

OUR PROBLEMS

Africa's Awakening

By *Ivon Jones.*

The negro is the greatest living accuser of capitalist civilization. The wealth of England and America is built upon his bones. The slave ships of Bristol and New York, with good Quaker prayers to speed them, founded the fortunes of many a Christian home. Every capitalist Government is drenched with the blood of the negro. British Imperialism in South Africa, the French in the Cameroons, Belgium in the Congo, and the German Empire in Damaraland,—they all constitute the blackest record in human history of mass slaughters and violation of every primitive human right, continued up to the present day. Even the liberation of the American slaves was only an incident of a civil war between two factions of property holders engaged in a quarrel over the forms of exploitation, and was not the aim of the war as is commonly supposed. And as an aftermath of that war there was created a social attitude towards the negro race which leaves the one-time chattel slaves still degraded outcasts among the peoples of the earth.

This artificially generated race animosity towards the negro pervading the whole of Anglo-Saxon society, infects also

the large working masses. The African negro is the hewer of wood and the drawer of water even for the white workers of Europe. The workers of England are trained from childhood to regard the Zulu and Matabele wars as heroic exploits, rather than foul pages in English history. Hence, the apathy and social prejudice towards the negro race, for we hate most those we have injured most. But this period is passing, just as the days of the Second International are passing. The workers of Europe are no longer sharing the profits of their masters. The Communist International has appeared, and calls into the one great proletarian family the negroes of Africa as well as the peoples of the East, along with the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist countries.

This is the first ray of hope for the negroes throughout all the centuries of their oppression. For the first time, Negro Communists appeared at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, and a resolution was passed declaring in favor of a World Congress of Negroes.

There have been World Congresses of Negroes before. But they have been composed of members of the very thin layer of Negro intelligentsia, who have placed vain hopes in professions of loyalty to their oppressors. The London Congress of 1921 greeted the recruitment of negroes into the French army as a mark of citizenship. Among the large toiling masses of negroes such a Congress passes by without notice.

There are also the Congresses held by the association headed by Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican negro who has captured the imagination of the negro masses in America and whose slogans "Back to Africa", and "Africa for the Africans" are even spreading into Africa itself. This organization is strongly flavoured with religious and racial charlatanism. The proletarian character of the negro mass is not so distinct in America as, for instance, in South Africa. In the latter country the negroes form a race of laborers, without any shopkeeping or small tenant element. Probably the small property psychology of the tenant farmers and the small trader element in America reflecting on the purely laboring negro masses, has a lot to do with what is now notoriously known as "Garveyism", a charlatan exploitation of awakening race consciousness; which, in so far as it takes anti-white forms, is secretly encouraged by the Capitalist class both in America and in South Africa. The number of Negro farmers, mostly with very small holdings, according to the last American census, was 949,889 which, with their families, represents a big proportion of the negro population in America.

But awakening race consciousness in Africa tends to have a positive side among the large industrial masses, namely the outliving of old tribal sectionalism. What the South African bourgeois calls a native boogian is one who, having worked some time in the towns, no longer recognizes the authority of his tribal chief. Race consciousness, in the case of the Negro in Africa, is a step towards class consciousness, because his race is a race of laborers. The coming World Congress will have to decide the question, how far the movement towards race consciousness can be directed into proletarian forms.

The foremost leader of the negro intelligentsia in America, Burghardt du Bois, a graduate of Harvard, stands apart from the Marcus Garvey organization. He is an author of several books of high literary merit, in which appears a glimmering apprehension of the truth that negro emancipation can only come through proletarian emancipation. But in action, the negro intelligentsia, including du Bois, pin their faith to mixed associations of negroes and white philanthropists. Their eagerness for immediate social contact on equal terms with white intelligentsia, cannot stand the long strain of waiting for proletarian emancipation. But the organization of negro Communists, known as the African Blood Brotherhood, has achieved considerable progress. Undoubtedly, America will supply the leaders of negro emancipation.

But negro emancipation is not an American question; it is a question of Africa, as our American comrades themselves have declared. Who is to get this great Africa, the capitalist class or the Comintern? And when is the European proletariat going to stretch out the hand of brotherhood to the masses of Africa, and wipe out centuries of capitalist wrong? The status of the American negro can not be raised without the awakening of Africa. But it is no less true that the European proletariat can not obtain a real link with Africa except through the more advanced negroes of America.

To the South African negro, every white man is an oppressor, a master, a "boss". Even the oppressed among the whites appears to the black the most violent-cursing of the negro. And therefore it is no wonder that news of class emancipation in Europe must appear to him a purely domestic affair of the whites. A few young industrial workers are beginning to hear news of the Communist Party and of its actions on behalf of the blacks,

and these are beginning to spread the idea. They see Communists jailed for declaring the solidarity of black and white workers. But a more imposing gesture is needed to convince the negro masses that a new dawn is breaking, that "white man" and "oppressor" are not one and the same thing, that there is an army of liberation coming to aid him, the revolutionary proletariat. Time is pressing, the negro armies of Imperialism are already on the Rhine. Only the Communist International can reconcile the negro and the white races, and only through proletarian solidarity can this reconciliation be achieved.

The Fourth Congress appointed a Committee to draw up the plans for a World Negro Congress. It is to be hoped that this Committee will report to the forthcoming Enlarged Executive, and that the delegates will be equipped with definite ideas on the subject. The Congress will undoubtedly be a proletarian Congress, but the extent to which non-proletarian representatives will be invited will also be a matter for the Enlarged Executive to decide.

The foregoing notes are written as part of the Committee's publicity campaign; the Committee hopes that the Party organs in Britain, America, Belgium etc. will devote special attention to the negro question and to the preliminary work necessary for the calling of a World Negro Congress under the banner of the Comintern.

E. C. C. I.

First Session of the Enlarged Executive

Moscow, June 11. The first session of the Enlarged Presidium of the Executive of the Communist International was held on Sunday June 10, in the Red Hall of the Comintern in the Mochovaya. Comrade Zinoviev was in the chair and there were present, in addition to Comrade Bucharin and the members of the Presidium, one member from each of the Delegations.

From the report of the Secretariat it appears that all the sections of the Comintern have sent strong delegations to the Enlarged Executive and that with one or two exceptions (Australia and South Africa) all the delegates have arrived in Moscow.

It was decided that the Enlarged Executive should commence its sittings on June 12, at 6 p.m. with the report of Comrade Zinoviev.

A lively discussion arose during the consideration of the detailed points of the agenda, in which practically all the delegates took part, and many proposals were made. The agenda decided on was agreed to unanimously. In addition to the points of the agenda already published it was decided to include the date of the next World Congress and the present situation in Russia.

The following is the agenda adopted by the Presidium:

1. a) Report of the Presidium.
- b) Practical measures for continuing the campaign for the United Front.
- c) Fusion of the Second and Two and a Half Internationals. Speaker: Comrade Zinoviev.
2. The World Political Situation. Speaker: Comrade Radek.
3. Fight against Fascism. Speaker: Comrade Clara Zetkin.
4. Trade Union and Factory Councils. Speakers: Lozovsky and a representative of the German Delegation.
5. The Limits of Centralism in the Comintern (Discussion with the Scandinavian comrades). Speaker: Comrade Bucharin.
6. The Labor Movement in England.
7. Preparatory work for the drawing up of a Program of the Communist International. Speaker: Comrade Bucharin.
8. The Problems of Sections.
9. Date of the next World Congress and the Congresses of the Individual Sections.
10. Report on the Situation in Russia.
11. Other business.

It was decided to set up a number of Commissions, their size varying with the importance of the question to be considered. The Political Commission which will be set up to discuss the first point on the Agenda, will consist of 21 members, and the remaining Commissions from 9 to 15 members.

At the end of the meeting, Comrade Zinoviev invited the delegates to attend the deliberations of the Council of Leading Representatives dealing with the national question in the Federated Soviet Republics, since the national question was an important problem in practically every Section.

Comrade Zinoviev closed the sitting at 1 a.m.