

The Negroes in a Soviet America

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I. THE NEGRO IN CAPITALIST AMERICA

BOOKER T. Washington once said: "No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized." He thought that capitalism would permit the Negro to develop business and manufacturing, and increase his ownership of land. In this way, he believed, the Negro could achieve an important economic place in the capitalist world. His whole philosophy was based upon this belief. "Agitation for social equality," he said, "would be extreme folly." Let each Negro train himself in industrial pursuits or in business, hew a place for himself in capitalist America, and only then will he be treated with respect, was his advice.

But what has this wisdom led to?

Economic "Progress"

Let us first consider the question of landownership. During the Civil War and immediately after, the Negroes thought that they would obtain the land—"forty acres and a mule." But nothing of the kind happened. Only very slowly and with much difficulty was it possible for some to purchase land. By 1910 only one-fourth of all Negro farmers owned some land, usually very little, the poorest and most heavily mortgaged.

But for the last 25 years, capitalism has been taking even this land away from Negro farmers. In 1930 there were 40,000 less Negro farm owners than in 1910. In ten years, between 1920 and 1930, Negroes lost almost 2,000,000 acres of land. How much they have lost in the last five years, no one knows. But it is certain that land is being taken away now from Negro owners by banks, insurance companies, large landowners and other creditors, much more rapidly than before.

On the other hand, the most brutal form of slavery in the country has been growing rapidly. The Negroes are the principal victims of this slavery. It is share-cropping and planta-