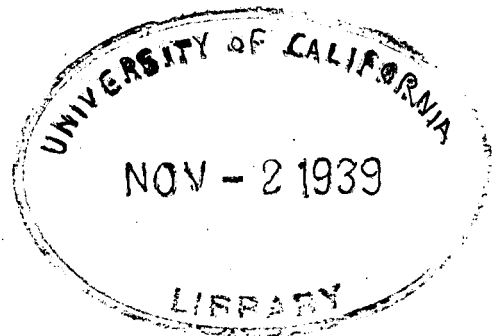


10

NEGRO SLAVERY

Then and Now

FIVE CENTS



Revolutionary Workers League

1904 DIVISION STREET
Chicago, Ill.

135%

Three hundred years ago a cargo of Negroes was brought to the western hemisphere to be sold as slaves. At the time the difference between the Negro slaves and the "indentured" whites was only a difference of degree. In the streets of Berlin and London profiteers organized the kidnapping of men, women and children to send them to the "new world." Once here they would be forced to work seven years — or possibly more — to buy themselves back, to become free men. The dearth of population made the English profiteers give these whites their "freedom" in order to procure the necessary labor power to develop the fields, shipping and trade. Otherwise white slaves might have been kept in bondage for all their days just as the black slaves.

The Negro, however, came from a continent with a generally lower culture, where primitive communism and barbarism prevailed. He had no understanding of the new capitalist order, of "free trade", of the language of the whites, etc. The landowners never in hundreds of years tried to educate the Negro slaves. The guiding motif of the slave system, just like capitalism, was PROFITS. It was more profitable for the landowner, and for the capitalists, to keep the Negro illiterate, working sometimes 19 hours a day, with a whip over him, than to have him educated.

THE "CIVILIZING INFLUENCE"

In the name of "civilization" thousands of Negroes are chained to their beds on long voyages, with an infernal stench and poor food, and the chains tearing the flesh in their arms as the ships rolled. Sometimes half a boatload of Negroes perished. Once in the Colonies, they were branded and sold, just as one puts the "made in America" brand on a pack of cigarets and sells it.

When Washington, Jefferson, and the others fought the Revolutionary War, they demanded "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" for all men, they shouted about "all men" being "created equal." But when they established their own independent government they refused to give the right to vote to the "white trash" who didn't have any property — about 32 out of every 33 persons;

and they decided that a Negro slave was not a human being but merely a **PIECE OF PROPERTY**, with no voice and no rights.

The Negro slave was reaping millions and millions for the slave-owners, for the rich traders in Massachusetts engaged in the slave trade in the Indies, and for the other "forefathers." In the interests of protecting the profits the good forefathers invented the myth that the Negro is an inferior person because he has black skin, that he can't be educated, that he was being saved from paganism and hell by being enslaved to the American capitalists and slave-owners.

MYTHS AND FRAUDS

Even in the days of our forefathers all this was known by them to be just "propaganda" and fraud. In San Domingo in Washington's time a revolution broke out between the slaves and the slave-owners, which ended in 1801 in the establishment of an independent Negro Republic, Haiti. The good forefathers, who had such contempt for the "niggers" at home, were flattering Toussaint Louverture and the other Negro rulers of San Domingo in an attempt to gain better trade relations with the Negro-controlled state.

For capitalism the Negro is a dull ignorant fool at one time and place and a highly cultured and brilliant individual at another — so long as by using this sort of propaganda and diplomacy capitalism can reap a profit.

When slavery was finally abolished in the United States it was not because of the goodness of the American capitalists under Lincoln. It was again because of the old, old profit motive. In 1860 the Negro population was increasing enormously; the white owners were constantly pushing out West to get new lands. The Northern capitalists who could not use slave labor in the factories were also pushing out west with their railroads and their factories. There inevitably was a conflict between the two. It was a question of which type of social structure could bring more profits — the chattel slave structure of the south, or the capitalist structure of the North. The capitalist structure of the North won and the Negro slave became "free"

A NEW FORM OF SLAVERY

Terms like "civilization" and "freedom" under capitalism are harsh jokes. Freedom for the Negro — since the Civil War — has meant the freedom to be exploited by this or that land-lord and bank in the South, or the freedom to be exploited by this or that factory-owner in the North. In other words he has been given the freedom to choose WHO SHALL EXPLOIT HIM; he has merely been changed from one FORM of oppression to another, from chattel slavery to wage slavery.

A slave before the Civil War cost \$1,000 and he had to be fed, sheltered and clothed. After the War Negro workers were employed for \$7 a month. There lies the story of the abolition of slavery in a nutshell.

Seventy four years after the "freedom" of the Negro people, Negroes are herded into Negro ghettos where they pay between two to four times as much rent as whites in similar apartments; they are forced to ride in different parts of trolley cars and trains, excluded from most "white" restaurants even in the North, excluded even from attending "white" colleges; they are deprived of the right to vote in the whole of the South — with rare exceptions — and to a great extent in the North. They are given the dirtiest work for the lowest pay, the last to be hired and the first to be fired. From 35% to 45% of the Negroes in large cities are forced to go on relief. They live under such miserable conditions in their ghettos that from two to five times as many Negro children suffer from tuberculosis as white children.

Under Franklin D. Roosevelt, who is such a great "friend" of the oppressed, who cries nightly for the oppressed Jews in Germany, Negroes are forced to go to separate relief stations in the South, where they get far lower relief rations than even the whites; thousands of Negro sharecroppers are being thrown off their land as a result of the Roosevelt farm program which favors the middle and large farmers; and more Negroes are starving today than in the worst days of chattel slavery.

NEGRO PROBLEM A SOCIAL PROBLEM

The Negro problem is also in part, an agrarian carryover from the Chattel Slavery before the Civil War.

Millions of Negroes in the south have been turned from Chattel Slaves into agrarian slaves of one sort or another — slaves to the large landowners from whom they rent land. In certain sections peonage still exists — by fraud and deception blacks are forced into veritable slavery to pay off “debts” to the landowning white.

Along with this agrarian carryover, however, is the increasing shift of the Negro to industry as a wage slave. Negro populations in the larger cities have doubled and quadrupled in the past 20 years. The same process which hurled white farmers off the land and into the factories has thrown relatively far more of the Negro agrarians — who tilled the poorest acreage — into the factory system of the cities.

Thus, while on the surface the dominant note in this complex social problem appears to be the racial question, the Negro problem is primarily a CLASS problem.

The Negroes are an oppressed people. But like all other people they are divided into classes. The rich Negro oppresses his “brother” just as viciously on his lands or factories as the white capitalist. The working class Negro has as little in common with the Negro capitalist as he has with the white capitalist. The working class must defend the whole Negro people against racial discrimination, but it must never forget these divisions of class.

The whole working class is not homogenous. There are differences between an alien worker and a native worker, between a male worker and a female worker, between an adult and a youth, between Gentile and Jew, and between Negro and white, between workers in small factories and workers in large, between workers in one country or one section and workers in another.

BUT ALL OF THESE ARE SECONDARY DIFFERENCES. THE WORKING CLASS IS UNITED BY FAR GREATER BONDS. IT IS UNITED BY THE FACT THAT ALL WORKERS ARE EXPLOITED BY THE CAPITALIST CLASS AND ITS STATE. It is united by the fact that they belong to the same CLASS

DIVIDE AND RULE

The capitalist class tries to take advantage of these

ferences in order to sow the seeds of dissension among the working class. No minority can possibly enslave a majority except by working on the old principle of "Divide and Rule." When the capitalists speak of Negro "inferiority", when they incite mobs to lynch framed Negroes in the South, when they give Negro workers separate locker rooms and exclude them from the lunchrooms, etc. of the whites, when they pay Negroes lower wages and give them dirtier jobs, when they seclude them into Negro ghettos — when they do all this they are attempting to divide and rule.

No division in the ranks of the working class has been so constantly utilized by the capitalists of the United States as the division between white and black. Nothing is so detrimental to the white worker and to the working class as a whole as the racial antagonism fostered and developed by the capitalists. **THE WHITE WORKER IN AMERICA CAN NOT LIBERATE HIMSELF FROM WAGE SLAVERY WITHOUT LIBERATING HIS NEGRO BROTHERS AND THE REST OF THE OPPRESSED NEGRO PEOPLE.**

FAKE PANACEAS

Ever since the Negro problem has existed all sorts of quack schemes for the liberation of the Negro have been promulgated. After the Civil War the white capitalists of the North organized the Southern Negroes into "Loyal Leagues" to massacre the Whites of the South. This same division between colors of skin instead of between CLASSES is still being fostered in one form or another today.

Since the depression various nationalist movements of the Negroes have grown up — notably the Garvey movement. These movements are similar in certain respects to the Zionist movement of the Jews. They base themselves upon the idea of race and nationality instead of class. They propose to make the Negroes free of the white by conquering Africa from the white imperialists. They foster all sorts of racial hatred. No matter what their motives, movements like the Garvey movement, serve the interest of the capitalist class, serve to divide the Negro worker still further from his white brother.

These nationalist movements instead of fighting the capitalist class, lead the misguided Negro people to fight against white workers (note the Harlem riots for instance). Nothing could suit the capitalist class more.

Another panacea for the Negro people has been the Religious cult movement. Negro religious cults are more concerned with the social problem than the white preachers. With no large Marxian party to give the Negro people leadership, they fall prey to all sorts of these Religious quacks who promise them "manna" in heaven and who sometimes help them in getting relief, etc. Instead of militant class action with their white brothers against evictions on the land in the Sharecropper South, or against the relief starvation, the Negro people are taught by these religious cults to depend on some miracle from heaven. If anything has been a great factor in the lowering of relief standards and the continuation of the double oppression of the Negro people, the various Negro churches can claim that distinction.

SELF DETERMINATION A SEPARATIST SCHEME

Still another panacea is the proposal by certain groups that the Negro fight for the right of self-determination in the black belt. In other words that the Negroes try to establish an autonomous Negro state in the South.

The Negro people are a minority of the population; it is true, but they are not a NATIONAL minority. They have a common culture with the rest of the American people; they have no national borders and never did have in the U. S. They do not constitute a NATIONAL minority (such as the Slovaks, Irish, Indians, etc.) that can carry the struggle for independent state rights as a blow against Imperialism. Both their economic and political problems are similar to that of the poor workers and farmers.

The theory of self-determination for the Negro people is an American form of the Stalinist theory of Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasants that in backward countries TWO revolutions are necessary — first the agrarian revolution and then the proletarian revolution. Adherents of this theory will and

laid into the hands of the enemy class by fighting against the proletarian seizure of power on the grounds that the bourgeois (agrarian and democratic) revolution must be completed first.

The coming revolution in the U. S. will be and can be only a social, a proletarian revolution. The agrarian carryovers in the south will play a role in this revolution, but there can be no SEPARATE agrarian revolutions in this period of capitalism. The theory of self-determination strengthens racial and separatist tendencies and negates the fundamental solidarity of the Negro and white workers. The interests of the Negro people lie not in further separating themselves from the white WORKERS and oppressed, but in uniting for a common struggle against the common enemy: capitalism.

The latest "radical" panacea for the Negro people has been the Stalinist program: "fight to enforce the 14th, 15th, and 16th Amendments." This vicious swindle aims at uniting the Negro people with the capitalist machinery more brazenly and thoroughly than almost any other program. Under capitalism literally thousands of laws have been passed "in the interests of the working class". Not one of these laws has ever bettered the conditions of the working class unless the proletariat by militant class action FORCED THE CAPITALISTS TO ENFORCE THEM. Furthermore, wherever possible these laws have been distorted and used **against** the people. For instance the Sherman anti-trust law was passed to stop monopolies. Monopolies still flourish and grow larger. But the law was used to stop workers from organizing on the grounds that a Union is a monopoly.

THE "DEMOCRATIC" APPROACH

The 14th, 15th, and 16th Amendments to the U. S. Constitution are dead letters. They never were intended to give the Negro people real equality. Their only effect has been to give the capitalists a legal loophole for swindling smaller capitalists and the government. The "with-
out due process of law" clause in one of these amendments has been the legal bulwark of private property, has been used to cover fake bankruptcies, stop monopoly dis-
solution, etc. But it never once aided the Negro people in

their fight for equality and freedom.

To depend on the capitalists to grant real liberty to the Negro people is like depending on the boss class to voluntarily do away with the profit system. Capitalism keeps the Negro workers oppressed in order to preserve its profit system. Only the forceful overthrow of the profit system will give the Negro people and all the other oppressed real freedom.

BLACK AND WHITE UNITE

Like his white brother the Negro must fight the misleaders in his own ranks, those who try to separate him from his fellow white worker or agrarian, those who try to reconcile him with capitalism.

For the white worker the liberation of the Negro worker and farmer is indispensable if the oppressed whites are to be released from the miseries of capitalism. Negro and white unite — that must be the slogan of the working class. And the white worker, because he does not labor under that double oppression of the Negro worker, must take the initiative to organize the Negro worker, to eliminate Jim Crowism in the unions and in the factories. He must fight for equal rights and equal opportunities for the Negro workers.

Negro and white workers together must take the lead in fighting for the abolition of mortgages for the tenant farmers and sharecroppers, for government grants and aid to be administered by the sharecroppers themselves. They must organize the oppressed Negro people behind the working class in the struggle to overthrow capitalism and establish a Workers Society.

The Negro problem can be solved only as part of the problem of the class, as part of the class struggle. The key to the solution of this problem is the unity of Negro and white worker in the day to day class struggle and toward the overthrow of capitalism. For this, as well as the other problems of the oppressed under capitalism, a new Communist Party, section of the Communist Fourth International is needed to give leadership to the workers and oppressed of the world in their struggle to overthrow capitalism.

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