

The Socialist Party Denies Existence of the Black Belt

By Their Words and Deeds the S. P. Misleaders Uphold Oppression of the Negro People

By JAMES S. ALLEN

I.

THE Scottsboro Case, the unemployed struggles, the fight of the Camp Hill croppers, and other struggles, have laid bare the sharp class lines among the Negro people, and on the other hand showed where the various announced "friends" of the Negroes stood in relation to Negro liberation.

Previously the Socialist Party had contented itself simply with a theoretical denial of the existence of a Negro question as such. But this policy of simply accepting the conditions of double exploitation and oppression of the Negro people in action could no longer suffice in the face of growing struggles and radicalization. The clear formulation of the Communist position on the Negro question, the leading of the whole struggle for Negro liberation into consistent and effective revolutionary channels, forced the "Socialists," whose whole aim is "to avert revolution" (Norman Thomas), into a direct attack upon the Communists and, with that, upon the liberation struggle itself.

DENY EXISTENCE OF BLACK BELT

When the Communist Party, during the election campaign popularized its program and gave it content in reality by nominating James W. Ford, a Negro worker and Communist leader, for Vice-President, the "socialist" leaders knew no bounds in their denunciation of the Communists. Being the most sensitive advance agents of the capitalists, they were the first to realize the danger of the program to capitalism.

The "socialists" concentrate their whole attack upon the demand for the right of self-determination. Morris Hillquit and Norman Thomas, the "right" and "left" of the S. P., do not recognize such a right for the Negro people. This is consistent with the policy of the Second ("Socialist") International, which also does not recognize the right of colonial peoples and oppressed nations to complete independence. But to cover up their outright denial of the principle of self-determination, the S.P. leaders deny that such a right can even be claimed by the Negro people, because, they say, the Negroes do not have a territory on which this right can be exercised. They deny the existence of the Black Belt, as a continuous stretch of territory on which the Negroes constitute the majority. Norman Thomas finds

aid, money, houses, to the unemployed.

They are massing together now, in all towns, in front of the quiet coal tipples of the closed mines, before the gaping windows of the textile mills, whose machinery has been wantonly destroyed by the bosses, on the farms where the farmers through their sweating labor have reaped "stones," in the steel towns—sending their elected delegates into the ranks of the eight columns of the National Hunger March.

The hungry will not commit suicide, the jobless will not be overcome by "mental and nervous" illnesses. Instead, they have joined from hundreds of cities and farms to demand of the Federal government, the heart of the bosses' oppression, relief and unemployment insurance.

ON TO WASHINGTON!

In the Workers' Congress in Washington, delegates from the four corners of the country will speak for those who have elected them. On December 5, representing the millions of jobless of the country, they will demand Unemployment Relief and Unemployment Insurance.

The futile apologists for death, disease and starvation, on December 5, will find they cannot quiet the unemployed. Their roaring demands cannot be quieted until the bosses' government will be compelled to give immediate unemployment relief and unemployment insurance.

On to the Hunger March to Washington!

that according to census figures only one state, Mississippi, has a clear majority of Negroes, and like an ignorant—or shall we say forgetful?—schoolboy, asks where "the autonomous Negro republics" are to be.

WE ARE "DUBIOUS MATHEMATICIANS"

The official organ of the S. P., the "New Leader," of Nov. 5, 1932, in what pretends to be "only a small section of a more detailed study," presents a map and an imposing array of figures which are supposed to prove that the "Communist plank of 'self-determination of the Black Belt' . . . is both mathematically dubious and inept and historically misleading in the face of the great Negro migrations going on at the present time."

The author of this "highly scholarly article," who cannot even avoid mistakes in simple addition, accuses the Communists of "convenient mathematical reckoning" to "conjure up for themselves a 'continuous Black Belt.'" He finds that the accepted principle of classification whereby a county having a Negro population of 49.6 per cent is classed with the majority Negro counties, when used by the Communists "casts light upon the honesty of their 'scholarship.'"

LIKE typical petty-bourgeois politicians who stoop to slander when they are unable to meet the arguments of their opponents, the "New Leader" is reduced to practice mathematical magic under the cloak of scholarship, in order to deny the existence of the continuous Black Belt. They can do it in no other way.

To prove his point, the "socialist scholar" adduces three arguments: (1) Only in Mississippi are the Negroes in a majority, and only a tiny one at that; (2) there has been a great northward migration of Negroes since the war, which, if I may conclude his argument, is reducing the Negro majority in the Black Belt; (3) figures are marshalled in an attempt to show that there is no continuous stretch of territory with a Negro majority.

NEGRO MIGRATIONS

To take his second argument first: During the World War and up to 1922 there were mass migrations of Negroes from the Southern plantations to industrial centers both in the North and South. The number of Negroes migrating to the North during this period is variously estimated (there are no exact figures) at from 500,000 to 1,000,000. This was a movement of tremendous significance to the Negro people and to the working class as a whole. For, during the brief period of a few years, it turned hundreds of thousands of Negro peasants into industrial workers and strengthened the decisive class in the struggle for Negro liberation. At the same time it increased the northern market of the Negro bourgeoisie, broadened its base, and thus initiated a strong bourgeois nationalist current among the Negroes. The Northern Negroes were subjected to fiercer oppression as a national minority by the ruling class. At the same time, the drawing of Negro and white workers into the same industries in the North created the basis for the growing class solidarity we are experiencing today.

AT THE time of these migrations the argument was rife that the Negro population would be diffused

NEW HOMES IN MOSCOW

The Moscow House Building Trust this year completed 17 five-story houses of 60 apartments each for the Moscow Soviet, two for the Ball-bearing plant, and one for a building cooperative, an aggregate of 1,300 apartments. In addition, three school buildings and four medical clinics were finished. Eleven more houses are nearing completion, some of them extensions of older structures. Next year's program calls for 55 houses, 20 for the Moscow Soviet. Construction work, under new arrangements, continues all the year round.

over the whole country, that the Black Belt with its serious threat at capitalism because of the specially oppressed condition of its concentrated Negro majority would dissolve of itself. This argument, together with the contention that industrialization in the Black Belt itself would turn the Negro peasantry into a working class and thus remove the objective condition for a national revolutionary struggle in the Black Belt, is also used by the Lovestonites, renegades from Communism, to deny the demand for the right of self-determination.

MIGRATIONS STRENGTHEN LIBERATION STRUGGLE

But the mass migrations to the North did not cut very deeply into the Negro majority in the Black Belt. While the Negroes were escaping in such large numbers from peonage and unbearable conditions on the cotton plantations, large numbers of "poor whites" were also migrating into industry both in the North and South. Moreover, the number of Negroes going North was almost equalled by the Negroes leaving the plantations for industry on the border of the Black Belt, the latter phase of the migration being a much older movement. In accordance with their policy of forcibly retarding the economic growth of a subject people, the Yankee imperialists had constructed their main heavy industrial sections (with the exception of the textile industry, from which Negroes are almost entirely excluded) not in the Black Belt proper, which was forced to continue to serve its main function of supplying cheap cotton, but outside of the Black Belt.

This inner-southern migration of the Negroes, far from removing the conditions and necessity for a revolutionary emancipation struggle, strengthened that struggle and its potential leaders. For these Negro workers, with one foot still in the soil, were increasing the Negro working class in the South and coming face to face with the Southern white workers in industry, who, no matter how much imbued with white chauvinism, are bound to forge and are forging bonds of solidarity with the Negroes in the struggle against capitalism. The struggle for liberation thus entered with greater force into southern industry, broadening the field of that struggle and merging with the whole struggle against capitalism.

As a result of these developments the population figures have changed very little in the Black Belt since 1910. Over a period of 20 years the total population in the Black Belt proper increased by only 1,000,000, while the Negro population remained at the same figure.

THE "SCHOLAR" MAKES A DISCOVERY

From 1922 on, Negro migration to the North diminished. Today there is a reverse movement among the Negroes, part of the general and yet incipient trend back to farms, under the influence of the deep crisis and widespread unemployment. Government statistics for 1930 and 1931 show that there is more migration from the cities to the farms than from the farms to the cities.

To return to our "New Leader" "scholar," may we not wonder by what inhuman efforts of scholarship he has been able to discover "great Negro migration (to the north—J. A.) going on the present time"?

THE "Socialists," of course, are but too glad to grasp at the picture of a dissolving Black Belt. It is a part of their general concept—or wish—that all the difficulties of capitalism, all its contradictions, will be removed in a peaceful, harmless and painless manner. But the Black Belt remains, in spite of migrations beginning even in 1876, as a thorny problem in the heart of capitalism and as an arena on which a revolutionary struggle of inestimable aid and value to the whole struggle of the proletariat, is maturing.