



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Pamphlet: A Negro Looks at War

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"Who profited from the last war? Twenty-five thousand new millionaires were created by war profiteering. Sixty-nine Wall Street corporations increased their profits by 300 per cent during 1917. Food prices rose from 50 to 100 per cent in that year. The total cost of the war was \$350,000,000,000. Who paid it? We did-you and I. We are paying for it now. Just imagine what that huge sum would mean for us if spent for peaceful purposes? It would mean five acres of land and a \$3,500 house for every family in the United States and Canada, Great Britain, France, Germany and Australia."

Joe edged his way deeper into the crowd, and listened to every word as the speaker continued.

"But who got the money out of the war? The big money-men in Paris, London, and New York. Yes, we were tricked into the war step by step. Our 'best families,' headed by J.P. Morgan & Co., made loans. They gave credit to the warring nations. Morgan financed wheat and munitions shipments. It was to collect these loans and protect these Morgan profits that our boys died on the battlefields of France. Yes, it was a rich man's war and a poor man's fight."

Up to this point, Joe could find nothing to disagree with. But he asked himself the question: Why? Why is the game played this way? Why are a few men allowed to hold the rest of the world in subjection? How do they do it? What's their technique? It wasn't long before the speaker was answering just this question.

"But the question is, how do a few billionaires keep the big majority of mankind in oppression? How do they get away with it? I'll tell you how. It's the old Roman device of divide and rule. Pitting foreign-born against native-born, Catholic against Protestant, Gentile against Jew-and all against the Negro. They use their lieutenants in the labor movement-Samuel Gompers, William Green, Matthew Woll, J.P. Frey-to carry out their Jim-Crow policies in the trade unions, siding with the bosses in keeping the Negro in the class of the lowest-paid and least-skilled, sabotaging the organization of the unorganized. We of the Communist Party say to the white workers that your interest is one with that of your Negro brother. Look at the South today. White supremacy reigns. But what of the white

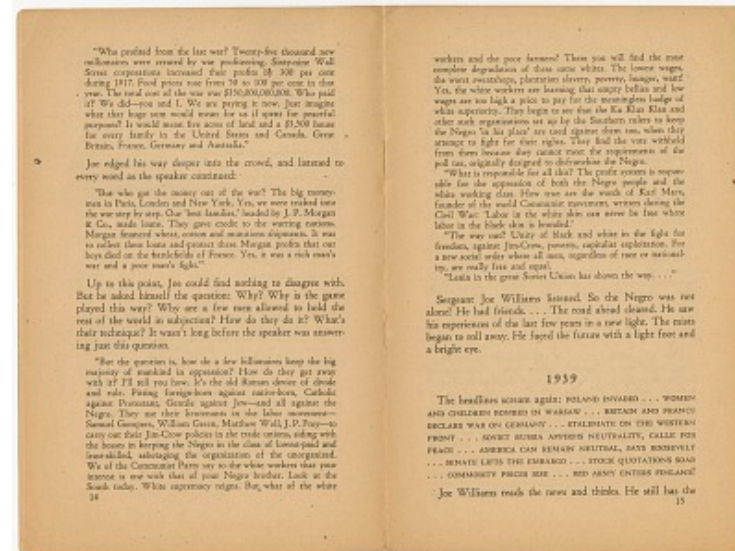
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workers and the poor farmers? There you will find the most complete degradation of these same whites. The lowest wages, the worst sweatshops, plantation slavery, poverty, hunger, want! Yes, the white workers are learning that empty bellies and low wages are too high a price to pay for the meaningless badge of white superiority. They begin to see that the Ku Klux Klan and other such organizations set up by the Southern rulers to keep the Negro 'in his place' are used against them too, when they attempt to fight for their rights. They find the vote withheld from them because they cannot meet the requirements of the poll tax, originally designed to disfranchise the Negro.

"What is responsible for all this? The profit system is responsible for the oppression of both the Negro people and the white working class. How true are the words of Karl Marx, founder of the world Communist movement, written during the Civil War: 'Labor in the white skin can



never be free where labor in the black skin is branded.'

"The way out? Unity of black and white in the fight for freedom, against Jim-Crow, poverty, capitalist exploitation. For a new social order where all men, regardless of race or nationality, are really free and equal.

"Lenin in the great Soviet Union has shown the way...."

Sergeant Joe Williams listened. So the Negro was not alone? He had friends....The road ahead cleared. He saw his experiences of the last few years in a new light. The mists began to roll away. He faced the future with a light foot and a bright eye.

1939

The headlines scream again: POLAND INVADED...WOMEN AND CHILDREN BOMBED IN WARSAW...BRITAIN AND FRANCE DECLARE WAR ON GERMANY...STALEMATE ON THE WESTERN FRONT...SOVIET RUSSIA AFFIRMS NEUTRALITY, CALLE FOR PEACE...AMERICA CAN REMAIN NEUTRAL, SAYS ROOSEVELT...SENATE LIFTS THE EMBARGO...STOCK QUOTATIONS SOAR...COMMODITY PRICES RISE...RED ARMY ENTERS FINLAND!

Joe Williams reads the news and thinks. He still has the

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