

# Bulletin

## OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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## NOTES ON THE JEWISH QUESTION

-by- Eugene Vaughn

In a previous bulletin on the Jewish Question, this writer presented the following position: 1. Open the doors of the world to Europe's remaining Jews who wish to escape the land of their degradation and start life anew among their families and friends in other parts of the world. 2. Wherever there exists among the displaced Jews of Europe a desire to return to Palestine and live a Jewish national existence, it behooves the revolutionary socialists to give support to the realization of these national aspirations. It goes without saying, of course, that such a Jewish national movement which we would support, must not tread upon the toes of other people; in this particular instance the Arab masses of Palestine. A governmental and economic formula must be devised which would make the welfare of these two Palestinian people compatible.

The correctness of the latter solution to the present day problems of European Jews flows--we stated--from the Leninist position on nationalism and national movements. During the first World War and immediately afterwards, a dispute was carried on by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg on the position that the revolutionary socialist movement should take on national movements of that day. Rosa Luxemburg argued that the days were over when national movements could be considered progressive movements. National movements were progressive in the 19th century when they aided the expansion of the capitalist economies. Now, she argued, we are living in a period where international socialism is on the order of the day. National movements divide the solidarity of the workers of the world. National movements militate against the creation of a workers international economy which is needed as a basis for socialism. She therefore opposed national self-determination in the case of the Ukraine, in the case of Poland, etc.

Lenin argued differently. The international social order is arriving at a time, said he, when national sentiment is still strongly entrenched in the political consciousness of many people, particularly in the political consciousness of those people who are being nationally oppressed. "The policy of oppressing nationalities is the policy of dividing nations." If we are to continue the subjection of these national sentiments, and not allow these national sentiments self-expression, we risk the danger of alienating these suppressed nationalities from the revolutionary socialist movements. The revolutionary socialist movement cannot and may not impose the higher internationalist sentiment by force from above. Instead, the Bolshevik movement must channelize these national sentiments along revolutionary socialist lines. The Bolsheviks must explain and prove to the oppressed national masses that it is only capitalist society which suppresses nationalities. The only way the nationally oppressed people can realize their aspirations towards true national freedom and cultural autonomy is by aligning their forces with the revolutionary socialist movement.

Lenin was therefore in favor of the slogan of national self-

determination for the Ukraine, for Finland, for all oppressed nationalities. Bolsheviks do not preach nationalism. However, where it does exist it attempts to work with it, to channelize it along revolutionary socialist lines. It should follow therefore, that if national sentiments exist among Jews, revolutionary socialists must not fight against it, but must channelize this sentiment along revolutionary lines. One would consider this formula quite logical and clear. Yet Lenin himself was opposed to the Jewish national movements, and also subsequent Bolshevik-Leninists opposed it as well.

Lenin, and the revolutionary marxist movement in general were opposed to the Zionist movement for several substantially, although perhaps not absolutely correct and valid reasons. It is these reasons which we propose to discuss in this document. We propose to show that these reasons which were once valid no longer retain their validity. On the contrary the conditions which prevail today among the Jews of Europe and Palestine are such that it flows logically from the previously mentioned Leninist position, which we accept, that we today have it as our revolutionary socialist duty to support the migration of Jews to Palestine and to support their desire to live a national existence. The point is Comrades, ZIONISM MAY BE REACTIONARY AS PRACTICED BY THE VARIOUS ZIONIST ORGANIZATIONS, BUT IT IS NOT INTRINSICALLY REACTIONARY. Present day Zionism is the legitimate and understandable aspiration of an oppressed group of people to reorganize their lives and regain their self respect in a national community. It is basically progressive. As socialists, it is our task to make it so. What were the erstwhile objections to the Zionist and general Jewish National movements held by Revolutionary Socialists?

1. "The Zionist movement is an instrument used by British Imperialism to gain control of the Near East".--This argument which was reasonably valid at the inception of the Zionist effort after the Balfour Declaration is no longer true. On the contrary, the Jewish community in Palestine stands at loggerheads with the British Empire. Since the Balfour Declaration, the British foreign policy for the Near East has gone through a diametrical change. Let us review very briefly the policy of the British in the Near East.

During the latter half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, prior to World War II, the British Foreign Office sided with the Sultan of Turkey against the rest of Europe. Britain hoped to secure its passageway to India, to gain the right of exploitation in the Near East, by friendship with the Sultan. During the war the Sultan sided with the Central powers, and at the end of the war was deposed, after his empire disintegrated completely. Britain was again faced with the need for an instrument by which she could impose here hegemony over the Near East. For a while she toyed with the idea of creating a Jewish State in the Near East for just that purpose. If she were instrumental in setting up a Jewish state in the Near East, that state would look to her for leadership. It was a popular notion during the early days of "Balfour" Zionism that the Jewish State would join the British Commonwealth. In this manner Britain hoped to retain her hold over the Near East even after she would be forced out of Egypt. Palestine could be used as a crossroad of transportation and a center of communication, and a central point

from which to tap the oil fields of the Near East.

However, Britain very soon had a change of heart. A modern progressive state in a backward colonial area might become substantially independent and prove difficult to handle. The economic and political potentialities of such a state for the backward Near East were too dynamic and might prove dangerous to "Empire". Also the reactionary princes and Bedouin chieftains of the Near East stood in mortal fear of a modern western progressive state in their midst. Such a state they must oppose with might and main, and Britain soon rose to the occasion! Perfidious Albion! Britain soon decided to retain control over the Near East by aiding and abetting the reaction of the Sauds, the Husseinis, the Arab League. Britain followed a policy of draining the oil of the Near East and pouring gold into the tents of Ibn Saud and the palace of Emir Abdullah, now King Abdullah by the Grace of Allah and his Britannic Majesty's government. If any Bi-National state is to arise in Palestine in which the Jews will participate, it can only arise through a struggle against the British Empire.

The Jews who wish to migrate to Palestine are a western and modern people. The state set up by the Jews would be a modern state with democratic ideas. It would at the very least be a comparatively progressive state, and the most progressive in the Near East. It could lead the Near East in the direction of industrialization, towards democratic ideas. The reactionary Arab leaders fear such a state. The "Foreign Office" is concerned with Empire and not with political and economic progress for colonial peoples.

It is apropos at this point to make some remarks about the Arab leaders in the Near East. They are a reactionary lot whose only interest it is to rule as absolute despots, to exploit their people, and the land. Millions in gold have been poured into their money chests. What part of it has gone towards the betterment of the living conditions of the Arab masses? Nothing! Ibn Saud, the Arab potentate par excellence, has no conception of what it means to rule in the interest of his people. He rules because he is divinely ordained to rule. He is a descendent of a founder of a religious puritannical sect in Islam. He kills non-believers with his own sword and his own hands. He has no people. He recognizes only religious followers whose duty is to pray to Allah, live a puritannical life, and turn away from western ways. His domain isn't mediaval, it is ancient, Biblical, pastoral, nomadic, disease-ridden, steeped in superstition and ignorance, and right in the eyes of Allah. He is opposed to Jewish migration to Palestine, and Britain agrees with him. King Abdullah of Trans-Jordania is a puppet ruler set up by Britain. His country is part pastoral-nomadic and part feudal. His country is closest to Palestine and he is afraid that the Jewish labor movement in Palestine will give the masses of his country some ideas. He too is opposed to Jewish migration to Palestine. Egypt, the most industrially advanced of the Arab states in the Near East, is also part feudal, and tends towards reaction. Iran is little more than an oil field for competing imperialist interests. The one or two other states are as backward as these.

All this reaction, organized under the Arab League is opposed to Jewish migration to Palestine. The league is hardly an organization

of the Arab masses. It is the social center for the reactionary leaders who gather to discuss means of getting more gold out of Europe for their oil rights and how to keep western ideas from making inroads into the lives of the Arab masses. THE PRESENT STRUGGLE OF THE JEWISH "YISHUV" IN PALESTINE ISN'T A MOVEMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH BRITISH IMPERIALISM BUT A STRUGGLE AGAINST BRITISH IMPERIALISM.

2. The Jews are not a nation. The Jews are a caste argued Kautsky and Bauer. Therefore revolutionary socialists need not support a Jewish Nationalist movement, a Zionist movement.--The question as to whether the Jews are or are not a nation has been raging over a hundred years now. Some sociologists have argued that the Jews are a nation because they possess certain characteristics of a nation. They have a common origin, history, culture, religion, even a common language in Yiddish or Ladino, and also a strong in-group feeling. Other sociologists, including the Marxists, argued against this position. Prime requisites for a national existence are a common area of concentration, that is, a land of one's own, and a common government for a majority of the nationals. In the absence of these two factors, the other factors of nationality are weakened. The Jewish culture in America shows signs of diversification from the culture of European Jews. The same applies to history and language and all the other elements of nationality. The Marxists in addition, argues that the Jews were a caste. They served the community only in certain economic capacities. Their in-group feeling is constantly being weakened, and as society progressed towards a higher level of productivity, as society advances socially, democratically and culturally, the greatest aspiration of the Jews is to be treated as an equal citizen in the land of the their residence.

But the moot question with regard to Jewish nationalism isn't whether they live a national existence in the diaspora (Kautsky was certainly right in arguing that they did not live a national existence but whether they desire to live a national existence. While capitalism was on the incline, the international-assimilationist solution tended to prevail as the choice solution to the Jewish Question. However, as soon as capitalism began to flounder on the rocks and succumb to evils of crises and imperialism, anti-Semitism increased. The recent Hitlerian experience of the European Jews has brought about a condition where it is safe to say that at least 50% of the remaining Jews of Europe want to go to Palestine and live a national existence. The rest would like to travel to America and the rest of the world to be reunited with the remaining members of their families, friends, uncles, cousins. The Jews who wish to go to Palestine feel the social and psychological need to live in a society where they will be completely accepted and not merely tolerated as strangers. These people never did live a true national existence, do not now live a national existence, but their uppermost desire is to live a national existence. It is our duty as revolutionary socialists to aid them in their aspirations.

3. The imminence of socialism in the world and particularly on the European scene where the greatest number of Jews were concentrated and the immediacy of the need of the Socialist movement, makes the Jewish Nationalist movement first of all superfluous, and

secondly, diversionary and confusing--wrote Lenin in the period immediately prior to World War I. "Whoever directly or otherwise puts forward the slogan of Jewish National Culture (however well intentioned he may be) is the enemy of the proletariat, the defender of the old and caste elements in Jewry, the tools of the Rabbis and the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, those Jewish Marxists who join up in the international Marxist organizations with Russians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians and other workers their might to the creation of an international culture of the working class movements, are continuing in the traditions of Jewry".

This argument is tied up with the previous one that the Jews are not a nation, but a caste living in the various European countries. They do not have a strong national sentiment, that is, a desire to live a national existence. It is therefore reactionary to force Jewish nationalism upon them. They are immediately needed by the Marxist movements among all the nations of Europe. Let them join the Ukrainians, the Lithuanians, the Russian Marxist movements. The struggle for the social revolution is most immediate, and the preaching of Jewish nationalism and separatism would only lead to a diversion of political effort and confusion among the Jews. The objective situation for the Jews has changed since then.

1. Jewish national sentiment among the remaining Jews of Europe is very strong. 2. (And this point is most decisive) There is no basis for political activity or social activity or economic life for the remaining Jews in Europe. They have no place in European society today. They are de-classed and dispossessed. They are the wards of UNNRA. They are neither capitalist nor middle class nor proletariat, neither fish nor fowl. The only possibility for any social existence in general, or a socialist political existence in particular for the remnant of Jewry is to leave Europe and start life anew. For those Jews who wish to start life anew within a Jewish national group, Palestine presents itself as the only practical solution.

Zionism, and by this I mean a Jewish Nationalist aspiration, is today basically progressive. Our job is to move this desire for national existence along socialist channels. We must give the Zionist movement in Palestine critical support. Open the doors of Palestine to Europe's Jews! Yes! Political support to the various Zionist organizations in Palestine? No! We must present the Jewish community in Palestine, and the Jewish Zionists in Europe with a revolutionary criticism of the present Zionist political effort. We must aid in the building of a 4th Internationalist movement in Palestine.

MARXISM AND THE NEGRO PROBLEM  
A Discussion Article by  
F. FOREST

(Note: The following article was submitted as pre-convention discussion for publication in the New International. Because of lack of space, it was never published. The Political Committee therefore decided that it should appear in this bulletin. - Editor)

In his article, Negroes and the Labor Movement, in the March, 1946 issue of The New International, Comrade Coolidge asks me to explain what I mean by the Leninist conception of the national question "in connection with the struggle of Negroes in the United States against 'segregation' or any of the rest of their social, political or economic disabilities"; (p. 90, col. 3). He insinuated that my understanding of this Leninist conception is "acceptable to Garveyites" (Ibid).

According to Comrade Coolidge, neither Lenin nor Trotsky "had a very extensive acquaintance with the problem" (p.92, col.3) and therefore "for Marxists who have a more extensive acquaintance with the question it is not necessary to know the views of either Lenin or Trotsky". (Ibid) For such Marxists among whom he evidently includes himself as the author of the National Committee Resolution on the Negro question, a discussion cannot be carried on fruitfully, writes Comrade Coolidge, "as a battle of quotations, no matter what the source of the quotations". (Ibid, my emphasis). Here Coolidge reaches the climax to his whole article:

"Lenin and Trotsky are our teachers, but we dishonor them and ourselves by burning incense in their names. Marxism is not a faith once and for all delivered to the saints. Our doctrine and theory were not delivered to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky on tablets of stone as they communed with some Jehovah on Sinai."

Comrade Coolidge will forgive me if, in order to deal seriously with the Leninist concept of the national question, of which the Negro question is an integral part, I by-pass his religious irreligiosity against quotations since there is no way of elucidating instead of violating, the Marxist past on this question, without "entering a battle of quotations".

1. The Negro Question as a National Question

"Properly speaking", proclaimed Debs, "there is no Negro question outside the labor question". \* This ultra-left phraseology

\*International Socialist Review, 1903, Vol. VI, p. 1113. Debs was not the first to proclaim such an attitude. Before his time the German Marxists in America evaded the Negro question by stating that they were most "emphatically against both white and black slavery". Marx disassociated himself from these "Marxists" and as General Secy. of the 1st International not only offered critical support to the North in its struggle against the slave South but was active in arousing British labor in this support, though their livelihood depended upon cotton from the South.

was a Social-Democratic form of escapism from the actualities of the Negro problem both with respect to capitalist society as a whole and within the labor and revolutionary movements in particular.

The Bolsheviks too, were not without some theoreticians who failed to comprehend the complexities of the national question. Thus Stalin tried to show that national oppression stemmed only from feudal, not bourgeois relations, and hence that "in America national oppression, generally speaking, finds no place." To this Trotsky retorted: "The author completely forgets the Negro, Indian, immigrant and colonial problems in the United States." \*

Note that the "Negro, Indian, immigrant and colonial problems" are grouped together as manifestations of national oppression. Trotsky thought that the American Marxists were too easily satisfied with abstract deductions regarding the Negro problem. The Negro, they said, had no national customs, culture or even religion outside of the American culture and religion and hence the Negroes are not a national but a racial minority. If even the Negro is called a racial minority, what difference does this make to the basic analysis and the principle along which the Negro questions should be constructed?

Trotsky considered that the Austrian Social Democracy made an "abstract" distinction between nations and national minorities. He drew a parallel between its abstraction, that national minorities are not nations, and the American Trotskyist conception that because the Negroes were not a nation, therefore the Negro Question did not belong as part of the National Question:

"Nations grow out of the racial material under definite conditions...We do not obligate the Negroes to become a nation; if they are, then, that is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and they strive for....In any case, suppression of the Negroes pushes them toward a political and national unity." (Trotsky, Internal Bulletin, #12, CLA (O) April, 1933)

And in 1938, after he had become further acquainted with the Negro problem, he added: "I believe that the differences between the East Indies, Poland and the situation of the Negroes in the States, are not so decisive."

The whole crux of the question lies here. He who is overwhelmed by his own extensive knowledge of the Negro question may think that Trotsky's ignorance of the Negro question was so profound that he thought the Negroes were a nation like the Polish, and it is this which prompted him to say that the differences between them are "not so decisive". But he who knows that what is involved here is not a lack of "relevant facts" but a method of approach will immediately sense the principle involved: the Leninist concept of the National Question, which includes the Negro Question.

Lenin's Theses on the National and Colonial Question, which was  
\*History of the Russian Revolution, Vol. III, pp.52-3



adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist International, was essentially a statement of principles. It embraces the Marxist policy on the question of nations and national minorities as well as colonial and what Lenin called "financially dependent and weak nationalities". The Theses single out two nations as illustrative of the type of national oppression that evoke mass movements of resistance. These nations are Ireland and the Negroes in America. This reference to the Negroes as a "nation" generally calls forth superior smirks among American Marxists who have studied the National question in general and the Negro question in particular a good deal less seriously than had Lenin. Comrade Coolidge points to this place, and asks me whether I consider the Negroes to be a nation. No, I do not, but that is not the question. The issue at stake is the principle by which Lenin clearly demarcated the national question from the general class struggle and the question of the proletarian revolution. To think that Lenin and Trotsky believed that the American Negroes were a nation in the sense that the Irish or Polish were a nation is not merely to accuse them of gross and vulgar ignorance, but it is to fly in the face of the material which exists, as well as be ignorant of the fact that, apart from the Revolutionary War, no section of American history is as familiar to Europeans as the importation of Negroes and the Civil War.

It is the particular course of development of the nation in a country like the United States that lends historical credence to the type of ultra-left phraseology behind which lurks national egoism. For whereas the national minorities of Europe fought for independence from the larger society (from the Tzarist or Austro-Hungarian Empires) the national minorities that came to this country fought for integration within the larger society. They more or less succeeded. The exception is the Negro. Why? Surely, it isn't the Negro's doing; he only wants his assimilation accepted. We see that here is a complex pattern that cannot be solved by abstract criteria as to what constitutes a nation.

Much has been written of the sameness of the Negro and American culture in order to prove that the Negroes are a nation. But what these writers have failed to show is, why then does there nevertheless exist a Negro problem. That is the nub of the matter. The sameness of the Negro and American culture does not explain this. The explanation lies in the divergence of the Negro from the American culture. The persistence of the divergence and its sharpness is what Lenin and Trotsky saw in their approach to the Negro problem.

The contradiction between the aim--integration--and the reality--segregation--cannot but evoke an organized mass expression. The history of immigrant groups in America shows the minority groups that have sought integration into American society organized themselves first politically on a national basis. Lenin saw and understood this road that the mass movement of oppressed groups takes. That is why he included the Negro as part of the National question. Trotsky, knowing that the Negro question is part of the National question, feared that we are not fully aware of the character of these struggles and that therefore events would take us by surprise. That is not just a theoretical but a practical question can be seen in many

recent instances, such as the Detroit and Harlem riots. Neither is the Negro problem a mere labor problem. The most striking example of that is the Texas primaries.

Lenin wasn't playing with words--he was dealing with the actualities of the struggle of persecuted minorities. That is why, though he always fought against the consideration of Jews as a nation, he nevertheless, in his Preliminary Thesis on the National Question \* he cited the Jews in Poland as an example of the problems to be dealt with under the National question. In another instance-- in a basic article on that question\*\*he referred to the immigrant workers in America as an "oppressed nation". To have to repeat such ABC's as the fact that Lenin used the word, "nation", \*\*\* in its broad sense of nation, national minority, colonial majority may have some educational value, but it is education on a very low level.

In his very numerous polemics on the National question, and again in his Theses, Lenin emphasized that concrete historical situations, not abstract considerations, formed the focal point of theory and action on the National Question. The decisive thing was that "All national oppression calls forth resistance of the broad masses of people." \*\*\*\*

The N.C. Resolution seems to deem it sufficient merely to state that "The Workers Party will not be indifferent to the militancy of the Negro in his own behalf, neither will it denigrate his heroism." (P.10, Col.2) It is not a question of denigrating the heroism of the Negro. It is a question of recognizing the validity of the movement, and realizing that objectively independent mass movement undermines the capitalist system.

It was Trotsky's contention that if we understood the reason for Garvey's mass following, we would have the answer to the Negro problem in America. To this day revolutionists fail to estimate the significance of the movement. They only look at Garvey the faker and not at the mass movement of revolt. A study of the Garvey movement is outside the scope of this article, but it is important to focus attention on how Trotsky meant to apply one of the main lessons he drew from it. Recognizing that the Negro's specific

\* Cf. Selected Works, Vol.X, p. 231

\*\*A Caricature of Marxism, Collected Works, Vol.XIX

\*\*\*At the Second Congress of the Communist International, where the Theses on the National Question were discussed, all delegates, including the American representatives, John Reed and L. Fraina, used the word, "nation", "people", "race" interchangeably, because what was at stake was not a word but a concept. (Cf. Stenographic Report of the 2nd CI Congress, pp. 131-2 esp., Russian)

\*\*\*\*Collected Works, Vol. XIX,

oppression would evoke a broad mass movement, Trotsky stated that, should such a broad mass Negro organization desire to elect its own candidates whom they put up on a capitalist party ticket, the revolutionists must nevertheless withdraw their own candidate in favor of the Negro candidate. Such a radical departure from the revolutionary advice for the proletariat in general to vote only for independent working class candidates would have been suggested on only one ground: Trotsky considered the Negro question as part of the National question, as indeed he repeatedly stated. The national and colonial movement is the only instance where revolutionists conditionally support bourgeois party tickets because here seeming chauvinism is really the expression of revolt.

This is what John Reed, whose concept of the Negro question as an integral part of the proletarian question paralleled our National Committee Resolution on the question, could not understand. Neither did any one else in the Communist movement in the U.S. That is why the Theses remained a dead letter, until two years later when the Fourth Congress once again took the question up. At that Congress, Claude McKay complained that

"The reformist bourgeoisie have been carrying on a battle against discrimination and racial prejudice in America. The Socialists and Communists have fought very shy of it because there is a great element of prejudice among the Socialists and Communists of America." \*

A Negro commission was then elected and the CI instructed the Communists to apply the Theses of the Second Congress, adding:

"The Fourth Congress recognizes the necessity of supporting every form of Negro movement which tends to undermine or weaken capitalism or imperialism or to impede its further penetration."\*\*

As we see, there is a continuity of Marxist doctrine on the Negro question, which the NC Resolution is violating. The fact that the framers of these Theses may not have had "extensive" knowledge of the Negro problem should connote the need for an extension, development or precise revision of the previous theories advanced by Marxists on this question. If Comrade Coolidge considers a revision necessary, why doesn't he state so boldly instead of covering himself up with a figleaf of an allegation that neither Lenin nor Trotsky "had an extensive acquaintance with the problem"? Why not boldly state that the basic thesis of Trotsky needs to be revised, instead of claiming to agree "with many of the views expressed by Trotsky on the question" (P.92, Col.3)? In support of these "many" views he agrees with, Comrade Coolidge cites a single quotation from Trotsky. Repetition of that one quotation does not cause it to fructify. Trotsky made the statement in 1922. In 1933 Comrade Shachtman tried to use that statement in support of his contention

\* Fourth Congress of the C.I., Abridged Report, p. 260

\*\*Resolutions & Theses of the Fourth Congress, p.86

that the Negro Question is not a national question. Comrade Trotsky then commented:

"I base myself only upon the arguments brought forward by the American comrades. I find them insufficient and consider them a certain concession to the point of view of American chauvinism, which seems to me to be dangerous". (Internal Bulletin, 1933)

Following that discussion Comrade Trotsky further studied the Negro question and finally in 1938 concretized the general statement into a series of practical proposals. From the moment those conversations between Trotsky and Johnson appeared, Coolidge has consistently fought against them. In all fairness to an educational discussion that Comrade Coolidge is so anxious to see conducted, oughtn't Coolidge to have found space somewhere to enlighten comrades on this point?

## 2. The Class Struggle and the Dual Movement

Comrade Coolidge puts great emphasis on the allegation that I misquote him. At the end of more than a page of the NI, devoted to variations on the theme of misquotations, the charge, concretely, turns out to be that in two instances I capitalized the word "the", which should not have been so capitalized since in one case it was preceded by the word, "consequently", and in the other case, by the phrase, "In view of these considerations". Being aware of the emptiness of the charge, Coolidge hurries to add an "even if":

"Even if F.F. had not garbled the quotation textually, its content would have been distorted by her manner of quoting. Context had no meaning for Forest". (P.90, Col.1)

Now let us look at this context which "had no meaning" for me, though it concerned nothing less than the main strategy of the Workers Party in the struggle for democratic rights for Negroes. I contended: (1) that if our first aim in entering the Negro organization was not so much to fight with them as to create a class rupture between the Negro proletariat and the petty-bourgeois leadership, then that was equivalent to declaring war upon these organizations; (2) that the espousal that the leadership of these Negro organizations be replaced with one "supplied from the trade unions or the Workers Party" (p.90, col. 2) meant, in effect, the elevation of the trade unions to an equal status with the revolutionary Marxist party; and (3) that Comrade Coolidge is betrayed into this false position by the motive which drives him all through the Resolution to wipe away any significance that can be attached to the independent Negro struggles.

Although orally Comrade Coolidge has done so most vociferously, he does not in this article answer the first charge. He denies the second charge, challenging me "to produce the smallest bit of evidence to support her statement" (p.92, col.2). In order to get to the nub of the question, I shall gloss over his "forgetfulness" of the instances I cite to substantiate my charge in the column

and a half devoted to that one point, (p.120) and examine his denial. To prove his point that the NC resolution is well aware of the distinction between a trade union and a Marxist party, he goes into an abstract explanation of the urgent need of a political solution of labor's problems, and then, when returning to the concrete question of the Negro problem and the trade unions, writes; that "the Workers Party is fully conscious of the fact and understands clearly that 'unionization' will not solve the Negro problem any more than 'unionization' will solve the problem of the white worker." (P.90, Col.2, my emphasis, F.F.)

Though Comrade Coolidge formally speaks of a special Negro problem, he in reality does everything to erase the distinction between the labor problem in general and the Negro problem in particular. In the original resolution he wrote: "The difficulties faced by white workers are at bottom identical with those faced by Negro workers and all workers" (p.11, Col.1, my emphasis). If by "bottom" is meant the fact that capitalism is the exploiter of the proletariat as a whole, there needs no ghost from the grave to tell us that. If "at bottom" is an attempt to erase the distinction between the dual oppression of the Negro as a worker and as a Negro, then that, in essence, is no different from the Social-Democratic or Debsian conception that there is no special Negro problem outside of the general labor problem. Coolidge declaims against that, but his whole resolution stems precisely from a similar conception.

Comrade Coolidge vehemently denies my third charge that he has been betrayed into a false position by the motive which forces him to look down upon independent struggles of the Negro masses. He writes that it is not that the Workers Party "disregards any struggle carried on by Negroes" but that the W.P. "directs that struggle into the labor movement (trade union and political)"...since it realizes that the democratic rights the Negroes are struggling for "cannot be acquired outside the general class struggle". (P.91, Col.3)

Is any clearer demonstration needed, I ask, of this motive which drives him to underestimate the value of the independent struggles of the Negro masses and the desire to dissolve these struggles into the general class struggle?

That is why Comrade Coolidge's reference to the dual oppression of the Negro is devoid of any dual movement. Though he says I'm a "million" times correct in saying that the more the Negro is integrated into the trade unions the more he resents his segregation outside, Coolidge asks facetiously: "What is it (the dual movement) over against or parallel to?" (P.90, Col3) Is it or is it not true that the strongest outpost of the NAACP is precisely where the Negro is most unionized: Detroit? At the very time that he joins the trade union, he also joins a Negro organization. In the very place where he is most integrated into organized labor, his exclusion from the democratic rights outside the union "foment" the riot. I quoted from Comrade Johnson's Resolution approvingly that this dual movement is the key to the Marxist analysis of the Negro problem in America. To Coolidge this "Marxist analysis" (The quotation marks are

gratuitously supplied by Comrade Coolidge to denote his sarcasm of what I refer to as the Marxist analysis: Comrade Johnson's Resolution on the Negro Question) is "like the incantations of a primitive Siberian shaman" (P.90, Col.3) because it is not guided by "the relevant facts". "The "relevant facts", he informs me, are that the riot "was an extra-union affair and probably fomented by anti-union elements such as the KKK". (p.91, Col.1)

Now let me ask Comrade Coolidge: Did the KKK also foment the Harlem demonstration? Did the KKK urge the Negroes in Florida to protect their right to ballot with guns in their hands? Did the KKK foment the movement in Tennessee where the Negroes decided not to run when attacked but to defend themselves with shotguns? What is it that so blinds Coolidge to the new element in the Negro demonstrations in the past few years? Why is it that in pointing out that "Detroit is not unique. There have been many riots in the U.S. during the past 25 years similar to the Detroit riot", (p. 91, Col.1) doesn't he see that the suppressed resentment of the Negroes in the South, once it breathed the comparatively free air of the North, burst forth into the Garvey movement? Why doesn't he see that the independent mass movement of the Negroes will again be misled by such fakers as Garvey so long as revolutionists, failing to recognize its objective validity, act as bystanders instead of participants in this movement?

I had written that because he fails to see the objective movement of history Comrade Coolidge falls into a subjectivist approach and because he falls into this subjectivist approach he has only vague phrases about the Negro's revolutionary potentiality while in reality blaming them for their delusion? He complains that this is "quite a strain on one's patience" (P.91, Col 3) proceeds to quote from the Resolution on what "a vast reservoir of potential revolutionary manpower" the Negroes constitute, and asks me where can I cite any instance where the Resolution blames the Negro working class for its delusion. Although many quotations could be found to prove this attitude of blame,\* it is not these that are important to the case. Rather it is the manner in which he writes history. I shall cite but one example. Comrade Coolidge writes that after emancipation:

"The Negro masses followed the Northern bourgeois liberals and petty-bourgeois Negro politicians into the Republican party, where they remained until the New Deal Revolt in 1932." (P.8, Col.1, my emphasis, F.F.)

This does not happen to be true, for history records that at the height of the Populist movement when the National Colored Farmers Alliance numbered no less than 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  million, the Negro masses were in the forefront of the fight in the 1890's to break from both the Republican and Democratic parties and form the Peoples Party. Now

\*Cf., for example Coolidge's Resolution, P.10, Col.2: "Already there has been too much indifference on the part of the Negroes in the matter of leading and pushing white workers into action in behalf of the Negroes".

this error is not made because Coolidge is "unacquainted" with the fact it is made because he is unable to see it with eyes glued on the dialectic movement of history. Instead he sees it as a series of "untoward events", culminating in the betrayal of the Negroes and having him "assigned the special function of a labor reserve" for the sake of the benefits to be accrued from conquest of the "Southern market". (P.7, 8) Now, anyone having the slightest acquaintance with the objective, not the subjective, pattern of American history knows that so sharp were the social relations between capital and labor that the Northern bourgeoisie decided upon the sacrifice of the "Southern market" for the sake of maintaining the social structure there, that industrialization of the South was not built upon the ruins of slavery but alongside its economic remains, that in order not to intrude upon the semi-feudal agrarian relations upon which cotton production was based, it left intact the black labor supply of the plantations and used immigrant labor as its labor reserve. It was this by which the Negro was conditioned and developed.

Capitalism, not capitalism in general but American capitalism as it expanded, of necessity sharpened the basic contradictions of the historic environment in which it functions. It is capitalism tied to the cotton plantations. Had industrialization engulfed the South as it had the North, had it disintegrated the black peasantry as capitalism had in Europe when it drove the peasants from the land, had it fully proletarianized the Negro, we would have no special Negro problem, but only a general labor problem.

So archaic a system as cotton culture in so advanced a country as 20th century America can keep from collapsing only through such despotic social relations and totalitarian politics as exists in the South. Any freedom of movement that the Negro might get would topple the whole intricate structure of cotton culture with its semi-feudal relationships which are already much aggravated by the tremendous industrialization of the Negro both in the North and in the South. It is this which explains the unnatural right of the Southern Senators. It was this which made Trotsky conclude that the Negroes could never achieve their democratic rights under capitalism, that the movement for these rights would undermine capitalism, and that it was therefore up to us not only to see the objective validity of these movements but to stimulate and even initiate these movements. That is why Johnson's Resolution, which is in the true Marxist tradition, satisfied itself not with general phrases about the revolutionary potentiality of the Negroes, but concretely specified:

"The party brings Marxism to the Negroes by emphasizing to them that the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. It emphasizes to the Negroes that Negro emancipation cannot take place without the vigorous and self-sacrificing struggle of the Negroes themselves. It sharply condemns that distortion of Marxist truth which states or implies that

\*For a statement about the great loss the sacrifice of the Southern home market means to this day, cf. Report on Economic Conditions of the South, prepared for the President by the National Emergency Council.

the Negroes by their independent struggles cannot get to first base without the leadership of organized labor". (P.17, Col.2)

And again:

"Such is the proletarian composition of the Negro people, so hostile are they to the existing social order because of the special degradation to which it subjects them, that the political organization which knows how to utilize their preoccupation with their democratic rights can find ample ways and means for carrying that socialistic propaganda which must always be the climax of revolutionary effort, particularly in this period". (P.19, Col.1)

It is because Comrade Coolidge does not know how to utilize this preoccupation with democratic rights for the purposes of the coming proletarian revolution that he fears these organizations as an impediment in the way of the social revolution and considers the democratic struggle an "ordeal" instead of a direct part of the struggle for socialism. That is all that is involved in the distinction between the Majority and Minority Resolutions on the Negro Question.

April 23, 1946



## ON STALINISM

-by- Ben Hall and Jack Wilson

(Note: The following was introduced at the Fourth National Convention as an amendment to the International Resolution of the National Committee and was referred by the Convention for post-convention discussion. - Editor)

These strata attracted to the banner of Stalinism have their own aims which are neither the victory nor an advancement of Socialism and the proletariat but the establishment of the totalitarian tyranny known as Bureaucratic Collectivism. To hope for, to strive for, even to fight for such an aim is one thing. To be able to achieve it, however, is something vastly different. Like the petty-bourgeoisie which may dream of some day reestablishing a middle class paradise, the Stalinists of each separate nation are utterly incapable of themselves realizing their own aims. In fact, it is just that impotence which compels them to act PRIMARILY as the instruments of the Russian ruling class.

These groupings which form the backbone of Stalinism outside of Russia...more accurately the backbone of its leading section...do not represent any new class in society and cannot with their own social power reorganize or even dominate society. In Germany, a similar element formed the mass base for fascism and fought fanatically to establish "national socialism." It came to power only to solidify more firmly the rule of monopoly capitalism by crushing the organized labor movement and was crushed itself in turn.

In Russia, it was the proletariat that destroyed the rule of the bourgeoisie. Only after a protracted period of isolation during which the proletariat itself was weakened, was Stalinism able to take power and in time to transform itself into a new ruling class. The destruction of the rule of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat in any nation in Europe today would be the prelude to the destruction of Stalinism not only in Europe but in Russia as well.

Today, however, when the whole world is dominated by the antagonism between Russia and the United States, which contest for complete supremacy, and which represent, each in its own manner, mighty military and economic machines for reaction, and which have only recently emerged victoriously from World War II without facing internal revolutionary convulsions; all nations and peoples are to one degree or another in the shadow of these powers. At the same time, in no country has the proletariat fought to establish its own rule...the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the working class in any single country to struggle for power, it must reject all modification or limitation of its struggle in the interests of the capitalist class of its own nation, of the Anglo-American bloc, or of the Russian-Stalin regime. It means in effect to strike out simultaneously against both blocs of imperialists. Such a revolution would face the immediate possibility of international attack by the forces of either or both Russian and American imperialism.

These facts cannot but act temporarily as a tremendous objective and subjective deterrent to proletarian revolution and as an

obstacle in the path of the restoration of the complete class independence of the proletariat which independence signifies not only a complete and radical break with the national bourgeoisie and Stalinism as well.

Examples of the impact of world imperialist antagonisms upon the class struggle in any single nation are, of course, numerous.

In Spain, during the war against France, the Spanish proletariat found itself under attack from the forces of Italian and German fascism and at the same time blockaded by the allied imperialists. Russian Stalinism was thereby enabled to gain tremendous influence by supplying limited amounts of arms and ammunition to the Peoples Front government. The CP of Spain was able to grow into a mass force overnight and finally to subject large sections of the Spanish workers to Stalinist domination.

During World War II, the national revolutionary movements in their struggle against fascist oppression turned for assistance to the enemies of their main enemy, Germany. As a result, all classes in the oppressed nations, including the proletariat, subordinated themselves politically to the aims and needs of allied imperialism.

Today, with the world divided into spheres of influence and areas of domination by Russia and the United States, all nations, parties, and classes tend to line themselves up with one or the other of these two main imperialist contenders, hoping with the support of one to balance off the other. This is manifest in conflicts over food supplies, boundaries, the composition of national governments. In the working class, this trend is expressed in the revival of the social-democracy as the agent of Anglo-American imperialism and Stalinism as the agent of Russian imperialism.

In this delicate balance between the imperialisms on a world plane, it has been possible for Stalinism, especially in the absence of any mass revolutionary socialist proletarian parties to rise in influence in several countries and even to come to power. Those new Stalinist regimes bear the unmistakable mark of Bonapartism. But where the capitalist world Bonapartist regimes have balanced themselves upon the conflict between the classes in the nation and have defended the existence of capitalist private property, the Stalinist regimes base themselves primarily upon the balance between the main rival imperialists and defend Stalinist collective property as an instrument of exploitation and oppression.

In Poland and Yugoslavia, for example, Stalinist bureaucracies have taken power and in clear refutation of the analysis that they represent a "capitalist force" have not only disenfranchised and enslaved the proletariat and peasantry but have systematically expropriated the bourgeoisie and the landowners and converted their property into state property, thus giving the final blow to the theory that Russia is a "workers state" because property is nationalized. This victory of Stalinism results not from the inherent viability and power of "native" Stalinism but from the balance of power between the United States and Russia on a world scale. Neither the United States nor Russia is prepared to press its will

upon the other by force; the bourgeoisie of Europe has been enormously weakened by the war and its aftermath; the peoples of Europe are under the physical or ideological control of imperialism in the form of Stalinism, social democracy or the bourgeois-democracy of the United States and England. In this combination of circumstances, certain secondary strata of the national population such as the leaders and guiders of Stalinism who are normally incapable of playing any decisive independent role in society are able to exert that necessary degree of power and influence to tip the scales in the interests of the Russian ruling class and thereby to come to power in their own nation.

RESOLUTION OF THE WORKERS INTERNATIONAL  
LEAGUE ON THE WORKERS PARTY AND SOCIAL-  
IST WORKERS PARTY UNITY NEGOTIATIONS.

Although the Workers International League is not yet officially a section of the Fourth International, we are, however, vitally interested in the discussions now proceeding in the S.W.P. on unification with the W.P. and after examination of all available documents and material, the E.C. has taken the following stand:-

1. That the S.W.P. minority in 1940 was completely unjustified in splitting from the S.W.P. and its action dealt a cruel blow to the Fourth International in a time of world crisis. In the principal ideological dispute of the Russian question we agree with Comrade Trotsky's characterization of Soviet Russia as a degenerated workers state, yet worthy of unconditional defense against imperialist aggression. We reject the W.P. theory of the Russian state as being one of bureaucratic collectivism.
2. Although pointing out the petty-bourgeois nature of the opposition in 1940 Trotsky sought to maintain the unity of the S.W.P. and affirmed that the ideas of the minority were compatible with remaining inside the F.I.
3. Six years after the split the minority organized in the W.P. has expressed its desire to reunite with the S.W.P. and to take its place in the ranks of the only world party of socialist revolution - the Fourth International. During these six years of its independent existence, the W.P. has maintained a Leninist attitude to its own ruling class - calling for the continuation of the class struggle against American capitalism and its reactionary war. Burnham, the chief representative of the petty-bourgeois tendency, left the W.P. and other petty-bourgeois members rubbed off their petty-bourgeois dusting by coming into close contact with the working class in the factories and army. This can give new impetus to the fusion of the two organizations and aid the building up of the mass Bolshevik revolutionary party for America.
4. The chief obstacle towards unity was the refusal of the W.P. membership to subordinate themselves to the majority decision inside the S.W.P. and to abide by the principles of democratic centralism. The move towards unity indicates a change of attitude and readiness to accept the principle of democratic centralism and to work as disciplined members in the carrying out of the program and the policies of the S.W.P.
5. The unity of the two organizations is a progressive step in the development of the F.I. in America, a pooling of revolutionary resources which we fully support. It would also influence the International towards cohesion and give new strength to the struggling Trotskyist groups elsewhere and serve to discourage splits and fruitless division in the other Trotskyist groups.
6. We firmly believe that the ideas of the W.P. are compatible with membership in one organization with the S.W.P. The S.W.P. has

grown significantly during the war years and has brought the ideas of Trotskyism to increasing sections of the workers. Unity with the W.P. would remove a rival organization and clear up the confusion that the present co-existence of two Trotskyist parties with similar programs must necessarily have created in the minds of the advanced workers of America.

7. In order to facilitate the fusion of the two parties we support the holding of joint membership meetings, the issuing of joint bulletins and the engaging in common action in trade unions, elections, etc. so that a firm and lasting unity can be achieved.
8. We strongly urge the S.W.P. majority to bring about unity with the W.P. and in this way prevent any further split in the Trotskyist ranks. We also urge its minority not to split but to continue to work for the consolidation of all the revolutionary forces in America.

Adopted March 13, 1946.