

The Self-Determination Slogan

by Herbert Zam

There can be no doubt that the Negroes, and particularly the Negro workers and farmers, are suffering more from the economic crisis than any other section of the population. As the "first to be fired", they have been suffering longer from unemployment. They have smaller reserves, less credit and no assistance. They are discriminated against in the administration of relief of all kinds, from open charity to the "work relief" bureaus. In the South, the Negro farmers are rapidly losing their parcels of land and other meager possessions to the banks, landlords and loan sharks. The Negroes are therefore the nearest to desperation. Large masses of them are in fermentation. They are beginning to doubt the wisdom of a social system which brings about such results and adds them to the burdens of racial oppression of all kinds. Many of them are thinking and talking about Communism who a little while ago were totally unfamiliar with even the word. At no time has there been a better opportunity for the Communist Party to come out as the champion of the rights of the Negroes, as the fighter for complete racial and social equality of the oppressed Negroes. With a correct program and proper activity, thousands of the best elements could be won to the cause of Communism. But the picture is quite different. It is true that the Party is paying more attention than ever before to and is more active in Negro questions but the results obtained are amazingly meager. What is the cause of this serious failure in this important field of work?

The Source of the Failure

At the root of the failure lies the ultra-left outlook and ultra-left program, at the head of which stands the ridiculous slogan of "self-determination". In spite of all the energy which has gone into the attempt to popularize this slogan, it has failed utterly to take root, not only among broad masses of Negroes but even among the Negro Communists. Not a single important Negro organization has adopted it, not a single prominent Negro has championed it outside of the ranks of the Communists. If the situation among the Negroes were such as to require such a slogan, surely we would expect the petty bourgeois Negro organizations and leaders to be rather quick in making it their own, as is the case with all national minority movements. But just as the Party and the Comintern refused to take into account the failure of the seventy years of Negro development since the Civil War to produce either the slogan or a movement for self-determination when adopting this slogan, so they refuse to acknowledge the failure of the slogan to take root and therefore the necessity for its abandonment. On the contrary, the Party leadership already sees visions of Negro revolts for "national liberation". In the resolution of the Central Committee we find that the "increase in the national oppression of the Negroes and the steady worsening of their conditions, is already raising as an early perspective the development of mass liberation struggles of the Negro toilers, especially in the South . . ." Of course, the contradiction here can be overlooked. The self determination slogan is supposed to apply to the South only and here we find the national liberation struggles "developing" also in other parts of the country.

How To Forget The Slogan?

It is true that the Central Committee would probably like to forget this slogan, but how to do it gracefully? In the same resolution, when the concrete tasks are listed, we find first a correct list of demands and issues ending with the demand for equal rights, and then, in parenthesis, obviously as an afterthought and to be "kosher", self-determination in the South is added. (The actual demand reads: "State unity of the Black Belt and the right of self-determination." Is this "state unity" to be introduced before the achievement of "self-determination"? If so, it is obviously a contradiction. If it is synonymous with self-determination, it is not only unnecessary but confusing.)

The Party Negro Organization

The same narrow outlook characterizes the decisions regarding the forms and functions of the Negro organizations (L.S.N.R. Liberator, etc.) What is the resolution interested in? The development of these organizations on the broadest possible basis? Nothing of the sort! The resolutions occupies itself mainly with working out limitations for these organizations. The worn-out, sectarian bogey of "competing with the Party" is revived and belabored. To see this as a danger at a time when the organizations are barely born is, of course, nothing but the worst sort of sectarianism. Consequently, these organizations are limited to the role of "assisting the Party" in one form or another. Is the L.S.N.R. to be developed into a broad mass organization leading the Negroes in the struggle for their rights, as the name implies, making a broader appeal than that of the Party directly? Nothing of the kind, says the resolution. "In the struggle for Negro rights the L.S.N.R. . . . must become an auxiliary mass organization . . . having the task of aiding the Party in rally-

ing the white and Negro workers. . . ." If other groups are formed, the same applies to them. Groups formed to support the Liberator should "aid the Party in rallying the workers, white and colored . . ." Should we try to build the L.S.N.R. into a mass organization by recruiting Negroes on a mass scale? Oh, no! "In recruiting activities, the principal emphasis should be placed on drawing the Negro workers into the revolutionary T.U.U.L. unions and the Party . . ." What sort of a future can one expect for organizations which are thrust into the struggle tied hand and foot in this manner?

Relations to Other Negro Organizations

What about relations with other Negro organizations and work inside of them? The Party feels satisfied when it has made a general statement of how the "reformists" are tools of the white imperialists. But that will not bring the Negroes to the Party. It is necessary that the Party go to these organizations, which have masses in them, which have influence over

the masses, and bring these masses to the Party by the correct application of united front tactics, by proper work in these organizations, by doing everything possible to win the best elements, if not the organizations as a whole to Communism. But the Party has closed all avenues to these organizations and to their masses by the smug, self-satisfied theory of "social-fascism". These avenues must be reopened.

The Negro question is, and will continue to be for a long time to come, one of the most basic and important problems confronting the American Communists. The problem can be solved in the interests of Communism only thru constant study, analysis and discussion, thru constant examination of experiences, thru thoro and honest correction of errors. But if conditions are created whereby analysis, discussion, proposals, are all subordinated to a few inflexible and untouchable dogmas, then the favorable solution of this problem will be long delayed.

Science And Religion Under Capitalism

GOD IN THE TEST-TUBE

by Bertram D. Wolfe

(Continued from the last issue)

The Case of Albert Einstein

A word should be said here about the special case of Albert Einstein. He alone of the many contributors is virtually devoid of theological refuse. He once told an inquiring reporter: "I believe in the God of Spinoza, which God, as Hobbes long ago discovered, is no God at all."

"He who calls the world God," wrote Hobbes of Spinoza, "asserts thereby that the world has no cause or, in other words, that there is no God. In the same way he also denies the existence of God, who does not regard the world as created but as existing eternally, for the eternal can have no cause."

"I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes," writes Einstein. "Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body."

Yet he cannot bring himself to part with the word "religion" after he has emptied it of all meaning. So, at last, he erects for himself a fetish to worship: "To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge this feeling is at the center of true religiousness."

Knowledge of the impenetrability of the universe and our own dull faculties—the emotional reflex of our ignorance and dullness—a truly noble fetish! Nor is this noble worship of ignorance and dullness for everybody. "The common herd," writes the democratic Einstein, "remains dull in thought and insensible in feelings . . . The only deeply religious people of our largely materialistic age are the earnest men of research."

This great thinker "may be after all, a simple soul," writes Dr. Cotton and after reading his opinions outside of his field—on Zionism, on pacifism, democracy and on cosmic religion—we must admit that very likely Dr. Cotton is correct.

A Ghost That Knows His Einstein

Einstein has thus prepared a nest for religious cuckoos to lay their eggs in. And they lay eggs aplenty, and befoul the nest as well. Cotton fathers on Einstein a relativistic God. J. Malcolm Bird, "psychic research expert", tells a learned laboratory tale about a medium who was addressed by a spirit, mistook it for her father when it was her father-in-law, learned that in life the ghost had had a little goatee, learned that she had been seen by the spirit the night before washing lingerie in her bathroom (how could the spirit possibly find that out!) And finally J. Malcolm Bird discovers that "the communicator (i.e. the ghost) was alive at the time"! Does that phase J. Malcolm? Not a bit! Has he not studied Einstein? "The relativistic philosophy presents time in a new light and pictures the future as having a real existence in some part co-extensive with the present." So, of course a man's ghost can be in the spirit world before the man is dead. And in place of the medium being exposed as a cheap faker, she is revealed as a modern scientific marvel, communicating with relativistic ghosts who know that they can be the ghosts of dead men long before the men die, for has not Einstein made the future present? No doubt, in the spirit world there are only twelve ghosts that really know their Einstein. But twelve really active ghosts are enough!

A Shameful Capitulation

The most alarming thing about this symposium is not the gibberish about near-sighted Gods to whom man was an afterthought, mathematician-Gods, Gods that are personal since they

created personalities (why not parasitical because they created parasites), divine measuring rods, quantum-Gods and relativity-Gods, Gods of cosmic power and cosmic law and order, Gods who are "more dependable" because they obey the law, Gods that reward and punish, Gods that work if you try them out and Gods in whom it pays to believe, electronic Gods, Gods at the hind end of telescopes, Gods at the bottom of test tubes, cosmic energy-Gods, theorem-Gods, fugue-Gods, poem-Gods, sunset-Gods, and the whole Walpurgis-night rout of surviving personalities, table-rappers, furniture-movers, magic makers, bell-ringers, hobgoblins and ghosts.

The alarming thing is the spectacle of the capitulation before religion on the part of a number of men professing to be scientists, a capitulation in the name of science before the assembled forces of unreason, anti-science and obscurantism. The bloody pages of the record of the persecution of knowledge by obscurantism, of science by defied ignorance, are to become white as snow. "Religion," we are now to believe, "is the parent of research." We are to rivet on again the shackles of ignorance which were one by one struck off from the spirit of man, the investigator and increasingly the master of his surroundings. We are to believe again "that the mind of man is incapable of grappling with reality in any truly scientific way" (Mather), that ignorance and impotence are a source of wonder and joy (Millikan), that while "religion can never become a science . . . science can become a religion and seems on the verge of doing so" We are to agree that science is nowhere and never to concern itself "with values, with right and wrong, with better and worse," with how man should live his life, with social organization, but should limit itself to the study of the sub-human, sub-living physical chemical world. We are to dilute organized knowledge with disorganizing hocus-pocus and recognize that "the speculations of religionists and philosophers regarding a First Cause are a form of science" that "in the final analysis and scientific theory (like any religious dogma) is simply a belief" (Curtis).

We are to enthrone ignorance upon a golden throne and sing hosannas to it for ever and ever. "Science cannot solve the great mystery of our existence," is the burden of our hymn of praise to the degradation of the spirit of man. "Human purpose is naught and human planning less than naught." Faith alone assures us that there is definite purpose in all experience." (Thus can we exalt planlessness and give up planning, exalt exploitation and misery and give up striving to fashion a better world! Does not faith tell us that there is a divine and inscrutable purpose in all things evil, in all things as they are?) "This knowledge makes life as it is

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THE stock market declines this week have wiped out most of the January gains. Stocks trading is now lowest in six months. Steel production continues to stay at a very low ebb despite the slight increase in operations this month.

The Reconstruction Corporation Act's failure to stimulate sentiment, the unexpected protracted railway wage-cut negotiations, the resumption of the trend towards heavy gold losses, and the unfavorable dividend actions by the U. S. Steel