labor movement must mobilize its full fighting strength to beat back the union-busting offensive of Big Business and Washington.

Why has this epidemic of the lynch spirit broken out like a plague all over the nation?

The capitalist, liberal and Stalinist press claim that Axis agents and Japanese "fifth columnists" provoked these outbursts. Although the Axis powers unquestionably exploit these acts of violence for their own reactionary ends, any informed person knows that such an explanation is absolutely worthless and nothing more than a fake alibi to cover up the real conditions and forces responsible for the crimes.

The real causes and culprits are here at home. Lynch assaults upon Negroes took place decades before the fascists came to power or the United States went to war with the Axis.

These attacks are an inevitable outgrowth of the Jim Crow system fostered by reactionary capitalist interests, protected by the Democratic and Republican Parties, and buttressed by the government's policies of discrimination against Negroes in war industry and segregation in the armed forces. This vicious system breeds race hatred, officially sanctions and deliberately sharpens antagonisms between white and colored. The Jim Crow system provides the social basis for the poisonous propaganda and activities of the Ku-Kluxers, Black Legions, Christian-Americans and other native fascist cliques. The adherents, beneficiaries and dupes of the Jim Crow system take advantage of every source of friction between white and Negro to stimulate ill-feelings between them, inflame their prejudices, incite and hurl them against each other.

This carefully cultivated hostility has been aggravated by the consequences of the war. Bad housing, poor transportation, dislocation of family life, juvenile delinquency, scarcity of food, frozen wages and burdensome taxes in the face of soaring prices, afflict all sections of the working masses and create enormous discontent and rebelliousness. Because of their no-strike pledge and slavish subservience to Roosevelt's labor policies, the CIO-AFL leadership has completely failed to provide the workers with any program of resistance to the encroachments of the capitalists, to stop profiteering and the mounting cost of living. That is the reason why fascist demagogues and preachers of race hate and violence are able to receive a hearing from some workers.

For their own ends the ultra-reactionary forces are trying to divert the justifiable indignation of the workers away from the real causes and authors of their misery. The actual instigators of these attacks come from the capitalist class and their conscious or unconscious tools. It has already been disclosed that agents of the employers planned and provoked the anti-Negro demonstrations in Mobile and elsewhere.

Every worker is aware that the capitalist interests are conducting today a furious campaign against the labor movement. The blows against the coal miners, the anti-labor decisions of the War Labor Board, the passing of the Smith-Connally slave-labor act,

Roosevelt's demand for the drafting of all strikers, have been high points in this offensive.

All workers must realize that the concerted attacks upon the colored people are an essential and integral part of this national union-busting drive. The employing class hopes by these murderous means to split the workers along race and color lines, to throw white workers against black, to undermine and demoralize the unions; and thus to turn the attention of the workers away from their real enemies.

Divide and rule: This policy, everywhere pursued by the possessing classes and their agents, has alone enabled them to hold down the exploited masses. Britain incites Moslems against Hindus. Hitler uses the Jews for scapegoats. All of them hurl the workers of one country against another in periodical world wars.

For generations here in the United States employers have grown fat and powerful by playing native workers against foreign-born, white against black, craft against craft. The American workers were able to build their powerful union movement in the last decade by sweeping aside, overcoming and fighting against all these artificially fomented divisions. The Negro workers played a heroic role in the building of the industrial union movement. They fought side by side with their white brothers against the bosses. Race prejudice and discrimination cannot be permitted to penetrate again and regain a foothold within the trade unions.

The capitalist government bears a large share of responsibility for these attacks. The administration's recent decision for segregation of colored workers in the Mobile shipyards and the policy of segregation practiced in the armed forces provide official example and encouragement to the Jim Crow elements.

The government fails to enforce the Fourteenth Amendment or the federal statutes against discrimination, and even violates the provisions of the Selective Service Act against discrimination. This authorized lawlessness has encouraged similar lawlessness amongst the advocates of "white supremacy." The failure of Roosevelt's administration to press for the passage of anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation has given aid and comfort to all enemies of the Negro people. Roosevelt has brought neither freedom from want

nor freedom from fear to the Negro people. On the contrary they are today more terrorized and troubled than ever before.

What must be done to stop this lynch violence? Certainly no trust or reliance can be placed in the federal authorities, the army, state or municipal police, the good-will of the capitalist rulers, the action of Congress or the President. They have shown that they will not take the steps needed to protect Negro lives and rights.

The Negro people have both the right and the duty to protect themselves against lawless attacks of the lynch mobs. They have the right to demand that, in event of any future attacks, Negro troops alone be used and Negroes be deputized to defend them.

But the Negroes constitute only a small minority of the population. For their protection they require strong and reliable allies. These allies will come above all from organized labor of which the colored workers form a significant section. The prejudices exhibited by some workers should not blind the Negroes to the necessity of uniting with the labor movement. Prejudices implanted in the minds of white workers by their enemies have been and can be overcome through action and education in joint struggle of black and white workers against their enemies and exploiters. The fundamental interests and aims of the white and colored workers in their fight for equality and emancipation are the same.

The chief responsibility for defending the Negro people rests today upon the trade unions. The CIO, most powerful organization of the working people in Michigan, was established and grew strong because of its policy of non-discrimination against any worker, regardless of color, race, religion or political affiliation. The labor leaders must do more than deplore these attacks upon the Negro people. They must do more than order their members to stay off the streets and appeal for grand jury investigations. They must summon their membership to take determined and organized action against the instigators and organizers of these lynch mobs. The unions of Detroit could have repulsed this threat to their very existence as they repulsed General Motors in 1937 and Ford in 1941. Detroit would be far different today and the native fascists would be cowering in their holes, demoralized instead of triumphant, had the union leaders called out the veteran flying squadrons to defend the Negro people.

These attacks are an alarm signal. They involve issues no less important to the unions than the fight waged against the auto barons in 1937. The hoodlums and hooligans who are today assail-

ing the Negroes are training themselves for other acts of violence. Tomorrow or the day after they can be unleashed by the Fords, Wilsons and Chryslers as storm troops and strike-breakers against the unions themselves. Workers, take warning! This is how fascist gangs were formed and fascism arose in Europe and crushed the labor movement. Do not permit them to take root here.

For their own self-protection the unions must use the same methods of struggle, the same fighting program that proved so effective against Harry Bennett's mobsters. Let the union officials call a great meeting of all the shop stewards in the Detroit area, acquaint them with the seriousness of the situation and inform them of the union's plan of campaign. The members of each local should be mobilized for action. Flying squadrons of union militants should stand ready to protect the rights of their Negro fellow-workers menaced by the mobs. The various local unions should maintain order and clear their respective territories of anti-Negro, anti-labor gangs.

Every local union should set up a vigorous anti-discrimination committee to combat employer-instituted discrimination in the shops and to ferret out the conscious Ku-Klux agents and provocateurs who try to stir up dissension between white and colored workers. The unions must carry on educational activities to explain to the backward workers the reactionary meaning of race prejudice and its menace to their own interests and organizations. The prejudices inculcated by capitalist institutions can and must be eradicated by union education. In addition, the Detroit labor movement should set up its own investigating committee and conduct its own public hearing, where the truth can be told about the causes, instigators and beneficiaries of the anti-Negro terror, and where plans to prevent new attacks can be mapped out.

Such immediate steps in Detroit must be extended on a national scale. The unions can be content with nothing less than the leadership of the struggle to abolish Jim Crowism and to secure full economic, political and social equality for the Negro people.

Such a program of action would help restore the shaken faith of the Negroes in the entire labor movement. It would create unbreakable bonds of unity between white and colored workers. By establishing the solidarity of the working class as a whole, it would clear the way to smash the capitalist anti-labor offensive all along the line. Black and white, unite and fight your common enemies!

The Harlem Outbreak--A Protest .

Against Jim Crow

(From *The Militant*, Aug. 7, Aug. 14, Sept. 4, 1943)

Five killed, more than 500 injured, more than 500 arrested, property damages exceeding \$5,000,000—these were the immediate results of the outburst in Harlem last Sunday and Monday. (Another of the injured died later.)

It began Sunday night when a white policeman shot and wounded a young negro soldier who had objected to his maltreatment of a Negro woman he was arresting. The rumor spread that the soldier had been killed, and resentment rose high. Groups began roaming the streets, fighting with police, breaking store windows, carrying off merchandise. With the exception of 40 police injured, all of the casualties were Negroes.

What set these thousands of people into motion in this way? The shooting of the soldier was only a chance incident; it could have been precipitated by some other accidental event. The real cause must be sought in the social, economic and political conditions of the Negro people.

On several occasions in the past year Negro leaders have been compelled to complain publicly about the brutality of the New York police toward Negro citizens. More than one outbreak provoked by police brutality has been narrowly averted in Harlem in recent months. The Negro people are sick and tired of being beaten, maimed and thrown into jail on the slightest pretext. They are revolting against victimization by the police who have been taught by the press that all Negroes are "muggers" and must be dealt with viciously.

Another and equally important factor in the Harlem conflict was the fact that a Negro soldier was involved in the initial incident. Nothing rankles in the Negro people so much as the true stories they hear and read about the treatment of the Negro soldiers, espe-

cially in Southern camps. Many Harlemites have sons and brothers in Camp Stewart, Ga., and other "hell-holes," as the soldiers describe them, and they know that their relatives, being trained to fight in a "war for democracy," are themselves Jim Crowed and insulted in a manner to make Hitler green with envy. Every Negro leader in Harlem recognizes this to be one of the basic causes of last Sunday's outbreak.

On top of these are the economic conditions in Harlem, aggravated in the extreme by the war. Rents are uncontrolled. Prices are higher, the quality of food is generally lower, and food is scarcer than in other parts of the city. Negroes have the worst-paying jobs, despite the manpower shortage. The Negro people suffered from the lowest standard of living in the city before the war; today they are even worse off.

On Sunday and Monday the Negro people carried on a spontaneous protest. Their protest took on a distorted, elemental and chaotic form, as protests usually do in the absence of a clear program and a trained leadership; under these conditions the protest could not possibly win what the demonstrators wanted. But it is perfectly clear that they were trying to show in some way that they were fed up with present conditions and ready to fight against them.

The Communist Party, which has considerable influence in Harlem, was among the first to denounce the protesting Negroes. Acting in the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, these Stalinist finks have betrayed the Negro struggle as well as the labor movement at home.

For LaGuardia—who knew long ago what was coming and failed to do a thing about it but make speeches on the need for keeping calm in times like these—the Stalinists have nothing but praise. For the Negro masses they reserve their vilest slanders and attacks.

In the same language the capitalist press uses in denouncing "hoodlums and vandals," and with the same spirit of hatred and contempt, a front page editorial in the August 3 *Daily Worker* says:

“. . . groups of irresponsible elements began a wholesale looting of stores owned by white storekeepers.

"This looting of stores was a shameful act at this moment in our nation's history. . . ."

Like the capitalist press the Stalinists neglect to mention the

fact that people are hungry in Harlem. Yes, mothers accompanied by six-year old children took food from the window-broken grocery shops. The Stalinists attack them as "irresponsible." That is the voice of well-fed bureaucrats, not of a party genuinely concerned with the suffering of the masses.

"A shameful act," they say. But not half so shameful as the cynicism, baseness and treachery of the Communist Party, and not a hundredth as shameful as the Jim Crow system that produces such acts—a system which the *Daily Worker* editorial does not mention, let alone blame.

* * *

"This is not another Detroit! This is not a 'race riot'." Thus Mayor LaGuardia, the liberals, Stalinists and "respectable" Negro leaders hastened to assure the world that the August 1-2 outbreak in Harlem, deplorable as it was, could have been much worse.

It is true that there were marked differences between the events in Harlem this week and the tragedy in Detroit last June. In Detroit organized bands of hoodlums and advocates of "white supremacy" intervened in a minor clash to aggravate the situation and terrorize the whole Negro population; such bands were absent from the Harlem outbreak. In Harlem a large section of the Negro people gave a demonstration of their dissatisfaction with the conditions under which they live; the only whites to molest the Negroes were the police, with the result that whites were able to walk freely through the streets at the height of the demonstration, and the affair never took on a Negro-versus-white complexion.

Nevertheless, the underlying cause of the Harlem events was the same as the underlying cause of the Detroit events—the maintenance of the Jim Crow system, which assumes the most oppressive form in times of social crisis such as we are now passing through.

The capitalist, Stalinist and liberal press congratulate LaGuardia on restoring "order" and on handling the situation so that greater harm did not result. But what now? Does anyone seriously believe that this has solved the situation? The underlying causes of the outbreak remain; the authorities have not proposed and will not propose any measures to eliminate these causes. This week Jim Crowism took five lives and inflicted injuries on hundreds. What is to prevent it from taking a toll ten times greater next week? What is to prevent it from developing into the form and on the scope of the Detroit anti-Negro terror?

The Militant does not denounce the masses of Harlem who felt constrained in their desperation to demonstrate against Jim Crow in the manner which they did. We recognize it to be an expression of their discontent, of their desire to conduct a militant struggle against their Jim Crow conditions. We understand that it happened the way it did because they are lacking the program and leadership able to direct their struggle into fruitful channels and against the real enemy—the capitalist system which promotes and upholds Jim Crow.

Until the Negro people forge a fighting program and leadership—which they will find only through an alliance with the militant labor movement—there will always remain the social conditions breeding Harlems and Detroits.

* * *

There was remarkable unanimity of opinion among the well known Negro leaders and in the Negro press during and after the August 1-2 outbreak in Harlem. Practically every one of them—whether conservative, liberal, Stalinist or “radical”—joined in calling for the restoration of “law and order” as the most important need of the Negro masses and in denouncing thousands of Harlemites as hoodlums, vandals, irresponsible elements, etc.

The *Pittsburg Courier* headlines screamed: “Disgraceful Scenes Enacted As Hoodlum Elements Loot Stores.” The *Chicago Defender* expressed its disapproval by refusing to print a single picture relating to the affair. The *Daily Worker* echoed the capitalist press by calling it a “shameful act.” A. Philip Randolph, who delights in referring to himself as a militant and dynamic leader, voiced “great sorrow and distress” and delivered a short lecture to the masses on the need for observing the law.

Virtually all the Negro papers hailed the behavior of the New York police—the same police whose brutality to Negroes was one of the chief causes of the outbreak. They seem highly elated and relieved that “only” six died, most of them at the hands of the police.

These Negro leaders and editorial writers knew, as most of them have since half-admitted, that the Harlem outbreak was fundamentally a protest and demonstration against the oppressive Jim Crow conditions to which the Negro people are subjected in even the “most liberal city in the country.” It was not a planned and organized protest; its participants did not understand the program for abolishing Jim Crow; under such conditions the demonstrators

could not do more than show their deep dissatisfaction and their strong impulse to resist the Jim Crow attacks on their rights and conditions.

These Negro leaders and writers know as well as *The Militant* does that the responsibility for what happened in Harlem lies not on the Negro masses, but on the capitalist system which breeds discrimination and segregation, on the White House and Congress and the bureaucracy of the armed forces which inspire and set a reactionary example for the most backward elements of the white population, and on the propaganda and educational machinery of the nation which upholds and spreads the ideas of "white supremacy."

But none of these leaders used the same vituperative language against the real culprits that they used against the desperate and harried victims of the Jim Crow system.

Fundamentally, we repeat, it was a demonstration against Jim Crowism. But it was more than that. It was also a demonstration against the official Negro leaders. It was also a protest against the program of these leaders, a vote of no-confidence in their policies and methods.

How have these leaders reacted to the present crisis in the struggle for equality? At best, they offer a program for fighting defensive, rear-guard actions. At worst, they counsel patience, "tolerance," the subordination of the Negro people's interests to the needs of "national unity," and the postponement of the anti-Jim Crow fight to some future date after the end of the war. In no case do these leaders present a bold, realizable program; all they can inspire is defeatism and despair.

As a result the masses do not have a program. They see no way out of the crisis. Their conditions, the increase of reaction, the growing gap between the democratic slogans of the war and freezing of the second-class citizenship status of the Negro—all these convince the Negro masses that now is the time for struggle. They see the need to fight, they WANT to fight—but they don't see how.

What can result from such a situation but blind, chaotic, bitter, misdirected, and hopelessly futile outbursts of the kind witnessed in Harlem? Only the most naive optimist will believe that the same thing won't happen again, on an even greater scale, in Harlem and elsewhere.

And the blame for it rests in part on those people who present

themselves as the leaders of the Negro masses but who have led them only into a blind alley. No wonder that these people, recognizing their own responsibility, were so violent and unrestrained in their denunciations of the masses.

As for us, who recognize the real causes of the Harlem outbreak and the real forces to be censured for it, we see in these developments the need to intensify our efforts to win the Negro people over to the program of revolutionary socialism.

* * *

This whole discussion reminds us of many of the slave rebellions that took place a century or so ago. We all know how cruelly the slaves were oppressed and exploited—and that the arguments raised on behalf of the maintenance of slavery sound monotonously like the arguments raised on behalf of the maintenance of Jim Crow today. Many of the slaves were ignorant and superstitious, they had no understanding of the forces at work in society, they rarely had leaders who knew how to give them the proper guidance.

But when they saw no other way out, when their patience came to an end and their resentment reached a boiling pitch, they revolted—in most cases blindly, often realizing that they had little chance of success. In many instances they resorted to arson and robbery, often innocent bystanders (like the small storekeepers in Harlem) were killed and beaten.

Now the question arises: Who and what were to blame for the “excesses” committed during these revolts? If you leave aside the sociological, economic and political explanations then you could come to the conclusion, as some well-meaning abolitionists did in that period, that the slaves were to blame. But the verdict of history is that the slave system and the slaveholders were responsible. And today the Negro people and the labor militants pay honor and tribute to the memories of those brave, unlettered slaves who didn’t have a full and correct program but who had the courage to fight against oppression in the best way they could see.

We don’t pretend that the Harlem outbreak was completely identical with the slave revolts, but we do maintain that the same spirit was evidenced. Those who look only at the effects and shut their eyes to the causes will learn nothing from the Harlem events. Those who see the indissoluble connection between the two will be able to learn at least one thing useful for the struggle against Jim Crow—namely, that the masses today are ready to fight and are desperately seeking the correct program.

Trotsky and the American Negro Struggle

(From *The Militant*, Aug. 15, 1942)

It is not our purpose on this occasion, the second anniversary of the death of Leon Trotsky, to discuss all of what that great Marxist had to say about the Negro struggle in the United States. Nor is it our intention here to exaggerate the extent of his contributions toward the solution of the immediate, practical problems of uniting the American Negro and white masses against their common enemy. Trotsky did not have the opportunity to study the problems of the American Negro at close hand; for one thing, the "democratic" government of this country—which welcomes Queen Wilhelmina and other oppressors of millions of colored people—would not let him live here and refused to permit even his dead body to cross the border.

Trotsky's great contributions were in the field of clarifying the tasks and tactics of the world working class and thus bringing together the forces of the world revolutionary party which alone will lead the masses of all races to the solution of their problems. It will be for this above all that the American Negro people will remember and honor Trotsky in the future. In addition, many of his writings dealt with the problems of the colonial people and their struggle for independence from imperialism.

But this does not mean that Trotsky was unaware of or underestimated the significance of the concrete problems relating to the American Negro people. On the contrary, at every possible chance, he kept emphasizing these things:

1. The necessity for winning the Negro people to support of the revolutionary party.
2. The necessity for combating all traces of racial prejudice among the white militants and workers.

Long before the Trotskyist movement was formed as an opponent of Stalinist treachery, Trotsky wrote a letter in reply to some questions put to him by Claude McKay, then a communist. Printed in the March 13, 1923 *International Press Correspondence*, part of the letter said:

“In North America the matter is further complicated by the abominable obtuseness and caste presumption of the privileged upper strata of the working class itself, who refuse to recognize fellow-workers and fighting comrades in the Negroes. (AFL President) Gompers’ policy is founded on the exploitation of such despicable prejudices, and is at the present time the most effective guarantee for the successful subjugation of white and colored workers alike. The fight against this policy must be taken up from various sides, and on various lines. One of the most important branches of this conflict consists in enlightening the proletarian consciousness by awakening the feeling of human dignity, and of revolutionary protest, amongst the black slaves of American capital. As stated above, this work can be carried out only by self-sacrificing and politically educated revolutionary Negroes.”

More than six years later, when the Trotskyists had been expelled from the Communist International for their defense of Marxist principles, and when the Trotskyists were holding their first organization conference in this country as the American Left Opposition, forerunner of the present Socialist Workers Party, Trotsky, already in exile, wrote a letter to *The Militant* on “Tasks of the American Opposition.” In this, the first letter which he was able to write to his American collaborators, Trotsky emphasized the importance of the Negro problem in relation to the revolutionary movement:

“The trade union bureaucrats, like the bureaucrats of false Communism, live in the atmosphere of aristocratic prejudices of the upper strata of the workers. It will be a tragedy if the Oppositionists are infected even in the slightest degree with these qualities. We must not only reject and condemn these prejudices; we must burn them out of our consciousness to the last trace. We must find the road to the most deprived, to the darkest strata of the proletariat, beginning with the Negro, whom capitalist society has converted into a Pariah, and who must learn to see in us his revolutionary brothers. And this depends wholly upon our energy and devotion to the work.” (*The Militant*, May 1, 1929.)

Trotsky's attitude toward the Negro masses contained not a trace of that condescension and sentimentalist superciliousness which characterized the Stalinists and social-democrats of ten years ago. He was far more interested in recruiting a Negro worker than a white intellectual. And for very good, very material reasons. To illustrate:

In 1932 an application for membership in the Trotskyist movement was received in this country from 24 Negroes in Johannesburg, South Africa. As soon as Trotsky had seen their letter, he wrote an article for *The Militant* (July 2, 1932) in which he said:

"If the Johannesburg comrades did not as yet have the possibility to acquaint themselves closer with the views of the Left Opposition on all the most important questions, it cannot be an obstacle in getting together with them as closely as possible even today and to help them fraternally to come into the orbit of our program and our tactics.

"When ten intellectuals of Paris, Berlin or New York, who have been in various organizations, address themselves to us with a request to be taken into our midst I would give the following advice: Put them through a number of tests on all the questions of program; wet them under the rain, dry them in the sun, and then after a new careful examination, accept one or two.

"The matter changes basically when ten workers connected with the masses come to us. The difference in our relation to the petty bourgeois and to the proletarian groups does not require any explanation. But if the proletarian group works in a district where there are workers of various races, and in spite of this, it consists only of workers of a privileged nationality, I am inclined to regard them with suspicion: are we not dealing with the workers' aristocracy? Isn't the group poisoned by slaveholding prejudices active or passive?

"It is quite a different matter when we are approached by a group of Negro workers. Here I am ready to consider beforehand that we are achieving agreement with them, even though this is not yet obvious; because of their whole position they do not strive and cannot strive to degrade anybody, oppress anybody or deprive anybody of his rights. They do not seek privileges and cannot rise to the top except on the road of the international revolution.

"We can and we should find a way to the consciousness of the Negro workers, of the Chinese workers, of the Hindu workers, all

these oppressed colored races of the human ocean to whom belongs the decisive word in the development of humanity.”

In a discussion on “self-determination” held with one of the American Trotskyist leaders on Feb. 28, 1933, Trotsky returned once again to the need for fighting racial prejudice among the white workers:

“The Negro can be developed to a class standpoint only when the white worker is educated

“I am absolutely sure that they (the Negro masses) will in any case fight better than the white workers. That, however, can happen only provided the communist party carries on an uncompromising merciless struggle . . . against the colossal prejudices of the white workers and gives it no concessions whatever.”

Considerations of space prevent us from quoting further, but we think we have made the point. Trotsky guided us to a correct working-class perspective in this respect as in all others. We Trotskyists do not claim to have a lot of influence among the Negro masses today. The job of gathering together a group of courageous, self-sacrificing Negro revolutionists in a period of reaction has not been an easy one—no easier than that of building the revolutionary party.

But we have reason to be encouraged by the progress of the last few years, especially since the war began. We now number in our ranks a comparatively small but important number of Negro workers, most of them active trade unionists with experience among the masses. The difficulties ahead are considerable, but we are confident that our comrades, both Negro and white, will play a decisive role in the Negro struggles coming. Success in those struggles will be the only kind of monument that Trotsky would have wanted.

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