## Nigger-Lovin' Jew

TOM JOHNSON

MET Sam the night I arrived in Steelton. I was a Communist organizer, the first to reach that section of the South. My instructions were: "Go to Steelton, connect yourself with local Negro and white workers and build the Party organization. Report regularly to headquarters." It was impossible to be much more explicit. All we in the North knew was that Steelton was the nerve center of Southern industry, that wages there were considerably lower than in any other section of the country and that the violently open-shop A.B.S. Corporation owned the town- lock, stock and barrel. We had just one connection in the whole territory; his name was Sam Beckman and he was a subscriber to the Freiheit, the Communist daily in the Jewish language. Beyond this I knew nothing of him.

It was past midnight when my bus pulled up before the frowzy, dim-lit station and came to a stop. I had very little money and late as it was, decided to look up Beckman at once; perhaps I could stay the night at his place and save the price of a hotel room.

Instructed by the night porter, I found my street without difficulty and started down it, watching the numbers as I went. It ran through the heart of the Negro business section, but at this hour it was pretty well deserted. A couple of Negro miners, coming off a late shift and dead tired, clumped stolidly by me in their wet pit clothes, their redrimmed eyes glued on the sidewalk ahead of them. A soft voice called from a doorway, and the graceful figure of a Negro girl, her childish face rouged and painted, detached itself from the shadow and smiled at me timidly.

Number 739 at last! It was evidently a store, housed in a ramshackle one-story frame building. Closed, of course, and not even a night light burning. But as I pressed my face against the window, I thought I saw a thread of light in the rear. I pounded the door with a will and after a minute or two a light was ritched on and the door opened. It framed tall, gangling figure—barefoot and in long ton drawers. From their setting in a narw, sensitive face, now covered with a two-ys' growth of stubble, a pair of abstracted, unhappy eyes looked me over without interest.

"What do you want?" he asked quietly. "Is Sam Beckman here?"

"Yes, that is I," he replied in a strongly accented voice.

"The editor of the Freiheit gave me a letter to you and asked me to look you up."

"The Freiheit! Then you are a comrade?" I nodded. He stared at me incredulously for a moment and then repeated, "A comrade! A comrade here in Steelton! But come in, dear comrade, you are welcome!" He hung

his arms about me and fairly dragged me through the door. "Zaller!" he called to someone behind the curtain that separated the living quarters from the front of the store, "Come here quick! A comrade from the North has arrived!" He pulled me along with him, his arm still around my shoulders, and flung the curtain aside. A sweating porpoise of a man was swinging himself upright on the bed. He was fat and broad and he was much excited.

None of us slept that night. For years these two had been isolated from their world; the world of the revolutionary movement, and they could not hear enough. Was it true the Party gained strength steadily in the North? Then why so few votes in the last election? How was the miners' strike going? Did I think war against the Soviet Union would come this year or next? Between questions they told me their story.

Both had been needle workers in up-state New York when the slump of '21 put them on the street. Somehow in their anxious search for jobs they had wandered South. Two years of odd jobs followed until at last they decided to pool their resources and go into business. This pitiful little grocery store was the result.

"For seven years we have been chained to this hell hole of a South," Sam declaimed passionately. "We could not leave, for who would buy our stock and fixtures? We tried to agitate, to work for the movement at first but we are foreigners—Jews. These Southern barbarians hate us. And because we are white the Negroes do not trust us and will not listen. We have been like dead men, lost to our comrades, lost to ourselves. But now all will be changed! With you, an American, here to help us, to show us how, we will work, we will build the Party. Only tell us what to do and we will do it. This I pledge!"

Sam kept that pledge. For months his grubby store was our headquarters. We slept there, always three and sometimes four in the big bed. We ate from the shelves of the store and cooked our food on the pot-bellied stove in the corner. We fitted the back room with a door and muffled the walls with quilts so that the sound of my typewriter and the mimeograph machine running off leaflets would not attract the attention of those in the store. The first Communist leaflet to appear in Steelton, or in the state for that matter, was run off in that room. And eight men-four Negroes and four whites-gathered there late one night behind drawn shades to form the first unit or "nucleus" of the Communist Party in the deep South.

Sam's customers were mostly Negroes of the neighborhood. It was the first year of the crisis, but already many of them were close to actual starvation. A man can't save on wages of 15 cents an hour, and when he's laid off—well, his family will go hungry in three weeks. Sam couldn't turn them down. As the greasy ledger in which he kept his charge accounts grew steadily fatter, the stock on the shelves dwindled in proportion. There was less and less money in the till to buy fresh supplies; the unemployed were slowly eating up the store.

It worried Zaller, but to Sam it was a relief. To him the store was a personal enemy which kept him from giving all his time to the movement. To him it summed up all the pettiness and chicanery that is the essence of the petty bourgeois soul. He hated it and despised it. On occasion he spat upon it. More than once, when the arrival of a customer found Sam busy at the crank of the mimeograph, or in the midst of a heated discussion on Communist policy in the back room, I have seen him open the door a crack, stick out an angry face, and shout to the astounded customer: "I'm busy! Can't wait on you now. You'll have to come back later or go somewhere else!" The door would slam shut and Sam would dive once more into the center of the argument.

Later, when we were about to hold our first mass meeting of the unemployed in Center Park, Sam insisted that he and Zaller both attend the meeting. We three left the store together. Sam turned the key and hung a crudely painted sign from the knob. It read:

## STORE CLOSED

HAVE GONE TO CENTER PARK TO DEMON-STRATE FOR MORE RELIEF. GO THOU AND DO LIKEWISE.

S. Beckman, Prop.

Then the terror clamped down. The store was raided and all Communist literature confiscated. Sam protested to the prosecutor and demanded its return. He was told the police would return only such of his books as might also be found on the shelves of the public library. Sam diligently hunted through the local library and emerged triumphant with a copy of the Communist Manifesto and Sinclair's The Jungle. That's all he got back from the police. He was insistent and threatened to sue the city for the return of his property. The police were annoyed and Sam was promptly thrown in jail as a "suspicious person." They held him 72 hours while the police terrorized Zaller at the store.

They decided to drive him out of business and out of town. Inspectors from the Department of Health appeared and nothing suited them. State men raided the store on the pretext that Sam sold cigarettes without affixing the four-cent state tax stamp. They found one pack without a stamp and Zaller pawned his ring to pay the \$50 fine.

A Ku Klux Klan parade of a hundred cars wound slowly through the Negro section. One car stopped at the store and six burly men came in. They looked long at Sam behind the counter.

"If you know what's good for you, you'll leave this town before you're shipped out in a box, you nigger-lovin' Jew," one said. Then they turned and left.

The next morning found three foot-high letters splashed in red paint on the window with a smaller line below them:

## KKK

NIGGERS KEEP AWAY FROM THIS STORE.

One night a bomb shattered the front of the store. A can of coal oil caught fire and the flimsy building went up like a torch. Sam and Zaller were asleep, but they managed to escape unhurt through a rear window. The next day I stood with Sam beside the smoking ruins. He turned to me and his sad eyes filled with tears, but he was smiling gently, happily.

"At last, comrade, I am a free man," he said. "That cursed store is done for. From my heart I thank God for the thugs that set that bomb! Now I can really work! I will sell the Daily Worker in front of the shop—Let them arrest me! I will win many workers for our Party. At last I can give all I have within me to the revolution!"

He has

## Dewey, Russell and Cohen

Why They are Anti-Communist (Concluded)

PAUL SALTER and JACK LIBROME

F these three opponents of Communism, Cohen is by far the most sophistic, the most patently reactionary. This is no surprise to those who know his philosophical and legal writings. Cohen has told elsewhere how he came to philosophy through the study of Capital for propaganda purposes. Here again he proudly relates what he owes to Marx, and protests that he holds "no brief for the injustices and stupidities of the present capitalist regime." But where he differs is on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. "To be sure," he says, "this dictatorship is to be in the name of the Proletariat. just as the fascist dictatorship is in the name of the whole nation. But such verbal tricks cannot hide the brute facts of tyrannical suppression necessarily involved in all dictatorships." Now no Communist tries to hide the suppression of the dictatorship (though to call it "tyrannical" is a misuse of terms). The question is, who is suppressed and for what end? Are the masses of workers now suppressed under capitalism suppressed under the proletarian dictatorship? Has Professor Cohen heard of unemployed and oppressed people being smuggled into Germany and Italy as they are into the Soviet Union? (Recent dispatches show the existence of large-scale rackets in Poland for the smuggling of unemployed workers across the border and into the Soviet Union.) What Cohen fears, of course, is the suppression of the bourgeoisie, especially of the reactionary petty-bourgeoisie that he so fervently represents.

Probably never before has Cohen so brazenly shown his true nature as in his attack in this article on civil war. He is so horrified at the notion of civil strife that he upholds and approves of imperialist war. The arguments Communists use against the World War are more cogent, Cohen alleges, against civil war. Civil wars are "more destructive of all that man hold dearest than are wars between nations." He hates the Bolshevik revolution whereby the world is seeing a new and better society evolve, but has nothing to say against

the World War with its slaughter of 10 million men and the wounding of 20 million more for capitalist profits and a new division of spoils that is fast moving us toward a new and greater slaughter. "Wars between nations are necessarily restricted in scope . . . " A new imperialist slaughter which will probably involve every power in the world, which will take, if civil war does not prevent it, tens of millions of lives, which will cost hundreds of billions of dollars, will be "necessarily restricted in scope." But Cohen's main point, the truly great virtue of foreign wars, is that they not only do not prevent but "to a limited extent they even stimulate cooperation within a community." This sophist, in short, so believes in class-cooperation in capitalist society that he finds even international holocausts worthwhile when they foster that cooperation. And he is a respected college teacher of philosophy! Unlike the virtue of imperialist war, civil war "dislocates existing social organs and leaves us with little social capital or machinery to rebuild a better society." The capitalist world, we suppose, has been rebuilding a "better society" since the world war. But in the Soviet Union, apparently, as the argument runs, there is not the "social capital or machinery" for this. Cohen will thus betray mankind to protect his class. He also objects to the hatreds that fratricidal wars develop, for they are so much more lasting than those of the nicer wars that end in treaties. Cohen is the impartial philosopher who recommends the study of Spinoza for the spiritual life, and who now, under this same guise of impartiality, says: "We must be as criticallyminded in considering the consequences of armed revolution as in considering the evils of the existing regime." But to do this is to support the existing regime for the very reason that it happens to exist.

Now Cohen insists that he is not opposed to all revolutions. He believes in bourgeois revolutions, not revolutions of the proletariat. The supposed reason is that the former "approximate national unanimity in the coopera-

tion of diverse classes." This would also justify the fascist seizure of power for is not that the cooperation, the Gleichschaltung of diverse classes? Cohen's "good" revolutions are the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution, and the March Russian Revolution. Peasant revolts, Roman gladiatorial revolts, the Moscow uprising of 1905 are "bad" revolutions. If Cohen were not serious one would think he is parodying the middle-class as two Englishmen have parodied English patriotism in a history of England in which every event is judged good or bad according as it helped to make England "top nation" or the opposite. But Cohen is in dead earnest. A revolt of the middle class is good, one of the proletariat bad. He says that "When armed uprisings have been undertaken by single oppressed classes . . . they have left a deplorably monotonous record of bloody massacres and oppressive reaction." And Cohen carefully avoids mentioning the victorious Russian Revolution of October, 1917, apparently because it represents neither national unanimity nor the uprising of a single class. But that is just the nature of the proletarian revolution. For it to be successful the proletariat must have allies, and for it to be a revolution it cannot approximate "national unanimity."

Thus Cohen rambles on in his opposition Communism. He argues that the Marxian lief in the inevitability of revolution is a prouct of Hegel's dialectic, which Marx borrow from Hegel and Schelling, and which Co dismisses as being "an outgrowth of specula" carried on in theological seminaries." Cohen denies that a class only gives / ¿ power with a bloody struggle, by inde the English reform bill of 1832, and the ing of the serfs in Russia in 1863. The plest answer is that these are not instances of a class giving up its power, but merely of reforms forced by revolutionary ferment. From here he goes on from bad to worse, using every trite argument against revolution that has ever been concocted, and using them regardless of whether or not they fit to-