

THE NEW

December 1939

INTERNATIONAL

A MONTHLY ORGAN OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM

SPECIAL NEGRO NUMBER

ROBERT L. BIRCHMAN

The Negro in Southern Agriculture

From Slavery to Sharecropping.

**Extent and Character of Sharecropping and
Tenancy.**

**Wage Labor. Mechanization. Negro Landownership.
Concentration of Landownership. Credit System.**

J. R. JOHNSON

Revolution and the Negro

The Negro and the French Revolution.

The Haitian Revolution and World History.

The Negro and the Civil War.

The Negro and World Revolution.

Article by George E. Novack

Twenty Cents Single Copy - - - Subscription Per Year \$2.00

At Home

IT is not yet possible for THE NEW INTERNATIONAL to return to its former 32 page size. The circulation and revenue in the United States are still considerably too low to be able to offset the large decrease in circulation and revenue from the foreign countries as a result of the outbreak of war. Nor did sufficient contributions come in to be able to have a 32 page December number.

By the time the January issue appears we shall know quite definitely if THE NEW INTERNATIONAL can increase its size again, or whether it will be necessary to stabilize the magazine on a 16 page basis.

The November number aroused considerable interest and 4300 copies were published, a larger quantity than for several months; this despite the circulation loss from abroad. Although some copies are still on hand, they will no doubt be cleared from the shelves by requests for copies and bundles.

* * *

Several new orders and increases were placed in recent weeks. The Harvard Socialist League placed an order for 20 copies; a group in Memphis, Tennessee, for five copies; and a group of comrades at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, put in an order for 20 copies regularly.

Increases were made by Worcester to nine copies; New Haven from 15 to 20; San Diego from five to eight. Two decreases were recorded: Minneapolis from 75 to 50 and Detroit from 35 to 25.

The bundle circulation, by and large, appears to be quite stabilized, with more persistent and planned efforts made by the branches to circulate the magazine. The agents have for a long time been ordering what they are able to dispose of and consequently THE NEW INTERNATIONAL circulation is entirely bona fide.

The main difficulty continues in the field of subscriptions, which for varied reasons have been harder to obtain. However the past month was a quite good one, all things considered. But the combination offer of a THE NEW INTERNATIONAL subscription together with a copy of the book, "Living Thought of Marx," with an introduction by L. D. Trotsky, "Marxism in Our Times," brought in quite a number of subscriptions.

The comrades in Cambridge, Massachusetts, did exceptional-

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

Volume V December 1939 Number 12 (Whole No. 39)

Published monthly by THE NEW INTERNATIONAL Publishing Company, 116 University Place, New York, N. Y. Telephone: ALgonquin 4-8547. Subscription rates: \$2.00 per year; bundles, 14c for 5 copies and up. Canada and Foreign: \$2.50 per year; bundles 16c for 5 copies and up. Entered as second-class matter December 9, 1937, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Editorial Board:
JAMES BURNHAM MAX SHACHTMAN
General Manager: Assistant Manager:
MARTIN ABERN SHERMAN STANLEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

REVOLUTION AND THE NEGRO	339
<i>by J. R. Johnson</i>	
THE COLONIAL PLANTATION SYSTEM	343
<i>by George E. Novack</i>	
THE NEGRO IN SOUTHERN AGRICULTURE	345
<i>by Robert L. Birchman</i>	
<i>Inside front cover: At Home</i>	

ly well, sending in a dozen subscriptions. Chicago sent several and Minneapolis and Akron obtained a number of renewals.

Chicago also ordered an additional 50 copies of the November number in order to meet the demands of its public meetings held recently. Under Lois Lowell's direction, the magazine's situation is being rapidly improved in Philadelphia.

There have been frequent changes of agents in recent weeks, but these have not occasioned any difficulties in handling the magazine. Among the new agents are Nick L., New Haven; F. Dart, Flint; I. S., San Diego; Lois Lowell, Philadelphia. Oscar I. placed a regular order for Pittsburgh.

In New York City, the Bronx and Upper West Side Branches continue to be the most dependable units in the circulation of our theoretical organ. In addition several renewal subscriptions were obtained through the medium of Upper West Side comrades. The agent there, Mimi Slater, attends to her duties systematically, and also Ben Walker of the Bronx has made steady efforts to promote THE NEW INTERNATIONAL.

The Los Angeles organization, endeavoring to place its Press circulation on a sound foundation, recently took special measures in regard to THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. An agreement arrived at between the Los Angeles organization and the Business Office in New York resulted in a settlement of Los Angeles' large debt to the magazine. As a result the Los Angeles slate is now clear, and the comrades feel that they can now proceed with systematic efforts to increase the SOCIALIST APPEAL and THE NEW INTERNA-

TIONAL circulation without the worry of heavy debts overhanging them.

Of general interest is the increase in sales of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL in Southern cities, such as Memphis, Houston and Chattanooga.

The New Haven Branch, writes Comrade N. L., is planning a social to raise money for THE NEW INTERNATIONAL and begs that we hang on to THE NEW INTERNATIONAL while they and others come to the rescue.

Comrade Chester Johnson, Minneapolis agent, writes: "One step which we have recently taken to improve our sales distribution has been to cover the largest and most important newsstands in the city. In this respect we have been very lax in the past; that is, failing to use the regular avenues of news sale distribution, which after all is the most efficient method of sales once the people know that THE NEW INTERNATIONAL is there. I have been placed in charge of newsstand placements and collections, both for THE NEW INTERNATIONAL and SOCIALIST APPEAL, and I find that the results merit very close and sustained attention. With our forum season getting under way, and a rejuvenated campaign launched among our comrades on the basis of our reduced bundle, I think we shall be able to improve the sales of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL in this area."

In the Boston region comrades London, R. P. and H. R., besides the general agent, John Taber, have been making serious efforts to obtain subscriptions and, as reported above, already sent in several subscriptions.

The Los Angeles organiza-

tion, under the direction of Jack G., recently sent out a very good promotion letter to a large number of contacts with the objective of obtaining new readers and subscriptions. Also they have placed the magazine on several newsstands.

In this column we have in the past overlooked to mention that the East Chicago, Indiana organization, where a party unit made up largely of steel workers exists, disposes regularly of from 10 to 15 copies. The agent there is Comrade H. M. East Chicago obtains its bundle through the Chicago organization.

New York continues to be the best possible place for substantial increases in the circulation of the magazine. On an average the Party branches dispose of 325 copies; the Labor Book Shop of 50; newsstands, 125-150; the Y.P.S.L. 125-150; besides subscriptions in Greater New York which at present total about 230. But increases can be expected in subscriptions through a drive for renewals. In all 850 to 900 copies are circulated in New York, but much more can yet be accomplished.

Again it must be pointed out that it is the American organization and readers who must give the answer on the future of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. In our view it is possible for the United States to sustain a 32 page N. I. through circulation—bundle orders and subscriptions. Up till recently the circulation abroad was so substantial as to make certain a 32 page organ, but now the American comrades and readers must supply the answer in the form of hundreds of new readers.

—THE MANAGER

ON THE PRESS

New German pamphlet

The New World War and the International Labor Movement

By H. DAVID

Answers many questions and clarifies problems that have arisen during the present crisis

20c a copy

Order at once from
P.O. Box 173, STATION D,
NEW YORK CITY

UNSER WORT

Official Organ, German Section,
4th International, with
the Declaration of the IKD
will appear shortly

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

A Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

VOLUME 5

DECEMBER 1939

No. 12

Revolution and the Negro

THE NEGRO'S revolutionary history is rich, inspiring, and unknown. Negroes revolted against the slave raiders in Africa; they revolted against the slave traders on the Atlantic passage. They revolted on the plantations.

The docile Negro is a myth. Slaves on slave ships jumped overboard, went on vast hunger strikes, attacked the crews. There are records of slaves overcoming the crew and taking the ship into harbor, a feat of tremendous revolutionary daring. In British Guiana during the eighteenth century the Negro slaves revolted, seized the Dutch colony, and held it for years. They withdrew to the interior, forced the whites to sign a treaty of peace, and have remained free to this day. Every West Indian colony, particularly Jamaica and San Domingo and Cuba, the largest islands, had its settlements of maroons, bold Negroes who had fled into the wilds and organized themselves to defend their freedom. In Jamaica the British government, after vainly trying to suppress them, accepted their existence by treaties of peace, scrupulously observed by both sides over many years, and then broken by British treachery. In America the Negroes made nearly 150 distinct revolts against slavery. The only place where Negroes did not revolt is in the pages of capitalist historians. All this revolutionary history can come as a surprise only to those who, whatever International they belong to, whether Second, Third, or Fourth, have not yet ejected from their systems the pertinacious lies of Anglo-Saxon capitalism. It is not strange that the Negroes revolted. It would have been strange if they had not.

But the Fourth International, whose business is revolution, has not to prove that Negroes were or are as revolutionary as any group of oppressed people. That has its place in agitation. What we as Marxists have to see is the tremendous role played by Negroes in the transformation of Western civilization from feudalism to capitalism. It is only from this vantage-ground that we shall be able to appreciate (and prepare for) the still greater role they must of necessity play in the transition from capitalism to socialism.

What are the decisive dates in the modern history of Great Britain, France, and America? 1789, the beginning of the French Revolution; 1832, the passing of the Reform Bill in Britain; and 1865, the crushing of the slave-power in America by the Northern states. Each of these dates marks a definitive stage in the transition from feudal to capitalist society. The exploitation of millions of Negroes had been a basic factor in the economic development of each of these three nations. It was reasonable, therefore, to expect the Negro question to play no less an important

role in the resolution of the problems that faced each society. No one in the prerevolutionary days, however, even faintly foresaw the magnitude of the contributions the Negroes were to make. Today Marxists have far less excuse for falling into the same mistake.

The Negro and the French Revolution

The French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution, and the basis of bourgeois wealth was the slave trade and the slave plantations in the colonies. Let there be no mistake about this. "Sad irony of human history," says Jaurès, "the fortunes created at Bordeaux, at Nantes by the slave-trade, gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which needed liberty and contributed to human emancipation." And Gaston-Martin, the historian of the slave trade sums up thus: though the bourgeoisie traded in other things than slaves, upon the success or failure of the traffic everything else depended. Therefore when the bourgeoisie proclaimed the Rights of Man in general, with necessary reservations, one of these was that these rights should not extend to the French colonies. In 1789 the French colonial trade was eleven million pounds, two-thirds of the overseas trade of France. British colonial trade at that time was only five million pounds. What price French abolition? There was an abolitionist society to which Brissot, Robespierre, Mirabeau, Lafayette, Condorcet, and many such famous men belonged even before 1789. But liberals are liberal. Face to face with the revolution, they were ready to compromise. They would leave the half million slaves in their slavery, but at least the Mulattoes, men of property (including slaves) and education, should be given equal rights with the white colonials. The white colonial magnates refused concessions and they were people to be reckoned with, aristocrats by birth or marriage, bourgeois by their trade connections with the maritime bourgeoisie. They opposed all change in the colonies that would diminish their social and political domination. The maritime bourgeoisie, concerned about their millions of investments, supported the colonials, and against eleven million pounds of trade per year the radical politicians were helpless. It was the revolution that kicked them from behind and forced them forward.

First of all the revolution in France. The Girondins, right wing of the Jacobin club, overthrew the pro-royalist Feuillants and came to power in March, 1792.

And secondly the revolution in the colonies. The Mulattoes in San Domingo revolted in 1790, followed a few months later by the slave revolt in August 1791. On April 4, 1792 the Girondins granted political and social rights

to the Mulattoes. The big bourgeoisie agreed, for the colonial aristocrats, after vainly trying to win Mulatto support for independence, decided to hand the colony over to Britain rather than tolerate interference with their system. All these slave owners, French nobility and French bourgeoisie, colonial aristocrats and Mulattoes, were agreed that the slave revolt should be suppressed and the slaves remain in their slavery.

The slaves, however, refused to listen to threats, and no promises were made to them. Led from beginning to end by men who had themselves been slaves and were unable to read or write, they fought one of the greatest revolutionary battles in history. Before the revolution they had seemed subhuman. Many a slave had to be whipped before he could be got to move from where he sat. The revolution transformed them into heroes.

The island of San Domingo was divided into two colonies, one French, the other Spanish. The colonial government of the Spanish Bourbons supported the slaves in their revolt against the French republic, and many rebel bands took service with the Spaniards. The French colonials invited Pitt to take over the colony, and when war was declared between France and England in 1793, the English invaded the island.

The English expedition, welcomed by all the white colonials, captured town after town in the south and west of French San Domingo. The Spaniards, operating with the famous Toussaint Louverture, an ex-slave, at the head of four thousand black troops, invaded the colony from the east. British and Spaniards were gobbling up as much as they could before the time for sharing came. "In these matters," wrote the British minister, Dundas, to the governor of Jamaica, "the more we have, the better our pretensions." On June 4th, Port-au-Prince, the capital of San Domingo, fell. Meanwhile another British expedition had captured Martinique, Guadeloupe, and the other French islands. Barring a miracle, the colonial trade of France, the richest in the world, was in the hands of her enemies and would be used against the revolution. But here the French masses took a hand.

August 10, 1792 was the beginning of the revolution triumphant in France. The Paris masses and their supporters all over France, in 1789 indifferent to the colonial question, were now striking in revolutionary frenzy at every abuse of the old regime and none of the former tyrants were so hated as the "aristocrats of the skin." Revolutionary generosity, resentment at the betrayal of the colonies to the enemies of the revolution, impotence in the face of the British navy—these swept the Convention off its feet. On February 4, 1794, without a debate, it decreed the abolition of Negro slavery and at last gave its sanction to the black revolt.

The news trickled through somehow to the French West Indies. Victor Hugues, a Mulatto, one of the great personalities produced by the revolution, managed to break through the British blockade and carried the official notice of the manumission to the Mulattoes and blacks of the West Indian islands. Then occurred the miracle. The blacks and Mulattoes dressed themselves in the revolutionary colors and, singing revolutionary songs, they turned on the British and Spaniards, their allies of yesterday. With

little more from revolutionary France than its moral support, they drove the British and Spaniards from their conquests and carried the war into enemy territory. The British, after five years of trying to reconquer the French colonies, were finally driven out in 1798.

Few know the magnitude and the importance of that defeat sustained at the hands of Victor Hugues in the smaller islands and of Toussaint Louverture and Rigaud in San Domingo. Fortescue, the Tory historian of the British army, estimates the total loss to Britain at 100,000 men. Yet in the whole of the Peninsular War Wellington lost from all causes—killed in battle, sickness, desertions—only 40,000 men. British blood and British treasure were poured out in profusion in the West Indian campaign. This was the reason for Britain's weakness in Europe during the critical years 1793-1798. Let Fortescue himself speak: "The secret of England's impotence for the first six years of the war may be said to lie in the two fatal words St. Domingo." British historians blame chiefly the fever, as if San Domingo was the only place in the world that European imperialism had met fever.

Whatever the neglect or distortions of later historians, the French revolutionaries themselves knew what the Negro question meant to the revolution. The Constituent, the Legislature, and the Convention were repeatedly thrown into disorder by the colonial debates. This had grave repercussions in the internal struggle as well as in the revolutionary defense of the Republic. Says Jaurès, "Undoubtedly but for the compromises of Barnave and all his party on the colonial question, the general attitude of the Assembly after the flight to Varennes would have been different." Excluding the masses of Paris, no portion of the French empire played, in proportion to its size, so grandiose a role in the French Revolution as the half million blacks and Mulattoes in the remote West Indian islands.

The Black Revolution and World History

The black revolution in San Domingo choked at its source one of the most powerful economic streams of the eighteenth century. With the defeat of the British, the black proletarians defeated the Mulatto Third Estate in a bloody civil war. Immediately after, Bonaparte, representative of the most reactionary elements of the new French bourgeoisie, attempted to restore slavery in San Domingo. The blacks defeated an expedition of some 50,000 men, and with the assistance of the Mulattoes, carried the revolution to its logical conclusion. They changed the name of San Domingo to Haiti and declared the island independent. This black revolution had a profound effect on the struggle for the cessation of the slave trade.

We can trace this close connection best by following the development of abolition in the British Empire. The first great blow at the Tory domination of Britain (and at feudalism in France for that matter) was struck by the Declaration of Independence in 1776. When Jefferson wrote that all men are created equal, he was drawing up the death-warrant of feudal society, wherein men were by law divided into unequal classes. Crispus Attucks, the Negro, was the first man killed by the British in the war that followed. It was no isolated or chance phenomenon. The Negroes thought that in this war for freedom, they could

win their own. It has been estimated that of the 30,000 men in Washington's army 4000 were Negroes. The American bourgeoisie did not want them. They forced themselves in. But San Domingo Negroes fought in the war also.

The French monarchy came to the assistance of the American Revolution. And Negroes from the French colonies pushed themselves into the French expeditionary force. Of the 1900 French troops who recaptured Savannah, 900 were volunteers from the French colony of San Domingo. Ten years later some of these men—Rigaud, André, Lambert, Beauvais and others (some say Christophe also)—with their political and military experience will be foremost among the leaders in the San Domingo revolution. Long before Karl Marx wrote, "Workers of the world, unite," the revolution was international.

The loss of the slave-holding American colonies took much cotton out of the ears of the British bourgeoisie. Adam Smith and Arthur Young, heralds of the industrial revolution and wage-slavery, were already preaching against the waste of chattel-slavery. Deaf up to 1783, the British bourgeois now heard, and looked again at the West Indies. Their own colonies were bankrupt. They were losing the slave trade to French and British rivals. And half the French slaves that they brought were going to San Domingo, the India of the eighteenth century. Why should they continue to do this? In three years, the first abolitionist society was formed and Pitt began to clamor for the abolition of slavery—"for the sake of humanity, no doubt," says Gaston-Martin, "but also, be it well understood, to ruin French commerce." With the war of 1793, Pitt, cherishing a prospect of winning San Domingo, piped down on abolition. But the black revolution killed the aspirations of both France and Britain.

The Treaty of Vienna in 1814 gave to France the right to recapture San Domingo: the Haitians swore that they would rather destroy the island. With the abandonment of the hopes for regaining San Domingo, the British abolished the slave trade in 1807. America followed in 1808.

If the East Indian interest in Britain was one of the great financial arsenals of the new bourgeoisie (whence the diatribes of Burke, Whig spokesman, against Hastings and Clive), the West Indian interest, though never so powerful as in France, was a cornerstone of the feudal oligarchy. The loss of America was the beginning of their decline. But for the black revolution, San Domingo would have strengthened them enormously. The reformist British bourgeoisie belabored them, the weakest link in the oligarchic chain. A great slave revolt in Jamaica in 1831 helped to convince those who had doubts. In Britain "Better emancipation from above than from below" anticipated the Tsar by thirty years. One of the first acts of the victorious reformers was to abolish slavery in the British colonies. But for the black revolution in San Domingo, abolition and emancipation might have been postponed another thirty years.

Abolition did not come to France until the revolution of 1848. The production of beet-sugar, introduced into France by Bonaparte, grew by leaps and bounds, and placed the cane sugar interests, based on slavery in Martinique and Guadeloupe, increasingly on the defensive. One of the first acts of the revolutionary government of 1848 was to

abolish slavery. But as in 1794, the decree was merely the registration of an accomplished fact. So menacing was the attitude of the slaves that in more than one colony the local government, in order to head off the servile revolution, proclaimed abolition without waiting for authorization from France.

The Negro and the Civil War

1848, the year following the economic crisis of 1847, was the beginning of a new cycle of revolutions all over the Western world. The European revolutions, Chartism in England, were defeated. In America the irrepressible conflict between capitalism in the North and the slave system in the South was headed off for the last time by the Missouri Compromise of 1850. The political developments following the economic crisis of 1857 made further compromise impossible.

It was a decade of revolutionary struggle the world over in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. 1857 was the year of the first war of Indian independence, commonly miscalled the Indian Mutiny. In 1858 began the civil war in Mexico, which ended with the victory of Juarez three years later. It was the period of the Taiping revolution in China, the first great attempt to break the power of the Manchu dynasty. North and South in America moved to their predestined clash unwillingly, but the revolutionary Negroes helped to precipitate the issue. For two decades before the Civil War began, they were leaving the South in thousands. The revolutionary organization known as the Underground Railway, with daring, efficiency and dispatch, drained away the slave owners' human property. Fugitive slaves were the issue of the day. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was a last desperate attempt by the Federal Government to stop this illegal abolition. Ten Northern states replied with personal liberty laws which nullified the heavy penalties of the 1850 law. Most famous perhaps of all the whites and Negroes who ran the Underground Railway is Harriet Tubman, a Negro who had herself escaped from slavery. She made nineteen journeys into the South and helped her brothers and their wives and three hundred other slaves to escape. She made her depredations in enemy territory with a price of \$40,000 on her head. Josiah Henson, the original of Uncle Tom, helped nearly two hundred slaves to escape. Nothing so galled the slave owners as this twenty-year drain on their already bankrupt economic system.

It is unnecessary to detail here the causes of this, the greatest civil war in history. Every Negro schoolboy knows that the last thing Lincoln had in mind was the emancipation of Negroes. What is important is that, for reasons both internal and external, Lincoln had to draw them into the revolutionary struggle. He said that without emancipation the North might not have won, and he was in all probability right. Thousands of Negroes were fighting on the Southern side, hoping to win their freedom that way. The abolition decree broke down the social cohesion of the South. It was not only what the North gained but, as Lincoln pointed out, what the South lost. On the Northern side 220,000 Negroes fought with such bravery that it was impossible to do with white troops what could be done with them. They fought not only with revolutionary brav-

ery but with coolness and exemplary discipline. The best of them were filled with revolutionary pride. They were fighting for equality. One company stacked arms before the tent of its commanding officer as a protest against discrimination.

Lincoln was also driven to abolition by the pressure of the British working class. Palmerston wanted to intervene on the side of the South but was opposed in the cabinet by Gladstone. Led by Marx, the British working class so vigorously opposed the war, that it was impossible to hold a pro-war meeting anywhere in England. The British Tories derided the claim that the war was for the abolition of slavery: hadn't Lincoln said so many times? The British workers, however, insisted on seeing the war as a war for abolition, and Lincoln, for whom British non-intervention was a life and death matter, decreed abolition with a suddenness which shows his fundamental unwillingness to take such a revolutionary step.

Abolition was declared in 1863. Two years before, the movement of the Russian peasants, so joyfully hailed by Marx, frightened the Tsar into the semi-emancipation of the serfs. The North won its victory in 1865. Two years later the British workers won the Second Reform Bill, which gave the franchise to the workers in the towns. The revolutionary cycle was concluded with the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. A victory there and the history of Reconstruction would have been far different.

The Negro and World Revolution

Between 1871 and 1905 the proletarian revolution was dormant. In Africa the Negroes fought vainly to maintain their independence against the imperialist invasions. But the Russian Revolution of 1905 was the forerunner of a new era that began with the October Revolution in 1917. While half a million Negroes fought with the French Revolution in 1789, today the socialist revolution in Europe has as its potential allies over 120 million Negroes in Africa. Where Lincoln had to seek an alliance with an isolated slave population, today millions of Negroes in America have penetrated deep into industry, have fought side by side with white workers on picket lines, have helped to barricade factories for sit-down strikes, have played their part in the struggles and clashes of trade unions and political parties. It is only through the spectacles of historical perspective that we can fully appreciate the enormous revolutionary potentialities of the Negro masses today.

Half a million slaves, hearing the words Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity shouted by millions of Frenchmen many thousands of miles away, awoke from their apathy. They occupied the attention of Britain for six years and, once again to quote Fortescue, "practically destroyed the British army." What of the Negroes in Africa today? This is a bare outline of the record.

French West Africa: 1926-1929, 10,000 men fled into the forest swamps to escape French slavery.

French Equatorial Africa: 1924, uprising. 1924-1925, uprising, 1000 Negroes killed. 1928, June to November, rising in Upper Sangha and Lai. 1929, a rising lasting four months; the Africans organized an army of 10,000.

British West Africa: 1929, a revolt of women in Nigeria, 30,000 in number; 83 killed, 87 wounded. 1937,

general strike of the Gold Coast farmers, joined by the dockers and truck drivers.

Belgian Congo: 1929, revolt in Ruanda Urundi; thousands killed. 1930-1931, revolt of the Bapendi, 800 massacred in one place, Kwango.

South Africa: 1929, strikes and riots in Durban; the Negro quarter was entirely surrounded by troops and bombarded by planes.

Since 1935 there have been general strikes, with shooting of Negroes, in Rhodesia, in Madagascar, in Zanzibar. In the West Indies there have been general strikes and mass action such as those islands have not seen since the emancipation from slavery a hundred years ago. Scores have been killed and wounded.

The above is only a random selection. The Negroes in Africa are caged and beat against the bars continually. It is the European proletariat that holds the key. Let the workers of Britain, France, and Germany say, "Arise, ye children of starvation" as loudly as the French revolutionaries said Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity and what force on earth can hold these Negroes back? All who know anything about Africa know this.

Mr. Norman Leys, a government medical officer in Kenya for twenty years, a member of the British Labour Party, and about as revolutionary as the late Ramsay MacDonald, wrote a study of Kenya in 1924. Seven years later he wrote again. This time he entitled his book *A Last Chance in Kenya*. The alternative, he said, is revolution.

In *Caliban in Africa*, Leonard Barnes, another milk and water socialist, writes as follows: "So he [the South African white] and the native he holds captive go spinning down the stream fatally, madly spinning together along the rapids above the great cataract, both yoked to one omnipotent hour." That is the revolution, wrapped in silver paper.

The revolution haunts this conservative Englishman. He writes again of the Bantu, "They crouch in their corner, nursing a sullen anger and desperately groping for a plan. They will not be many years making up their minds. Time and fate, even more prevailing than the portcullis of the Afrikaner, are driving them on from the rear. Something must give; it will not be fate or time. Some comprehensive social and economic reconstruction must take place. But how? By reason or by violence? . . ."

He poses as alternatives what are in reality one. The change will take place, by violence and by reason combined.

"We Have a False Idea of the Negro"

Let us return again to the San Domingo revolution with its paltry half a million slaves. Writing in 1789, the very year of the revolution, a colonist said of them that they were "unjust, cruel, barbarous, half-human, treacherous, deceitful, thieves, drunkards, proud, lazy, unclean, shameless, jealous to fury and cowards."

Three years later Rouse, the French Commissioner, noted that even though fighting with the royalist Spaniards, the black revolutionaries, organizing themselves into armed sections and popular bodies, rigidly observed all the forms of republican organization. They adopted slogans and rallying cries. They appointed chiefs of sections and divisions who, by means of these slogans, could call them out and send them back home again from one end of the

province to the others. They threw up from out of their depths a soldier and a statesman of the first rank, Toussaint Louverture, and secondary leaders fully able to hold their own with the French in war, diplomacy, and administration. In ten years they organized an army that fought Bonaparte's army on level terms. "But what men these blacks are! How they fight and how they die!" wrote a French officer looking back at the last campaign after forty years. From his dying bed, Leclerc, Bonaparte's brother-in-law and commander-in-chief of the French expedition, wrote home, "We have . . . a false idea of the Negro." And again, "We have in Europe a false idea of the country in which we fight and the men whom we fight against. . . ." We need to know and reflect on these things to-day.

Menaced during its whole existence by imperialism, European and American, the Haitians have never been able to overcome the bitter heritage of their past. Yet that revolution of a half million not only helped to protect the French Revolution but initiated great revolutions in its own right. When the Latin American revolutionaries saw that half a million slaves could fight and win, they recognized the reality of their own desire for independence. Bolivar, broken and ill, went to Haiti. The Haitians nursed him back to health, gave him money and arms with which he sailed to the mainland. He was defeated, went back to Haiti, was once more welcomed and assisted. And it was from Haiti that he sailed to start on the final campaign, which ended in the independence of the five states.

Today 150 million Negroes, knit into world economy infinitely more tightly than their ancestors of a hundred years

ago, will far surpass the work of that San Domingo half million in the work of social transformation. The continuous risings in Africa; the refusal of the Ethiopian warriors to submit to Mussolini; the American Negroes who volunteered to fight in Spain in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, as Rigaud and Beauvais had volunteered to fight in America, tempering their swords against the enemy abroad for use against the enemy at home—these lightnings announce the thunder. The racial prejudice that now stands in the way will bow before the tremendous impact of the proletarian revolution.

In Flint during the sit-down strike of two years ago seven hundred Southern whites, soaked from infancy in racial prejudice, found themselves besieged in the General Motors building with one Negro among them. When the time came for the first meal, the Negro, knowing who and what his companions were, held himself in the background. Immediately it was proposed that there should be no racial discrimination among the strikers. Seven hundred hands went up together. In the face of the class enemy the men recognized that race prejudice was a subordinate thing which could not be allowed to disrupt their struggle. The Negro was invited to take his seat first, and after the victory was won, in the triumphant march out of the factory, he was given the first place. That is the prognosis of the future. In Africa, in America, in the West Indies, on a national and international scale, the millions of Negroes will raise their heads, rise up from their knees, and write some of the most massive and brilliant chapters in the history of revolutionary socialism. J. R. JOHNSON

The Colonial Plantation System

IN THE colonial period, before the rise of large-scale industry, slavery existed in two different economic forms in the Western world, one representing its past, the other its future. The first was the patriarchal form in which it had flourished from time immemorial. The patriarchal plantations were largely self-sustained, retaining many features of natural economy. Production was divided into two parts, one devoted to the cultivation of such cash crops as tobacco, corn, hemp, etc.; the other to the needs of home consumption.

The plantation system developed along these lines in the Virginia and Maryland colonies. The average estate was relatively small, employing from five to twenty hands, part of whom were likely to be white redemptioners. Blacks and whites worked together in the fields without insurmountable barriers or deep antagonisms between them. Relations between masters and slaves, with notable exceptions, had a paternal character. The slaveowner was not an absentee landlord who entrusted his estate to the supervision of an overseer and was interested solely in the maximum amount of profit to be gained from his operations. He lived upon his plantation the year round and regarded it as his home. Field hands were often indulgently treated. Negro servants, who replaced white servants in the household as well as in the field, were frequently on intimate and trusted terms

with the master and his family, remained in the same family generation after generation, and were regarded as subordinate members of the household.

Such plantations raised their own food, wove their own cloth, built their own houses. Agriculture for domestic use was sometimes supplemented by domestic manufacture. George Washington's estate, for example, contained a weaving establishment. Other planters owned spinning and weaving factories employing not only slave labor but white servants on a wage-labor basis.

In South Carolina and Georgia the plantation system developed according to a different pattern. There chattel slavery lost its patriarchal characteristics and became transformed into a purely commercial system of exploitation based upon the production of a single money crop. The typical rice and indigo plantations in the coastal regions were of large size, employing about thirty slaves working under a white taskmaster. The proprietors were either absentee owners living in Charleston, Savannah, or Jamaica who came to inspect the estates several times a year or who lived only part of the year upon their plantations owing to the prevalence of malaria in the hot months. South Carolina and Georgia's economy was so utterly dependent upon slave labor that they became the strongholds of the slave system in the English colonies on the mainland.

Until the rise of the Cotton Kingdom, the capitalist plantation system in the English colonies was perfected on the largest scale in Jamaica. Economically considered, the whole island was converted into one vast plantation devoted to the cultivation of sugar cane and the making of sugar which was then shipped overseas for sale. The individual plantations, carved in large sections out of the fertile soil, were in many cases owned by absentee landlords resident in England and managed by hired superintendents. They were extremely productive and worked entirely by slave labor.

"The average unit of industry in the Jamaican sugar fields came to be a plantation with a total of nearly two hundred Negroes, of whom more than half were workers in the field gangs," writes Ulrich B. Phillips in his introduction to the first volume of *The Documentary History of American Industrial Society*. "The laborers were strictly classified and worked in squads under close and energetic supervision to near the maximum of their muscular ability. The routine was thoroughly systematic, and the system as efficient on the whole as could well be, where the directors were so few and the Negroes so many and so little removed from the status of African savagery. The Jamaican units were on the average the largest in all the history of plantation industry."

The concentration of production upon one commercial staple combined with the exclusive use of slave labor give rise to the social and economic consequences that were later to prevail in the Cotton Kingdom. The small farmers who had originally populated the island were pushed out and gradually disappeared. The inhabitants came to be divided into two absolutely opposed classes: the planters and their agents on top and the Negro slaves on the bottom. A sprinkling of merchants and mechanics between them catered to the needs of the plantation owners. The sugar lords were absolute rulers of the island, exploiting it for their exclusive benefit and representing it at Westminster.

This type of chattel slavery prefigured the future and was to predominate within the Southern Cotton Kingdom.

Slavery and the Colonial Revolution

Except for the far South, slavery was a decaying institution in the English coastal colonies at the time of the Revolution. The decline in the value of tobacco compelled many planters to turn to the raising of other crops in which slave labor could not profitably compete with free labor. Finding their slaves to be an economic liability, some masters entertained ideas of emancipation. The slave system began to disintegrate, giving way here and there to tenant-farming, share-cropping, and even wage-labor.

Virginia and Maryland were then among the leading centers of abolition sentiment in the colonies. Some of the wealthiest and most influential planters in the Old Dominion, such as Washington and Jefferson, advocated the abolition of slavery and the restriction of the slave trade. Henry Laurens of South Carolina, President of the Continental Congress, who owned slaves worth twenty thousand pounds, wrote his son in 1776 that he abhorred slavery and was devising means for manumitting his chattels. But most slaveholders, especially those in Georgia and South Carolina where rice and hemp could not be grown without slaves, flatly opposed any restrictions upon the trade which would prevent them from buying the labor they needed. They found support among Northern merchants who benefited from the slave traffic.

In the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson had inserted an indictment of George III for promoting and protecting the slave trade against colonial protests. But, he tells us,

"the clause, reprobating the enslaving of the inhabitants of Africa, was struck out in complaisance to South Carolina and Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves, and who, on the contrary, still wished to continue it. Our Northern brethren, also, I believe, felt a little tender under those censures; for though their people had very few slaves themselves, yet they had been pretty considerable carriers of them to others."

The Revolutionary War impressed the dangers of slavery upon the minds of the colonists. Aroused by proclamations from royal governors and military commanders promising them freedom, thousands of Negroes escaped to the British camps and garrisons; while the slaveowners, fearful of insurrection and the safety of their property and families, were unable or unwilling to serve in the Continental armies. New England, with a population less numerous than that of Virginia, Carolina, and Georgia, provided more than twice as many troops to the revolutionary forces. The South was easily conquered by the redcoats who were defeated and expelled from New England at the beginning of the war.

Although the Revolution had been proclaimed and fought in the name of liberty and equality, it brought little immediate alteration in the status of the mass of Negroes who lived in the South. Only the few thousands in the North benefited from the liberating legislation of that period. The state constitution of Massachusetts led the way by abolishing slavery in 1780; Pennsylvania passed an act of gradual emancipation the same year; in the succeeding years other Northern states illegalized slavery within their borders. But not for a half century after the Declaration of Independence, in 1826, was slavery legally abolished in New York.

When the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met in secret conclave at Philadelphia to form the Union, the question of the abolition of slavery was not even placed upon the agenda. The discussions concerning slavery revolved around those issues pertaining to the interests of the Southern planters and Northern capitalists whose representatives composed the Convention. The questions in dispute concerned the slave trade, the use of slaves as a basis for taxation and representation, and the protective tariff. In return for the protective tariff granted to the capitalists, the delegates from South Carolina and Georgia, whose platform was "No Slave Trade-No Union," were granted a twenty-year extension of the slave-trade, a fugitive slave law, and a provision allowing three-fifths of the slaves to be counted as a basis for taxation and political representation.

The slaveholders proved powerful enough to obtain a Constitution that not only protected their peculiar institution but even erected additional legal safeguards around it. General Charles C. Pinckney, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, reported with satisfaction to the South Carolina ratification convention that: "By this settlement, we have secured an unlimited importation of Negroes for twenty years. Nor is it declared when that importation shall be stopped; it may be continued. We have a right to recover

our slaves in whatever part of America they may take refuge. In short, considering all circumstances, we have made the best terms for the security of this species of property it was in our power to make. We would have made better if we could; but, on the whole, I do not think them bad."

The Constitution, then, was a slaveholder's document; the United States was founded upon slavery. Some of the founding fathers recognized that slavery was the chief crack in the cornerstone of the new Republic, a crack which in time might widen to a fissure capable of splitting the union apart. Jefferson prophetically warned the slaveholders

that they would one day have to choose between emancipation or their own destruction. But before Jefferson's prophecy was fulfilled, chattel slavery was to flourish more luxuriantly than ever in North America and spread beyond the Mississippi to Texas. It was to make Cotton king of American economy and the cotton barons autocrats of the nation; and it was ultimately to flower in that anachronistic Southern culture which proclaimed slavery to be "a perfect good," eternally ordained and sanctified by the laws of God, Justice, History, and Mankind.

George E. NOVACK

(To be continued)

The Negro in Southern Agriculture

UNDER MODERN CAPITALIST conditions no less than under chattel slavery the Southern plantation economy constitutes the main material basis for the exploitation and oppression of the Negro masses in North America.

The bulk of the Negroes in the United States live in the South. In 1930, 79% of the 11.9 million Negroes in the country dwelt there. The proportion of Negroes in the so-called Black Belt has remained constant since before the Civil War, comprising about 50% of the population. In 1860 Negroes numbered 2,461,099, or 56.4% of the total population of that area, and in 1930, 4,790,094, or 50.3% of the total population. They have maintained the rate of growth of the general population of the region and in addition, have migrated in thousands to the North.

Despite the great northward migration of the Southern Negro, about three-fourths of the Negro people, rural and urban, still live in areas directly influenced by the plantation system; yet, despite the proportions of the urban migration, and the growth of industry in the South, the Negro in America is still predominantly rural. The depression has acted as a serious deterrent on further migration to the cities during the last ten years. The decrease in the number of Negro farm operators, amounting to 8.5% between 1920 and 1930 and to 7.5% between 1930 and 1935, does not negate this fact. More than half the Negroes are still rural; most of these are farm operators; and almost all of the Negro farm operators (95.3%) are in the South. To grasp the fundamentals of Negro life today we must examine the plantation system that shapes and overshadows it.

From Slavery to Sharecropping

The abolition of slavery closed one chapter in the development of the plantation system and opened another. But the transition from the slave plantations to the present peonage of sharecropping and tenancy was not so great a break as is commonly supposed. After having been shattered by the impact of emancipation, the plantation system was reorganized upon a new basis, formally different from the old but little better in reality. This was the tenancy and sharecropping system.

After emancipation neither the state nor Federal govern-

ments made any real effort to enable the freedmen to achieve economic security on the land. The stricken bourbons, owning nothing but land, faced the masses of the ex-slaves possessing nothing but their labor power. A system was arrived at whereby labor was secured "without money wages and land without money rent." This system, accepted at first as a temporary arrangement, developed into a permanent system.

The slave owner's place was taken by the usurer-planter, who had a direct interest in maintaining and strengthening the survivals of slavery by means of sharecropping and tenancy. Henry Grady noted in 1881 that

"There is beyond question a sure but gradual rebunching of the small farms into large estates, and a tendency towards the reestablishment of a landowning oligarchy. Here and there through all the cotton states, and almost in every county, are reappearing the planter princes of the old time, still lords of acres though not of slaves."

Today, as before the Civil War, the plantation system dominates the entire economic, social, and political life of the South, above all in the cotton areas. The plantation system supports a hereditary oligarchy similar in all vital respects to the slave-holding seigneurs of the Old South.

Character of Plantation Area

The cotton plantation area is characterized by a high percentage of tenancy, a high degree of concentration of landownership, a large percentage of Negroes, lower incomes for the tenants than for farmers in other sections of the country, a slight proportion of urban and village inhabitants, scarcity of non-agricultural industries, large families, poor school facilities, and a highly mobile population. Whole families are frequently on the move in search of better conditions.

These families are the vassals of King Cotton and the cotton nobility. Practically no other crop is grown on the plantations other than feed for livestock and a scant amount of produce for home consumption. The Negro is the principal victim of the semi-slave economy of these plantations, even though this economy, radiating from the plantations themselves, profoundly influences non-plantation farming and tenancy in the neighborhood, and encompasses increasing numbers of white workers.

Thus, today, the exploitation of black labor in one form or another is basic to the plantation system. Moreover, the concentration of plantation economy determines the degree of concentration of the Negroes. In his study, *Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation*, T. J. Woofter, Jr. states that in 1934, 84% of the tenant households were Negro in a sample survey of 646 plantations in six Southern states. Their general status is the same as in slave days "Nowhere are ante-bellum conditions so nearly preserved as in Yazoo delta," says Rupert B. Vance. "The delta planters compose the Mississippi aristocracy and, conversely, here the Negro is to be found at his lowest levels in America."

The Extent of Sharecropping and Tenancy

Today, more than three-quarters of a century after the abolition of chattel slavery, the area of the old slave plantations and the modern peon plantations is much the same. This is the area of the largest concentration of Negroes and the area in which the largest proportions of Negro tenancy and sharecropping prevail. The basis for the strength of the economic survivals of slavery are the plantations where the majority of the tenants and sharecroppers are Negroes.

Moreover, the link between tenancy and cotton production is as close today as ever. In the South as a whole, 79% of the cotton farms were operated by tenants, as compared to 38% of non-cotton farms. In the cotton belt alone the percentage of tenancy is still higher. For example, in 1935, 68% of all farms in Mississippi, and 65.6% of all farms in Georgia, were operated by tenants. The tenant is predominantly Negro, but he is gradually being displaced by the whites. Today 77% of Negro Southern farmers are tenants, as compared with substantially the same figure, 75%, in 1900. During the same period the proportion of tenants among Southern white farmers jumped from 36% to 46%. Moreover, although sharecroppers are about equally divided between Negroes and whites, a far larger portion of Negroes is to be found in this lowest class of tenants. In 1935, 58.5% of the 629,301 colored tenants in the South were sharecroppers, whereas of the 1,202,174 white tenants only 28.9% were sharecroppers.

In Mississippi in 1935, 71.8% of the 147,693 Negro tenants were sharecroppers, compared to 69,871 whites of whom 45.1% were sharecroppers. In Arkansas, 68.3% of the 59,940 Negro tenants were sharecroppers, compared to 91,819 white tenants, of whom 26.7% were sharecroppers. In these typical plantation states sixty out of every hundred cotton farms are operated by tenants. 445 out of every 1,000 Negro farmers in the South are sharecroppers, compared to 170 out of each 1,000 white farmers.

There has been a steady decrease in the number of Negro tenants and a steady increase in the number of white tenants. Today the problems of the agrarian population in the South, and of cotton tenancy in particular, involve white, no less than black workers. Most white tenants are located on the non-plantation size farms. Tenancy on these is directly influenced by the semi-slave conditions on the plantations and has numerous features in common with them. This constitutes the main difference between Negro and white tenancy.

Sharecropping

There are three types of tenancy in the South—sharecropping, share-tenancy, and renting.

The sharecropper owns nothing. The land to which he is assigned, implements and working stock he uses—all the means of production—belong to his landlord. The cropper has nothing but the labor of himself and his family. The average area cultivated by the Negro sharecropper in 1935 was 31.2 acres, compared to 52.8 by whites. But in such typical plantation states as Mississippi and Arkansas, with the largest number of Negro sharecroppers, the acreage is from 10 to 20 acres.

For use of the means of production the cropper must give the landlord a portion, usually half, of the crop; out of the other half the landlord deducts for "furnish," i.e., all food, clothes, and other necessities advanced during the season, and the cropper's share of fertilizer. These are supplied through the landlord's own commissary or by arrangement with some merchant. The cropper has no control over the nature of his crops, the acreage, methods of cultivation or marketing of his crop, and is at all times under direct supervision by the landlord or his agents. The "settlement" at the time the crop is sold amounts to no more than this: After having received barely enough for subsistence from the landlord in the "furnishes" to enable him to continue working, he is occasionally granted a small cash bonus at Christmas during a good year. But usually the cropper finds himself in debt to the landlord after the cotton is picked and sold and is forced to remain until the debt is worked off. This state of affairs is legalized by means of vagrancy statutes and laws penalizing agricultural workers for failure to complete cultivation of a crop after having entered into a contract with a landlord. The oppression and degradation of the masses under this form of economic bondage is little better than those experienced under chattel slavery.

The cropper is a worker paid in kind with no claim on the crops upon which the landlord has first lien. The legal codes of some cotton states define a cropper as a "wage-laborer working for the share of the crop as wages" and the Georgia Supreme Court in 1872 decided that "the case of the cropper is rather a mode of paying wages than a tenancy."

The slave received a bare subsistence, the entire product of his toil on the land being appropriated by the plantation owner. The sharecropper, on the other hand, gives the landlord one-half of the crop by virtue of the landlord's ownership of the land and implements, thus assuring the landlord from the beginning a large portion of the surplus product produced by the tiller of the soil. But the remaining half also reaches the coffers of the landlord in the form of payments on the advances, fertilizer, etc., which the landlord usually fixes to equal the total wages of the sharecropper.

While the sharecropper does not appear as part of the means of production, as did the slave, the method by which surplus labor is extracted by the landlord differs but little from slavery. The only difference is that occasionally, when his labor is not essential on his patch of plantation, the cropper is paid partly in cash. But his position as a semi-

slave is altered neither by this nor by the fact that he has a degree of freedom that permits him under certain circumstances to change masters. The sharecropper is bound to the soil by coercive measures, by contract enforced by the state for the period of the growing season, and then by debt slavery, made all the more coercive by the credit system of finance-capital.

The price the plantation owner paid for a slave was "the anticipated and capitalized surplus value or profit to be ground out of him." (*Capital*, vol. III, p. 934). The cost of the slave was a deduction from the capital available for actual production, and this capital ceased to exist for the plantation owner until he sold his slave once more. Additional investment of capital in production was necessary before the slave-master began to exploit his labor.

With the sharecropper, the landlord is saved the initial deduction from capital in the purchase of the slave; he invests only in his advances to the cropper and in the costs of production. Under chattel-slavery the cost to feed and maintain a slave was about twenty dollars a year. Woofter, in his study of 646 plantations, found that advances to tenants and sharecroppers amounted to an average of \$12.80 per family per month for an average of seven months of the year. (*Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation*, p. 59).

Considering that the sharecropper's family usually has at least five and often as many as ten members, the actual cost of furnishing a cropper with the bare necessities of life is lower, at times, than the cost of maintaining a slave. If one considers the initial deduction in capital for the purchase of the slave, the investment is even less. The landowner is relieved of any necessity to provide for his labor in the months between picking and planting the next crop, or during periods of reduced production. The landlord, his contract protected by the state power, may force the croppers to remain on the plantation without at the same time advancing food and other necessities. This is the prevailing state of affairs throughout the cotton area in periods of crisis or low prices for cotton.

Since the sharecropper owns no means of production, he is less a tenant than a wage-laborer. However, his relations to the landlord and the land keep him in a state of peonage worse than slavery.

There is no strict line of demarcation setting off tenants from sharecroppers. One often finds on a single plantation, sharecropping, share-tenancy, renting and wage-labor. On the 646 plantations in the cotton states he studied, Woofter found that sharecropping was predominant. Of these plantations 71% were mixed in tenure, with share-croppers predominant, 16% operated entirely by croppers, 6% by renters, 3% by other share-tenants and 4% operated entirely by wage-labor. Negroes and whites many times were employed on the same plantation. Of the above plantations 53% were operated entirely by Negroes, 42% by both Negroes and whites and only 5% entirely by whites.

Share-Tenancy and Renting

The share-tenant differs from the sharecropper by the fact that he owns part of the means of production and makes an investment in the enterprise. The tenant supplies labor, work stock, feed for the work stock, tools, seed, and

three-fourths or two-thirds of the fertilizer. The landlord receives one-fourth or one-third of the crops. He must take advances from the landlord or the supply merchant and, caught in the credit net, is consequently subject to a considerable degree of supervision, including the sale of his crops.

The share-tenant is often but slightly distinguished from the sharecropper. As Robert P. Brooks states, "The share-tenant is in reality a day laborer. Instead of receiving weekly or monthly wages he is paid a share of the crop raised on the tract of land for which he is responsible." (*The Agrarian Revolution in Georgia, 1865-1912*, pp. 65-66).

The renter most closely approaches the typical tenant of more developed capitalist areas. The landlord supplies the renter with house, land and fuel for which he is paid a fixed rental in either cash or its equal in crops. The renter furnishes all the means of production. When the renter is a small farmer, his work is often supervised by the landlord, who is interested in the crop for the rent and in many cases for advances of food and other necessities.

Differences Between North and South

In the North, the rapid increase in tenancy since 1900 is an index of impoverishment, brought on by foreclosure, which deprives the farmer of his land, buildings and other capital. It is only as a much poorer capitalist that the dispossessed tenant can rent land, if at all, and continue farming. The complete expropriation of land, buildings, livestock, machinery and other capital since 1929, is reflected in the growth of an army of farm laborers rather than in the growth of tenancy itself. These laborers cannot even become small tenant farmers.

In the South the general basis of tenancy was the large plantations that continued to exist after the abolition of chattel slavery, while in the North tenancy was rather the result of the expropriation of landowning farmers brought about by finance-capital on the basis of capitalist relations of production. The same type of expropriation takes place in the South as in the North, but it does not constitute the main basis for the perpetuation of tenancy.

There is another important difference between the types of tenancy in the North and in the South. In the third volume of *Capital*, Marx points out that the progressive characteristics of the capitalist mode of production in agriculture are, on the one hand, the rationalization of agriculture which makes it capable of operation on a social scale, and, on the other hand, in the development of capitalist tenants. While capitalist tenancy has an adverse effect upon the advance of agriculture insofar as the tenants on the land hesitate to invest in improvements and many times permit the land to deteriorate, the development of capitalist tenancy does have progressive features. In contrast to pre-capitalist forms of agriculture it separates landownership from the relationship of master and slave, for the landowner or his agent is not, as under feudalism or slavery, the direct overlord of the tillers of the soil.

Capitalist tenancy "separates land as an instrument of production from property in land and landowners, for whom it represents merely a certain tribute in money, which he collects by force of his monopoly from the industrial

capitalist, the capitalist farmer." Land thus assumes the character of an instrument of production and is separated from private monopoly over a parcel of land, which enables its owner to appropriate a part of the surplus value in the form of rent. Marx points out that capitalist production brought this about "by first completely pauperizing the direct producers" (*Capital*, vol. III, pp. 723-724). Capitalist tenancy, by making the landlord merely a rent collector, an expropriator of surplus value, and by depriving the actual farmer of landownership, prepares the road for the socialist revolution, which will abolish private property in land and make possible planned operation of agriculture.

Tenancy in the South does not exhibit any of the progressive characteristics of capitalist tenancy. Instead of separating on a broad scale landownership from the relationships of master and slave, it prolonged and strengthened such relationships, thus maintaining important survivals of chattel slavery in a highly developed capitalist country.

Neither was there a separation of land as an instrument of production from private property in land, despite the intervention of rent in kind, which does not draw any sharp line of distinction between the relations of production and landownership. The landlord in the South maintains a direct supervision over production.

The tenant system in the South, while possessing none of the progressive features of capitalist tenancy, partakes of its worst evils. Tenancy hinders the rational development of agriculture by deterring the tenant from investing in improvements on the land, since they would only add to the capital of the landowner.

The failure to make improvements and the concentration of production upon a single crop, which does not permit the tenant to rest his land and rotate his crops, results in the deterioration of the land. The Soil Erosion Survey of seven Southeastern states found 10,900,000 acres practically destroyed for further cultivation and 11,000,000 more acres rapidly approaching the same condition. There are about half-a-million families living on such land.

The dominance of semi-feudal types of labor relationships in the South has not excluded the penetration of capitalist relations of production. Wage-labor and machinery are the best indices of capitalist relationships in Southern agriculture.

Wage-Labor

Along with an increasing penetration of capitalism into the agrarian economy of the Black Belt, there has been an increasing number of Negro farm wage-workers. Many plantations and some large tenant farms employ wage-labor exclusively and an even larger number employ wage-labor occasionally.

A part of the plantation is set aside by the operator for cultivation by wage-labor. The labor for working the landlord farm is supplied in part by wage-labor and in part by the tenants under forced labor conditions. The large plantation owners employ the greatest number of wage-laborers; the plantations having fifty or more tenants retained an average of 1,375 acres to be cultivated in this manner.

The typical plantation in 1934, according to Woofter, had three wage-laborer families who cultivated 45 crop acres each, eight cropper families cultivating 20 acres each,

two share-tenant families cultivating 26 acres each and one renter family cultivating 24 acres. This reflects the close relationships existing on the plantations between capitalist and semi-feudal relations of production.

Census data on the use of wage-labor are not complete, but these data give us some indication of the low stage of capitalist development in Southern agriculture. In Mississippi, a typical plantation state, half the population are Negroes. In 1929, 64.5% of the managers of plantations and farms, 27.5% of the owners and 10.4% of the tenants, employed wage-laborers. In North Dakota, a state with highly developed capitalist methods of operation in agriculture, in 1929, 77.9% of the managers, 75.8% of the owners, and 71.1% of the tenants hired wage-workers.

Sharecropping and share-tenancy are being replaced by an even more vicious system of labor exploitation. The sharecropper of yesterday is the wage-worker of today, the man who peddles his brawn and muscle for twenty-five and thirty cents a day, lucky to get one day's work a week during the winter months, and still luckier if he can collect his wage in cash rather than in corn meal or old clothes.

According to the 1930 census, there were 523,000 Negro agricultural laborers in the South. Counting the unpaid family workers they totaled over a million.

The shift from farming with sharecroppers to farming with wage-hands by many landlords, is taking place on a large scale in the Western cotton areas, in the Mississippi Delta, and in other areas.

The semi-feudal conditions in the plantation area weigh heavily upon the Negro farm workers. They get the lowest wages in the country, an average of \$180 a year per family of wage-laborers, or \$62 per capita, 17 cents a day on the plantations studied by Woofter. They labor the longest hours and are subject to strict supervision by plantation foremen. This army of Negro agricultural workers will inevitably play a leading role in the development of a revolutionary agrarian labor movement in the South.

Mechanization

The technical backwardness of agriculture in the South is a result of the plantation economy and its credit system. The average value of machinery and implements per Negro-owned farm in the South in 1930 was \$108. For farms operated by Negro tenants it was \$57.

In his study of Macon County, Georgia, a typical cotton plantation county, Charles S. Johnson found that out of 612 Negro farm families there were 289 who owned not a single farming implement and were using the same methods of cultivation as under slavery (*Shadow of the Plantation*, p. 119).

Only 23% of the owners and managers and 6.8% of the tenants in Mississippi reported expenditures for implements and machinery in 1929. In North Dakota, a typical Northern agricultural state, 54.8% of the owners and 49.5% of the tenants reported expenditures for farm machinery the same year.

In the Eastern section of the cotton belt 80% of the farmers still used half-row cultivators in 1936. Fewer than 10% of the farmers in this area switched to the use of one-row or larger cultivators in the period from 1909-1936. In the Mississippi Delta, an area where nearly all land is

in cotton plantations, only 9% of the farmers used half-row equipment. In the cotton area west of the Mississippi River most of the implements are two-row or larger. There is a definite tendency toward the use of tractors on the Mississippi Delta and Texas cotton plantations. The number of farmers using tractors increased from 5% in 1919 to 45% in 1936 in two Mississippi Delta counties, and from 1% to 41% for the same period in two Texas counties. This compares to an increase from 1% to 3% in seven selected counties in the Eastern areas.

"There is impending a violent revolution in cotton production as a result of the development of the mechanical cotton picker" (Johnson, Embree, Alexander, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*, p. 44). This is an event that has been awaited in the Cotton Kingdom with much more eagerness than the development of the cotton gin in the last century. When it is perfected, hundreds of thousands of sharecroppers, tenants and wage-laborers in the cotton belt will be automatically eliminated from production. Already a large number of sharecroppers and tenants have been displaced, especially in the Mississippi Delta and Western cotton areas, by the increased use of machinery in the pre-picking operations in the cultivation of cotton. This tendency is spreading eastward in spite of a persistence of the old methods in the old cotton areas.

The survivals of slavery have impeded the introduction of machinery. With the cheapest labor supply in the country on hand, the landlord is not likely to make investments in machinery, especially when his profits have been cut by a contracting market. Only the large plantation owners are able to purchase new machinery. By so doing, they accentuate the crisis in cotton production by piling up surpluses and thus hasten the expropriation of the small producers and displacement of the tenants and sharecroppers.

New machinery under present conditions will not abolish the semi-feudal plantation system. The increased use of machinery, especially on the Western plains, can result only in a greater exploitation of the tenants, sharecroppers and wage-laborers in the older plantation areas of the East. The increase in the use of machinery will promote the maturing of the conditions and forces that will eventually abolish "ten acres, a nigger and a mule." Machine production can only accentuate this process, not substitute for it.

Negro Landownership

The extent of landownership among Negro farmers is a measure of the extent that freedom has been obtained from plantation bondage. According to Booker T. Washington and other bourgeois leaders, salvation for the ex-slaves would come under the capitalist system by the growth of a large Negro landowning class, which could serve as the basis for the growth of a Negro bourgeoisie. But capitalism has proved to be just as brutal in retarding the development of the Negro landowner and in expropriating him as it has been in the case of the small Negro businessman.

Such land as the Negro had been able to get has been to some extent expropriated in recent years. Landownership by Negroes reached its peak in 1910, when there were 218,972 Negro owners and part-owners with a total acreage of 12,847,348. But by 1930 the number of owners had fallen by 16.5% and the acreage by 14.5%. Most of this loss took

place in the second decade; between 1920 and 1930 Southern Negroes lost 19.7% of their total acreage. Although there was an increase of about 2% in the number of Negro landowners from 1930 to 1935, during the same period the total acreage declined by about 5%. More and more, the tendency is to displace the Negro landowner.

And while the total acreage held by Negro farmers as a group has been steadily decreasing, the acreage held by any one Negro farmer, never large, has also decreased. In 1935 the colored farm owner in the South owned an average of 56.6 acres, compared to 63.1 acres in 1930. The average acreage per white Southern owner was 144.8 in 1935, substantially the same as in 1930. Many Negroes have farms even smaller than the average; 55% have farms of less than 50 acres, and 22% of less than 20 acres. Only 5% owned between 175 and 499 acres and only 9.7% 500 acres or more; that is to say, only 14.7% can be said to hold even a small plantation. Hardly a larger percentage have middle-size holdings. Most Negroes have small farms, and many have only minute farmlets.

The average value of Negro-owned farms decreased even faster than the acreage. In 1920 it was \$2,459; by 1930 it fell by 17.5% and by 1935 by an additional 25%, to \$1,133. In 1930 the average value of implements and machinery per Negro-owned farm in the South was only \$106. The acreage per farm of the average Negro owner was less than half, his value of land and building about one-fourth, and his value of implements about one-third of that of the average white landowner in the South.

Generally the size of a farm is not decisive in determining the economic status of a farmer. A truck farmer often is able to conduct a reasonably profitable enterprise on a small holding. But the fact that Southern farmers generally have a less diversified crop than the ordinary truck farm tends to make a small farm more of a disadvantage. Moreover, to be profitable a small farm has to be intensively cultivated, and this takes machinery and fertilizer, neither of which the Negro farmer can afford. In addition, the land held by Negroes is in general the marginal land. Just as in cities there are neighborhoods from which Negroes are excluded, so there are rural areas where it is practically impossible for a Negro to purchase land. The Negro farmer, in general, is to be found in outlying sections, on back roads, and on the poorest land.

Ladder or Treadmill

The theory held by certain bourgeois economists that sharecropping and tenancy are progressive steps by which the farmer rises to ownership rather than a status into which they fall, has been proven false by the increase of tenancy in every sphere. Although the number of young farmers has decreased, the proportion of those who are tenants has increased steadily. There has been a general increase in the number of tenants over fifty-five years of age. "Many of these people," writes Secretary Wallace, "have struggled for years, and yet in their old age have no home and no more security than when they started." Harold Hoffsommer in his study "The AAA and the Cropper" (*Social Forces*, May 1935) states, "In Alabama . . . of those who started farming as sharecroppers, nearly one-fourth still remain such. Less than one-tenth have become

owners." The agricultural ladder for thousands has become a treadmill.

The majority of Negro tenants and landowners can be classed as in the lower stratum of the rural petty-bourgeoisie. The croppers and most of the share-tenants, are petty-bourgeois only by aspiration. They hope to obtain land, a hope that has small chance of being realized under present conditions. This hope, however, is nonetheless a powerful lever for propelling the rural masses on to the path of revolutionary action.

Concentration of Landownership

The pre-Civil War plantations have persisted as a unit to a large extent. Some acreages have, it is true, been broken up into smaller plantations and into small farms. But large-scale operations are the general rule in the area that was characterized by plantations in 1860.

The 1910 plantation census, the only one to survey plantations, covered 325 counties in eleven cotton belt states. In most of the counties, Negroes constituted at least half of the total population. On the 39,073 plantations of five or more tenant farms, there was a total of 398,905 tenants or an average of 10 tenants for each plantation.

The large increase in the number of farms in the South and the decrease in the size of average holdings, do not reflect a breaking up of the plantation, but the division of the plantation tracts into tenant holdings.

In the 325 counties, 37.1% of the total number of farms were in plantations, 31.5% of the total farm acreage was in plantations, and 32.8% of the total value of land and buildings was on the plantations.

Plantations constitute only 3.3% of all farms in the plantation area but account for approximately one-third of the total farm acreage and value of land and buildings.

Today, in the Yazoo Delta, the most fertile area of the lower Mississippi Valley, 70% of all improved land is in cotton, 85% of the farm land is in plantations and 86% of the farms are operated by Negroes.

In 1910, 8.6% of the total number of plantations contained 28% of all tenant farms in plantations, 23% of all land in plantations, and accounted for 25% of the total value of all lands and buildings on plantations. Thus we see that approximately one-fourth of the plantation economy is concentrated in the hands of one-twelfth of the owners of plantations.

In 1934, 55.7% of all land in 20 Georgia plantation counties was in tracts of 260 acres or more. Such tracts were 16% of the total number of farms. There was an increase in plantations in the Atlantic Coast region and almost no reduction in the number of large plantations in the Black Belt. There was a rapid increase in the number of small holdings, indicating that a number of small farms were carved from large tracts without reducing the parent tracts below plantation size.

Many landlords hold non-contiguous tracts of land, another indication of concentration of ownership. Woolfer found that on the plantations he surveyed, 39% of the landlords owned an average of 2.9 additional farms, ownership of more than one non-contiguous tract being a common practice among large operators. With this group of

large tenant-operated holdings, plantation farming partakes of the character of big business.

Absentee ownership is extensive in many sections of the South. Widows, heirs, bankers, lawyers, merchants and corporations become owners of plantations, through inheritance, foreclosure and speculative purchase. Overseers are hired to supervise these plantations. Many landlords devote only a part of their time to their plantations. A landowner, having another occupation, is most often a merchant. Many landlords further concentrated their operations by renting additional land. On the plantations investigated by Woolfer the acreage was distributed as follows: owned, 86%; additional rented, 14%.

Since 1929, large banks, mortgage and insurance companies have taken over large acreages through the plantation area. "It is estimated that areas amounting to 30% of the cotton lands of various states are owned by insurance companies and banks." (Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*, p. 33.)

It is apparent that since about 1880 there has been a progressive concentration of the better land of the South into large plantations under central control. Owners of plantations of the size surveyed do not constitute a majority of landowners in the South; but through their control over large acreages of the best land and of large numbers of tenant and laborer families, they still dominate the economic, political and cultural life. Landlord-tenant relationships on the smaller units in these areas were molded after those on the large holdings.

The Credit System

Louis XIV of France observed with a grim irony that "credit supports agriculture, as the cord supports the hanged." Cotton culture has been strangling for years under a precarious credit system. A favorable world market and the social and economic relations bound up with its production have permitted cotton economy to survive. But with the increasing competition of other growing areas in the world, and the resulting contraction of the world market, the cotton economy faces the fatal consequences of the credit system. Even under chattel slavery, the cotton economy of the South was dependent on the finance capitalist of the North for credit, a situation that kept the entire area subservient to Northern capital.

The seasonal character of agricultural loans and bank deposits, and the speculative character of cotton loans result in unbearable credit costs for the small farmers, tenants and sharecroppers. The credit merchant is an unavoidable part of such a system under a one-crop economy. Credit costs are estimated to drain off 25 to 50% of the operating capital of the small farmers.

Under this credit system there is no hope for the small farmers and tenants. "The landlord and credit merchant, instead of promoting advancement in agriculture and social development, have been financing economic stagnation and backwardness." (Johnson, Embree and Alexander, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy*, p. 27.)

The credit merchant, very often a landlord, controls all credit facilities, not only for his own tenants, but of other renters and small owners. The credit merchant's security is the entire crop, which when harvested and ginned, must

be turned over to him in payment of the debt. The merchant keeps the books and sets the interest rates. The tenant rarely gets a statement of his account and usually finds himself in debt, or just breaking even after the crop is sold. The credit system forbids questioning of accounts by either Negro or white tenants.

The per annum interest rates in three selected cotton counties in Mississippi and Texas in 1934, varied from 16.1% to 23.3%. In addition to this, credit prices which were in excess of interest rates, made the total cost to tenants for their supplies more than 50% per annum. This is typical of the whole cotton area. Under this system, tenants and sharecroppers rarely get out of debt and the small owner is in constant danger of losing his farm. The enormous increase in tenancy and sharecropping shows how extensively this is happening.

Conclusions

1. Negroes are basic to the plantation system, even though large numbers of whites are now equally exploited by its semi-feudal methods of labor.

2. The plantation system, now fused with modern capitalist methods, dominates the entire agrarian economy of the South. This economy is the main basis for the exploitation and oppression of the Negroes in America.

3. Sharecropping and share-tenancy, the main characteristics of the plantation system, are direct survivals of chattel slavery.

4. There is a large and increasing concentration of land in the hands of plantation owners, banks, insurance companies and credit corporations.

5. Since 1910, tenancy has rapidly increased, with a decrease among Negroes in the last fifteen years and a proportional increase of white tenants, indicating that Negroes are being displaced by whites and the Negroes being driven into the ranks of wage laborers or unemployment.

Since 1930, this has been the situation with white sharecroppers, as well as the Negroes.

6. Mechanization of the operations connected with the production of cotton is on the increase. Along with this there is an increase in the use of wage labor.

7. The income and living standards of the masses of tenants, sharecroppers, and wage-laborers in the South,

both Negro and white, are the lowest of any section of the population in the country.

Such is the present economic situation of the Negro worker on the land in the South.

Robert L. BIRCHMAN

OUT SOON!

Labor and the Second World War

By J. R. Johnson

Once again the holocaust has broken loose. Why did it start? Who or what started it? Is America going in? How can it be stopped? There is only one answer to all these questions, and in thirty-two closely written pages J. R. Johnson gives it. No one can miss it.

PRICE 5c PER COPY

Bundle rates—10 to 50—3c per copy; 50 or more—2½c per copy

Special Rates to Organizations

Rush your orders NOW!

Pioneer Publishers

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE NEW YORK, N. Y.

JUST OUT!

WHY NEGROES SHOULD OPPOSE THE WAR

A Message that Affects the Life of Every Negro

By J. R. JOHNSON

Price—5c per copy. Bundle rates—10 to 50—3c per copy. 50 or more—2½c per copy

SPECIAL RATES TO ORGANIZATIONS

ORDER NOW!

PIONEER PUBLISHERS

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE NEW YORK CITY

WANTED DONATIONS...

of books, pamphlets, magazines, etc., on history of the Negro; economic, political, social life of the Negro; economics and history of the South; Classics of Marxism, especially 3 vols. of *Capital*.

NATIONAL NEGRO DEPARTMENT

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

116 University Pl. New York, N. Y.

Read!

The Negro Question

Column appearing in each issue of the

SOCIALIST APPEAL

Discusses the history, politics, economic conditions, etc., of the Negroes in America, Africa and the West Indies. Gives a revolutionary socialist analyses of the problems of the Negro people.

Real news from the labor front in America and throughout the world

Regular contributors: LEON TROTSKY, FELIX MORROW, DWIGHT MACDONALD, MAX SHACHTMAN, GEORGE CLARK, J. P. CANNON

\$1 for 6 months; \$2 for one year

Add \$1 for Bronx and Manhattan postage

SOCIALIST APPEAL

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE

NEW YORK, N. Y.

RENEWALS

If the subscription number on the wrapper of the issue you have just received is

39

then your subscription *has expired*. Please *renew* your subscription at once to avoid missing any number.

16 or 32 pages? *The Answer Is Up to You!*

For the second successive time THE NEW INTERNATIONAL is published at only half its normal size. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL. Its contents have spoken for itself.

Until now, the response by our readers to our ap-

By the time the January, 1940 issue of THE NEW

peal for funds to maintain our regular 32-page magazine has not been sufficient.

The loss of circulation and revenue from abroad all too quickly had its drastic effect on THE NEW INTERNATIONAL, but it is our belief and hope that the many friends and readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL will yet rise strongly to its support. *This must now be done quickly.*

For all thinking and revolutionary-minded people in the United States and throughout the world, there is no necessity to emphasize the significance of

What Our Readers Think About the Magazine

"To THE NEW INTERNATIONAL—a buck. Long may it wave!"

—N. G., *New York City*

"I feel confident the other branches will take the sixteen pages of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL as an alarm signal and come through. We are organizing an affair for the benefit of the magazine."

—N. L., *New Haven, Conn.*

"I receive the issues of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL regularly. Every one of the issues is a source of help and inspiration. I hope and think that you in America and Europe, in which the implications of recent events will have time to have effect, and so help to give the international movement the reorientation it so direly needs."

—R., *Colombo, Ceylon*

"I was deeply shocked to see the hunger-pinched NEW INTERNATIONAL for November. Its threatened demise would be a major tragedy not only for the revolutionary and labor movements, but for intellectual fellow-travellers in the universities. It is the only magazine which gets beneath the surface, which sees order and sense,—however blood-curdling to the left that sense may be—in the seemingly chaotic jumble the world is in today. Don't let us all down by suspending publication. Enclosed you will find a check for \$4.00.

—R., *Columbia, Missouri*

INTERNATIONAL goes to press, we shall have to make a *final decision*; namely, whether to return to our regular 32-page size, or to reduce the size of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL permanently to 16 pages, a step, it goes without saying, we do not want to take. Only financial stringency can compel such a step.

Readers of THE NEW INTERNATIONAL! The answer is up to you! For a 32-page issue, send us your financial aid at once, speedily and generously!

Rush all contributions to:

THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

116 University Place

New York, N. Y.