

# *Fourth International*

## ***Marxism and the Negro***

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**Equality Under the Welfare State**

**NAACP at the Crossroads**

**Role of the CIO Unions**

**Stalinism and Negro Intellectuals**

**W. E. B. Du Bois and His Work**

***Negro Liberation Through Socialism***

## Manager's Column

If this is the first copy of **Fourth International** you've ever read, we'd like to tell you something about our aims and policy.

This issue is a special one, devoted entirely to the struggle of the Negro people for full equality. It is one of a series dealing with crucial economic, social and political problems facing the American people.

Our August issue, featuring "The American Empire," assessed Wall Street's drive for world domination and the resistance it is generating at home and abroad. A previous issue, "Political Trends in the U. S.," brought the Marxist view of the American political scene up to date. Future issues will single out other subjects of similar general interest for special attention.

**Fourth International** is the only genuine Marxist magazine in the United States. It defends Marxism against the publicists of capitalism and the propagandists of the counter-revolutionary Stalinist regime in the USSR. It is the American voice of Trotskyism, that international revolutionary socialist movement which carries on the tradition of Marx, Engels and Lenin and which in other countries is organized in the **Fourth International**, the **World Party of Socialist Revolution**.

We believe that capitalism has reached the end of its usefulness for the great mass of working people and that it must be replaced by the modern economic system of socialism. Capitalism, in our opinion, offers only a grim perspective of continual depressions, new waves of fascism and more catastrophic world wars with the very real possibility in the not distant future of atomic annihilation.

As the evidence assembled in this issue of **Fourth International** demonstrates, American capitalism, the richest and most powerful on

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## CONTENTS

Equality Under the Welfare State	By The Editors	67
Stalinism and Negro Intellectuals	By Fred Hart	70
Negro Workers and the CIO . . . .	By C. Thomas	75
The NAACP at the Crossroads . .	By Jean Blake	78
W. E. B. DuBois and His Work	By William Gorman	80
Two Lessons of Reconstruction	By William F. Warde	86
Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism . . . .	SWP Resolution	90

earth, cannot even assure the Negro people the exercise of their democratic rights. Indeed, it has powered a barbarous drive against all civil liberties in America. As Big Business proceeds with its plans for domination of the world, the danger of totalitarianism in the U.S.A. grows more and more menacing.

**Fourth International** is,

consequently, a partisan magazine and has been since its inception. It stands for no compromise with the billionaire plutocrats and their retinue of racial bigots, careerists and fascist-minded reactionaries. It voices the aspirations of the overwhelming mass of humanity who want a world of enduring peace, the boundless plenty

modern industry can obviously produce and the fulfillment of the great promise of limitless progress which science holds forth.

In this ideological war, **Fourth International** performs a special function. Its principal aim is to provide the basic theory needed to solve the difficult problems facing the people in moving toward the transformation of society. From the great body of Marxist thought it presents out-of-print hitherto untranslated articles that shed a revealing light on current events. The January-February issue, for instance, carried a remarkable letter by Leon Trotsky on the peasant war in China which sounds as if it were written about the current situation although it was actually penned in 1932 by this master of the dialectics of revolutionary struggles.

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The influence of **Fourth International** extends far beyond the confines of the United States. Outside of fascist Spain and the Stalinist-dominated lands where its possession could mean the firing squad, it is read by the vanguard of informed workers in virtually every country. Here at home it enjoys a solid reputation among the politically-alert sections of the labor movement for the reliability of its articles and the accuracy of its forecasts.

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# FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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## Equality Under the Welfare State

By THE EDITORS

The latest program of salvation offered to the American people as protection against the crimes and catastrophes of modern society is the Welfare State. The 1948 elections showed that the vast majority of the nation singled out the Negro people in America as faring very ill and badly in need of welfare. But since then Congress has shown itself an unrelenting enemy of Negro rights. Now Truman's administration is preparing to go to the voters again in the 1950 elections, seeking to place the blame on the Southern bloc. But many Negroes recognize the responsibility of the administration for the fiasco on civil rights.

These events have posed the following question very sharply: If the Welfare State is the answer to the modern social crisis, what has the Welfare State to offer the American Negro?

First of all, let us note one contribution the Welfare State itself has made to Jim Crow. The Roosevelt-Truman Welfare State organized the nation in arms along Jim Crow lines. By sending this Jim Crow army to every quarter of the globe, the present Welfare State stamped American race prejudice upon the consciousness of the whole world.

Jim Crow is a burden on the U.S. itself. This is admitted in the brief submitted to the Supreme Court against Racial Covenants by Tom Clark, then Attorney-General, and Philip B. Perlman, Solicitor-General of the United States, who quoted a letter from the acting Secretary of State in 1946 to the FEPC:

We are reminded over and over again by some foreign newspapers and spokesmen that our treatment of various minorities leaves much to be desired... Frequently, we find it next to impossible to formulate a satisfactory answer to our critics in other countries.

Nevertheless, the Roosevelt-Truman Welfare State makes clear to the whole world that, whatever may be its political needs, it will preserve military Jim Crow as a permanent part of American democracy. When you take all these circumstances into consideration it becomes clear that the Roosevelt-Truman Welfare State has struck harder blows against the Negro people than any government since the Civil War.

Not only that. Today the U.S. government says that persecution of the Negro harms the country at home and abroad. Yet it continues with its criminal course. Thus what it is saying in reality is that while *the government* is willing to abolish Jim Crow, the American public will not permit it to do so. The practiced liars of the Kremlin and

the Cominform could have invented no more vicious frame-up of the people of the United States.

The Truman Welfare State and its supporters claim that the problem is so deep-rooted they have to be perfectly sure that the great mass of people is with them before they, as a Welfare State, can act. The people gave them that authority and mandate by their support of Truman's civil rights program in 1948. But, rejoins the Truman Welfare State, the state cannot act without *legislation* by Congress: that is the democratic process. And it adds, in the words of the President, "I am doing my best."

Every important member of the administration knows this is a tissue of lies. From the beginning of its politics on the Negro question the Welfare State has carefully charted its course of deception.

### Charting a Course of Deception

To prove this, let us take first the attitude of the Welfare State to the South. President Truman prepared the way for the 1948 election campaign by the report of his Civil Rights Committee. This Committee recognized that to judge progress in the South by the number of lynchings alone is utterly false.

The almost complete immunity from punishment enjoyed by lynchers is merely a striking form of the broad and general immunity from punishment enjoyed by whites in many communities for less extreme offenses against Negroes. Moreover lynching is the ultimate threat by which his inferior status is driven home to the Negro.

The report repeats this over and over again.

As a terrorist device, it [lynching] reinforces all the other disabilities placed upon him. The threat of lynching always hangs over the head of the Southern Negro: the knowledge that a misinterpreted word or action can lead to his death is a dreadful burden.

Here then is a social system unique in the modern world, for in a totalitarian state, the government reserves to itself and its organized party and institutions the terrorization of the masses. Not so in the South.

... In certain states the white population can threaten and do violence to the minority members with little or no fear of legal reprisal.

In such a social system, it is to be expected that, as the report emphasizes, a "*jury is no protection.*"

This is what is new about the Welfare State. So intense is the concentration, national and international, upon the unending persecution of American Negroes that the state

must parade as champion of the oppressed. That is its welfare side.

However, even in its documents, the Welfare State does not analyze the basic economic and political causes and consequences of the regime of terror in the South, as for instance the Socialist Workers Party has done in its resolution (see Page 90). To do so, the Welfare State would have to expose the capitalist forces behind Jim Crow and the reliance of the Democratic Party upon the white supremacists. That would disclose the other side of the Welfare State as the protector of the capitalist system and its interests.

These two sides emerge as soon as you look carefully at the recommendations of the report on Civil Rights. The report proposes federal organizations to enforce anti-Jim Crow laws in general. But, it continues:

There are civil rights problems, unique to certain regimes and localities that can best be treated and solved by the individual states.

Thus right from the beginning the propagandists of the Welfare State hand over to the state governments of the South the responsibility for changing a system of which these governments are the chosen guardians and protectors. Smoothly, the treacherous recommendations continue:

The states should create permanent civil rights commissions to make continuing studies of prejudice, to publish educational material...

The aim is a partnership between the Welfare State and these gangster regimes.

Such commissions, with their fingers on the communities' pulses, would complement at the state level the activities of a permanent Federal Commission on Civil Rights.

These are the two faces of the Welfare State. While it denounces the evil of Negro persecution, in the very same document it assures the South not to take all this chatter seriously for it does not intend to impose anything that the Southern rulers do not agree to.

What has happened since the Civil Rights Report is merely the working out in life of the published program of the Welfare State, the document on which the President went to Congress and then to the country. The people may not yet fully recognize this but the politicians and plutocrats on the inside understand it very well. The South knows that, against the changed attitude of the country to Negroes, it can have no better protection than the Truman Welfare State.

### The Record on Housing

But perhaps at least outside of the South the Welfare State attempts to improve the welfare of Negroes? Complete illusion! The Welfare State plays precisely the same vicious role in the North as it does in the South. Let us review the record of Roosevelt and Truman on the one issue of housing.

In 1947, as we have seen, the Welfare State presented a brief to the Supreme Court on Negroes and housing. *The Welfare State knows that Jim Crow is growing.* Says the brief:

Since 1920 the trend toward use of racial exclusions in new developments appears to have been steadily upward... and also in extension to previously untouched cities.

This trend, we are told, was "resumed after World War II." And what of the future?

If this trend continues unchecked almost all new residential sections of our cities will be barred within ten or twenty years from occupancy by Negroes and to an increasing degree, by other groups.

Here it is impossible for the Welfare State to close its eyes to the fact that the real estate and financial interests are responsible. The brief tells us that the whole policy is "rooted in ignorance, bigotry and prejudice." But prejudice is "nurtured by the opportunities it affords for monetary gains from the supposed beneficiaries and real victims alike."

Here again we see the "welfare" side of the state-talk. But what does the Welfare State *do*? Loren Miller, a Negro lawyer of Los Angeles, who has worked for years on restrictive covenants gave the facts in his report to the NAACP Convention of 1949.

When the Federal Housing Authority was first established under Roosevelt, it issued a manual containing a model race restrictive clause to be inserted in documents as a condition for any loans or mortgages. The NAACP fought the issue and, after a hard fight, the condition was withdrawn. Then in amendments published in the manual of 1947, the terms "race" and "race restrictive covenants" were omitted but so rephrased that the FHA could continue with its policy of refusing to insure loans for Negroes in "white communities" or to guarantee mortgages for projects designed for mixed occupancy. Thus this agency of the Welfare State, with all the authority of the Federal Government behind it, set the pattern throughout the country for confining Negroes in the ghetto. Once more after vigorous protests the FHA made modifications.

On December 2, 1949 Philip B. Perlman, Solicitor General of the Welfare State, announced, with the special blessing of President Truman, that the FHA would refuse to finance any new houses or apartments whose occupancy was restricted on the basis of race, creed or color. That was the new face of the Welfare State. Immediately, a howl arose from the Southerners and *the real estate interests*. The very next day Franklin D. Richards, FHA Commissioner, announced that "It will be an exceptional case where a property cannot receive Federal mortgage help."

This is the real trend, not the spectacular legal victories in the Supreme Court and the well-publicized but rare examples of mixed housing. There is a *steady growth* of Negro communities. The children have to go to schools nearest their homes—Negro schools. Negro teachers are given "equal opportunities" by being appointed to these schools. The same occurs in police precincts, fire stations, in relief headquarters, in YMCA's, in churches. There is being created among the Negroes themselves a vested interest in Negro segregation.

Thus, at the very period when public sentiment threatens the reactionary practices of the real estate and fi-

nancial interests, the Welfare State rushes to their rescue. It uses federal money to finance their Jim Crow projects, assists them to evade the law, and uses the prestige gained by its public denunciations of Jim Crow to bluff and bamboozle the great body of the people. It would be impossible for the capitalist interests to perform on their own account what their Welfare State has done for them.

The Welfare State did not fall from the sky. Its real policies are not some tricks invented in back-rooms by dishonest politicians, which can be corrected by substituting more honest politicians. Truman is not more honest, or if you like, more dishonest, than Roosevelt. We have to push aside foolish speculations as to the sincerity of this or that government official. Great social forces are in action here, pushing along government, institutions, parties and men. It is with these forces that we must reckon, analyzing their origin, their movement, their limitations, and, above all, their conflicts.

### Laws of Capitalist Development

Negroes have arrived where they are in the United States and the Welfare State of U.S. capitalism is what it is, because of certain fundamental laws of capitalist development. Nowhere are they so superbly stated as in the famous Chapter XXI of Marx's *Capital* entitled the "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation." There Marx recapitulates the great law of centralization and its results in economic and social life. Capitalism tends inevitably to a system of social, i.e., mass production. There develops

... on an ever extending scale, the cooperative form of the labor process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labor into instruments of labor only usable in common, the economizing of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialized labor, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market, and this, the international character of the capitalist regime

This is the movement which formed the industrial concentrations of Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Youngstown, Los Angeles. This is the movement which in periods of economic expansion such as the two wars, brought millions of Negroes from the South and knit them into industrial units with whites. The Negroes became part of the vast cooperative social process of production. This is the ever-extending basis of a potential socialist society *created by capitalism itself*. But capitalism reigns and by every effort in its power holds on to its control of the economy and the government, and all its perquisites such as the housing system it has developed. Thus arises a violent conflict between the progressive movement of the proletariat in production and the attempt of the capitalists to exploit that movement for their own benefit. So Marx continues:

Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolize all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation.

This is precisely what happens in every sphere of capitalist society and what is happening to the Negroes. Never

did Negroes feel so keenly the misery, oppression, slavery and degradation of capitalism. But with their numbers in industry increasing, joining the unions, gaining confidence, strength and solidarity with white workers, they react with increasing violence against their conditions of life and labor. This, too, is an expression of Marx's law, that, if the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation grows,

... with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself.

This—in brief—is the Marxist analysis of modern historical development. The instruments of labor only usable in common, huge factories, means of transport covering the whole country, vast organizations for the distribution of goods, services and information, a disciplined, united, organized working class, constantly incorporating Negroes into this discipline, unity and organization, the internationalization of production and society; all these are the premises and preparations for a new mode of production, and for corresponding new forms of housing, education, etc.

But these new forms of life and work can be attained only through the struggle for a socialist society. Meanwhile this new form of society is being suppressed, thwarted, choked, retarded, by the old capitalist order inside and outside of production. Until this basic conflict is resolved, the crises will continue. The ultimate end must be either socialism or the descent into totalitarian barbarism.

### Effects of Civil Rights Fight

That is the stage which we have reached, and that is the stage which has produced the Welfare State to defend the old outlived system against the advances of the new. Despite its attack upon the Welfare State, the Republican Party has nothing to offer but a promise to administer the Welfare State more cheaply. It is no more than another defender of capitalism. The working class, which grows continuously in numbers, in discipline, in unity, in organization, revolts more and more bitterly and effectively against the degradation and exploitation of capitalism. The more oppressed sections of society, conscious of the protection given them by a militant labor movement, raise their special grievances. A general and growing movement for the reorganization of society develops. Other sections of society, stirred by the prevailing social disruption, take up the cause of the oppressed.

In America no cause is so obviously just and crying for amelioration as the cause of the Negroes. Hence the tremendous support given to the Negro cause by millions who are not in the labor movement. Under these circumstances, the capitalist class can try fascism as it did in Germany, which involves the total suppression of organized labor, and, once that is accomplished, the brutal moulding and streamlining of the old capitalist system to meet the needs of monopoly capitalism threatened by socialism. But fascism (for the time being) has sustained great defeats on a world scale and is now in discredit. Hence (for the time being) the resort to the demagoguery of the Welfare State.

Is it then futile to fight for the passage of civil rights legislation and to demand that Truman live up to his promises? Not at all! Conducted vigorously and without illusions, the struggle for anti-discrimination legislation is a highly progressive struggle, both for its immediate aims and its results. Negro persecution will fall only with the fall of capitalism. But that can take place only when the vast majority of the population realizes that the Welfare State provides no solutions to their problems.

To defeat the opponents of anti-Jim Crow legislation would be a great victory for the Negroes and the whole American people: a field chosen, the issue posed, and the enemy defeated. But after this victory, the workers, Negroes and all who feel only the blows and get none of the advantages of capitalism, would inevitably confront another side of the Welfare State.

President Truman in his interview with Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* has already warned that if legislation which seeks to compel employers to hire Negroes is passed, he would not administer it. Good. Let him not only say so, but let him do so, for all the world to see. Hard and bitter as that experience would be, there is no other road for the social development of this great country and the political education of its masses.

The Negroes are furthest ahead in the growing comprehension of the true nature of the Welfare State. They, therefore, have a duty to perform, to themselves, to the country, and to the world. They must show by the presentation of their own irrefutable experience that the Welfare State is not the friend but the double-edged enemy and deceiver of the Negro people and the world at large.

The release of a new order of production from the stranglehold of capitalism is the task of the great majority of the population, and above all, the united, disciplined, organized working class. But it by no means follows that the Negroes, as they have been trained to do under capitalism, must wait and leave the initiative to others. In the great struggles that have lifted the Negro question to the forefront today, they did not wait. Nor should they hesitate now to denounce root and branch the Welfare State and all its works.

They will find a ready ear in organized labor itself, which has had its own experience with the Welfare State in the Taft-Hartley Act and has seen the Welfare State's corruption of mass leaders. The Negroes will find a ready ear in the millions of the middle class bowed down under murderous taxation, imposed upon them by a war-making government in the name of peace. They will find readiness to listen in the millions of poor farmers, particularly in the South, in whose name the Welfare State pours hundreds of thousands of dollars as government subsidies into the overstuffed pockets of the farming magnates.

The class struggle ebbs and flows, but mounts inexorably to conflicts of greater intensity and wider scope. The battle in this Congress around FEPC has been fought and lost. But gains have been registered—in knowledge, understanding and experience, and particularly knowledge, understanding and experience of the hypocritical nature of the Welfare State. At this stage few sections of the population can deal such mighty blows at this imposing fiction of the Welfare State as the Negro people of the United States.

## Stalinism and Negro Intellectuals

By FRED HART

Negro intellectuals are powerfully attracted toward Marxism. This is not strange. Marxism is the theory and practice of revolt against the evils of capitalism by all its victims. Frederick Douglass used to say there was not a white man living who did not know that slavery was wrong—for him. Every Negro knows that as far as Negroes are concerned, the social system of the United States is wrong. The intellectuals naturally tend toward an analysis of society which explains this intolerable injustice in social terms and offers a way out.

Even a careerist like Walter White, writing against Paul Robeson's policies in the *Negro Digest* of March 1950, says that Negroes "could listen with greater patience and attention to Mr. Robeson's advice" if Russia were "sincerely, efficiently and successfully putting into practice the basic principles (of) Karl Marx and . . . Lenin . . ." On the contrary, says White, "Russia of 1950 is at the opposite pole of Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat." Such has been the bitterness of the Negro experience with American democracy that even this exploiter of his people's wrongs can feel the attraction of Marxism.

For most Americans, however, white or black, Marxism today is represented by Stalinism. Between the brazenness of Stalinism and the vigor of American propaganda, the world is pretty well acquainted with the fact that the policies of American Stalinists shift with every change in Moscow's foreign policy. It is remarkable, however, that a number of Negro intellectuals are not unduly affected by this. The persecution of the Communist Party by the government has made them wary of open fellow-traveling, but despite their recognition of the shifts of Stalinist policy on the Negro question, despite their recognition of Russia's totalitarian dictatorship, many continue to feel and to express sympathy and even admiration for the activities of the Stalinists on the Negro question.

Their reasoning should be carefully followed. It is true, they say, that during the war the Stalinists opposed Negro struggles for freedom. That was wrong—but it was done for the defense of Russia which they believe in. At any rate, today they are most vigorous in defense of Negroes, as their work for the Trenton Six indicates. Look at their record in the Scottsboro case, the demonstrations they

led against evictions of Negroes in Chicago and elsewhere during the thirties. The Stalinists first raised the Negro question in an uncompromising manner and have done more than any other party to keep the Negro question before the American people and the world. In the unions they have fought for equality. They do theoretical work on Negro history, they are publishing the collected works of Frederick Douglass. They make mistakes but try to correct them. Their "Black Republic" slogan is nonsense but they are trying to correct that too. The Stalinists fight for unity of Negroes and whites, the abolition of prejudice. In their party Negroes have equality. They help Negro artists. Wouldn't progressive Americans and labor in particular lose if a fighter like Bridges was driven out of the labor movement and Philip Murray controlled the CIO without opposition? And then (final argument), look at Robeson! What Negro today is doing more to denounce American race prejudice at home and abroad! We don't go along with the Stalinists all the way but, despite everything you may say, the Negro in America benefits by Stalinism. At the worst, Negroes can use the Stalinists.

That is the line of argument advanced. And these ideas cannot be brushed aside simply by listing Stalinist crimes and zig-zags. Negro intellectuals know about these. They accept—or rather discount—them as "politics." Furthermore, knowing these, it is their view that they can take the good and avoid the bad.

First of all, let us examine the argument, constantly put forward by the Stalinists themselves, that they are chiefly responsible for the Negro question occupying the central position it does in the United States today. Nothing could be more false. If not one single Stalinist had ever said one single word on the Negro question, it would have much the same status that it has acquired today.

What has brought the Negro question forward is not anyone's propaganda but the necessary, the historically conditioned social and political development of the American people. It is true that a consistently revolutionary Marxist party, fighting for the socialist cause on all fronts, in the proletariat as well as among the Negroes, abroad as well as at home, could and would have qualitatively altered the existing relationship of forces. But the Stalinists? No. When it coincided with their needs, they helped along this development. At other times and at very critical times, they opposed it with all their force.

### **Emergence as Distinct Political Force**

American capitalism itself brought the millions of Negroes from the South. Garveyism was the first great political experience of these Negroes. The second was their turn from the Republican Party to the New Deal. With the CIO they came into the union movement.

These were the preliminaries to the real emergence of the Negroes as a distinct political force which began in World War II. By the March-on-Washington Movement the Negroes turned from dickering with private industry and raised the whole struggle to a higher plane by concentrating the issue on the federal government. From that time, the government, and with it the ruling Democratic

Party, has been thrown into increasing confusion by the mounting Negro pressure and its effects on the country as a whole.

In the army Negroes fought incalculable battles, large and small, for equality. In Detroit they made a bloody retaliation against Jim Crow. The climax of these struggles was in Harlem in 1943 where they took a carefully-organized militant offensive, and at the same time refrained from attacks against white persons. From end to end of the country and in fact the world over, the boldness and subtlety of this demonstration, despite its obvious weaknesses, were recognized. State after state hastened to pass FEPC bills. The Negro question dominated the national election of 1948, and has been the cause of the stormiest sessions in Congress during the century.

### **Their Record Counts Against Them**

In the light of these facts, the Stalinist attempt to claim primary credit for this progress is an insult to the American people. It is also a thundering lie. When it suited them, as in the organization of the CIO, the Stalinists assisted. But they fought against the March-on-Washington Movement which is one of the key links in the chain of development. They joined with the city and state officials against the people in the 1943 Harlem demonstration. Who can measure fully the assistance they gave to capitalism and to the government in trying to make Negroes accept Jim Crow during the war, promising that after victory Jim Crow would be abolished?

To say that they had done strenuous work in the past counts not for the Stalinists, but against them. For it was precisely the prestige they gained over the preceding years as militants which made them so effective as allies of Jim Crow and enemies of the Negro people at the very moment when the Negroes were putting forward their greatest efforts.

The tremendous theoretical, literary and artistic interest in Negroes is the most striking cultural phenomenon of the last decade and this, too, is not the work of Stalinism. It is an integral part of the development of the United States and of the Negro people as part of America.

In the general awakening which followed World War I, Countee Cullen put into literary form the rising racial consciousness of the Negro. The elegance and beauty of his verse should not obscure the essential affinity of *What is Africa to Me?* with Garvey's nonsensical program of Back-to-Africa. Claude McKay, revolutionary as he once was, in his most popular novel, *Home to Harlem*, expressed the somewhat decadent interest of white intellectuals in the supposed primitiveness of Harlem.

By 1941, parallel to the political emergence of the Negroes and popular support for them, something entirely new appears. Richard Wright makes the first great popular literary success with *Native Son*. In Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*, which has sold millions of copies, Southern liberalism brought before the country its own sentimental and confused but genuine preoccupation with the Negro question. Again, Wright's *Black Boy* swept the country. Gunnar Myrdal's important book *The American Dilemma*, and the

studies associated with it, showed that the liberal bourgeoisie was responding seriously to the national awakening on this question.

The Civil Rights Report of the President's Committee, despite its political hypocrisy, was in its own way a historical document. Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* is being sold in cheap editions of hundreds of thousands of copies. So is William Gardner Smith's *The Last of the Conquerors*. The recent films are taking the question to the nation and to the world.

These are the broad nation-wide strokes which, whatever their individual virtue, have driven home to the country the new stage of the Negro question, both in its own right and as a symbol of progress in the masses of American people.

To be sure, the Stalinists played a role in this process; but what sort of sociological method is it which acquiesces in their claim that they played the major role? If useful books were written under their influence, it should likewise be noted that men like Wright and Himes who were undoubtedly influenced by them, have in the end struck them the greatest blows they have received in literature going to the mass of readers.

When, by silence or tacit encouragement, the Negro intellectuals allow the Stalinists to get away with their fantastic claims, they unwittingly join the American government's slander of the American people in its claim that it is willing to abolish Jim Crow but the people are not ready. The Communist Party's claim that it is responsible for American mass hostility to Jim Crow is but the other side of the most reactionary bourgeois allegation that agitation on the Negro question is the work of "Reds." Thus, each in its own way, Washington and the Kremlin are striking blows at the very heart of the struggle for Negro freedom. How, in the face of this, can the Negro intellectuals excuse their passivity?

### Incredible Claims

Incredible are the lengths to which the Stalinist boasts go, not only in private, public meetings, etc. but in their publications which circulate over the world. In the June 1949 issue of *Political Affairs*, devoted to "The Struggle Against White Chauvinism," the Stalinists resurrected James Ford who contributes an article entitled "The Communist Party: Champion Fighter for Negro Rights."

The Communist Party, he insinuates without too much subtlety, was responsible for the formation of the CIO, owing to its work on the Negro question.

The successful creation of the CIO, based on the fight against Negro discrimination led by the Communists over a period of more than a decade and a half, also had its influence on the AFL. As a result, there are today nearly two million Negro workers in the organized labor movement...

Thus millions of Negroes have their very jobs "as a result" of the Negro work of the Communist Party.

These are ridiculous lies, but these lies, incessantly repeated, can have effect upon those who know no better. Negro intellectuals who allow them to pass in silence or

try to dismiss them as insignificant exaggerations, bear a direct responsibility for them before the Negro people in particular.

All who hear the Stalinists or read ten lines of their writings cannot but believe that they stand for unity of whites and Negroes. Such unity has, and rightly, a great appeal to Negroes and increasing millions of whites. But a brief examination of the facts and the record of the Stalinists will show that, except insofar as it suits their special purposes, they are as resourceful wreckers of such unity as any Democrat or Republican, and more effective because they function within the mass movements.

Unity of Negroes with the great mass of the population is developing with gigantic strides. It is developing first of all because of public recognition that without liberation of the Negroes, the movement for the preservation and expansion of genuine democracy in the United States cannot prosper. It is developing because the whole tendency to centralization in modern life forces great masses of the people more and more into common cooperative effort, in industry as in politics.

### The Labor Party Question

This movement takes place in contradictory forms. Thus, despite the fact that the Democratic Party is a capitalist, reactionary and treacherous party on the Negro and labor questions, the movement of the Negroes to it in 1936 was a step toward political unification with organized labor, even within that reactionary framework. As organized labor has differentiated itself within the Democratic Party through the PAC-CIO and Labor's League for Political Education, labor and the Negroes have grown closer together in self-defense against the Southern Bourbons and some of the more obvious administration fakers.

Outside capitalist politics, there has taken place the great movement of Negroes and whites into the CIO. The failure to repeal Taft-Hartley parallels the fate of the civil rights bills. The next stage is obvious. It is the break with the Southerners and the administration through the formation of a great mass party of labor, the Negroes, the poor farmers, the idealistic youth, the old people who have done their share, the lower middle class who do not know where to look for help today.

This political advance would be in line with historical development on a world scale for every developed European country has had such a party for decades. The Negroes, sick of the cynicism and dishonesty of both capitalist parties, would join the new labor party by the millions. One of its main issues, appealing to whites and Negroes alike, would be the civil rights program now treated with such contempt by the two capitalist parties. A party of this type is bound to come in the United States and nothing in the whole past history of the United States will so bring together not only Negro and white labor, but Negroes and whites of all types. The unity will be political in form but such is the nature of politics today, so sharp are the social tensions in the United States, such would be the opposition of reaction to such a party, that the great masses, Negro

and white, would experience the greatest impulse yet felt in the United States towards social integration.

No one can lay down the specific policies of such a party in advance. But Marxists are heart and soul for the formation of such a party in which the labor movement separates itself from the ruling bourgeoisie and takes the political field in its own name, summoning all the oppressed in the nation to join with it against the capitalist parties. Such a party may and in all probability will support at first American imperialism in its war-making adventures. Nevertheless Marxists would support this party against Big Business, while opposing its wrong policies. They would extend and deepen wherever possible the political unity of the workers, going through the experiences of the masses with them. The struggle for the next stage of Negro-white unity centers around the struggle for such a party.

One would expect that the Stalinists, in their self-proclaimed role as Marxist advocates of socialism, a doctrine addressed above all to the proletariat, would be the strongest advocates of such a party. They are its deadly enemies.

For a brief period around 1935 Browder spoke for a farmer-labor party; then, from 1936 the Stalinists turned and supported Roosevelt, hoping to win the American alliance for the Kremlin in World War II. For 12 years from 1936 to 1948 they denounced as "enemies of unity" all who pointed out the inevitable betrayal of the hopes of labor and the Negroes involved in depending upon capitalist promises.

But when the Stalinists engaged in a new political venture in 1948, they turned up with the Progressive Party, under the leadership of Wallace, still denouncing a labor party.

### **Their Kind of "Unity"**

During their old pro-war policy, when they wanted to help the American government, they fought for their kind of unity—unity of the Negroes with the Democratic party of Bilbo and Rankin. Now today when they want to embarrass and impede and harass the American government, the Stalinists strive for unity only with those who support what they call their anti-imperialist peace policy but which really is an opportunist pressure policy for another deal between Washington and Moscow. In both cases they serve as an obstacle to the real unity of the Negroes with the mass of the population whose next step is and can only be a great mass party of labor.

Are Negro intellectuals so naive as to believe that this consistent line is no more than a "mistake?" *The Stalinists do not want the Negroes in a labor party which the labor leaders would in all probability commit to support of the war against Russia.* They want to tie the Negroes to whatever liberal capitalist politicians, workers and intellectuals they can get together in their discredited Progressive Party which stands as a barrier and diversion to the anti-capitalist political unity of the great masses. What is this but hostility to the historic development of the Negro people in the United States?

This is the constant contradiction between their professions and their actions, their claims to be acting in har-

mony with the historic aims and methods of socialism, their policies which force them in actuality to oppose these aims. Hence their monumental, incessant lying, the lying about their aims, the lying denunciations of other groups and parties. Nowhere is it so startling as in the intellectuals who commit themselves to following the Stalinists. The most remarkable of these today is a Negro, Paul Robeson. Instead of talking about his spirit and his courage, Negro intellectuals would be well advised to examine the highly instructive course of this world-famous figure.

### **Paul Robeson and Frederick Douglass**

The Stalinists are pertinaciously trying to build a comparison between Robeson and Frederick Douglass. Negro intellectuals have a special responsibility here to protect not only the memory but the enormous contemporary significance of a great American and a great fighter for human liberty.

Douglass was a political and mass leader of enormous stature, a leader in the Abolition movement, a leader in the Free Soil Party. He originated policy. He broke with Garrison and Phillips to defend the revolutionary traditions which in his mind were inseparably connected with the Constitution of the United States. No man was ever less of an Uncle Tom politically.

What political policy for Negroes has Robeson ever originated or proposed? None. For years he has been a docile follower of the shifts and dodges of the Communist Party. Was he in favor of the March-on-Washington Movement when the Stalinists opposed it? Has he ever had anything to say about Negroes which his masters did not tell him to say? Didn't he, with Browder, stretch out the hand to J. P. Morgan? Does he oppose "self-determination"? Where? When? Was Frederick Douglass ever in such a humiliating position in regard to any group of politicians? Would he have been Frederick Douglass if he had?

The Stalinists for years emphasized that Douglass called on the Negroes to join the army of Lincoln and drew the analogy that Negroes should support World War II. This is a monstrous perversion. Douglass said that, whatever the conditions, Negroes should fight against the South, for its defeat would mean emancipation. He said this before Lincoln came out for emancipation. He was right. But even if he had been wrong, it was an honest policy, a policy conceived in the highest interests of the Negroes and the vast majority of the people of the United States.

But Robeson? When the Stalinists were telling the Negroes that victory over Germany meant emancipation for Negroes in the United States, they lied and knew they lied. A thousand books and articles testify to their knowledge of the profound roots Negro persecution had in American capitalism. Did any word come from Robeson on this vicious deception of the Negro people? No. Lester Granger and Walter White were Uncle Toms for the White House; Robeson played the same role for the Kremlin.

Douglass was an internationalist, took his message of Negro emancipation to Europe and was the advocate of freedom for Irish, Hungarians and all oppressed peoples. And Robeson? He comes back from personal visits to

Eastern Europe and uses his great reputation and prestige to tell the American people that:

Here in these countries are **the people**; their spokesmen are in the forefront of our struggle for liberation—on the floor of the United Nations, in the highest councils of world diplomacy... Freedom is already theirs... It is indeed a vast new concept of democracy.

Southern Bourbons say that the Negroes in the South are happy and contented. Robeson says, in face of a gigantic mountain of evidence to the contrary, that nearly 300 million people in Russia and Eastern Europe have freedom. Could anyone imagine Frederick Douglass in a similar position?

The whole political world in the United States has been startled and disgusted by the refusal of the Stalinists to support civil rights for Trotskyists. In July 1949 at the Stalinist-dominated Bill of Rights Conference in New York, Robeson led the attack upon the Trotskyists, calling them "fascists" and giving this as the reason for denial of Stalinist support to their civil rights. No GPU agent could have exceeded the ferocity, the utter absence of shame and conscience with which he shouted out these lies, knowing them to be lies. Let anyone find one single page in the writings and speeches of Frederick Douglass which show that incorruptible Negro in a corresponding position.

### A Cover for Tyranny

Robeson's whole political activity is a living lie. He does not owe his present status in the world merely to his remarkable talents. Negroes, whites, Indians, Chinese who loved liberty gave him their support, not only for himself, but as a demonstration against the ideology of imperialism. They saw in him a symbol of triumph against the lies, the lynchings, the frame-ups, the tyranny, the judicial murders of Negroes. That is what made Robeson what he is today. And now he turns around and uses what the oppressed masses have given him to defend and cover up lynchings, frame-ups, judicial murders, tyranny and oppression over half the continent of Europe. Where are the words to express this crime against humanity and against the Negro people in particular, committed on innumerable platforms, stages and radios over the civilized world? What single figure in the world today tells so many lies to so many people in so many languages? It is a tragic spectacle to see what American imperialism and Stalinism between them have made of a man so supremely gifted, so trained for influencing millions of people and with such powerful impulses to serve his fellowmen.

But tragic as it is, that does not absolve the Negro intellectuals from their responsibility. Robeson increasingly represents himself as the voice of Negro America. In defense of the Negro people, Negro intellectuals have to let the hundreds of millions in Europe know that there exists among them an honest and principled opposition to American bourgeois democracy which does not compromise with Stalinist tyranny.

In tolerating and showing sympathy to Stalinism, the Negro intellectuals do not know what fire they are playing with. They airily brush aside the Stalinist "self determina-

tion" slogan as if it were some sort of aberration or some Marxist curiosity. The Stalinists are exploiters of Negro suffering and Negro militancy in the United States which they use and abuse for their own purposes. When they had the alliance of Washington with Moscow, they dropped the whole business of "self-determination." Now that they are once more in conflict with the American government, they have taken it up again. This is conclusive of its ultimate purpose.

Let the Negroes beware. If the Stalinists gain influence among them, they will not hesitate at a critical moment to recklessly hurl them at American imperialism, to artificially foment needless race riots and if necessary to divide labor unions by embittering relations between whites and Negroes.

### Robeson Is a Warning

The end result of this ruthless sacrifice of whatever can be used to further their own ends could easily be a blood-bath for the Negroes and a serious set-back to the positions painfully won by such hard fighting. This is exactly what the Stalinists did in Canton, China, in 1928. The Comintern, to support its policies in the 6th World Congress, called for an insurrection which was doomed from the start because it had no relation to the situation in the country. The result was a hopeless massacre of the best fighters among the Chinese masses.

Negro intellectuals may believe that their indulgence to Stalinism is in the best interests of the Negro people. They are mistaken. In reality, their adaptation to Stalinism is a class attitude—not the attitude of the militant worker, but the attitude of the pliant intellectual petty-bourgeoisie.

This is perfectly expressed by Robeson when he says that in Moscow he could walk with dignity. Negro masses in the United States have to walk in Jackson, Mississippi, or Savannah, Georgia. If they did go to Moscow they would have to work in factories under bureaucratic slave-drivers, guarded by soldiers. The Negro intellectuals share the prevailing despair that the future belongs either to American imperialism or to Stalinism, and that there is no other path to emancipation. Unable to bear the cruelty and intolerable hypocrisy of American imperialism, they feel that at any rate Stalinism is a bulwark against race prejudice. They are wrong, pitiably, horribly wrong. No minority has ever been emancipated by the methods of Stalinism, and any passivity and tolerance in regard to the crimes of Stalinism is already an evidence of degeneration. Not to denounce such crimes, not to warn against such dangers is second only to commending them. Let the spectacle of Robeson be a warning.

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# Negro Workers and the CIO

By C. THOMAS

In the years before the formation of the CIO, when craft unions dominated the American labor movement, not only the employers but the bulk of organized labor itself was militantly Jim Crow. White workers sought deliberately to keep Negroes out of jobs. The trade unions constituted a hostile barrier to the employment of Negro labor in the organized sectors of industry and trade. Where obvious self-interest dictated the necessity of organizing Negro workers, they were usually shunted off into second-class Jim Crow locals.

Under the circumstances, the Marxist contentions that the future of Negroes lay with the labor movement and that the only road for workers, white and black, was solidarity in the struggle against their mutual capitalist enemy, appeared like lunacy to the majority of Negroes.

The CIO brought a great change. Today about a million and a quarter Negroes are *established* in the labor movement with approximately half-a-million in the CIO. Compared to the pre-CIO days the present situation represents a great advance. But it is necessary to recognize that only the first steps forward have been taken. Negroes still suffer heavy discrimination in industry and in the unions.

A wartime study, published in 1944, disclosed that some 30 national unions, AFL, Railroad Brotherhood and independent, either excluded Negroes through constitutional provision and ritual or accorded them only segregated auxiliary status. Exclusionist provisions by unions affiliated to the AFL violate its national constitution. Yet, numerous attempts to invoke disciplinary action have been sidetracked by the AFL hierarchy with the hypocritical assurance that the problem can best be solved by "education." This beneficent approach to its Jim Crow affiliates is in sharp contrast to the AFL leaders' ruthless expulsion in 1936 of unions comprising the Committee for Industrial Organization for "violating" the AFL constitution because they sought to unite all workers in a given factory or industry in a single organization.

## The Indispensable Cornerstone

The unions which launched the CIO had to deal, from the beginning, in a forthright manner with the Negro question. Fortunately, the most powerful of the group, the United Mine Workers, International Ladies Garment Workers and Amalgamated Clothing Workers, had gained insight and experience through intensive organizing campaigns in the early '30s. Thousands of Negro workers had been recruited without discrimination and comprised a substantial section of their membership. The inclusion of all workers regardless of race, color or creed, was immediately recognized as the indispensable cornerstone of any lasting union structure in the basic mass production industries. This was especially true in steel and auto, two of the main citadels of corporate resistance to unionization.

The United Steel Workers and United Automobile Workers are the largest and most influential in the CIO. Each contains a large proportion of Negro members. Their attitude on the race question exerts great influence on the policy of the CIO and its affiliates. While no comprehensive survey of the entire CIO can be given within a brief article, it is possible to give a fairly accurate indication of the situation of Negroes in the CIO and to draw certain conclusions from the experience of its major unions.

## How Negroes Got into Unions

How the Negroes got into industry and the unions is essential to an understanding of where they are today. Prior to World War I the rapidly expanding steel centers of the North relied on immigrants from Europe for an ever-increasing supply of cheap labor. Negro labor was concentrated in the South, particularly in the Birmingham region. The war shut off immigration and subsequent restrictive legislation dried up that source of supply.

The steel industry then turned to the South for its cheap labor supply, recruiting thousands of Negroes for its northern mills. In the two decades from World War I to the launching of the CIO, Negro labor in basic steel more than tripled. In the 30's between forty and fifty thousand Negroes were employed in basic steel production. This was a factor to be reckoned with in the calculations of the CIO leaders. It would have been impossible to organize basic steel without tacit support from the Negro labor force.

Very few Negroes were employed in the automobile industry prior to World War I. The 1910 census figures show only 569 Negroes in a total labor force of 105,759 automobile workers. An acute labor shortage during the war attracted thousands of southerners, white and colored, to the automobile industry center in Detroit. This mushrooming industry continued to absorb Negro labor so that by the middle 30's between twenty and thirty thousand Negroes were employed in auto plants.

An additional factor that made the race question a key issue in the organization of auto was the Ford Motor Company's potent bid for the sympathy and support of Detroit's Negro community. Ford made a practice of hiring Negroes to the extent of 10% of his labor force. These jobs were distributed primarily through Negro ministers who in turn were expected to bolster the ferocious anti-union policy of the Ford Motor Company and deliver the Negro vote to Harry Bennett, head of the notorious Ford Service Department. Although Ford rarely departed from the accepted racial occupation pattern of confining Negroes to the dirtiest, heaviest and most dangerous jobs, the fact that he hired so many colored workers established his reputation as a "friend" of the Negro. He tried to use this reputation to the very last to prevent organization but failed. By the time the UAW leadership tackled Ford,

it had already demonstrated in action its adherence to the CIO policy of non-discrimination and thereby gained the active support of prominent Negro spokesmen who played an important role in critical stages of the 1941 strike which brought Ford into the UAW fold.

### Basic Racial Patterns Unchanged

Although the CIO has organized Negro workers without discrimination, it has done little to alter the racial occupation patterns imposed by capitalist operation. Unionization found the Negroes concentrated in the heaviest, dirtiest, most dangerous and poorest paying jobs. By and large, that is where they remain. This is true of steel, auto, mining, textile, tobacco, etc. The Negro is unskilled, semi-skilled, common laborer, while the white is mechanic, machine-tender, skilled maintenance and white-collar worker.

The persistence of this inequality must in large measure be laid at the door of the CIO leadership. Negroes were able to penetrate industry in large number only during periods of acute labor shortage. It is in such periods that the greatest advances can be made. The CIO organized the Negro worker without discrimination but neglected to take advantage of the wartime opportunity for eradicating the discriminatory employment practices of the bosses. The wartime policy of national unity, equality of sacrifice and the no-strike pledge left employers free to exercise discriminatory practices in the field of hiring, transfer and promotion.

Most union agreements in the mass production industries contain departmental or occupational seniority clauses. Plant seniority clauses are very rare. While department seniority protects the Negro worker in case of layoffs within the department, it makes no provision for upgrading or promotion to more desirable or higher paying jobs in other departments. This tends to freeze Negro workers in the least desirable departments.

The wartime labor shortage provided CIO leaders with their greatest opportunity to lead Negro workers out of this blind alley. Despite the acute shortage many employers refused to hire Negroes, others persisted in maintaining the traditional racial occupation pattern of industry while a few made token moves infringing on this pattern by upgrading Negroes to hitherto all-white departments. To the credit of many national and local CIO leaders it must be said that in the latter case they moved with vigor to quell any Jim Crow strikes or demonstrations designed to exclude Negro workers. Usually a threat of drastic disciplinary action was enough to send the "rebels" back to work.

### Negroes Took the Initiative

Where the employer took the initiative or could be induced to hire or upgrade Negroes into all-white departments the CIO threw the support of the union, if necessary, to make it stick. But such cases were rare. In the over-all struggle for equal opportunity of employment the Negroes themselves took the initiative through the

March-On-Washington Movement. This promising movement proposed to substitute mass action for ineffective pleas, petitions and pious wishes. With active support from the CIO it would have been invincible. But the CIO leaders remained aloof. They were unalterably committed to a policy of collaboration with the Roosevelt administration and would do nothing to embarrass their "friend" in Washington.

However, the mere threat of a nation-wide march on Washington sufficed to compel Roosevelt to issue the executive order establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee. Inadequate as it was, the FEPC represented the greatest concession wrested from the government in the struggle for Negro rights during the war. It demonstrated the superiority of militant methods of struggle over the moral preachments, appeals to patriotism, legislative lobbying and "education" practiced by the liberals and labor leaders.

Bolstered by the FEPC, the Negroes made some notable advances during the war. The number of Negroes employed in industry increased. Jobs hitherto reserved to whites were opened up to Negro workers. These gains were most marked in the section of industry organized by the CIO. But the number of Negroes who succeeded in breaching the Jim Crow occupation pattern was too small to make any appreciable alteration in the basic pattern. Today the racial occupation pattern remains essentially what it was before the war.

Meanwhile, the presence of Negro members in significant numbers, their active participation in union affairs plus the exigencies of internal union politics has made them an important factor in the key unions of the CIO. In most steel locals, for example, Negroes function as officials, executive board members, stewards, committeemen, etc. The same is true in auto and other CIO unions with substantial Negro membership. It is above the local level, however, where the top brass is further removed from direct contact with the ranks, that Jim Crow rears its ugly head.

### The "Jim Crow in Reverse" Argument

While a Negro is usually appointed in each district of the steel union, it is the practice to assign him a special department where his duties do not bring him into direct contact with the employer as a representative of the national organization. In the UAW repeated demands have been made for Negro representation on the International Executive Board. The Board is composed of regional directors and executive officers who represent the national organization in negotiations and disputes with the corporations.

The demand for Negro representation has been met by Reuther and his close associates with the charge that this constitutes "Jim Crow in reverse." The specious argument is made that advancement to top union positions must be made solely on the basis of "ability." This is poppycock. There are Negro leaders in the UAW as able as any now occupying top positions in the union. Underlying the

"Jim Crow in reverse" argument is an unwarranted concession to white chauvinism.

This concession to prejudice stems from the pattern adopted by the United Mine Workers Union in organizing the coal miners of the deep South. In setting up mixed locals in which Negroes constituted a majority, it was arranged for the president to be a white and the vice-president a Negro. The president was the official who represented the men in meetings with the employers. By this system, corporation executives were spared an affront to their Jim Crow prejudices.

When the UMW organized steel the same system was adopted for the mixed locals of the South and extended into the North—with harmful consequences. Prejudiced white workers are quick to sense the attitude of the leaders. Supervisory personnel are emboldened to practice discrimination in a hundred insidious and devious ways. Rising unemployment sharpens the competition for jobs. Exacerbated friction can lead to dangerous explosions. The complacent attitude of International Presidents like Reuther and Murray who feel they have discharged their obligation by giving lip service to the struggle for Negro equality and by using a few Negroes as window-dressing to display their "good will" acts as a spur to chauvinism. At this juncture, Negro representation on leading bodies of CIO unions—and not for show-case purposes—is the minimum required to demonstrate the seriousness of union leaders in the struggle against industrial Jim Crow.

### In the Taft-Hartley Era

Labor is now living in the Taft-Hartley era. The business unionism of Gompers and Green and the mossbacks of the AFL Executive Council is a relic of the past. Every major struggle involves the unions in conflict with the government which functions as the executive agency of the capitalist ruling class. Politics has become a life and death matter for the unions. And the Negro question is, above all, a political question. If the union leaders were unaware of it before, the so-called Republican-Dixiecrat coalition has forcibly reminded them of the fact.

The CIO campaign to organize the South ran smack into the Negro question in all its political and social ramifications. Lacking a correct policy on this crucial problem, the drive has bogged down. The Southern drive was undertaken with a view toward breaking the political monopoly of the Dixiecrats by exerting the pressure of organized labor on the Democratic Party. The Southern Negro is extremely sympathetic toward the CIO. But he is disfranchised, along with a large proportion of white workers, and in addition is subjected to an atmosphere of intimidation and terror. A policy based on an appeal to support "good" Democrats against "bad" Democrats cannot arouse much hope or enthusiasm. For in the South, even the "best" of the liberal Democrats, as witness the campaign pronouncements of a Claude Pepper, are Jim Crow practitioners.

The Republican-Dixiecrat coalition is a political fusion of northern capital and southern demagoguery. Northern

capital bolsters Southern reaction. Southern reaction upholds Taft-Hartleyism. As long as labor adheres to the fraudulent two-party system, monopoly capital can't lose. To organize the South while supporting the Democratic Party is a more formidable task than Hercules faced in cleaning the Augean stables. And Philip Murray is no Hercules!

### Education, Organization, Leadership

The CIO top brass is fond of emphasizing that Jim Crow will be conquered through education, organization and leadership. That is true in the abstract. But the heart of the question is, what sort of education, what type of organization, and what kind of leadership?

In steel, the Murray machine initiated an educational campaign through the establishment of a Civil Rights Committee. The committee calls various conferences to promote . . . Truman's civil rights program. The emphasis at these conferences is on legislative lobbying, letter writing and CIO-PAC types of political action. The sum total of Murray's educational program consists in covering up and whitewashing the Truman administration's failure to deliver on its election promises and drumming up support for the election of Trumanite Democrats next fall. This sort of "education" is worse than useless.

Effective education in the struggle against Jim Crow must lay bare the real function of racial discrimination, must expose its capitalist *class* character and the role it plays in dividing and weakening the working class in its struggles for emancipation from exploitation and wage slavery.

Effective organization must be based on the recognition of the class division in capitalist society, the knowledge that Democrats and Republicans alike represent the interests of the ruling capitalist class, and the necessity for an independent working class party to carry forward the struggle of exploited labor, black and white.

Effective leadership can be provided only by those who recognize the revolutionary implications of the struggle for Negro equality and are prepared to lead such a struggle to the very end.

The entrance of Negroes into industry during the first World War coincided with the beginning of the decline of capitalism as a world system. Encompassing a brief span of 30 odd years this period has been marked by major convulsions: wars, depression, colonial revolts and socialist revolutions. It required a major split in the American labor movement and the tumultuous rise of the CIO before Negroes gained admission to the unions on a near-equal basis. The same period witnessed a gigantic growth of union membership to, some 16,000,000 strong. These tremendous historical events are a harbinger of what is to come.

Taft-Hartleyism and Jim Crow are twins. Decaying capitalism, which exudes the poison of racial discrimination from every pore, is bent on using its political monopoly to destroy the labor movement. Necessity will drive the American working class onto the political arena to

engage the enemy in mortal combat. They will learn the truth enunciated by Marx: Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded. Working class solidarity, fertilized in the womb

of the CIO, will see its fruition in the conquest of political power and the establishment of a workers and farmers government. The death knell of Jim Crow will have sounded!

# The NAACP at the Crossroads

By JEAN BLAKE

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is slipping—in membership, in effectiveness, in prestige. The need for a strong, independent organization to struggle for equality for Negroes in the United States is greater than ever, but the organization faced with that responsibility by its program, base and history is paralyzed and torn by contradictions and confusion.

Membership has dropped to half the 500,000 of three years ago and the effectiveness of what is left is being dissipated in piddling, uninspiring write-your-congressman politics that brings nothing but defeats. The leadership of the Association, the executive staff in the national office, is completely disoriented in the face of its tasks, torn between responsibility to the Negro membership and potential membership, and enslavement to the traditions and defects of the past continued in the self-perpetuating board of directors which controls the organization.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, capitalist Bourbon reaction had wiped out the gains of the Reconstruction by force and violence and was consolidating its victory by legally disfranchising and segregating the Negro, depriving him of his rights as a citizen.

## Birth of A Movement

Young Negro intellectuals in the North, led by W. E. B. DuBois, saw the need for organized and aggressive defense of Negro civil rights. They met at Niagara, on Canadian soil, in 1905 to plan a national organization to combat all forms of segregation and discrimination. This new group represented a more advanced Negro leadership, opposed to the gradualism, conservatism and conciliatory policies of the dominant Booker T. Washington group at Tuskegee.

An atrocity—a race riot in Springfield, Illinois in 1908 in which many Negroes were killed or wounded—shocked a group of white liberals with an Abolitionist heritage into organizing another movement, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in 1909.

The following year the two tendencies merged when DuBois accepted the post of director of publicity for the NAACP and editor of its monthly publication, *The Crisis*. The first task was to reach the potential Negro base with the program. DuBois' militant editorial policy immediately won broader support for the magazine than the Association itself enjoyed. In the first year circulation reached 12,000

and in the next it was mailed into every state in the Union but one.

A vigorous anti-lynching campaign was begun, the first branch was set up in Chicago in 1911, and *Crisis* circulation reached 16,000 a month by 1912.

World War I and its aftermath provided the conditions for a new stage in the development of the organization. Mass migration of Negroes to the North resulted in compact urbanized communities. Of the 200,000 Negro soldiers taken overseas, 150,000 were forced to serve in labor battalions.

The NAACP investigated and protested Army discrimination and mistreatment of Negro soldiers, exposed the occupation of Haiti by U.S. Marines in 1916, defended Arkansas Negro cotton pickers victimized for organizing a union in 1919 and Negro victims of other riots.

The turn to the masses resulted in a tumultuous growth in membership. In 1916 there were 54 branches, nine locals and four college chapters, totaling 9,500 members. In 1917 there were 11,524 members, and by 1919, 88,000 in 300 branches.

The Association was winning its first legal victories in the U. S. Supreme Court—against the disfranchising of Negroes in the Southern states by means of "grandfather clauses" providing impossible conditions for voting, and against segregation ordinances. By 1922 the first anti-lynching bill was passed in the House of Representatives.

Inside the NAACP developments were also taking place. Negro intellectuals had replaced white staff members so that when James Weldon Johnson became executive secretary in 1920 all of the officers responsible for the day-to-day work of the organization were colored. The membership was more than 90 per cent colored and provided the bulk of the organization's financial support. But control remained centralized in the self-perpetuating board of directors consisting of Negro professional people—ministers, lawyers, social workers—and their white patrons and friends—philanthropists, ministers, lawyers and social workers.

In the period of the twenties relative prosperity seeped down to the Negro professional and business elements, who were able to base themselves on the sizeable communities of the ghettos. The more privileged began to seek to improve their condition by moving out of the slums into residential neighborhoods where they were met by hostility from whites. In 1925 in Detroit the NAACP successfully defended Dr. Ossian Sweet and his relatives and friends

against a murder charge based on the shooting of a man in a mob threatening the Sweets in their new home.

### Growth As An Agency of Protest

But in the NAACP of the Talented Tenth the millions of underprivileged were finding no adequate leadership for their protests against oppression, discrimination and second class citizenship. So the Negro masses flocked to the Universal Improvement Association of Marcus Garvey, who exalted the lowly, preached complete independence as opposed to integration into white American society, organized Negro co-operative enterprises and agitated for migration to Africa.

While the Garvey movement did not last—any more than other mass organization to which Negroes turned from time to time to fill the needs the NAACP ignored—it left its mark on the consciousness of the Negro masses in terms of greater self-confidence and more articulate expression of the independent aspects of their struggle.

With the Great Depression, the Roosevelt regime and the Second World War, Negro mass needs could no longer be denied or thrust aside. The NAACP added to its function of legal defender of Negro civil rights that of their negotiator with the federal government and with the unions.

Again mass migrations to urban centers strengthened Negro organization. Again in the 40's the war-time labor shortage, this time without an immigrant source of supply, strengthened the bargaining position of Negro labor. The NAACP did not take the lead, but its officers and members participated in the March-On-Washington movement led by A. Philip Randolph, which secured, by the mere threat of mass action, the Executive Order establishing the war-time Fair Employment Practices Committee.

For the thousands of Negro soldiers drafted into the segregated armed forces and shipped all over the world to fight and die for a Jim Crow army, the NAACP was the only agency of protest.

And again the tumultuous growth of which the Association is capable was demonstrated: 85,000 members in 1940; 100,000 in 1942; 250,000 in 1943; 300,000 in 1944; 400,000 in 1945; 530,000 in 1946.

Dizzy with success and unmindful of what was happening to their base, the national officers set the goal for the annual membership drive in 1947—"Make it a Million!"

But the war was over. Cutbacks threw Negroes out of work first. Soldiers returned and found few new jobs in industry waiting for them, ghettos even more overcrowded, and the same police brutality. They needed defense, organization, but their National Association branches limped along like relics of the turn of the century—a paper membership represented by ministers, lawyers, dentists and morticians better equipped to direct funerals than the struggle of the Negro masses for a better life.

They did not "Make it a Million." By the end of 1949 membership had dropped to 250,000.

What is wrong? many NAACP members are asking. So far as it goes, the program of the NAACP is all right.

Today national and regional conferences adopt programs broad and good enough for a mass organization; national and local action on employment, public housing, police brutality, voting and registration, civil liberties, united action with labor, and international solidarity with colonial peoples. At the NAACP conference in Los Angeles in 1949 resolutions sharper than those of the labor conventions condemned the government's "loyalty" purges.

But it isn't enough to have a good program in favor of civil rights today. Such programs are cheap; even the Democratic and Republican platforms have them.

What is needed now is the kind of action and direction that can make a living reality out of the promises and programs. That is where the present NAACP falls short. It suffers from four main defects: 1. the non-democratic structure of its organization; 2. its conservative, upper-crust leadership; 3. their dependence on the capitalist politicians, and especially the Trumanites; 4. their scorn and fear of the membership and inability to inspire and mobilize the Negro masses for action.

What have the present policies of the leadership accomplished? The national leadership concentrates the major part of its efforts on lobbying in Washington, depending on "friends" in the two old parties, and on the President. Both parties have promised civil rights legislation but killed it. The President promised also, but he has not even used his executive authority to improve civil rights in areas where he has the power.

### Lobbying and Apologetics

The National Emergency Civil Rights Mobilization of 4,000 delegates from 60 organizations led by the NAACP in Washington in January was run as a polite lobby, not a mass protest. So, after they went home, the House rejected the Powell FEPC bill for the McConnell substitute, a worse than useless "voluntary" measure.

NAACP response?—Apologetics for its friends in the House and the announcement that the "fight for a strong FEPC now shifts to the Senate." The Senate has already strengthened the filibuster device used to defeat civil rights legislation.

Unless these methods are changed, the fight for civil rights will undergo further defeat and the NAACP itself will go from bad to worse. The NAACP must make a sharp turn toward independence both in the political field and in other branches of its work. In the postwar years many Negro communities, impatient with support of the usual "friends" among Democratic and Republican politicians, ran their own candidates for office. Yet the NAACP maintains a fictitious and harmful non-partisanship and non-participation in these elections.

The Negro people require a vital mass organization of struggle, not a glorified lobby. If the NAACP is to hold its position as the leading organization in the Negro struggle for equality in the United States, it will have to base

itself on the Negro masses because it is the Negro masses—in large urban communities, in unions, and at the polls—who are the major force to be reckoned with today, not just the Talented Tenth and their liberal white friends.

### Complete Overhauling Needed

Everyone, it appears, but the chicken-hearted NAACP leadership, recognizes this fact, and acts accordingly. The government knows it, and attempts to placate the Negro masses by appointing a few to official posts. Truman knew it, and promised civil rights legislation in the 1948 campaign even at the cost of Dixiecrat votes. The labor leaders know it, and make room for a few Negroes in carefully selected posts in the union bureaucracy. The Stalinists know it, and are trying to wipe out the memory of their war-time abandonment of the struggle against Jim Crow. Even movies, radio and television reflect a growing awareness of the Negro audience.

A complete overhauling of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the organizational

structure and the leadership, from top to bottom, is necessary to equip it for the tasks of today. Elements in the leadership nationally and in the branches know this. Now is the time for them to demonstrate courage, responsibility and historic vision by breaking with the past, saying what must be done—and, above all, organizing themselves to do the job.

Now is also the time for the membership in the branches to assert their right to control their organization, change the autocratic board of directors and democratize the archaic organizational structure, select their own staff and leadership, utilize capable Negro unionists experienced in mass organizations of working people. The creative, militant, struggling potential of the branches must be released.

Such a reconstructed and regenerated NAACP could consolidate an independent nation-wide force for a sharp, hard-hitting offensive for civil rights, equality and social progress that could set back the forces of reaction, stimulate both the Negro masses and the labor movement, and raise the consciousness of the entire American working class.

# W. E. B. Du Bois and His Work

By WILLIAM GORMAN

As he approaches eighty-two, no higher tribute can be paid William Edward Burghardt Du Bois than that it is impossible to seriously consider the Negro in America without being confronted by his name at every turn. Journalist, research scholar, sociologist, historian, novelist, pamphleteer, educator—his evolution intertwines so completely with that of the Negro people since the Civil War that his individual portrait is the collective portrait of the Negro intelligentsia in twentieth-century America. Du Bois is not unaware of this. His autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn*, is appropriately subtitled "An Autobiography of a Race Concept." We propose to relate the successive stages of Du Bois' conceptions not only to the clash of American capital and labor in general, but also to Du Bois' more direct relationship to petty-bourgeois liberalism on the one hand, and the struggles of the Negro masses on the other.

Du Bois was educated at Harvard and at Berlin. In Berlin, as he himself relates, he was influenced by the "professorial socialism" of the German universities, a part of that emasculation of Marxism associated with the name of Edward Bernstein. This had a permanent effect on his thought.

When he returned to the United States, strikes, unemployment marches and the meteoric rise of the Populist Party were sweeping the country. The radical American intelligentsia expressed a growing disbelief in that mythology which declared free enterprise chosen by fate to remake and rule America as the crowning triumph of American his-

tory. The presumed natural basis of the plutocrat's rule, individualistic adaptation of Darwinism, Herbert Spencer's "Survival of the Fittest," proved vulnerable to the class conflicts produced by the very growth of capital. After the defeat of the Populists in the election of 1896, the scene shifted to the hard-pressed middle classes of the cities. Social work and an ameliorative sociology made their appearance hand in hand. With the "controlled experiment" as method and "moral welfare of society" as principle, this early twentieth century critical intelligence appropriated the method of the natural sciences to bolster evolutionary reformism.

### Du Bois as Sociologist

In *An American Dilemma* Myrdal declares "it is merely a historical accident" that Du Bois' sociological writings of the early 1900's "sound so much more modern than white writings." The reason for this, says Myrdal, is that

The Negro writers constantly have proceeded on the assumption, later formulated by Du Bois, that '...the Negro in America and in general is an average and ordinary human being...' This assumption is now, but was not a couple of decades ago, the assumption of white writers... It is mainly this historical accident why, for example, Du Bois' study of the Philadelphia Negro community published in the 'nineties stands out even today as a most valuable contribution, while white authors... have been compelled to retreat from the writings of earlier decades.

Myrdal misstates the whole case. Not only is Du Bois' sociology of the Negro superior to similar works by white authors of that period; there is no single body of American sociology on any subject during that period which, for seriousness, thoroughness and extensiveness, can compare with Du Bois' *Philadelphia Negro* and his annual Atlanta studies on the Negro as farmer, artisan, business man, etc.

It was because of *the objective conditions* of the Negro that Du Bois, intellectually a product of this period, seized upon sociology with such inherent belief and urgency. If the new theme of the social sciences—indeed their very creation—was premised upon the recognition of individuals as being constituent parts of a social entity, such compact communities as the Negro Ghetto and Black Belt were crying for study. Despite its affinity for reform, the prevailing theory of Social Darwinism did not refute the ideology of racism. The Negro was outside its vision. Du Bois therefore extended the whole range of social inquiry in America.

Another work of this period was Du Bois' *Suppression of the African Slave Trade*. Written fully fifteen years before Charles Beard's *The Constitution: An Economic Interpretation*, this is one of the pioneer applications in the United States of economic analysis to historic phenomena. "The development of Southern slavery has heretofore been viewed so exclusively from the social and ethical standpoint that we are apt to forget its close and indissoluble connection with the cotton market."

### The Du Bois-Washington Dispute

Frederick Douglass preceded Booker T. Washington in pressing forward the need for industrial training for Negroes. Du Bois himself applauded Washington's famous Atlanta speech in 1895 for segregated equality. In the subsequent decade developments within the Negro and non-Negro world began to play havoc with this program. The Negro migrations northward speeded the growth of the Ghetto. These highly urban concentrations of misery marked both the beginning of the Negro's migration into industry and the birth of a professional class far removed from the Southern hinterland. Outside the Ghetto the radicalization of the middle classes and of labor was evidenced by hundreds of thousands of socialist votes in the 1904 elections. The heretofore excluded unskilled workers were finding expression in the new Industrial Workers of the World.

The futility of Washington's philosophy was becoming evident even in the rural South. According to him, the education of the Negro sharecropper and tenant farmer in scientific agriculture would be the means of creating an independent Negro peasantry equal to the white rural middle classes in America. But precisely the scientific revolution in agriculture, the rationalized exploitation of the soil, the growth of capital investment in farming, increases the pauperization of the small agricultural producer. The expansion of capitalism, therefore, strengthened the remnants of feudalism on the Southern countryside. Du Bois, both as acute sociologist and sensitive observer of the Negro's

fate, recorded some of his impressions in *Souls of Black Folk*. Moreover, he engaged in a thorough study of an Alabama Negro farm area in 1906 at the behest of the United States Commissioner of Labor. It was paid for, but never published, on the grounds that it "touched on political matters." No wonder—for by 1910 official statistics reported 75.3 per cent of the Southern Negro farmers were tenants and sharecroppers.

Not Du Bois, but Monroe Trotter and his *Boston Guardian* began the attack on Booker T. Washington. Du Bois was at this time preoccupied with sociology, with placing the facts at the disposal of the powers that be. But Washington's setting up of a Negro "ghost government" at Tuskegee to control the Negroes on behalf of capital provoked increasing opposition from the new Negro intelligentsia, Du Bois included. The Atlanta riot in 1906 and the Tuskegee dictatorship ripped apart Du Bois' belief that the Negro was "a concrete group of living beings artificially set off by themselves and capable of almost laboratory experiments."

### The Talented Tenth and Its Program

Du Bois conceived that the intense political activity in the United States between 1892 and 1912 placed the Negro electorate in a decisive position. To parliamentary democracy he attributed a miraculous power: "...with the right to vote goes everything; freedom, manhood, the honor of your wives, the chastity of your daughters, the right to work, and the chance to rise..." Hand in hand with these miraculous powers of the ballot went his conception of a Talented Tenth which would uplift the illiterate and poverty-stricken Negro mass to the level of an advanced world.

In Du Bois' *Philadelphia Negro* (1895), this conception is already established. He writes that the Negro upper class "forms the realized idea of the group." And Du Bois finds his precedent: after a series of riots and repressions culminating in 1840, the Philadelphia Negroes were in a desperate situation. New European immigrants were pressing them against the wall economically.

It was at this time that there arose to prominence and power as remarkable a trade guild as ever ruled a medieval city. It took complete leadership of the bewildered group of Negroes and led them steadily onto a degree of affluence, culture and respect such as has probably never been surpassed in the history of the Negro in America.

This leadership, according to Du Bois, consisted of southern house servants who evolved into a caterers guild in Philadelphia. Such a narrow craft conception of leadership was possible in the Nineteenth Century, but was out of step with reality at the beginning of the industrial Twentieth.

The fetishism of education, which has always been strong in the U. S., experienced a very particular revival at the turn of the century. Around this time John Dewey's notion of applied scientific intelligence was brought forward to revolutionize formal schooling. The classroom was to be a model society, and worse, society was considered a model classroom. According to Dewey, Veblen, Parrington,

Beard, leadership of the offensive against monopoly capitalism was now to emanate from the Academy

Du Bois' Talented Tenth was no mere imitation of this doctrine of Progressivism but a natural exaggeration rooted in the extreme conditions of Negro life. In order to insure the most painless integration of the Negro into industry, Booker T. Washington had emphasized manual labor training. The Negro intelligentsia's attack on Washington, and implicitly on Andrew Carnegie and other industrialists supporting the Tuskegee idea, was the self-defense of their very being.

The most obvious characteristic of the Negro upper class, then even more than now, is that it parallels the white middle class rather than the capitalist-rulers who control production. As a result, the educational level of the Negro professional is far higher than his occupational or income level. One result of this excruciating disparity is self-consciousness, self-idealization, an ideological yearning and reaching out to a future of higher status and social achievement. The Negro intelligentsia in Northern cities was excluded from serving bourgeois society. It was isolated from the Negro majority living on the Southern countryside. It was also isolated from the Negroes in the urban Ghetto. Thus the notion of a Talented Tenth with a historical mission and exalted function was felt necessary to fill this painful vacuum in Negro and Negro-American class relations.

Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk*, a product of this period, is widely celebrated to this day. The isolation of the Negro intelligentsia lent a stylistic power and passion—yet tempered and lyrical—to these essays. North and South, the post-Civil War counter-revolution was the supreme fact in American Negro life; lynching was an open wound—between 1885 and 1894 the murder of seventeen hundred Negroes was a tragically accurate index to the degree of Southern barbarism. Du Bois on the fate of the Southern Negro peasantry reads like the writings of the great Russian intellectuals isolated in a backward, peasant sub-continent and jailed in the vast darkness of Czarism, prior to the rise of the Russian proletariat.

However deep its historical roots, the Talented Tenth remains a conception of limiting, restraining and subordinating the Negro masses. Pleading for higher education of the Negro, Du Bois warned that only in this way could "demagogic" leadership of the Negro masses be avoided. No sooner did there arise a Negro proletariat, integrated into American labor by the mechanism of capitalist production, than the Du Bois-Washington dispute was altogether transcended. The Talented Tenth did not serve to release and guide these new energies, it fettered them; it substituted solidarity with liberal reformism for the specifically new forces and independent activities of the Negro masses.

### From Sociology to History

In *The German Ideology* Marx explains that the German bourgeoisie, having arrived late on the world scene, failed to destroy feudal vestiges, to achieve national unification or foreign conquest, and succeeded in triumphing

only in the "shadow world" of ideas. With due respect for all differences, a similar generalization might be made of the post-Civil War Negro. Nowhere in America was the gap between actuality and need so great. The very existence of the Negro Ghetto and landless peasantry necessitated a vision of their negation through the destruction of that society which nurtured serfdom and a Ghetto existence. If Du Bois programmatically was confined more or less to the limits set by white petty-bourgeois liberalism, he could far transcend these limits in his historical works. His speech on Reconstruction before the American Historical Association in 1909, *John Brown*, and finally *Black Reconstruction*—each provided a greater sensation for an ever growing audience. Myrdal and others today can appropriate Du Bois' sociology but not his history.

His transition from sociology to history was not a mere transition in modes of thought or personal interest; it formed part of the blood and anguish of Du Bois' contemporaneity. The conflict with Booker T. Washington had deepened against Du Bois' own will. The 1906 Atlanta riot cast doubt upon the purposes and effects of his sociological investigations. The insurgency of the Negro intelligentsia required not only a symbolic visit to John Brown's grave, but an ideological pilgrimage to the Negro and the nation on the eve of Civil War.

Here were no controlled experiments conducted by a Talented Tenth. "Most Americans . . . had heard of Douglass, they knew of fugitive slaves, but of *the living organized struggling group that made both these phenomena possible* they had no conception." (My italics) But John Brown knew better than anyone else that he embodied the insurrectionary spirit of the slave mass and was thereby essentially a Negro creation. Because of that same insight Du Bois could declare with such clarity that the Second American Revolution was inevitable. Slavery "had to die by revolution and not by milder means. And this men knew and they had known it for a hundred years. Yet they shrank and trembled. From round about this white and blinding path . . . flew equivocations, lies, thievings and red murders." Some pages later, Du Bois appropriately asks, "Was John Brown an episode or an eternal truth?"

Du Bois' version of John Brown was heavily hit by Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the *Nation* and heir-apparent to Abolition, who was soon to head the new-born NAACP. In Villard's volume on Brown, Harper's Ferry is reduced to an episode. Villard re-appropriated Brown for the glory of American morality in general and the Northern conscience in particular—and, with magnificent inconsistency, even to Villard's own pacifism. Petty-bourgeois liberalism, panic-stricken by the depression of 1907, but safely confined to Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, wildly applauded Villard's volume.

In reaching the heights of his historical conceptions on the Civil War, Du Bois did not abandon either his directed Darwinism or Talented Tenth. Against the clamor about racial inter-marriage, Du Bois in the final chapter of *John Brown* can only answer: "The thoughtful selection of the schools and laboratory is the ideal of future marriage . . . we can substitute a civilized human selection of husbands

and wives which shall insure the survival of the fittest." If John Brown demonstrates, through history, the inevitability of social revolution, then a sociology subordinated to biological evolution demonstrates for Du Bois that "Revolution is not a test of capacity; it is always a loss and lowering of ideals." The *Nation's* reviewer slammed the book, but complimented the last chapter.

Du Bois will carry this fear of mass upheaval, this fixed conception of a specialized function for a specialized Talented Tenth, over into *Black Reconstruction*, but there it will take a different form, more befitting the time and theme of its writing.

### Early Years of the NAACP

The white liberals and quasi-socialists who sponsored the NAACP fancied themselves of direct Abolitionist lineage. This was a delusion: the Abolitionists were revolutionary, their descendants were reformists. Du Bois, the only Negro in the NAACP leadership, suffered as a consequence.

Although the Abolitionists had attempted to dominate the Negroes within their ranks, this was possible in individual cases, not with the mass. The white Abolitionists, consciously or otherwise, were forced to base themselves upon the rebellious and fugitive slaves. Nat Turner made Garrison famous in the 1830's; Frederick Douglass and the Underground Railroad kept the movement from disintegrating in the 1840's; the battles over the return of fugitive slaves together with John Brown's attempted slave insurrection made Abolition a burning issue during the 1850's.

The Talented Tenth of Du Bois' day, however, was in a different position. It could be dominated—and was—because it was isolated from the Negro masses.

Garrison avoided political activity entirely out of exaggerated fear of being contaminated by the slave power. Oswald Garrison Villard and others immediately plunged the new-born NAACP into the misadventure of supporting the pro-Southern Democrat, Woodrow Wilson! Thus Twentieth century liberalism was incorporating the Negro in its futile protests against the encroachment of the monopolies.

Yet even in this unpropitious environment Du Bois found a means of expression. The sponsors of the NAACP had limited their plans mainly to legal action and enlisting the big names of liberalism. Du Bois, almost completely on his own, emphasized the need for a Negro magazine. *The Crisis* proved to be a great success, reaching over a hundred thousand circulation in less than ten years. Monroe Trotter's *Boston Guardian* had by its militant policy prepared the Negro public years in advance for their protests against Booker T. Washington's Boston speech in 1905. J. Max Barber's militant *Voice of the Negro*, published in the South, had reached a phenomenal 17,000 circulation when the Atlanta riot drove the editor out of town. The Negro migrations North provided a ready-made audience, while the revolutionary implications of the Negro struggle were an immediate stimulus to bold and effective propaganda. At the height of *The Crisis'* success, the government tried to ban it from the mails.

World War I, which destroyed the world of Booker T. Washington, made precarious the world of W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois recognized this wistfully. "The Races Congress, held in July 1911 in London, would have marked an epoch in the cultural history of the world, if it had not been followed so quickly by the World War." (*Dusk of Dawn*)

The Tuskegee machine expired even before Booker T. Washington's death in 1915. The Negro petty-bourgeoisie was solidifying the alliance with its white counterpart. The Negro working class was yet to be reinforced by the hundreds of thousands soon to enter war industries. Meanwhile the strains in the economy were not acute. The Socialist Party, like its sister parties in Europe, had mellowed; membership in the IWW was declared incompatible with membership in the Socialist Party. More than ever Debs' radicalism seemed an individual phenomenon. Samuel Gompers was happily wedded to capital in the National Civil Federation.

The "Amenia Conference" in 1915 which gathered together former supporters as well as opponents of Booker T. Washington prided itself in a resolution "that its members had arrived at a virtual unanimity of opinion in regard to certain principles and that a more or less definite result may be expected from its deliberations." What definite result? "In 1916 we found ourselves politically helpless. We had no choice." Moreover, when America entered the war it was the pressure of a typical petty-bourgeois, Joel Spingarn, that over-rode Du Bois' doubts about supporting the war. Spingarn was only one of that layer of quasi-socialist intellectuals—Charles Edward Russell, W. E. Walling, Mary White Ovington, John Dewey—all founders of the NAACP who enlisted Progressivism, Socialism, the Negro and the proletariat behind the war-making of Woodrow Wilson.

It remains impossible for Du Bois, even retrospectively, to correctly evaluate what happened. In tribute to Spingarn:

It was mainly due to his advice and influence, that I became during the World War nearer to feeling myself a real and full American than ever before or since.

Yet at the same time he can say:

I am less sure now than then of the soundness of this war attitude... I do not know. I am puzzled... In my effort to reconstruct in memory the fight of the NAACP during the World War, I have difficulty in thinking clearly. (*Dusk of Dawn*)

The failure of Du Bois' scientific rationality in the face of imperialist war was only a more extreme form of the bankruptcy of American liberalism before the same phenomenon.

### Du Bois and Garveyism

Paternalistic liberalism was exploded by the Negro masses through two fundamental social developments: the proletarianization during wartime and the colonial revolts throughout the world of color. The craft-corrupted AFL locked out the Negro and all unskilled workers from organization and class expression. The response of the Negro

masses to industrial society was projected onto the scale of open colonial revolt outside America. As a consequence, the British and French rulers of Africa considered Garveyism as the black variant of international Bolshevism.

Out of this racial solidarity of the Negro masses was born a hatred for that minority, mainly mulatto, who were most distant from them and closest to reigning bourgeois society. For its attempted integration into—and imitativeness of—its counterpart in bourgeois society, the Talented Tenth was placed under a sustained assault by the aroused Negro masses.

An incidental irony of this whole conflict was that Du Bois reached Africa; few Garveyites did. The Garvey movement, attempting to reconstruct a new free Africa through the American Negro, actually reconstructed a new, freer American Negro through Africa as a symbol and conception. Du Bois, intent on "practicality," proceeded to the task of internationalizing a Talented Tenth. President Coolidge appointed him, Envoy-Extraordinary to Liberia in 1924. Through his own energies Du Bois had organized the Pan-African Congress earlier. The third Pan-African Congress made connections with Harold Laski, Ramsay MacDonald and Beatrice Webb. But Du Bois was only internationalizing the dilemmas of his own position in America.

His project died because the imperialists saw in Du Bois merely the lighter shadow of Garveyism while the Garveyites saw in Du Bois merely subservience to imperialism. At home Du Bois found "the board of Directors of the NAACP not particularly interested. The older liberalism among the white people did not envisage Africa and the colored peoples of the world."

The negative side of "Back-to-Africa" was developing in the United States. It was the "Jazz Age" and the Negro was in vogue. The white intellectuals came to admire the Negro as a *primitive*; this was *their* image of the Negro's contribution. William Lloyd Garrison admonished the Negroes not to smoke, drink or swear, and thus make themselves worthy of the approval of white society. A century later Carl Van Vechten told the Negro to sing, dance and play to be worth the attention of a middle-class Bohemia.

Du Bois saw a new function of the Talented Tenth in the encouragement and guidance of Negro cultural expression as a bridge to the sympathy and support of enlightened white liberalism. The task was to *resist* the growing conception of the Negro as a child of Nature. It was precisely over this problem that Du Bois clashed with Langston Hughes and others who considered him "old-guard" and "upper-crust." (Langston Hughes: *The Big Sea*)

*Darkwater*, Du Bois' own work of that period, is no longer tempered and lyrical; it is harsh and shrill. The "unreasonable" capitalists and imperialists on one side, and the "unreasonable" Garveyites on the other, make for alternate pages of pleading and threatening which tend to cancel each other out. In one essay, "Work and Wealth," Du Bois effectively delineates the role of the craft union leadership faced with the mass influx of unskilled Negro workers, a situation which brought on the St. Louis riot of

1919. This and one or two other essays are minor triumphs of Du Bois as social analyst and historian during the years which marked the emergence of the Negro mass movement.

### Black Reconstruction and the New Deal

The main theme of *Black Reconstruction*, published in 1935, is not that "the Negro is an average, an ordinary human being." Indeed the critics of Du Bois' volume attacked him for not limiting himself to proving that alone. Du Bois had dealt with Reconstruction a number of times previously, but this was a new stage. "The emancipation of man is the emancipation of labor, and the emancipation of labor is the freeing of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown and black..." Du Bois was now seeking an historical anticipation of the modern proletariat in the Civil War Negro. His very errors and exaggerations tend to underscore the extent of his effort to incorporate the Negro into modern proletarian history.

In the totality of style, passion, historical sweep, prodigious research, and boldness of interpretation, Du Bois here far outdistances his contemporaries, the Beards and the Schlesingers. A great work of this kind is always a climax of historical accumulation. Everything was poured into its writing: the slave system, the slave insurrections, the murder of Abolitionists, fugitive slave rescues, the last letters of John Brown, the Civil War, the intervention of Marx's International Workingmen's Association, the Year of Jubilee, the Black Codes, Ku Klux Klan terrorism, post-Reconstruction peonage, the monstrous crimes of world imperialism, southern lynching, northern labor chauvinism, World War, the crash of 1929, the pauperization of the Negro masses and intelligentsia both, Italy's assault on Ethiopia, the rise of industrial unionism, new waves of Southern terror, the threat of another world war.

In the chapter entitled "The General Strike," Du Bois presents the Negroes' physical movement from the Underground Railroad to the mass enlistment in the Union Army, not as the flight of a broken people, but as a purposeful weakening and paralysis of Southern economy, as the necessary prelude to its fundamental reconstruction. This was part of a larger conception that the Negro in the South was not simply a long-suffering but essentially a revolutionary laboring class which attempted "prematurely" to remake Southern society in its own image through land seizures and government based upon mass political participation. And if the prosperity of European imperialism was built on the massacre of the Paris Communards, America's rise as a participant and leader in world plunder was built on the unbridled deceit and terror which broke Black Reconstruction in the South.

This bold, new conception startled the bourgeois historical writers, petty-bourgeois radicals and Negro intellectuals. Characteristically the liberals of the *Nation* and *New Republic* with the Stalinists of the *New Masses*, just then plunging up to their necks into liberal-capitalist Popular Frontism, conducted a united assault upon Du Bois' history. The Stalinists launched James Allen's *Reconstruction: the Battle for Democracy*, as a substitute. Their attack on

*Black Reconstruction* in a more concealed fashion has continued up to this day.

Having gone so far to the left (even ultra-left) in assaying the Radical state governments of the post-Civil War period as a "dictatorship of the proletariat," Du Bois asserts that they were sponsored through self-interest by the Northern dictatorship of industrial and finance capital. The critics latched on to this obvious incongruity and tried to shake the whole book apart with it. But in this incongruity Du Bois is maintaining his principle of the *guardianship of the masses* by the professorial chair, the test-tube laboratory, private or government philanthropy, or an entrenched intellectual caste. The history of the revolutionary Negro elicits from him an accurate, forceful expression. But immediately there comes to the surface at the same time the classical fears of the highly trained intellectual: it is precisely in revolutionary times that the masses seem most untutored, undisciplined, capable of creating only incessant "violence and dislocation of human civilization" (*Dusk of Dawn*), rather than a new social order, a new way of living, a new stage of thought.

If Du Bois reached a more advanced position than Dewey, Beard, Farrington and the other intellectuals produced by the Progressive Era, it is because the Negro as a whole was not and could not have been incorporated into that era. But in his fundamental inability to comprehend the role of the modern proletariat—Negro and white—and embrace all of its capacities and potential, Du Bois demonstrates that, despite the highly radical coloration of his later beliefs, he remains fixed in the prejudices of the protest movement of small-farmer Populism and urban middle class Progressivism between 1885 and 1915.

### Program for the Thirties

The violence of this contradiction in Du Bois has propelled him to strange places programmatically. Characteristically, in 1918, a year after the Russian Revolution, Du Bois organized the "Negro Cooperative Guild." During the world-wide economic crisis of the nineteen thirties, Du Bois developed a full-blown program for a planned Negro economy. Of course this was, in a way, an expression of his justified suspicions that New Deal planning would affect little change in the Negro's economic status. But Du Bois' solution is again adaptation to new conditions for the functioning and fulfillment of the Talented Tenth.

In explaining his program, Du Bois reveals the real lack in his theoretical equipment. Writing in *The Crisis* on the Negro's relation to Marxism, Du Bois frankly identifies his planned Negro economy with pre-Marxian Utopianism. Strong on sociology and history, there is a general lack of economics in Du Bois' writings. Thus, when the Negro was being proletarianized on the largest scale, Du Bois could write:

The American Negro is primarily a consumer in the sense that his place and power in the industrial process is low and small. . . I see this chance for planning in the role which the Negro plays as consumer. In the future reorganization of industry the consumer as against the producer is going to become the key man.

Here is revealed the vast gap between Du Bois and

Marxism which sees the consumer and consumption as functions of production.

When Du Bois broke with the NAACP in 1935, he spoke very critically of the fate that had overtaken the Talented Tenth, which had sought to integrate itself individually into bourgeois society rather than lead the Negro masses. But without their self-identification with the perspective of mass social revolution, no other fate was possible. Indicative of this was the replacement by a first rate lobbyist, Walter White, for the first-rate theoretician and propagandist who had left the leadership of the NAACP.

And when Du Bois called a Conference on "Economic Planning and the Negro" in 1940 in Atlanta, the attendant Negro intelligentsia contained a large sprinkling of economic planners, not of a separate Negro economy, but for the New Deal, for the dominant, capitalist economy! In the same year as this conference of planners, a hundred thousand Negroes pledged themselves to a March-on-Washington, which could have delivered a deadly blow to the pretensions of New Dealism. Never was Du Bois so isolated from the actual living mass movement as he was after detailing the heroic efforts of the lowliest slave masses during Black Reconstruction, to create a new society. This paradox has run the full course of Du Bois' life.

### Present Sympathy with Stalinism

The current affiliation of Du Bois adds a great deal to Stalinism. It adds nothing to Du Bois. For the time being his hostility to American imperialism for its long betrayal of the Negroes finds a congenial refuge in Stalinism. There he can find embodied in a single movement the two ideals which have dominated his life work in regard to the Negroes: the conception of the Talented Tenth and the urge toward international revolt. Stalinism operates on a world scale. And it approaches and manipulates the masses like an elite convinced of their backwardness and incapacity; hence the necessity to dictate, plan and administer for them from the heights of superior knowledge and wisdom.

This pitiable political decline has been accompanied by a total loss of theoretical moorings. Reviewing Myrdal's *American Dilemma* in 1944, Du Bois gave it unqualified approval. A year later, Du Bois wrote that the problem of a "harsh" or "soft" peace with Germany was the same as the problem of reconstructing the South after the Civil War! Writing in the *Negro Digest* of February 1950 in defense of Paul Robeson, he says: "The American Civil War was not fought to free the slaves and if it accomplished this partially, a wiser nation could have done more by peace than by murder and destruction." Du Bois thus lands smack in the middle of that conservative American historiography which has been trying to prove for nearly a hundred years that the Civil War was not an irrepressible conflict, but could have been avoided, if only there had been less "fanaticism" on the part of both slavery and anti-slavery! What then becomes of Du Bois' *John Brown* and at least seventy-five per cent of all Negro historical works?

Du Bois continues "... our New Deal was socialism pure and simple and it must be restored..." Are there any serious thinkers today, from Republicans to Stalinists, who

believe *both* in the first and the second halves of this preposterous proposition? Amidst the greatest successes of the New Deal, Du Bois could write that the rebuilding of America in the modern world, "whether it comes now or a century later, will and must go back to . . . Reconstruction in the United States . . . for slaves black, brown, yellow and white under a dictatorship of the proletariat." Four years later Du Bois, facing the united hostility of the pseudo-radical intellectuals on this question, insisted on repeating his exaggerated formulations that the flight of the slaves, the "general strike" was followed by a "dictatorship of black labor" during Reconstruction. (*Black Folk, Then and Now*, 1939). Today, in the face of atomic war, imperialist counter-revolution, and universal chaos and crisis, Du Bois has nothing to counterpose but New Deal. "Socialism pure and simple!"

### Contribution to Revolutionary Perspective

The present generation of Negro intellectuals has one immense advantage over Du Bois. The last generation of social experience has been more permeated with the dynamics of the class struggle out of which the future will be created than all of Du Bois' eighty-two years. Yet his earlier sociological writings, his *Black Reconstruction*, and even *Souls of Black Folk* are imperishable. Such successes are dependent upon self-identification with the movement

and sentiments of the broad masses, and recognition, even though limited, of the insurgence of those generally considered the most powerless and retarded—the Negro millions in America.

Du Bois wrote early in the century "... the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with second sight in this American world." Convulsive decades in human history have filled this intuitive observation with pressing reality. Speaking to the Association of Negro History in 1939, W. T. Fontaine pointed out that the Negro intelligentsia is

not at all a socially unattached intelligentsia. (His emphasis) Consequently, "Black Reconstruction" by Du Bois is in its very inception an indictment of the democratic-liberal way of life. . . The mind of the Negro scholar today . . . presents a configuration generally antithetical to democratic-liberal concepts, thought patterns and techniques. . . The subtle casts of an old world view shall be broken, and time transformed by might of mind and hand, shall yet yield the black man's contribution.

Whenever he was inspired by the Negro masses, Du Bois has made notable contributions to the breaking of the traditional moulds of American thought. His work is restricted to the Negro question only in origin and theme; its full implications belong to the search for a new way of life for the whole American people by the best representatives of American thought in our time.

## Two Lessons of Reconstruction

By WILLIAM F. WARDE

As the Negro millions have risen up and their struggles stir America from top to bottom, students of past history and participants in current history have turned their thoughts to that epoch when the Negro question also held the center of the stage and the Negro masses first came forward as an independent political power. The forces preparing for new revolutionary collisions are, each in their own way, drawn toward a re-examination and reappraisal of the course of the Civil War, i.e., the Second American Revolution.

From the foundation of the United States the Northern capitalists and Southern planters had contended for total sovereignty over the nation. By crushing the pro-slavery rebellion the capitalists at last gained their prime objective, confirming by armed force the supremacy won through Lincoln's election. Naturally bourgeois historians incline to center their attention upon that part of the revolutionary process by which their own class conquered supreme power and to regard the revolution as virtually completed at that point.

They recoil from the aftermath of the Civil War for still other reasons. Reconstruction not only disclosed the capacities of the colored people for bold and creative deeds but exposes above all the real nature of the capitalist class. The bourgeois writers fear to dwell upon Reconstruction as

a criminal dreads to return to the scene of his crime. For it was then and there that the capitalist rulers killed the hopes of the Negro freedmen for full emancipation and conspired to deliver them back into bondage.

On the other side, by a sure instinct Negro and radical writers have become increasingly absorbed in the study of Reconstruction. Their reappraisal of the period was initiated in 1935 by the Negro scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois, in *Black Reconstruction*, which remains one of the foremost contributions to American history in our generation.

As Du Bois emphasizes, after the military defeat of the Confederacy had disposed of the contest between the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces on a national scale, the battle for supremacy between the people and the planters, the forces of revolution and counter-revolution, had still to be fought out and decided within the Southern States.

Following Lee's surrender to Grant early in 1865, it was easily possible to proceed to a thoroughgoing renovation of the South along democratic lines. The former slave-holding potentates had been militarily beaten, economically and politically dispossessed, and were so disgraced and demoralized they could offer no serious political or physical resistance.

At that juncture there were only two real powers in the South. First and foremost was the Federal government headed by the Republican Party and controlled by the in-

dustrial capitalists. They were the victors, the conquerors, the directors of the occupying forces. They had not only the military power but, what was more important, the confidence and allegiance of the progressive forces throughout the country.

The other power was the might of the aroused masses headed by the four million Negro freedmen with their allies among the small farmers and poor whites. If these two powers had marched along together down freedom's road, they would have constituted an invincible combination.

### Three Main Stages: 1865-1876

But something quite different resulted. What started out, at the close of the Civil War, as an alliance between the Northern men of means and the black and white plebeians of the South against the landed aristocracy terminated in 1876 with a union between the capitalist magnates and the planters against the Southern masses and their Negro vanguard.

The eleven years of Reconstruction fall into three main stages. (1) The years 1865-1866 when the revolution in the South was arrested by the conservative Northern bourgeoisie, marked time, and missed its most favorable opportunities. (2) The years of revolutionary resurgence from 1867 to the early 70's when the Radical Republicans gained full command of the situation at Washington and joined with the Negro masses and their white allies to institute through armed force the first and only democratic regime in the South. (3) The years of revolutionary recession ending with 1876 when Northern capitalism definitively broke with the Southern masses, threw its decisive weight against their struggles, and finally concluded a pact with the planters which sealed the fate of the revolution and reestablished the "white supremacists" in the South.

The various elements in the anti-slavery coalition were animated by different, and at times, conflicting interests and purposes. The main driving force of the revolutionary movement emanated from the four million freedmen in the South. They wanted relief from age-old oppression and insufferable exploitation. They desired land, jobs, a decent living; civil rights and political power represented by the vote; legal and racial equality; educational and cultural opportunities. These demands were eloquently voiced during the canvass for the Constitutional Convention of 1867 by a Negro voter at Selma, Alabama who held up a red (Radical) ticket and shouted: "Forty acres of land! A mule! freedom! votes! equal of white man!"

These measures necessitated turning the entire structure of the old South upside down. The confiscation of the land owned by the big proprietors, its partition and distribution among the landless laborers meant an agrarian revolution. The ballot and freedom of organization meant the transference of political power into Negro hands, especially in states where they were the majority. Ex-slaves on an equal footing with their former owners and taskmasters meant undermining the pyramid of class rule and privilege.

The Northern rulers had different aims, now that they had been lifted to the top by the anti-slavery movement.

The triumphant capitalists wanted to perpetuate their grip upon the national government, increase their control over industry and agriculture, and grab the natural resources. In order to promote this program their political representatives had to maneuver with the other forces in the country. On the right, they had to prevent the revival of the political influence of the Southern planters and their Northern accomplice, the Democratic Party. On the left, they had to curb the demands of the lower classes, North or South. The Republican bourgeoisie was willing to use any of these other classes as tools in the furtherance of its own aims, but was determined to keep them all in a subordinate position.

Most of the Republican leaders had been slow and reluctant to emancipate the slaves; during the Civil War they had tried to keep Negroes in the background and even out of the Union Army. Now that the menace of the Confederacy had been eliminated, the Republican bourgeoisie sought to hold the Negroes in leash, lest they overstep the bounds of bourgeois proprieties.

Thus, in the early part of Reconstruction, the most moderate elements through President Johnson and Secretary of State Seward moved to effect a speedy reconciliation with the defeated planters and bring them back into the state and national administrations. They sponsored Constitutional Conventions in the Southern States in 1864-1865 toward this end.

### Radical and Conservative Republicans

The conservative Republicans sought to hold reconstruction of the seceded states to the minimum without granting even voting rights to the freedmen. Johnson condoned the new Black Codes passed to police and suppress the Negroes, did little to help improve their conditions, and went so far as to veto the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights Bills.

The subservience of the President to the counter-revolution endangered all the fruits of victory. He was abusing the executive powers swollen by the war to reverse the course of the democratic revolution. Charles Sumner aptly wrote that the Negroes "should have had a Moses as a President; but they found a Pharaoh."

President Johnson's reactionary course encountered massive resistance from the people, both North and South, as well as in his own party. The opponents of Johnson's conciliatory course did not all have the same attitude toward the Negro struggle and the democratization of the South. The majority of Radical Republican leaders were primarily concerned with preventing the Democratic Party from regaining power in Washington.

Howard N. Beale explains their social motives. "Stevens at least was genuinely a radical. He wanted to confiscate planter property and divide it among Negroes. The Republican Party never seriously considered this, because, while it would have served certain party purposes, the majority of Republican leaders and party members had not the least interest in social revolution, even in a distant section. They were men of property who would not en-

danger the sanctity of property rights for Negroes or poor Southern white men any more than they would divide ownership of their own factories or farms with Northern workingmen. There were sighs of *Northern* relief when death removed Stevens' troublesome radicalism. The Negro wanted forty acres and a mule, but his Republican backers had no serious thought of turning political into social and economic revolution." ("On Rewriting Reconstruction History," *American Historical Review*, July 1940.)

The more militant Radical leaders like Stevens and Sumner were the last of the great line of resolute representatives of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, like Cromwell, Robespierre, and Sam Adams. Stevens was a true friend of the Negro all his life, but he also recognized that the interests of capitalist industry could best be promoted by exterminating the slave power root and branch.

Fortunately, the Radicals had control of Congress. Directed by Stevens, Sumner and their colleagues, prodded by the Abolitionists led by Wendell Phillips and Frederick Douglass, and urged onward by the Negro masses, the Radicals set up a Congressional Committee of Fifteen. This Republican Directorate pushed through a series of measures to prolong military rule in the South; exclude the secessionist states until they had been remodeled to their satisfaction; establish regimes which gave the Negroes freedom, the vote, legal and civil rights, and aid through the Freedmen's Bureau and similar agencies.

At the same time, the efforts of Sumner to get schools and homes, and of Stevens to get land for the Negroes were turned down.

The conflict between President Johnson and the Radicals continued through 1867, during which the Radicals failed to impeach Johnson by a single vote in the Senate.

### Direct Action by the Masses

While this struggle was going on in the governing circles at Washington, the masses in the South were on the move. Direct action by the insurgent people is the most salient feature of a revolution. The Negroes whose vanguard had fled the plantations to find freedom, who had fought in the Union Armies and were uplifted by the vision of a new world, started to reconstruct the South they longed for.

As early as 1864, free Negroes in the North had held Equal Rights Conventions which were sharply critical of Republican policy and energetically set forth the demands of the Negroes. Southern Negroes began to organize politically as soon as they could. Beginning with the summer and fall of 1865, Colored People's Conventions in most Southern states outlined a new Bill of Rights which included repeal of the Black Codes, the right to serve on juries, to vote, to own land, to bear arms, to free public education, etc.

The Negroes did not always wait for sanction or approval of any constituted authorities or laws to secure these rights, especially in regard to the land and the right to bear arms. In a number of areas they seized possession of the plantations, divided the land amongst themselves, and set up their own local forms of administration. On the Sea

Islands off Georgia and South Carolina, for example, 40,000 freedmen each took 40 acres of land and worked it on their own account. When the former owners came later to claim their plantations, these new proprietors armed themselves and resisted. Similar expropriations and clashes took place elsewhere, not only between planters and Negroes, but between land-hungry freedmen and Federal troops. Land seizures would have taken place on a far larger scale if the freedmen did not have faith in Republican promises and expected that land would be handed to them as it was to the homesteaders in the West.

At the same time Negro troops held on to their rifles and Negro civilians began to arm themselves. Citizens committees were formed or sprang up spontaneously to guard Negroes from actual or threatened assaults which were not always energetically repulsed by Federal commanders.

The initiative shown by the emancipated Negroes, their rapid overcoming of handicaps and achievements under the Reconstruction governments have been cited by sympathetic observers as evidence that, given equal opportunities, black citizens can prove themselves equal with the whites. It is good of them to recognize this—but there is more to the matter than that. Even Du Bois insists that the freedmen were just ordinary folks, no better and no worse than their white counterparts. This may serve to refute the doctrine of racial inferiority, but it is inadequate for a correct appraisal of the Negro's role during Reconstruction. Conditions make people as much as people make conditions—and revolutionary upheavals place ordinary human beings in exceptional situations which make unusual demands upon their capacities, call forth greater efforts, and result in remarkable deeds. That was the case with the Southern Negroes. They became the vanguard of the revolutionary forces, not at all because they had been prepared by experience and education to assume that role, but because their social situation and the tasks of the times thrust them, willy-nilly, to the forefront of the mass movement.

The most significant aspect of Negro participation in these events is the fact that, because of their social status as the most exploited and oppressed section of the laboring population, the Negroes and their leaders were compelled to spring farthest forward in seeking satisfaction for their needs and thereby occupied the most advanced political positions and advocated the most progressive proposals.

This highly radical quality was unmistakably clear on the crucial land question, the touchstone of the agrarian revolution. While the Republican bourgeoisie dickered and evaded decision, rejecting Stevens' proposals, the most audacious Negroes proceeded to settle the issue by taking land and cultivating it. While the Republicans debated how much—or how little—liberty they could safely extend to Negro citizens, the Negroes voiced demands, not only for themselves but for the whole people, for free public education, correction of criminal codes and many other reforms which far outstripped the ideas and intentions of the Northern overlords. Throughout the South Negroes took the lead

in establishing and extending the power of the masses and instituting democratic forms of administration.

As the Negroes became more independent and formidable, determined to carry democratization to its limits, they not only terrified the planters but alienated their Northern patrons. Just as the Northern capitalists held down the industrial workers and small producers in the North and West, so they strove to keep in their place the black agricultural toilers of the south. However, so long as they had not settled accounts with the "lords of the lash," they could not completely ignore the demands raised by the black millions. These masses were a vital force which kept exerting tremendous pressure upon Washington and pushing it forward.

The Conventions of 1867-68, composed of Negro and white delegates, and the state governments issuing from them instituted a new type of government in the South. Describing their remarkable activities in *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois incorrectly defines these Radically Reconstructed governments as "dictatorships of labor," analogous to the Soviet dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Radical governments were dictatorial inasmuch as they were subject to Federal military commanders, rested on the bayonets of the Northern troops, and held down the disfranchised ex-slave holders by direct force. But they were also highly democratic and progressive because they aimed to replace the despotism of the planters with an extension of the power of the people. The main edge of the dictatorship was directed against the ex-slaveholding aristocracy, not against the Negroes; it granted greater rights and freedom to the masses, instead of restricting them; and used force against the privileged, and not for them.

### Character of the Governments

However, the central and dominating role in these governments belonged to the bourgeois elements. The plebeian participants were not industrial proletarians but landless agricultural workers who aspired to become small owners and producers. Thus these governments can be more properly characterized as dictatorships of the bourgeoisie, democratically supported by the Negro and white masses, actual potential small farmers.

The Southern revolution was not proletarian in its character or socialist in its aims, as Du Bois believed, but plebeian, petty-bourgeois in its social basis and bourgeois in its tasks. It did not pass beyond the foundations of private ownership, production for the market and capitalist relations. But within the broad framework of these bourgeois relations, the revolution could take on different forms and proceed in different directions, according to the forces and policies that predominated.

While the bourgeoisie debated whether to effect immediate reunion with the landed aristocrats or to hold back the ex-slaveholders and support the freedmen until their own supremacy was nailed down, the bourgeois-democratic coalition contended over two methods of reconstructing the South. The first was the bourgeois-bureaucratic policy of those Radicals who used the masses as a counter-balance and weapon against the old rulers; the other was the ple-

beian democratic policy of the Abolitionists and Negroes who wanted to push democratization to the very end through united struggle against all the possessors of privilege. This struggle to determine whether the Southern revolution would be consummated according to the needs of the masses or be manipulated, restrained and abated by the big bourgeoisie came to the fore during this period of Reconstruction.

### What They Accomplished

The Radical Reconstruction governments had tremendous achievements to their credit which proved what could be done even with the beginnings of unity between the Negro and whites. They registered progress in the field of education and in the tax system, cut down illiteracy, abolished imprisonment for debt, did away with property qualifications for voting or holding office, and instituted other progressive reforms in city, county and state governments. As Du Bois notes: "There was not a single reform movement, a single step toward protest, a single experiment for betterment in which Negroes were not found in varying numbers," (p. 411.)

"The story of the last six years of the period of Reconstruction is one of counter-revolution—a counter-revolution effected under the forms of law where that was possible; effected by secrecy and by guile, where that would serve; effected openly regardless of the forms of law, with violence or the threat of violence, where that had to be." So a recent writer, Ralph Selph Henry, candidly summarizes the last chapter of Reconstruction. And he defends this historical crime in the name of the lesser evil. "But the counter-revolution was effected, at a cost to the South and its future incalculably great, justified only by the still greater cost of not effecting it." (*The Story of Reconstruction*, p. 401.)

The growing conservatism of the Republican leaders changed the relation of forces in the South. The white supremacists became considerably bolder, more outspoken, unrestrained, and powerful. They revived the Ku Klux Klan in the form of "White Leagues" and applied naked terror to rob the Negroes of their rights and gains and cow them into submission. For example, in the Mississippi elections of 1875, "nearly all the Democratic Clubs in the state were converted into armed military companies," wrote John R. Lynch, the colored representative in Congress.

The Negroes put up a stubborn and heroic resistance. But the revolutionary coalition grew weaker and within its ranks disintegration, demoralization and disillusionment set in. There was a series of splits within the Republican Party.

This process was crowned in 1876 by the deal between the managers of the Republican Party and the Democrats through which Hayes was permitted to assume the Presidency in return for acquiescence in the restoration of white supremacy to the South.

Two important lessons flow from this sketch of Reconstruction. One pertains to the relations between democracy and dictatorship; the other concerns the role of the capitalist rulers of the United States.

(1.) It is customary to counterpose the bare abstrac-

tions of democracy to dictatorship as though these two forms of rule were everywhere and under all conditions irreconcilable opposites. Reconstruction demonstrates that reality is more complex. The slaveholders' despotism smashed by the Civil War was utterly reactionary; so was the Bourbon-bourgeois autocracy which has dominated the South since the restoration of white supremacy, although both these dictatorships tried to disguise themselves behind democratic forms.

On the other hand, the bourgeois-military dictatorship backed by the masses which dominated the South at the flood-tide of the revolution was the shield and support of democracy, the indispensable form of the people's rule. It is an indisputable historical fact that the only time Negroes have ever enjoyed democracy in the South and effectively participated in its political and social life was

under the bayonets of the Federal armies and under the protection of their own organized defense forces.

(2.) Nowadays the Trumanites advise the Negroes to look toward the liberal capitalists and their political agents in Washington for equality. Much disillusionment in regard to the current civil rights struggle might have been avoided if the following lesson of Reconstruction had been known and assimilated. If the Northern capitalists feared and failed to give real equality and enduring freedom to the Negroes during their progressive days in the mid-19th century, how then can the present imperialist autocrats at Washington be expected to grant them in the middle of the 20th century when Big Business not only tyrannizes over the South but has become the foremost foe of the liberties of the entire people at home and on a world scale?

# Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism

## *The Socialist Workers Party Position on the Negro Struggle\**

Next to the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, the liberation of the Negro people from their degradation is the paramount problem of American society. These two social problems are integrally united. The only road to freedom for the workers, and to equality for the Negroes, is through their common struggle for the abolition of capitalism.

The Negro people in all aspects of their social and cultural life are a part of the American people. At the same time it must be recognized that the Negro struggle is not identical with the proletarian movement toward socialism. It exists as a distinct movement of an oppressed minority within the country, possessing its own historical origins, special characteristics, forms of development and methods of action. The economic, political, social and cultural degradation of the Negro people below the levels of even the most exploited layers of the working class places them in an exceptional position and impels them to play an exceptional role within the social structure of American capitalism.

\*The general line of this resolution was approved by the Socialist Workers Party national convention in 1948. It was then submitted for further discussion and amendment and adopted in its present form in February, 1950.

The Negro question in the United States represents a unique combination of the struggle for democracy by an oppressed minority with the working class struggle for socialism. The revolutionary party must take this dual nature of the Negro movement as the starting point for its theoretical and practical conclusions on this problem.

### **Role of Negro Movement**

Marxism teaches us that under imperialism, the proletariat is destined to be the leader of all oppressed classes and groups. Petty-bourgeois revisionists of Marxism pervert this conception into the thesis that the Negro movement is in essence helpless and useless unless directly led by the organized labor movement or the Marxist party. This conception is merely a transference into the labor movement of the bourgeois doctrine that the Negroes are so backward that they are incapable of independent action and must therefore at all times be led, if not by the bourgeoisie, then by the proletariat. However radically phrased, this doctrine represents a capitulation to Jim Crow prejudices, leads to an underestimation of the revolutionary tendencies of the Negro movement, and must be relentlessly opposed by the Marxist party.

At critical periods in this country's history, the Negroes have allied them-

selves with the revolutionary forces. The latter, as they approached decisive action, repeatedly found it necessary to reverse their previous opposition to the participation of Negroes.

To illustrate: The Army of Independence at the beginning rejected Negroes, but was compelled to change its stand. The Republican Party, which began by a readiness to confine slavery to the Southern states and was hostile to the Abolitionists, came to an alliance with the Negroes against the counter-revolutionary South. After a generation of slave revolts, often directly stimulated by the international struggle against slavery (Britain, France, Haiti), the Negroes organized the Underground Railroad which rescued tens of thousands of slaves from the South and established communications between the insurgent elements in the South and North. In addition, as propagandists and organizers, Negroes were the basis of the Abolition movement. The struggles centering around the Abolition agitation and especially the Fugitive Slave Law when the South attempted to restrict the democratic and civil liberties of the North, were the immediate causes which precipitated the Civil War. Once the revolutionary North directly sponsored the cause of the slaves, the Negroes threw full support behind the Republican Party.

During the Populist agitation of the 80's and 90's, the Negro farmers and agricultural workers organized the Southern Tenant Farmers Association, with a membership of a million and a quarter. When the Populist movement assumed national importance, the Negroes appended their organization to the Populist Party. At the height of the Populist struggle, Southern white Populists were constantly engaged in defending Populist Negroes against lynching and vigilante attacks by their political enemies.

The commercial bourgeoisie of the 18th century and the industrial bourgeoisie of the 19th century, after they had risen to power, betrayed the Negroes. The Negroes also found themselves deserted by the farmers of the Populist movement who, after they suffered defeat because of their inherent inability to carry through an independent struggle, made their peace with the capitalists.

### Gravitation to Revolution

The gravitation of the Negroes toward the camp of revolution has assumed varied forms in recent times. The leaders of the Garvey movement after World War I referred to themselves as the Negro part of the world-wide revolutionary movement led by Lenin and Trotsky. After the depression of 1929-1933 the Negroes broke with the Republicans and became ardent followers of the New Deal, but with loss of illusions about the New Deal they have repeatedly given demonstrations that they are ready to follow the lead of the CIO. The slavish political subordination of the CIO to the Roosevelt and Truman administrations has resulted in the formation of militant organizations like the March-on-Washington Movement, and the tendency to revolutionary protests.

By their entire history the Negro people have been prepared for participating side by side with the proletariat in the struggle to reconstruct society on revolutionary socialist foundations. On the other hand, the proletariat, which by the very nature of its position in capitalist society must abolish all classes and all forms of oppression, is alone able to guarantee the Negro people against a repetition of past betrayals.

Of the 14-15 million Negroes in the United States, the great majority, close to 10 million, live in the South. They are the crux of the Negro problem in the United States.

A large number live in the agricultural areas as tenant-farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural laborers. The most

backward elements in the country's rural economy are in the South and the millions of Negroes there constitute the most poverty-stricken workers in agriculture. The remains of the cotton slave plantation system, adapted to the needs of modern capitalism, keep millions of Negroes (and whites) in a state of bondage through sharecropping. Thus obsolete forms and methods of land cultivation are maintained. This system hampers the technical progress and development of the masses of Negroes, their initiative and education, which are essential for the fully productive utilization of the land.

This system is maintained and perpetuated by huge levies upon the national income which find their way chiefly into the pockets of the landlords, merchants and others who profit by the system.

The vestiges of the old plantation servitude and the predominance of sharecropping and tenant-farming on the lowest level have given rise to a corresponding social and political structure—the domination by landlords through terror and political disfranchisement of the masses, together with the maintenance and perpetuation of a political oligarchy—the Southern Bourbons. This oligarchy constitutes a nest of political reaction, inside and out of Congress. It is always in the forefront of the enemies of civil liberties. The political representatives of the Southern system have acquired enormous power in initiating, supplementing and sharpening the attacks of capital upon wages, working conditions and democratic rights.

Thus the Negro problem is not to be considered simply as the problem of the South, or worse still, restricted to the fight for Negro rights and equality. Only the destruction of the Southern system can free the Negroes but the destruction of the Southern system is an indispensable precondition for the economic and political advancement of the whole country. This cannot be accomplished by capitalism.

While insisting that the Negro problem is exclusively a Southern problem, the masters of the South have consistently acted in the knowledge that it is a problem of the whole country. Before the Civil War and afterwards, to maintain their privileged position, they have systematically propagated and injected racial discrimination, segregation, super-exploitation and prejudice into this country's life. In this they have been aided and abetted by Northern industrial capitalists. In 1876, after establishing its political domination over the defeated

slave-owners, Northern capital cemented a new alliance with Southern propertied interests for the maintenance of white supremacy. Since then Northern capital has steadily extended its financial control until today the South is entirely in its grip. Thus today it is the interests of capitalism which demand the maintenance and perpetuation of the Southern system.

The Southern brutality, its terror, its social discrimination, its robbery in appropriations for education, its lynchings reported and unreported, and its legalized oppression, persecution and humiliation of the Negro people, are not in any sense the product of any inherent racial antagonisms. Racial antagonism is the barbarous rationalization of an outmoded system of production, taken over and so intensified and developed by American capitalism that today it forms one of the most cruel and shameful features of its civilization.

White supremacy, racial discrimination and Jim Crow have now become part of American capitalist tradition and have poisoned the minds of many millions. But that does not in any way alter the real origins of Negro persecution nor the fundamental reasons why it is maintained. The root of the division lies not in psychology but in such material facts as the preference given to even the poorest whites in the competition for better-paid jobs in agriculture, industry, government employment, social services, education, hospitalization, relief, etc.

### Capitalism and the Negro

When capitalism needed the Negroes in the struggle against the slaveholders during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period the capitalist class did not hesitate to carry out by armed force large-scale actions to crush and discipline the Southern plantocracy and compel it to recognize Negro rights. This was when the Negroes still bore on their bodies and minds the marks of slavery. While it would be a serious error to ignore the reality of racial hatreds which have been injected into the historical development of the American people, not the slightest concession must be made to any ideas which do not place upon capitalism the complete responsibility, deliberate and conscious, for the existing situation of Negroes, the spread of racial prejudices in all areas of the United States today, and the example and encouragement given by American "democracy" to race-haters and race-baiters all over the world.

But if, after conquering the slaveholders, capitalism has taken over and intensified the exploitation and sufferings of the Negro people, it has, in its later development, also created the premises of their emancipation. Capitalist production has penetrated, at first slowly but recently with greater speed, into the formerly solid agricultural South. The Negro agricultural population is now exceeded by the Negro urban population in the South. This industrial transformation has tended to draw whites and Negroes together, creating an element of growing unification against the social divisions of the South.

Heroic attempts have been made by the sharecroppers, white and black, to create union organizations. World War II saw many war industries established in the South and unification of white and Negro workers both in industry and in unions. Capitalism, to avoid higher labor costs and unionization in the North, took the textile industry to the South, maintained Southern racial discrimination, and relegated Negroes to the lowest-paid and most menial tasks. But they are admitted to the textile industrial union. If not in job classification then at least in unionization, the Jim Crow pattern in the South is being steadily undermined. Within recent years the CIO and AFL have instituted campaigns for unionizing the workers. Precisely because of the economic and cultural backwardness of the South, the organized proletariat will carry a weight there far exceeding its mere numerical strength.

To contend that bourgeois democracy is capable of regenerating and reforming the South for the benefit of the Negro is to whitewash and embellish the present promoters and beneficiaries of Negro persecution. Only the proletarian revolution can free the Negroes, cleanse the social sewer of the South, and reorganize its economy.

It is in the North and West that the needs of capitalist production have given the Negroes a role of singular importance in the economy. Conditions in the South drove an increasing stream of Negroes to seek relief by flight to the less brutally discriminating areas. In World War I and especially World War II capitalist production itself brought millions of Negroes out of the South and incorporated them into the basic industries: coal, steel, auto, etc.

Within the last generation the workers in these industries have transformed themselves, chiefly through the organization and example of the CIO, into the

potentially most powerful social force in the country. Precisely because the Negroes, owing to racial discrimination, could find a place primarily in these industries as unskilled, unprotected workers, they find themselves, with the rise of the CIO, an integral part of the most advanced sections of the proletariat. This transition from the rural misery of the South into the mass industrial unions of the CIO simultaneously marks the transformation of the Negroes from the most degraded rural section of the population into part of the spearhead for the abolition of capitalism and the construction of the socialist society.

Despite the trickery of the capitalists, despite the Jim-Crow prejudices of many white workers and their opposition to upgrading in industry, Negroes and whites in industry are being constantly disciplined, united and organized by the very mechanism of capitalist production, which tends, slowly but steadily, to grind down the traditional social obstacles and racial prejudices. It is this unity which in a revolutionary crisis will be decisive. The traditions of the struggle for the organization of the CIO will help unite Negroes and whites in those branches of industry where they are still disunited.

Over one and a half million Negroes are already part of the organized labor movement. It has within its ranks the most advanced, the most disciplined, trained and tempered elements of the Negro people. Nothing but the total destruction of organized labor can seriously check the steady development of this movement.

### Negro National Consciousness

Capitalism confines most workers to slum-dwellings and miserable neighborhoods. This is itself a form of segregation, despite attempts to obscure this by fictitious democratic propaganda. This segregation of the proletariat as a whole assumes an exceptionally aggravated form in the case of the Negroes.

The system of plantation slavery dictated rigid social segregation of the slave. Driven by the needs of the Southern system and its own needs, capitalism, while integrating the Negroes into Northern industry, maintained and extended Jim Crow segregation. Everywhere, the Negroes have been herded into ghettos. As a result, there have developed large Negro urban communities not only in the South but in most of the great industrial cities. The Negroes especially in the North, East and West today form compact communities, over-

whelmingly proletarian or semi-proletarian, with a large minority of organized proletarians while the majority form an immense mass of domestic servants, porters, and other menial laborers.

A Negro bourgeoisie, owning capital and exploiting labor in industry, is practically non-existent. The petty-bourgeois intermediary between the Negro masses and big capital is in the majority white and not Negro. The Negro petty bourgeoisie is composed predominantly of a thin layer of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, teachers, journalists, musicians, and so on. But race prejudice continues on the whole to exclude the Negro petty bourgeoisie from social contact with the ruling class as well as from those minor positions of authority which help cement substantial sections of the white petty bourgeois to bourgeois society.

Thus the integration of the Negroes into industry and the simultaneous rise of these Negro communities have stimulated the racial and political consciousness of the Negro people.

With a great number of organizations of all types, with a large and varied press, a growing body of distinguished writers and spokesmen who chronicle their wrongs and protests, a fanatical pride in the history of the Negro race and the achievements of remarkable Negroes in any sphere and in any country, these Negro communities are knit together by resentment against their exploitation and humiliation by white America. In recent years the sentiment of racial solidarity and organized protest has grown by great leaps. There is now growing up an embryo "nation within the nation."

But contrary to similar manifestations in Europe and Asia, this feeling of racial and national solidarity among the Negro people thus far aims solely at acquiring enough force and momentum to break down the barriers that exclude Negroes from American society, showing few signs of aiming at national separatism. These new moods coupled with constantly increasing activities have already had a powerful effect on the Negroes in the South who, even within the shackles of the Southern system, try to follow the Northern example as far as possible.

It would be a grave error to underestimate the social and political significance of this maturing Negro racial and national consciousness. It is rooted in the very conditions of American capitalism, has grown with them and will only disappear with them. It does not lessen but grows continuously. Every stage by which the Negroes have been

incorporated into industry and industrial unionism, every expansion of the Negro ghettos, every social advance of the Negro people, has meant a corresponding rise in the solidarity and temper of the Negro community and its protest against segregation.

Despite all appearances American capitalism constantly increases and intensifies its Jim Crow system. The greatest Jim Crow organization ever created was the Army for World War II. Protests resulted only in special Negro air squadrons, special Negro war correspondents, special groups of Negro entertainers, etc. Thus directly and indirectly the American Army carried with it the American Jim Crow system to every quarter of the globe. The more powerfully the Negroes organize and protest, the more capital is compelled to attempt to bribe them with special Negro schools, special Negro hospitals, special Negro colleges, special Negro playgrounds, special Negro news films, special Negro appointments—generally to government departments dealing with Negro affairs.

### Spread of Insurgence

The Negroes have repeatedly exploded in revolutionary outbursts of the most varied types. As soon as they found themselves in sufficient numbers out of the South, the Garvey movement erupted. This extraordinary mass movement testified to the protest against Jim Crow which was and is restrained by terror in the South. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People attained a membership of more than half a million after World War II. But the petty-bourgeois dominated organizations are absolutely unable to discipline the insurgent Negro masses. In Harlem where the masses feel themselves strongest, the protests tend to express themselves most violently, as in 1935 and 1943. There the Negro masses expressed their pent-up resentment against Jim Crow by coming into the streets and wrecking shops owned by whites in the main centers of Harlem, while at the same time carefully refraining from violence against the whites, who walked the streets unmolested.

Similar outbursts have taken place in cities like Detroit and are incipient in every Negro community. With extreme rapidity the Negroes in 1941 organized the March-on-Washington Movement on a nation-wide scale, creating consternation in the ranks of the federal government. In addition Negro soldiers fought bravely throughout World War II for equality and democratic rights within the army.

Marxists have repeatedly pointed out that in a revolutionary crisis the most oppressed social layers, who have hitherto remained outside of the class struggle, when awakened by the organized proletariat, constitute some of the most dynamic elements of the revolution. The hatred of bourgeois society and enduring capacity for revolutionary sacrifice which characterizes the deepest proletarian strata is combined in the urban Negroes with the organizational solidity imposed upon them by American segregation and the readiness to revolt which is the result of the universally recognized, intolerable, and indefensible injustice of their position.

The petty bourgeois leaders of Negro organizations strive in vain to instill into the masses the "principles" of American democracy. But the petty-bourgeois leadership has far less control of the Negro masses than the labor leadership has of the basic ranks of the proletariat. In the lives of the great masses of the Negroes and even in the petty-bourgeois Negro press there is a mounting tendency to reject not only in words but in action, the shibboleths of American democracy and thereby, through conclusions from their own experience, to approach the truths of Marxism.

Thus it is that the Negroes more than any other social grouping in the country:

- (1) Have challenged the conception that the great wars of the United States in our generation were fought for democracy;
- (2) Have repudiated the fetishism of American democracy as the quintessence of freedom and equality of rights and opportunity;
- (3) Are skeptical of the belief that the future of American political life is unalterably confined to alternation between the Democratic and Republican Parties;
- (4) Have challenged the conception that the state is above all classes.
- (5) Have discarded the conception that rights are obtained purely by democratic discussions and parliamentary procedures.

It is not in the slightest degree accidental that during World War II, those sections of the population who reached the highest pitch of protest against the bourgeois state were the miners by a continuous series of strikes and the Negroes in Harlem. If the miners had the sympathy of the masses of the workers, the Harlem Negroes had still more the sympathy of the masses of Negroes all over the country. Miners and the

Negro masses in Harlem symbolized on a small but significant scale the unfolding pattern of revolt, of singular importance for the coming period—great mass strikes of the organized proletariat and rebellious outbursts among the Negroes.

The same pattern is already being repeated on a higher scale. In the apparently unchallenged march of the American bourgeoisie to internal enslavement of the masses in preparation for war, once more it is the miners who raised the first open challenge by action, and the Negroes, in the persons of Randolph and Reynolds, who hurled the first open challenge and defiance.

While this movement has nowhere found clear revolutionary socialist expression, its impact has already made itself felt.

### Political and Social Impact

(1) The March-on-Washington Movement resulted in the establishment of the FEPC which has become in its own way a potent source of conflict within the Democratic Party.

(2) The Harlem action in 1943 not only went unpunished by the government but was the signal for all the labor leaderships and liberal groupings to rally hastily together for the purpose of pacifying the Negro masses by means of a state FEPC with punitive legislation for convicted offenders.

(3) Racial conflict in Detroit over housing and discrimination resulted in an anti-Negro pogrom, stoutly resisted by the Negro masses. The UAW was immediately involved and the climax of its intervention was of great significance for the future relations between the Negro mass movement and organized labor. The city election of 1944 was fought by a combination of the UAW and the Negro masses against the reactionary Mayor Jeffries; the race question playing a major part in the campaign.

(4) The power and solidarity of the Negro protest has compelled the leaders of the Democratic Party to weigh the nearly 300 electoral votes, in states where the Negro vote is decisive, against the less than half as many votes controlled by the South, and to propound a civil rights program which is helping to tear the Democratic Party apart.

(5) The Negroes themselves, both in the mass, as in Harlem in 1943, and as groups, as in the Randolph-Reynolds protest, though basing themselves on their racial problems, show a profound recognition of the unity of their struggle with that of other oppressed groups and constantly demand joint action with the

whites. Though racial hatreds in the South may well be the cause of bloody reprisals for centuries of repression, Negroes have repeatedly taken the lead in organizations among the most oppressed groups, the sharecroppers, comprising Negroes and whites.

(6) Hostile as the Negro petty-bourgeois leaders are to mass action by Negroes, they have repeatedly joined together and in the name of millions of Negroes, recited their grievances and pointed out the weaknesses and crimes of both parties in regard to Negroes. They have solidarized themselves against the reactionary politics of the Southern bloc and therefore implicitly—and often explicitly—with the labor movement; and declared themselves, on behalf of the Negro people, as supporting the struggles for independence of the colonial nations. They have taken the symbolical step of appealing to the United Nations against the American government. Under the pressure of mass sympathy for the proposals of Randolph and Reynolds, those Negro petty-bourgeois leaders who were carefully nurtured by the Roosevelt administration as spreaders of bourgeois ideas among the Negro masses, were forced to refuse to take any part in assisting the government to integrate Negroes into a segregated army. Despite the inevitable vacillations, compromises and capitulations of the Negro petty bourgeoisie, this sharp break at a time when they are badly needed indicates the dilemma of the government between its need to mobilize the nation and the rebelliousness of millions of Negroes.

Many of these actions have not been carried through to any decisive conclusion. But their increasing frequency and widening scope, the variety of forms in which they appear, their deep historical roots in the past of the country, illustrate with unusual richness and clarity the truth of one of the great contributions of Leninism to Marxist theory.

"The dialectics of history," says Lenin, "is such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which help the real power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the Socialist Proletariat."

In analyzing the role of small nations Lenin cast light on the special contribution of the Negro struggle to the proletarian movement in the United States. Under the banner of Negro rights, the movement of the Negro people is rendered most sensitive and responsive to social tensions. It acts as a spur in precipitating struggles for elementary

democratic rights; it unmask the class nature of the capitalist state; it helps educate the working class to the reactionary role of bourgeois democracy and the need to wage merciless struggle against it; and propels into action the major political forces of the nation and the organized labor movement.

Important as these contributions are to the forces of social revolution, the Negro movement has invariably suffered heavy depression and demoralizing blows through the betrayal, defeat or lack of response of these forces. Deserted by the victorious bourgeoisie in 1876, the Negroes bore the full brunt of Southern reaction and revenge. After the defeat of the Populist Movement the South passed drastic anti-Negro legislation. Isolated from the revolutionary forces, the Garveyite outburst, though of great social and historical significance, became besmirched with grotesque follies and fantasies and rapidly disintegrated.

### Policy of the SWP

Today the greater organized political power of the Negro struggle faces correspondingly greater dangers. The CIO has brought the Negro back into the mainstream of American social life. Defective as may be its positive contributions, the very existence of the CIO and its enunciation of equality for Negroes, combined with the relative freedom with which Negroes function within it, create the arena in which Negroes become increasingly bold in their struggles. It acts as a check upon the more flagrant aspects of Negro persecution. The defeat of the proletariat by American capitalism would inevitably result in unprecedented persecution for the Negro people. Already in 1943 when the Negro struggles were at their height, Roosevelt's Attorney-General Biddle proposed that Southern Negroes be prohibited from coming North. If the proletariat is defeated, the Southern system will be extended over the whole country, and wherever American imperialism holds sway.

That organized labor is the principal shield and ally of the Negroes is true not only in a broad historical but in an immediate sense as well. In Detroit during 1943 the influence of the organized labor movement saved the Negroes from horrible massacres and persecutions by anti-Negro elements and the police.

The Socialist Workers Party pays special attention to the Negro mass movement. Our members join those organizations which offer a fruitful field for promoting the welfare of the Negro peo-

ple. When necessary, we also assist in the creation of new organizations aiming at the struggle for democratic rights.

In our attitude to these organizations, we recognize the great difference between a periphery organization which is guided by party policy on a particular issue or consists of close sympathizers of the party, and an organization which rises up independently of the party to express the deep needs and aspirations of millions of oppressed people. In entering such organizations the party does not at all insist that they be Marxist in program as a condition for working in them any more than we impose such demands on the unions as a condition for working in them, with them and for them.

Neither do we judge these organizations by the character of their leadership at any given moment, as for instance the reformist, petty bourgeois, timid character of the NAACP leadership. At critical moments organizations of this type can become centers of genuine mass activity. On the other hand, as the March-on-Washington Movement proved, new organizations, expressing the aroused fighting spirit of the Negro people, can spring up overnight. In critical times, mass outbursts, as in Harlem in 1943, can become the starting point for the creation of new or the revitalization of old organizations. From all these points of view, participation by our members in the existing organizations of the Negroes according to the party's strength and aims, remains a permanent feature of party work.

Party members participate in these Negro organizations, as in all others, as revolutionists. Our main purpose in them is the mobilization of the Negro masses for revolutionary action. The party applies here, too, the principles of its program, which presented with patience and flexibility, will find a ready hearing among the proletarian and semi-proletarian Negroes. The party wages unceasing struggle against the Negro petty-bourgeois leadership, the same type of struggle that it carries on against the union bureaucracy. It strives for an unambiguous militant program based upon the needs and readiness for struggle of the broad masses. It seeks to replace the vacillating, reformist petty-bourgeois leadership with a militant leadership fighting on the principles of the class struggle and in the closest alliance with organized labor and the Marxist revolutionists.

The party raises the question of political affiliation, and on the basis of the widespread Negro disillusionment with

the two traditional parties, urges these organizations to go on record for a Labor Party, and to outline their program for such a party and not on the Negro question alone.

Finally, the party will find in the Negro organizations and in Negro life a fruitful field for the spread of the fundamental doctrines of Marxism. The situation of all Negro people offers exceptional opportunities for winning over the best elements in these organizations to Marxism on the basis of Negro needs and Negro experiences.

The Negro mass movement is a natural ally of the proletarian revolution. It will organize and reorganize itself many times in the course of its evolution to socialism. But the party governs itself by the fact that the high peaks of organized labor struggle, the CIO in 1935-1937, the miners' strike in 1943, the great strikes of 1945-1946 culminating in the widespread but bureaucratically suppressed desire for a general strike against the Taft-Hartley Bill, have been paralleled by the outburst of the Negro masses in Harlem in 1935, the March-on-Washington Movement in 1940, the outbursts in Harlem, Detroit and elsewhere in 1943, the growth of the NAACP to over half a million members. The government and the bourgeoisie have never underestimated the potential force of the Negro movement and its threat to the capitalist system.

The forms and rapidity of its progress will be determined to a large degree by the strength and resolute participation of the party in its struggles and experiences, and its concentration upon promoting the economic and social interests of the Negro masses. We must support this mass movement, develop it, and make it a politically conscious and definitely class movement. In marching hand in hand with it to the end we are marching far beyond its initial goal; we are marching to the very end of the division of society into classes.

### Negro and Organized Labor

The primary and ultimate necessity of the Negro movement is its unification with the revolutionary forces under the leadership of the proletariat. The guiding force of this unification can only be the revolutionary party.

The most urgent task of the revolutionary party is the destruction of the strangling influence of the reformist union bureaucrats over the labor movement. Precisely because of its exceptional role in the country's economic and political life, the Negro question con-

fronts the labor bureaucracy with a series of acute problems. These have already drawn a widening line of demarcation between labor bureaucratism and revolutionary Marxism in the struggle for the leadership of the American proletariat.

The labor leadership itself has been compelled to assume a titular leadership of the struggle against discrimination and endorsement of Negro rights on the job and in the union. The imperative necessity of organizing the South has compelled the union leadership to grapple with the legalized and socially sanctified degradation and humiliation of the Negroes in the South. The formation of a Labor Party would immediately lead to a desperate struggle over the poll-tax, federal action against lynching and discrimination, and the whole system of oppression under the Southern oligarchy. Reformism can no more solve this burning problem than the reformist labor bureaucracies of Russia, Italy, or Spain could solve the peasant question.

The labor bureaucracy is becoming increasingly entangled with the government in the deprivation of the democratic rights of the workers. In the coming period, particularly if the war drive intensifies, a repetition of mass Negro upheavals, opposed directly to the federal government, can awaken warm response in the minds of workers, and become a powerful source of exposure of the hypocrisy of American imperialism. The endorsement by the union bureaucracy of the bi-partisan war program and their red-baiting campaign has given prominence and opportunity to some of the most reactionary and anti-Negro elements in the union movement.

In the critical days ahead, the Negro problem inside the union movement can become an extremely important issue. The whole past of the Negro movement shows that the Negroes in the unions, once assured of the support of a substantial number of white workers, will be in the forefront of any serious struggles against the labor bureaucracy as agents of governmental repression and reaction.

The American proletariat needs above all to be instilled with a consciousness of its historic mission as the fundamental force in the struggle against capitalism and leader of all oppressed groups and classes. The struggle for Negro rights and against the poll-tax, lynching, etc., have already made a strong impact upon the social education of the proletariat. This process will inevitably continue and develop. The mass struggles of the Negroes will increasingly pose the question of proletarian intervention and enable

the revolutionary forces to come to the fore with their revolutionary policy as opposed to the reformist.

By its leadership and championship of the Negro mass movement, the party takes one of the surest roads to gaining recognition as an organization that is determined, not merely to right Negro wrongs, but to abolish bourgeois society.

### Struggle Against Prejudice

The party does not deny or minimize the existence of racial hatreds and the very real dangers they hold and will increasingly hold for the proletarian struggle as the foundations of bourgeois society continue to crumble and release the passions it has fostered for centuries. The history of Nazi Germany shows what brutality, terror and sadism capitalism in its last agonies can and will mobilize in its defense.

The party alone can carry on a fundamental propaganda and sustained and effective agitation against these dangers. Only the strenuous, patient, persistent and vigilant propagation of Marxist views on the Negro question, which are especially on guard against abstractions, can teach the workers to recognize and tear out by the root, the innumerable, often subtle and always constantly recreated forms in which bourgeois race prejudice infiltrates into the ranks of the organized labor movement and the revolutionary vanguard itself.

The party will increasingly be subjected to conflicts between different strata of the labor movement which will find their expression in racial form. Particularly the party's forceful struggle for influence in labor organizations of predominantly white workers will sometimes be impeded or placed in jeopardy by its championship of the Negro cause and Negro workers. Reactionary enemies of the revolutionary party will deliberately incite and magnify this issue to embarrass the party.

This poses and will increasingly pose difficult problems for the party. Even where, as in many AFL unions, the anti-Negro policy is flagrant, the concrete circumstances will often present serious problems for the party. Their successful handling, both for the education of the proletariat and the solidarity and growth of the party, must be based on the determination of the revolutionary party under all circumstances to maintain the principles for which it stands.

In the Negro movement in particular and often in the labor movement the party will meet Negro chauvinism. While making no principled concessions to it,

the party treats it with great caution and makes a sharp distinction between the chauvinism of the oppressor and the chauvinism of the oppressed, even when the latter is expressed within the ranks of the organized labor movement. This chauvinism of the Negroes contains possibilities of being exploited under certain circumstances by the capitalists and turned into a terrible danger to the organized labor movement. Precisely because of this, the party must take the lead in guiding it, explaining its progressive features, purging it of its dangerous traits, and both in theory and practice, impressing the organized labor movement with its potentiality as a force for the defense of all democratic rights and the struggle against capitalist reaction.

As the party grows and wins over groups of rank and file workers, white and Negro, the cruder forms of race prejudice will assume importance within the party. They must be mercilessly fought. It is only on the basis of a constantly widening recognition and exposition of the significance of the Negro struggle not merely for Negroes but for the social revolution, that the party will be able to carry out the necessary measures with firmness and yet without hysteria or foolhardiness. Both in the party and in the organized labor movement the party in opposing Jim Crow spares no pains to explain its reasons to the white workers, victims of a long historical development.

### Fighting Capitalist Pressure

The pervading pressures of racial prejudice can take the most subtle forms. White workers and even union leaders in the party can find an easy escape from the hard task of combatting racial prejudices by counterposing the importance for the party of its influence on the organized labor movement, as against the Negro movement. On the other hand, Negro workers, on gaining class consciousness and observing the practices of equality in the revolutionary party and in certain of the industrial unions, sometimes react with hostility to the Leninist analysis of the racial and national aspects of the Negro movement and tend to reject it as a step backward and an unnecessary concession to Negro chauvinism. Petty-bourgeois Negroes who find in the party not only a means of revolutionary struggle but a relief from the strains and humiliations of Negro life will sometimes oppose bringing forward Negro work to its rightful place in party life. These are not individual

aberrations but reflect, each in its own way, political weakness before the bourgeois pressure to relegate the Negro question to a subordinate place. Only a sound policy, actively carried out, can correct and check these and similar manifestations.

The situation of the Negro movement in American society gives a special role to Negro leadership, not merely among Negroes but in the revolutionary forces of the country. All great revolutions have, of necessity, utilized in the leadership members of oppressed races and nationalities as the most opposed to the existing order.

That the American socialist revolution will prove no exception to this rule is shown by the role already played by Negro leaders in the CIO. In its activity in the Negro labor organizations the party must devote great efforts to the winning over, education and preparation for leadership of Negro workers and intellectuals. But here again only the clear grasp of the character of the Negro movement can create the basis for Negro revolutionists to take their rightful place in the revolutionary party and the revolutionary struggle of the organized labor movement.

The party will have to rely chiefly on Negroes in its activity among Negro organizations, even where whites are admitted as members, as a necessary concession to the historically justified suspicions and prejudices of the Negro masses. But if Negro leaders do not play a prominent role in the general activity of the party on a national scale, that would represent a concession to the terrible power of bourgeois race prejudice, and would, in effect, segregate the Negro even within the revolutionary movement itself. This danger must be vigorously and consciously fought.

The Negro leaders of the party in Negro work must be consciously and carefully trained as Marxists of the international revolution. Unless they are so trained they cannot be good examples of Bolsheviks in the union movement; lack of such training would tend to perpetuate inside the party itself the bourgeois division of white and Negro. The party teaches the conscious elements among the Negroes and builds its cadres, both white and black, according to the dictum of Trotsky that "the conscious elements of the Negroes... are convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class." Only a party educated in this spirit can create the surroundings to assist the Negro revolutionists in overcoming the influence of bourgeois race prejudice, express in-

side and outside the party the future historic role of the Negro people in the struggle for socialism, help to give confidence to the Negro masses that the past betrayals of the bourgeoisie are alien to the revolutionary proletariat, and demonstrate before the eyes of the masses the character of the new society.

At this stage of the party's development and at the present undeveloped level, in a strictly political sense, of both organized labor and the Negro movement, the party must view the incorporation of Negroes into the party and Negro work in party building as a test and touchstone of its general revolutionary strategy and tactics, illuminating both the strength and weakness of the American workers and oppressed classes as well as the strength and weakness of the party.

### Premises for Fruitful Work

The penetration into the most dynamic strata of the American workers, winning them over to Marxism, lifting them above immediate preoccupations to the heights of Bolshevism, steeling them against prevailing prejudices, the consolidation of diverse elements of an exceptionally diverse population, the creation of a centralized powerful revolutionary organization united by an inner discipline—all this at the present time finds a graphic expression in the Negro work of the party. "If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this strata, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and the rest would be only a lie." These blunt words of Leon Trotsky underscore his recognition of the vital importance of the Negro movement in the United States as a constituent part of the struggle for socialism.

But just as the Negro movement for all its revolutionary character depends upon the revolutionary proletariat for its final success and even for safeguarding it from defeat and destruction, so, too, the party's Negro work, important as it is, depends upon the general progress of the party in securing and extending its influence in the organized labor movement. Experience has shown that where the party possesses real strength in the labor movement its activities among the Negro masses meet with the greatest response. Only to the extent that the party successfully carries out the Transitional Program and rises to the level of its general political tasks will it be able to take fullest advantage of the great contributions to the socialist struggle inherent in Negro work.