

CLASS AGAINST CLASS IN THE SOUTH

Negro Misleaders in Dixie

By GILBERT LEWIS.

This is the second part of Comrade Lewis's article. The first part dealt with the vicious attack of the Negro bourgeoisie and the labor bureaucrats against the Trade Union Unity League and the activities of the revolutionary workers in the South.

The Editor.

II

THE question naturally arises: Why is the Southern ruling class so thoroughly alarmed, so thoroughly frightened at the appearance of the T.U.U.L. in Chattanooga? It is because evidence is at hand to prove that organizations under the political leadership of the Communist Party can smash the barriers of race prejudice and mobilize the workers of the South, black and white, for a militant struggle against capitalism. Because Chattanooga has not escaped the general crisis of capitalism and here as elsewhere, one witnesses the terrific onslaught of capitalist rationalization with its wage cuts, speedup and stretchout and increasing unemployment. At the same time one also witnesses a decided growing resistance of the workers to these attacks upon their living standards.

This growing resistance of the workers is shown in their response to our program of revolutionary unionism—in the fact that 1,000 leaflets with a minimum of information on them, could bring into our hall some 250 workers—in the fact that the T.U.U.L.'s acceptance of the political leadership of the Communist Party, which has been brought out to them time and again, did not in the least keep the workers from crowding around the organizers after the meetings were over to join the T.U.U.L.—in the fact that in a space of two weeks time, in Chattanooga, absolutely new territory, a number of workers from the shops and factories were drawn into the Communist Party.

Indicative of the radicalization in process here is the relationship existing between the Negro and white workers. Though the issue of race against race has at times, in the past, assumed acute form, the intense process of industrialization and rationalization has educated them to the need of standing together. Rapidly they are coming to realize how race prejudice is used by the bosses to keep them divided, so that the standard of living of both groups can be lowered. In several instances in this city Negroes who were barred from the A. F. of L. unions, have been used to scab on the white workers who have gone out on strike. In other instances, Negroes, too, barred from the unions, have refused to scab on the white workers when on strike. At all of our meetings both Negro and white workers have taken the floor and pointed out the necessity of standing together.

The attitude of the Negro workers in this respect presents a very interesting study. He has absolutely no objection to uniting with the white worker but neither does he regard it in the light of a special privilege granted him. And while not in the least subjective they want to be certain that you mean it when you say absolute equality, for they have had sorry experiences with the A. F. of L.

In 1920 the A. F. of L. came to Chattanooga and carried on a campaign of organizing Negro and white metal workers together. At first they declared that the workers were to be organized on a basis of equality. Soon however, they revealed their true intention. They organized the white workers as mechanics and the Negroes as helpers, stating that while the Negroes were receiving only \$6-\$8 per day as mechanics, as helpers they would receive \$8.50 and up. But the white mechanics would receive \$10 per day. The Negroes told the A.

F. of L. to go to hell and walked out in a body and have never returned.

Negro Workers in Basic Industries Militant.

Chattanooga has a genuine Negro industrial proletariat, capable of leading, together with the revolutionary white workers, the revolutionary struggle. The Chattanooga bourgeoisie is badly frightened at the prospect of its being organized. This fact is borne out by an item which appears in the "Times" for Feb. 6 bearing the following scarehead: "Wave Red Flag as Negro Hope Against Whites," a definite attempt to whip up a lynching spirit by declaring to the white workers that the Communist Party was calling upon the darker races of the world to rise up and conquer the white man.

All of these attacks, however, have done little to hamper our work. The T.U.U.L. has moved steadily forward in spite of them and all of our meetings have been well attended by both Negro and white workers. Our membership has increased at a rapid rate of speed, excellent progress being recorded in Chattanooga, Atlanta and other parts of the South, including Birmingham.

The workers are ready for struggle and willing to struggle. Not only are they willing to struggle against the bosses for a bite of bread but they are prepared to wage a militant struggle against the whole capitalist system. Workers here in the South who have never heard of the Communist Party will tell you that what this country needs is a revolution.

The Party must pay close attention to the South and lend political guidance to these workers in their struggle. And in view of that fact some of the things that I said in the beginning of this article in regard to winning the Negro masses will bear stressing.

Class Against Class Must Be Emphasized.

Certain shortcomings of the Party in reaching the Negro workers of the North must be overcome in the South. We cannot repeat the same mistakes. While in the North a serious campaign has been carried on by the Party to win the Negro masses for the revolutionary movement, trained organizers have been put in the field with this as their primary task, etc., the fact must be recognized that our Party hasn't a sufficient appreciation of the Negro question in this period. For while the slogan of class against class has been repeatedly raised not enough effort has been made to win the Negro on the basis of that slogan. In too many cases the stress has been placed upon his suffering as a member of an oppressed race and not enough upon his suffering as a member of an oppressed class.

We have not centered enough attention upon the shops and factories. In too many instances in approaching the Negro worker, we have subordinated the Party to general left-wing mass organizations. We have not sufficiently exposed to the mass of Negro workers the treachery of the Negro misleaders. It is not enough to tell the Negro masses that the Negro middle class is too lacking in courage or has no program to effect their liberation. We must make them understand that the Negro middle class is definitely their enemy and the friend of their oppressor.

In this period of sharpening class conflicts such shortcomings become keenly apparent. Class against class must be the outstanding slogan of our Party in its approach to the Negroes of the South. My experience with the Negro in industry, the only one vital to the revolutionary movement, gives me to believe that the Negro is as class conscious as the average white worker and can be won on the basis of that slogan.

—THE END.—