

KARL MARX ON THE NEGRO QUESTION

By OTTO HALL

Karl Marx, in his study of the historic development of capitalism in America, ruthlessly exposed the source of the great fortunes accumulated by the pious capitalists in England and America engaged in the slave trade. He pointed out, in the first volume of "Capital" in the chapters dealing with the source of primitive accumulation of wealth, that these hypocrites, in their greed for gold, did not hesitate "to turn Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of blackskins" and that this "signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production."

Marx not only exposed the viciousness of slavery, and the slave trade, but as the founder of the First International, he led a stern and uncompromising fight for the complete abolition of the vicious system of chattel slavery. He wrote many articles for the "New York Tribune" in the years preceding and during the Civil War, supporting

the abolition and mobilizing public sentiment against this vicious system of human bondage and was an important factor in mobilizing the workers, both in Europe and America, against slavery. He pointed out back in 1859, that "Labor in the white skin cannot emancipate itself as long as it is degraded in the black."

When the British textile barons who were accumulating great fortunes by securing cheap cotton thru the existence of the slave plantations in America, tried, during the early years of the Civil War, to mobilize sentiment in England favoring recognition of the Confederate States, Marx carried on a vigorous fight on the lecture platform, and through the columns of the Vienna "Free Press" against them. He succeeded in mobilizing the workers in England and other European countries against the slave system. Marx, who was living in London at this time, wrote to Lassalle on April 23, 1862 that: "The English middle class (and aristocracy) has never more shamelessly disgraced itself than in the great struggle that is taking place on the other side of the Atlantic. The English working class, on the other hand, which is suffering most under the bellum civile (Civil War), has never proved itself more heroic and noble. All the more is this to be admired when one knows as I do, all the means which were set in motion here (London) and in Manchester in order to get it to demonstrate. The only organ that they still had, the newspaper of the scoundrel Reynolds, has been bought up by the Southerners; likewise their most important lecturers. But all in vain."

It can easily be seen that through the agitation carried on by Marx, which resulted in the failure of the Southern confederacy to obtain moral and financial support of the principal European countries, was a great factor in bringing about its early defeat. Thus the struggles of the revolutionary white and Negro workers under the leadership of the Communist Party against the vicious campaign of lynch terror and suppression against the most exploited section of the working class becomes one of the most important tasks facing the workers at this time. The vigorous campaign carried on by the Communist Party for the self-determination of the Negro toilers in the "Black Belt" of the South and for their equal rights everywhere is not, as the social fascists and their friends of the N. A. A. C. P. claim, a new scheme of the Communists for self-advertisement, but the logical carrying thru of the teachings of Karl Marx.

The great majority of the Negroes in the United States are still on the land, and are living in actual slavery, in spite of their supposed emancipation, in the section of the South known as the "Black Belt." The vicious character of their exploitation, their re-enslavement on the plantation after the Reconstruction period when they were systematically deprived of the most elementary rights enjoyed by other workers, the super-profits extracted from their toil, definitely determines their class position as oppressed Nationals. Marx understood this very clearly when he wrote to Engels on July 25, 1877, commenting on the Hayes-Tilden compromise, which marked the end of the Reconstruction Period and the betrayal of the Negroes by the republican party. He stated that: "The policy of the new President (Hayes) will make the NEGROES, and the great expropriations of land (exactly the fertile land) in favor of railways, mining, etc., companies, will make THE PEASANTS OF THE WEST, who are already very dissatisfied, ALLIES OF THE WORKERS."

We see then, that an understanding of revolutionary Marxism gives the workers the means through which they can achieve their final emancipation from the yoke of capitalist oppression.

Marxism, Leninism

the revolution, when the proletarian revolution had not yet become an immediate and practical necessity. Lenin, the disciple of Marx and Engels, lived in a period of fully developed imperialism; in a period when the proletarian revolution was already under way; in a period when the proletarian revolution had already triumphed in one country, had made an end of bourgeois democracy and had begun the era of proletarian democracy, the era of soviets.

That is why I describe Leninism as a development of Marxism.

It is usual to point out that Leninism is preeminently combative and revolutionary. There are two reasons why Leninism has these peculiar characteristics. First of all, Leninism issued from the proletarian revolution, and therefore necessarily bears the imprint of that revolution. Secondly, Leninism originated and grew strong in conflict with the opportunism of the Second International—a conflict essential to success in the struggle against capitalism. We must never forget that between the epoch of Marx and Engels and the epoch of Lenin came the epoch when the opportunism of the Second International held unrestricted sway; and that a ruthless fight with this opportunism was one of Lenin's chief tasks.

Theory is the experience of the movement of all countries, taken in its general aspect. Theory becomes, naturally, objectless, if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice becomes blind if it fails to illuminate its path with revolutionary theory. But theory may become the greatest power of the workers' movement if it is indissolubly connected with revolutionary practice. Theory, and only theory, can add to the movement certainty, the power of orientation, and understanding of the inner connection of surrounding events; theory, and only theory, may enable practice to understand not only how the classes are moving at present, but also how and to where they must turn in the nearest future.

—From Stalin's book, "Leninism."

THE 2nd 5-YEAR PLAN AND THE ABOLITION OF CLASSES

The fundamental political task of the second Five Year Plan is the final liquidation of the capitalist elements and of classes in general, the complete removal of the causes which produce class differences and exploitation, the overcoming of the remnants of capitalism in economy and in the minds of the people, the conversion of the whole of the working population of the country into conscious and active builders of the classless Socialist society.