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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Pamphlet: Anti-Semitism and the Struggle for Democracy

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Bulletin," they call upon the Negroes to follow the example of Hitler. Under Catholic auspices vicious anti-Jewish material is being circulated. Elements in the Christian Youth movement are also seeking to foment anti-Semitism. White Guard Russians, Japanese and Nazi agents are busy, striving to incite the Negroes against the Jews. The "National American," and other anti-Semitic material which we spoke of in connection with East Harlem, are also being spread in Washington Heights, which has a large Irish-Catholic population. These instances which I have quoted reflect without doubt only a small portion of the attempt to foster hatred against the Jews in our area.

THE SOURCE OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Whence springs anti-Semitism? How do we explain its rapid rise today? Is it a plague against which nothing can be done, which in the scheme of things must eternally follow the Jews like an aura, unrelated to social conditions, unrelated to the struggle against fascism, as some Jewish leaders assert? Or does it stem from the Jews, as the Amsterdam News asserted in an editorial of August 27, 1938 - that "Anti-Semitism is regrettable, but the Jew himself is its author, insofar as it concerns the American Negro."

It has also been asserted that "The source of anti-Semitism everywhere is economic. That anti-Semitism is first of all a capitalist means to eliminate Jewish competitors; secondly, a means of confusing the broad masses, through a false issue, thus diverting their attention from the main enemy, the big exploiters."

The source of anti-Semitism is "economic," in the sense that it flows out of the economic structure, which gives rise to political reaction. But can it be said that the aim of the reactionary fascist demagogues today in fomenting anti-Semitism is first of all to eliminate the Jewish competitor, or

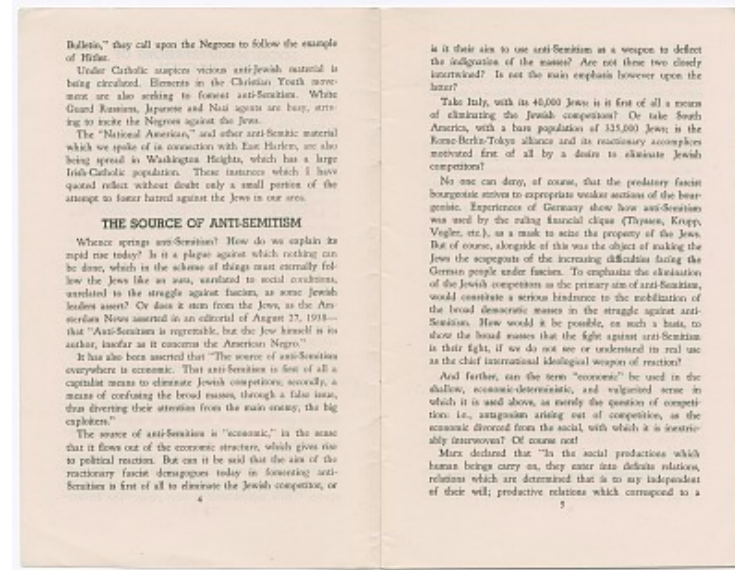
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is it their aim to use anti-Semitism as a weapon to deflect the indignation of the masses? Are not these two closely intertwined? Is not the main emphasis however upon the latter?

Take Italy, with its 40,000 Jews: is it first of all a means of eliminating the Jewish competitors? Or take South America, with a bare population of 325,000 Jews; is the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo alliance and its reactionary accomplices motivated first of all by a desire to eliminate Jewish competitors?

No one can deny, of course, that the predatory fascist bourgeoisie strives to expropriate weaker sections of the bourgeoisie. Experiences of Germany show how anti-Semitism was used by the ruling financial clique (Thyssen, Krupp, Vogler, etc.), as a mask to seize the property of the Jews. But of course, alongside of this was the object of making the Jews the scapegoats of the increasing difficulties facing the German people under fascism. To emphasize the elimination of the Jewish competitors as the primary aim of anti-Semitism, would constitute a serious hindrance to the mobilization of the broad democratic masses in the struggle against the anti-Semitism. How would it be possible, on such a basis, to show the broad masses that the fight against anti-Semitism is their fight, if we do not see or understand its real use as the chief international ideological weapon of reaction?

And further, can the term "economic" be used in the shallow, economic-deterministic, and vulgarized sense in which it is used above, as merely the question of competition: i.e., antagonism arising out of competition, as the economic divorced from the social, with which it is inextricably



interwoven? Of course not!

Marx declared that "In the social productions which human beings carry on, they enter into definite relations, relations which are determined that is to say independent of their will; productive relations correspond to a

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