

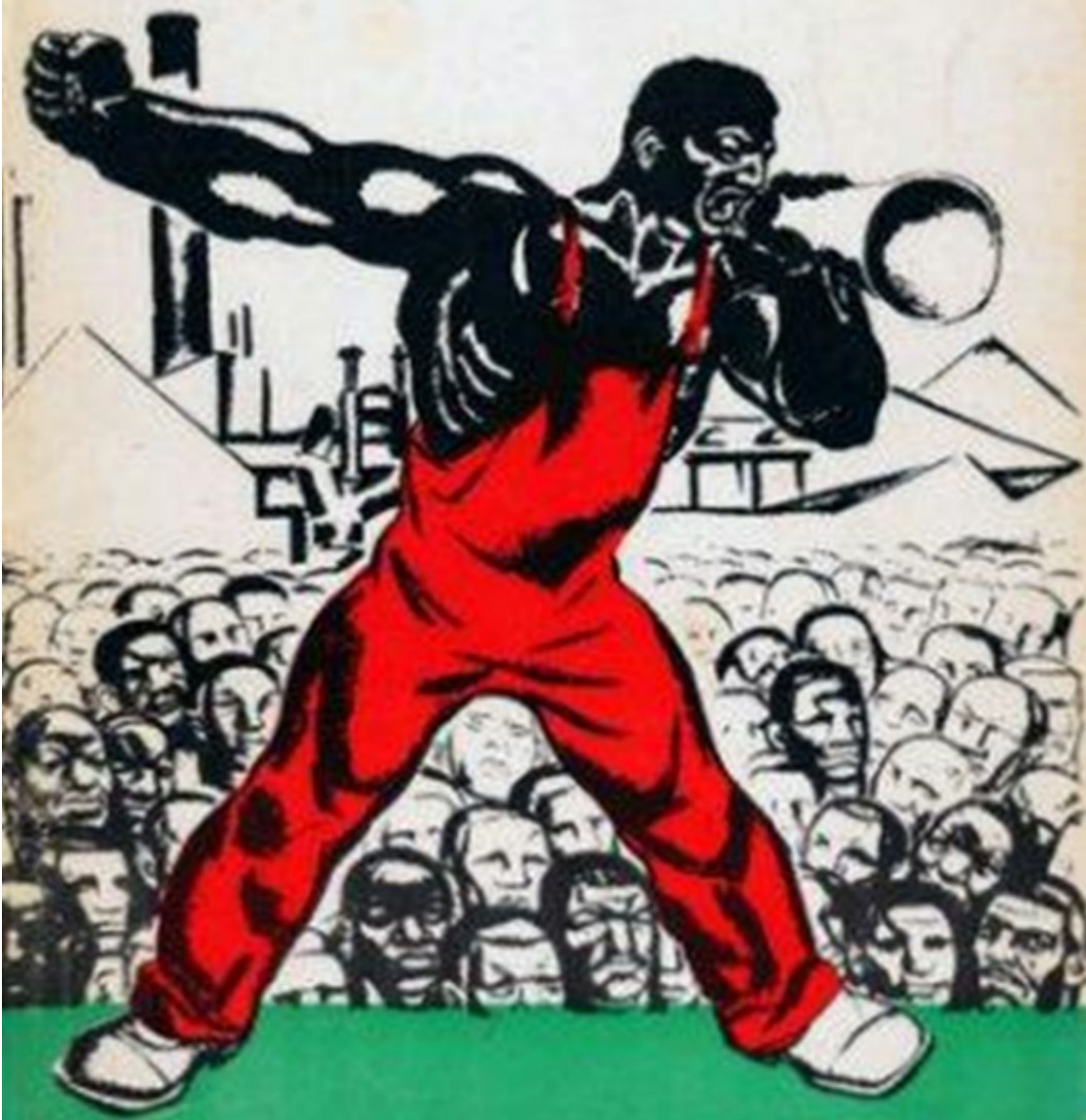
Bolshevik League of the United States



The
Importance
of the
Black National Question
and
the Struggle Against
National Chauvinism



LIBERATION for the BLACK NATION!



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The Importance of the Black National Question and the Struggle Against National Chauvinism (February, 1983)

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U.S. imperialism is a modern-day prison-house of nations. Since the American independence movement from British colonialism, the American bourgeoisie took on its chauvinist and racist “manifest destiny” and embarked on a path of building an empire on the basis of Black slave labor and annexing and plundering the lands of the Native Americans, Mexican and rising Chicano peoples and super-exploiting them as cheap labor.

This expansion and annexing of the Native American lands, the victory by the U.S. in the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, which resulted in the annexation of the northern colonized territory of the rising Mexican bourgeois and landlord class (then called New Mexico, but today, the southwest of the U.S.), and the consolidation of the power of the American bourgeoisie over the South as a result of the defeat of the slavocracy in the Civil War of 1861-65, provided the American bourgeoisie with the material basis to become the 20th century’s most dominant imperialist great power. By the end of the nineteenth century, industrial and

bank capital had merged to form finance capital. Within the state boundaries of the U.S., captive nations and peoples existed whose aspirations to full nationhood were aggressively denied. The annexation of the Mexican territory and the Native lands are very clear violations of self-determination. Leninism has taught us that

... however you may twist and turn, annexation is violation of the self-determination of a nation, it is the establishment of state frontiers contrary to the will of the population.” “To be against annexation means to be in favor of the right to self-determination.¹

But in addition to the obvious annexationist and genocidal policies towards Native Americans, the American bourgeoisie pursued a chauvinist and racist policy of suppressing and crushing the newly emerging Black Nation in the deep South and the Chicano Nation in the southwest. Both the Blacks in the deep south and the Chicanos (who, just because of their lands being stolen and annexed in the southwest by the U.S. imperialists, are due the right to self-determination) were developing all the features which constitute a nation, i.e.

“A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.”²

In 1914, on the basis of his analysis of agriculture in the U.S., Lenin concluded the following:

“In the United States, the Negroes (and also the Mulattoes and Indians) account for only 11.1%. They should be classed as an oppressed nation.”³

¹ “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,” *LCW* 22:328.

² Stalin, “Marxism and the National and Colonial Question,” p. 22.

³ “Statistics and Sociology”, *LCW* 23:275.

U.S. capitalism, on the basis of its accumulated profits derived from the racist robbery and pillage of Blacks, Native Americans, and Chicanos, proceeded to bribe the upper stratum of the American proletariat, much as Marx had described about the British proletariat. This system of corruption was further expanded with the development of U.S. imperialist pillage of most of the world. The American proletariat received national privileges and developed a labor aristocracy. There was as well an expansion of the petty bourgeoisie, all of these strata being the principal social props of U.S. imperialism. A split in the American proletariat was created. By the end of the nineteenth century, U.S. imperialism had developed a tremendous monopolization of capital and had generally captured its home market, enslaving the oppressed Black Nation, Chicano Nation, and Native American people. It embarked on the inevitable path of imperialism, the path of capturing foreign markets and territories, colonies and semi-colonies, with the objectives of exploiting the raw materials, exporting capital, and super-exploiting the cheap labor. The Spanish-American War, the world's first major imperialist war, resulted in the creation of a U.S. colonial empire. The U.S. captured and colonized the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the island of Guam. Ever since then, U.S. imperialism has been involved in numerous imperialist wars with the objective of capturing territories and enslaving oppressed nations and peoples. Hawaii and Alaska are colonized territories of U.S. imperialism, despite their formal status of "states" of the U.S. As a result of the U.S. policy of national enslavement and suppression of any strivings toward national liberation, millions of workers and peasants have left their homes (Puerto Rico, Cuba, Philippines, Central and Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa etc.) and emigrated to the U.S. only to find that the American "promised land" and "paradise" maintained these peoples as oppressed national minorities within the U.S. state boundaries.

J.V. Stalin explains:

"What is national oppression. National oppression is the system of exploitation and robbery of oppressed peoples,

the measures of forcible restriction of the rights of oppressed nationalities, resorted to by imperialist circles. These, taken together, represent the policy generally known as a policy of national oppression.”⁴

Elsewhere, Stalin summarizes:

“Oppressed nationalities are usually oppressed not only as peasants and as urban working people, but also as nationalities, i.e., as the toilers of a definite nationality, language, culture, manner of life, habits and customs. The double oppression cannot help revolutionising the labouring masses of the oppressed nationalities, cannot help impelling them to fight the principal force of oppression – capital.”⁵

This analysis applied to the U.S. reveals how the U.S. today is truly a prison-house of oppressed nations and national minorities. The U.S. is a multi-national state. However, it differs from the Eastern European multinational States. The eastern European multi-national states like Russia (before the October Revolution), Hungary, Austria, arose in the epoch of the rise of capitalism and nation-states. The U.S. multi-national state developed both in the epoch of mercantile capitalism and in the epoch of imperialism on the basis of the ruthless annexation and subjugation of most of a continent, and then continued this pursuit of “manifest destiny” right into the Pacific and the Caribbean.

This multinational character was expanded in the second period in the development of the national question when

“in its quest for markets, raw materials, fuel and cheap labor, and in its fight for the export of capital and for securing important railway and sea routes, capitalism

⁴ Stalin, “Report on the National Question”, April 29, 1917, p. 100.

⁵ Stalin, “The October Revolution and Question of Middle Strata,” op. cit. p. 278.

burst out of the framework of the national state and enlarged its territory at the expense of its neighbours, near and distant. In this second period the old national states in the West –Britain, Italy and France –ceased to be national states, i.e., owing to having seized new territories, they were transformed into multi-national, colonial states and thereby became arenas of the same kind of national and colonial oppression as already existed in Eastern Europe.”⁶

Today Blacks comprise 12% (26 million) of U.S. population with 54% concentrated in the Black Belt South. Chicanos comprise 10 to 12 million of the U.S. population with 85% concentrated in the southwest. The Native people comprise 1.4 million of U.S. population and are mostly concentrated in the southwest. These low figures, and even though they are undoubtedly an underestimation, reveal the fruits of the barbaric genocidal policies of the American bourgeoisie’s “manifest destiny”. Aside from those enslaved peoples, there are numerous oppressed national minorities (including immigrants) such as Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Haitians, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Salvadorians (and other Latin Americans). All Latinos combined make up 15 million of the U.S. population and it is estimated that they may become the largest grouping of oppressed nationalities by 1990. (This could be true already because of the tremendous number of “illegal” Latin immigrants, particularly Mexicans. One U.S. immigration official has said that 10% of the U.S. population is made up of “illegals,” mainly from Mexico.) Then there are the numerous Asians, Africans, and Arab immigrants who are also nationally oppressed by U.S. imperialism. The imperialists know they have enslaved nations and national minorities. However, they seek to disguise their enslavement by claiming to be the most democratic country in the world, by granting a few civil rights reforms, etc. in order to deceive the masses of oppressed.

⁶ Stalin, “The 10th Congress of the RCP(B),” *ibid.*, p. 154-155.

The U.S. imperialists propagate the chauvinist theory of the “melting pot”, which covers up their reactionary policies of national oppression, systematic denial of rights to both oppressed nations and national minorities. This is particularly done on a racist basis. All that has “melted” is the illusion of rights of the oppressed nationalities. U.S. imperialism is reaction all along the line. It is not the liberator of nations, but their oppressor. This is true not only in distant countries, but is particularly true right within the borders of the U.S.

The imperialists could not accomplish this task all by themselves. They are followed by the petty bourgeoisie, a section of the intelligentsia and a section of the upper stratum of the workers, who also share the spoils of robbery. These sectors of the population, overwhelmingly white, are the props of national chauvinism, patriotism, and racism. They fight for a defense of their national privileges, oppose the struggles for self-determination of the oppressed nations and help the imperialists in promoting divisions in the working class. They are the agents of imperialism in the working class and mass movements.

Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. In all the main capitalist countries, starting with the U.S., the objective conditions for the achievement of socialism exist.

“In Western Europe and in the United States, therefore, the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of capitalist governments and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is on the order of the day.”⁷

In the U.S. many so-called socialists and communists would agree that the struggle for socialism is top item on the agenda. Many have demarcated from the revisionist path of the CPUSA of Foster and Gus Hall who advocate a “2 stage revolution” in the U.S., i.e., a fight for a “People’s Democracy” that would gradually

⁷ “The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination,” *LCW* 22:143.

lead to “socialism.” Such reformist and revisionist betrayals are daily combatted by many who claim to be communists. However, many of these “anti-CPUSA” and “anti-trotskyite” communists have not demarcated from the national chauvinism that has plagued the U.S. communist movement historically, and the CPUSA in particular.

Self-proclaimed “anti-revisionist” and “anti-trotskyite” communists, like those in the Progressive Labor Party (semi-trotskyite and anarchist). Revolutionary Communist Party (maoist-anarchists). the Line of March swamp (critical, pro-Russian forces), and the Marxist-Leninist Party. USA (pro-Party of Labor of Albania), all “agree” that socialist revolution is on the agenda and that it cannot be a reformist, parliamentary accomplishment but an armed “smashing” of the bourgeois state and the establishment^ a “dictatorship of the proletariat”! (PLP, however, recently has become even more “leftist” in discarding even the task of building a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat. They want to create immediate “communist” society, under the dictatorship of the PLP.) Hence, all their claims of being the most consistent “internationalists” and “revolutionary communists.” Yet, all these “revolutionaries” pursue a disgusting national chauvinist policy in regards to the national question in the U.S. They all deny that the U.S. is a prison-house of nations. They, like Lovestone, Browder, and Foster (in his latter years when he abandoned even in words the struggle for self-determination of the Black nation), deny that an oppressed Black Nation exists in the deep south. They consider that the struggles for self-determination of the Black and Chicano nations and the Natives peoples are “bourgeois nationalist” and “reactionary movements”. They have liquidated the national question within the U.S. from various perspectives such as: “all nationalism is reactionary;” “all nationalism is nationalism;” “industrialization and the dispersion of Blacks from the Black Belt have changed the concept of Black Nation;” etc. To them, the Black question is only a racial and class question. To them self-determination, the right to secession, is “Bundist”. Socialist revolution by itself will resolve racism. All

these American exceptionalist and national chauvinist “theories” are propagated under the cloak of “internationalism” and “revolutionary communism”. To them, the Bolshevik principles on the national question do not apply in the U.S., hence, their American exceptionalism. (The PLP however, is “innocent” of this charge. They do not apply the Bolshevik principles on the national and colonial question to anywhere in the world.)

On the national question in the U.S., national chauvinism and racism has been and still remains the principal danger in the communist and workers’ movement.

Yet, even Karl Marx was very clear on this question. Long ago he stated:

“A people which enslaves another people forges its own chains.”⁸

And that

“Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin when in the black it is still branded.”⁹

Karl Marx noted this out of interest in achieving the final aim of world communism, i.e., the merger of all nations and abolition of class society. Lenin states:

“The aim of socialism is not only to end the division of mankind into tiny states and the isolation of nations in any form, it is not only to bring the nations closer together but to integrate them... In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through

⁸ “Resolution of the General Council of the International Workingmen’s Association,” 1861, Karl Marx.

⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital*.

a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e. their freedom to secede.”¹⁰

In the interest of uniting the multi-national proletariat in the U.S. in the struggle to overthrow the bourgeois dictatorship and establish socialism, revolutionary communists in the U.S. must address the national question, especially the Black and Chicano national question. The proletariat from the various oppressed nationalities in the U.S. will not unite with the white American proletariat if the white proletariat and communists do not in deeds repudiate and fight against the annexations, national inequality, national privileges, national chauvinism and racism that their oppressor white nation propagates and implements on a daily basis. The narrow nationalism and “Bundist” deviations on the national question will not be eradicated unless and until the national chauvinism of the oppressor white nation is fought against and defeated. Failure to recognize the existence of oppressed nations within the U.S. and to uphold their right to self-determination will mean failure in accomplishing the socialist revolution in the U.S.

The October Socialist Revolution was successful precisely because the Bolshevik Party implemented a correct Marxist program on the national and peasant questions, which rallied the several oppressed nations and peasant masses to the banner of the proletariat. As stated previously, Russia too was a prison-house of nations. More than 13 oppressed nations resided within the state boundaries of Tsarist Russia. The Bolsheviks confronted many problems of bourgeois and narrow nationalism from the oppressed nations. Yet, Lenin and Stalin and the Bolsheviks were clear as to the fact that this was a reaction to the dominant great Russian chauvinism. Part of the struggle for a Marxist program in the struggle to found a real workers’ communist party was the formulation of a correct program, on the national question. The

¹⁰ *LCW* 22:146-147.

Bolsheviks accomplished this task in 1903 and had to fight for its implementation against chauvinists and nationalist deviations.

In 1913, J.V. Stalin wrote *Marxism and the National Question*, which further presented the Bolshevik line on the national question. During the imperialist WW1, Lenin continued to develop and defend the Bolshevik policy on the national and colonial question in struggle against other internationalists, like Rosa Luxemburg, who on this question in essence sided with the social-chauvinists. In the construction of the USSR, Stalin was the principal architect in resolving the national question on the basis of the right to secession and voluntary union. Without such policies, the October revolution would never have occurred, nor the USSR have been constructed.

Yet, today, we have communists in the U.S. who claim to be adherents of Lenin and Stalin, yet fail to apply a Bolshevik policy on the national question. In the U.S., the struggle for socialism is not just a pure act of “anti-racist” class struggle. We think, and revolutionary practice in the U.S. has confirmed, that the following passage by Lenin is very much applicable:

The socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It would be a radical mistake to think that the struggle for democracy was capable of diverting the proletariat from the socialist revolution or of hiding, overshadowing it, etc. On the contrary, in the same way as there can be no victorious socialism that does not practise full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all-round, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy.

It would be no less a mistake to remove one of the points of the democratic programme, for example, the point on the self-determination of nations, on the grounds of it

being “impracticable” or “illusory” under imperialism. The contention that the right of nations to self-determination is impracticable within the bounds of capitalism can be understood either in the absolute, economic sense, or in the conditional, political sense.¹¹

In the U.S., the CPUSA has abandoned the struggle for socialism as some “future society,” making the struggle for “democracy” and “social-progress” the main issue. With this, they have completely liquidated the right to secession of oppressed nations, like the Black Nation. (On the Chicano question, the CPUSA never had a correct Marxist line even in words.) The “anti-revisionist” communists view the struggle for socialism as just “class struggle.” Lenin, in his experiences against national and social-chauvinists taught us the following:

In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor, countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. It is our right and duty to treat every Social-Democrat of an oppressor nation who fails to conduct such propaganda as a scoundrel and an imperialist. This is an absolute demand, even where the chance of secession being possible and ‘practicable’ before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand.¹²

Stalin, too, stated that: “... it is imperatively necessary to include in the national programme a special point on the right of nations to self-determination, including the right to secede.”¹³

The Bolshevik program demands that the right to self-determination be expressed as **THE RIGHT TO SECEDE**. Why? Because in Lenin’s days, and even more so today, the slogan of

¹¹ *LCW* 22:144.

¹² *LCW* 22:346.

¹³ “Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia,” *op. cit.*, p. 301.

“self-determination” has been advanced and upheld by many opportunists, and even imperialists. Witness the former president of U.S. imperialism, Jimmy Carter, who upholds the right to “self-determination of Puerto Rico.” This surely did not mean that Carter recognizes Puerto Rico’s right to independence. It was only a sham pretence. Even trotskyites and fascists will claim at various times that they support “self-determination.” In the U.S. there are many national chauvinists who attempt to pimp off the Black national movement by upholding the “struggle for self-determination” of Black people. The trotskyite Socialist Workers’ Party and the revisionist CPUSA throw these slogans around. It has become a fetish. What they mean by self-determination is the right for Blacks to have politicians and reforms. What is liquidated is the right for Blacks to secede in their homeland in the Black Belt South, if they desire to do so. Some so-called communist groups like the Communist Party (M-L) (pro-theory of three worlds supporter), which no longer exists, propagated self-determination for the Black nation, but in deeds liquidated the right to secession (the same deviation as the CPUSA under William Z. Foster’s leadership). Others, like the League of Revolutionary Struggle (pro-NATO and China), also in words recognize the right to self-determination, but tail the national reformist politics of the Black bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie.

The Comintern Resolutions of 1928-1930 on the Black National Question, however, presented very clearly the first comprehensive Bolshevik approach to the Black national question. Though much of the objective data needs to be updated and the actual formulation of the partial demands for the Black national movement needs to be compiled and also updated, the 1928-1930 CI Resolutions must still be a starting point of analysis.

Nevertheless, any so-called communist who fails to uphold the right to secession of the Black nation, and who liquidates the Black national question to just a struggle against racism, for equal rights, or an ambiguous “self-determination,” must be exposed as an “imperialist scoundrel.”

Historically, this question has been one of the fundamental questions where American socialism and communism has displayed its national chauvinist deviation. On the one hand, the old CPUSA, as part of the Communist International of Lenin and Stalin, was the best proletarian party that the American working class ever produced. The CPUSA, under the guidance of the CI, became the first advanced section of the American proletariat to struggle against national chauvinism, to fight for self-determination and equal rights, to develop Black-White unity in the proletarian movement, and to promote proletarian hegemony of the Black national movement. The CPUSA help formed many nationwide Black national formations (like the Negro Labor Congress) and led many struggles in support of Black people's struggles, and against Jim Crow segregation. It helped build international campaigns against racism, in support of Black struggles like that of the Scottsboro Boys. At one point, 20% of the CPUSA's membership was Black, an accomplishment that few mass multinational organizations can claim.

However, these accomplishments were achieved only through a ruthless struggle against national chauvinism and racism within the CPUSA. First Lovestone's and then Browder's leadership strove to liquidate the struggle for self-determination, allowing for the growth of national chauvinism. Their justification for liquidating the Black national question was their economist "productive forces" theory that industrialization in the Black Belt had "proletarianized the south." Hence, no more agrarian question, hence no more "land" question for the Black masses.

When Foster reconstituted the CPUSA in 1945, it made attempts to reconstitute a correct line on the Black national question. In 1946, the CPUSA held a plenum of the Central Committee in which the "Resolution on Negro Rights and Self-Determination" was adopted. It is a very short statement which demarcated from Browder's liquidation of the Black question and reiterated some of the basic points and tasks of the 1928-1930 CI Resolutions. However, the "reconstituted" resolution fails to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning the right to

secede. The Fosterite CPUSA in 1946 raised: “The Communist Party supports the right to self-determination for the Negro people, that is, their right to realize self-government in the Negro majority area in the South.”¹⁴

They reduce the task of self-determination to a “struggle for attaining representative government and land reform.” Yet, the Comintern thesis clearly states the following:

“It is incorrect and harmful to interpret the Communist standpoint to mean that the Communists stand for the fight of self-determination of the Negroes only up to a certain point but not beyond this, to, for example, the right to separation.”¹⁵

The Comintern also adds:

“... the right of the Negroes to governmental separation will be unconditionally realized by the Communist Party; it will unconditionally give the Negro population of the Black Belt freedom of choice on this question.”¹⁶

It also stated:

“If it desires to separate, it must be free to do so; but if it prefers to remain federated with the United States it must also be free to do that. This is the correct meaning of the idea of self-determination, and it must be recognized quite independently of whether the United States is still a capitalist state or whether a proletarian dictatorship has already been established there.”¹⁷

¹⁴ “Resolutions on the Question of Negro Rights and Self-Determination,” Dec. 3-5, 1946.

¹⁵ *CI Resolutions on the Negro Question 1928-30*, reprinted in this book, 1930, see Index n° 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, see Index n° 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Clear, one would think.

Yet, Foster in 1946 made sure that the right to secession of the Black nation would be liquidated in their “reconstructed,” “anti-Browderite” resolution. Foster stated: “Talk of an American Negro Republic has no foundation in present-day reality.”¹⁸ Benjamin J. Davis stated: “The position on self-determination as put forward in the resolution avoids two main dangers. First, it does not state, in a sectarian manner, as we did in the past, what the form and the exact manner would be in which this self-determination would be realized or exercised.”¹⁹ Eugene Dennis actually reveals that the slogan of self-determination is raised only for “historical reasons,” i.e., “Further, in contradistinction to the past, we do not present the slogan of self-determination as an immediate slogan of action, but as the affirmation of a historic right which guides and establishes the direction of all our work in the South.”²⁰

In actuality, the Fosterite CPUSA was forced to re-establish a position on self-determination for the Black nation, because in the late 1940’s a Black national movement was growing, with aspirations for self-determination. The liberating effects of the victory over fascism by the USSR, and the fact that many Black veterans who fought in World War II returned to the South and joined in with the Black farmers, sharecroppers, proletariat, and sections of the petty-bourgeoisie in a movement for self-determination and equal rights, forced the CPUSA to adopt a centrist position on the Black national question. But the Fosterites’ national chauvinism was sure to reduce this question to a national reformist battle for civil rights, land reforms, and electoral struggle.

Foster, Dennis, and all the other Browderites without Browder spent many years trying to cope with and divert this growing

¹⁸ *CPUSA Resolution*, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

revolutionary tide among Black people away from the actual exercise of self-determination. This first took the form of various centrist subterfuges to uphold self-determination without actually upholding it. Finally, these same neo-Browderites, including Foster himself, liquidated the question entirely, which accounts for the present position of the CPUSA. But this subject has importance beyond the historical question of how a rather small organization today came to its chauvinist position on the Black national question. Most of the “anti-revisionist” forces that arose in opposition to the CPUSA did not demarcate from this chauvinist line, but continued it, or they “demarcated” from the CPUSA by rejecting complete liquidation of the question in favor of the centrist position of Foster and company, leading to this liquidation.

Since the decline of the CPUSA as the party of the American proletariat, there has been a rise in the Black movement, but often in isolation from the white proletarian movement. The liquidation by the CPUSA of the Black national question, its failure to use its revolutionary potential, is a fundamental aspect of its revisionism, of its capitulation to the labor aristocracy and its contribution to the re-creation of a situation described by Marx, and that was beginning to be broken by the work of the CPUSA under the direction of the Comintern in the thirties. In describing the source of the impotence of the British labor movement, Marx compared the problem of chauvinism toward the Irish workers with the chauvinism of white workers in America to Blacks:

England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of

the 'poor whites' to the Negroes in the former slave states of the U.S.A. The Irishman pays him back with interest, in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rulers in Ireland.

This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And the latter is quite aware of this.²¹

Indeed this also explains the impotence of American labor since the early fifties. As the Black movement arose, as the anti-war and student movements arose, the American proletariat was relatively quiet. Although this is due to the objective economic conditions of relative stabilization of capitalism at that time, this is not sufficient to explain the tremendous passivity of much of the white proletariat and the large section of it that regarded itself in comparison to Blacks "as a member of the ruling nation and consequently becomes a tool" of the American bourgeoisie against the Blacks. This strengthens the domination of American capital over all of the working class. These white workers see the Black workers as their competitors, who lower their standard of living. They cherish religious, social, national and racial prejudices towards Blacks. Of course, the Blacks pay them "back with interest" and see in them "the accomplice and the stupid tool of" the white rulers in America.

In America, as in Britain, "this antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, and, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes." In this way the bourgeoisie creates national and racial enmity and diverts the

²¹ "Marx to Meyer and Vogt, April 9, 1970, *Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence*, pp. 239-7.

proletariat from the struggle against capital. The secret of the impotence of the American proletariat in the last thirty years is this antagonism. It is precisely to break this antagonism that Lenin, at the Second Congress of the Comintern, compared the situation of Blacks in the U.S. with the Irish:

It is necessary for the Communist Parties to render direct aid to the revolutionary movements in the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, the Negroes in America, etc.) and in the colonies.²²

White chauvinism, the outlook of the labor aristocracy, constantly found its way into the ranks of the Communist Party. This was inevitable; it was a question of how it was struggled against. This always posed problems for the CP, but it was under Browder's leadership that this battle was lost, along with the battle for a proletarian party itself. With the intervention once again of the International Communist Movement, the "new Lovestone" was defeated and the Party reconstituted. But as we have seen, even though the chauvinist liquidation of the national question of Blacks was formally reversed, this did not mean that the correct position on this question was taken up, nor that it was consistently put into practice. But the question of international intervention is not sufficient to explain the restoration of the demand for self-determination. As an analysis of the history will show, the principal factor was the immense popularity of this demand among Blacks, particularly those in the Communist Party and those sympathetic to it.

Many Blacks had been rallied to the cause of communism on the basis of the correct position of the Communist International, and the immense popularity of the liberation of nations in the Soviet Union among Blacks. There was also support for this just position by many other workers in the Communist Party. All of this meant that it was not easy to overturn this position. Browder's style of

²² "Preliminary Theses on the National and Colonial Question", *Selected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 235.

instant liquidation could not prevail, and a more subtle centrist approach had to be used to subordinate the Black proletariat to the white labor aristocracy and petty bourgeoisie. It needs to be understood that the class character of the reconstituted party was not as strongly proletarian as it had been prior to Browder's liquidation, nor was it any longer based on factory nuclei as the basic units of the party. We have already shown the half-hearted rectification that was made on this question with the reconstitution of the party, but the position of the CP would only deteriorate more with time. At the fourteenth convention of the CP in 1948, beside the usual lip service to the right of self-determination, there was in practice the line of subordinating the Black struggle to the NAACP, the new Progressive Party, and generally to any other struggle of the party except the struggle for self-determination. The question of the Black Belt was subordinated to the concept of building a "new South" under the banner of the "Progressive Party" of the liberal bourgeoisie in the US. The election program adopted at this convention in its section on "Negro rights" does not even demand the right of self-determination in words. Of course the reports at the convention mention this, but never raise it to explicitly mean the right to secede and form an independent state. The program and reports drop the call for the confiscation of the land in the Black Belt from the landlords and the bourgeoisie, and instead the program calls only for agrarian reform that would give some land to some Blacks. The question of state unity for the Black Belt was also totally abandoned in the program and in the reports.

In 1930 the Comintern had explained that the demand has to be put forward for the "Confiscation of the landed property of the white landowners and capitalists for the benefit of the Negro farmers." It explained that "without this revolutionary measure, without the agrarian revolution, the right of self-determination would be only a Utopia or, at best, would remain only on paper without changing in any way the actual enslavement."

The Comintern also raised, "Establishment of state unity of the Black Belt". The Comintern explained that,

“if the right of self-determination is to be put into force, it is necessary wherever possible to bring together into one governmental unit all districts of the south where the majority of the settled population consists of Negroes”.

Instead of this just demand the CP emphasized the question of “the right of the Negro people to full representation in government and demand Federal enforcement of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, so that the Negro people, North and South, may participate freely and fully in the 1948 elections, and all elections thereafter.”²³ Although this is a correct democratic demand, it is no substitute for the struggle for self-determination. The CP at that time, and thereafter, officially upheld a view that Lenin criticised in this way:

“Our Polish comrades like this last argument, on joint determination instead of self-determination, so much that they repeat it three times in their theses!... All reactionaries and bourgeois grant nations forcibly retained within the frontiers of a given state the right to determine jointly’ their fate in a common parliament.”²⁴

This would then become the principal struggle of the CPUSA, the question of obtaining more democratic rights to participate in the “common parliament”, be it the state legislatures in the South or the Federal congress. Specifically, in 1948 the obsession for a few votes for the Progressive Party was sufficient reason to abandon all the demands that gave real substance to the right of self-determination for Blacks. This was a reflection of the general capitulation to electoral politics where it was important not to offend the chauvinist voters. Of course, combined with this was the struggle to get the Black communists who still defended real self-determination to be less “offensive”, despite claims that “right

²³ *Political Affairs*, Sept., 1948.

²⁴ “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 322.

opportunism” in the form of chauvinism was the “main danger” (but only because it “encourages the left danger”, which is actually attacked as the main one). The question of Right opportunism is limited to slapping some chauvinists in the party on the wrist, but this is not due “to any intrinsic delinquencies on the part of these comrades, but rather to a failure to estimate properly that the wave of war hysteria and national chauvinism has carried with it a great heightening of white opportunism.”²⁵

On the other hand, the “left” deviators were denounced with another tone: “Sundry renegade groups have sought to undermine and destroy our Party in the name of ‘criticism and self-criticism,’ and have sought to make factional and disruptive use of our Party’s weakness in the field of Negro work. These rotten elements, such as the Francis Franklins and other insects, must be exposed and their attempts to search around in our Party for factional soft spots, smashed. This is necessary for the disciplined unity and fighting efficiency of our Party.”²⁶ Apparently to fight the “main danger” it is sufficient to remind the chauvinists that they are underestimating chauvinism outside the party, and to warn the chauvinists that their failure to wage a token struggle against chauvinism outside the party is fueling the “left danger”, it is giving ground to the “insects” that need to be crushed. “The right-opportunist danger has also fed the Leftist-sectarian danger, which expressed itself among many of our Negro cadres in a ‘go-it-alone’ tendency toward self-isolation.”²⁷

It is not hard to understand that there might be tendencies in this direction because of the prevailing chauvinism that existed in the Party. Unlike Foster’s reborn Browderite party without Browder, the Comintern understood Lenin’s position that communists do different types of propaganda in the oppressor and

²⁵ *Political Affairs*, Sept., 1948.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

the oppressed nation. In the Resolutions on the Negro Question, the Comintern makes clear time and time again that it is the task of Black communists to struggle against tendencies among Blacks toward “self-isolation,” but that fundamentally the only way to overcome this problem is for the Party to organize white workers to fight side by side with Black workers for the rights of Black people. The 1930 resolution concludes with the position that “it is essential for the Communist Party to make an energetic beginning now –at the present moment –with the organization of joint mass struggles of white and black workers against Negro oppression. This alone will enable us to get rid of the bourgeois white chauvinism which is polluting the ranks of the white workers in America, to overcome the distrust of the Negro masses caused by the inhuman barbarous Negro slave traffic still carried on by the American bourgeoisie –inasmuch as it is directed even against all white workers – and to win over to our side these millions of Negroes as active fellow-fighters in the struggle for the overthrow of bourgeois power throughout America.”

This was done, although far from perfectly, in the thirties, and thousands of Blacks were won to the side of communism and millions were becoming sympathetic. But this was abandoned by the opportunists who took the lead in the party in their quest for electoral success. The grand designs of building the Progressive Party in the South, struggling for a “new South,” were not compatible with this kind of struggle, because it loses votes among backward workers who are still infected with a high degree of chauvinism and among various chauvinist petty bourgeois. This process continued and intensified throughout the degeneration of the CPUSA, in which the mass of Black members, if anything, resisted too much the necessity of splitting with this revisionist organization in an attempt to try to maintain unity with the white proletariat in America.

The struggle by Blacks in the party to have the party maintain its Bolshevik stand on the Black national question also posed another particular problem for the white leadership. In 1948 it was said at the convention that one of the principal tasks was this: “Our

Negro comrades, in particular, must fight against the constant spread of the scourge of anti-Semitism in Negro communities. They must fight for collective leadership in Negro work.”²⁸ The importance of this statement must not be overlooked, even if not immediately apparent. This was 1948 and it was the year that Israel came into existence. The CPUSA took a leading position in the International Communist movement that the state of Israel should be recognized. This was part of the international zionist conspiracy against the socialist camp, which has been explained in *Lines of Demarcation* no. 15, published by the Bolshevik Union of Canada. It is not a coincidence that the leadership of the American party and much of its white composition was Jewish and there was a great deal of zionist sentimentality, particularly since zionism in World War II had become an agency of US imperialism. Much of Jewish capitalism in the US was developed in the exploitation of the Blacks. This was what was allowed by the US bourgeoisie to the Jewish bourgeoisie, but, nevertheless, they did not refuse it. Because of this the immediate capitalist and landlord enemies of Blacks in the ghettos of the northern cities were Jewish. It is only natural that Blacks would spontaneously express more outrage at Jewish capitalists than capitalists in general. This situation can breed a certain amount of anti-semitism, but this has nothing to do with the anti-semitism of the fascists This is the hostility of an oppressed race against its oppressors. The way to break any antagonism that would be expressed to Jews in general, and therefore to Jewish workers, would be for the Jewish workers to join with Blacks in the struggle against the Jewish capitalists and landlords in the ghetto. Actually the CPUSA was in a better position to organize such a joint struggle than it was with any other section of the white proletariat in America, but it did not do this precisely because it was heavily infected with zionism and Jewish chauvinism.

The “anti-semitism” that these Zionists and chauvinists wanted to stop was actually the rising proletarian struggle of the newly

²⁸ Ibid.

emerging Black proletariat in the major cities. Blacks had moved to the big cities of the North in large numbers during and immediately after WWII. Instead of finding the “promised land” they found a life of misery and oppression as the lowest strata of the proletariat, and the capitalists most directly involved in exploiting them as workers and consumers, the capitalists, landlords and petty bourgeois functionaries and bureaucrats they came into closest daily contact with were Jewish. It is only natural that spontaneously most hostility would be expressed towards these capitalists first until the consciousness of Blacks was raised to understand that this was only the first line of capitalists they faced, that they were only the frontmen for monopoly capitalism, which has often used Jewish capitalism to divert anger at capitalism in general. On the other hand this Jewish capitalism was of vital importance to the Zionists because it provided the material basis for zionism and the expansion of the state of Israel, which was and still is principally financed by Jewish capitalists in the US. The smashing of the Black revolutionary movement and diverting it into reformism was and remains one of the main goals of zionism. The destruction of the Black revolutionary movement in the US was part of the offensive and conspiracy against the socialist camp. Stalin and the Comintern had always opposed zionism and promoted the cause of Black liberation. One of the reasons the Comintern had such difficulty in getting the CPUSA to adopt the correct position on the Black national question was opposition from the Zionists and their dupes among the extensive Jewish membership in the CP. A component part of the zionist-revisionist offensive against Stalin was the attack on the Black national revolutionary movement in the US. The role of zionist agents in the American left has continued long after this time and right into the maoist movement.

It is not a coincidence that combined with the promotion of the defense of Jewish capitalism in 1948, there was a call for “collective leadership” on the Black question. This was the cry of the modern revisionists in the campaign against Stalin. They preached the concept of “collective leadership” to promote the conciliation of

Bolshevism with revisionism, exercising a “collective leadership” that would result in the liquidation of the Bolsheviks from the “collective”. In the US, this revisionist concept was used to attack the Black leadership in the CP, and the hegemony of the Black proletariat over the Black liberation struggle. The revisionists and Zionists demanded “collective leadership”, that is, they demanded that they be given veto power over the work among Blacks and to use this position to launch an all out attack on the Black Bolsheviks. This was not an attack that could be launched in a single blow, it took them time and subtle centrist methods to exterminate the “insects”.

So this “collective leadership” over the Black question was established in 1948. It is instructive to examine what the result was. At the 1951 convention the Black national question was not liquidated in word, but was reduced to token reference in presentations on the South and on agriculture in America. It was said that “this Convention will further signalize the fact that the question of peace and the fight for peace is the paramount common concern of each of the aforementioned groupings of the Southern masses. Above all it is the tactical key to achieving in life now the united action of masses of Negro and white people—a precondition for winning basic changes in the social condition of the Southern masses.”²⁹

By this means the national struggle of the Black nation was reduced to a question that was subsidiary to uniting on peace issues with white “people” in the South. Instead of unity with the white proletariat in America, there is now promoted unity with white “people” in the South for peace, and that the only way there could be basic changes in the “social condition” of the Black nation is if it first waged a struggle with white “people” for “peace”. In this spirit the convention of course said nothing about self-determination, the right to political secession, agrarian revolution and state unity for the Black Nation. All of these demands would

²⁹ *Political Affairs*, Feb., 1951.

apparently endanger the struggle for peace with the white “people” of the South.

It is in 1953, combined with the general struggle against Stalinism, that the CPUSA begins an even stronger campaign against the Black Bolsheviks in the Party. In July of that year, at the same time that disguised criticism of Stalin was launched in the Soviet Union, William Foster, himself, writes an article entitled “Left Sectarianism in the Fight for Negro Rights and Against White Chauvinism.” In the same issue of the party’s theoretical journal was an article justifying the existence of the state of Israel under the cover of criticising zionism. This article ignored the fact that the Soviet Union under Stalin’s leadership had broke off any relations with this state and denounced them as a “gang of bandits”, nor does the article talk about the hideous Doctor’s Plot, which had been exposed earlier that year.

Foster first gives lip service to the struggle against chauvinism and once again points the finger outside the party, and proclaimed the party as “far freer from the political disease of white chauvinism than any other predominantly white organization in the country.” While possibly true, this did not say much, because chauvinism was growing in the party. Foster, of course, does not deny that the problem exists, but tries to point the finger at the bad attitudes of certain members rather than problems of political and organizational line. Foster admits that, “Among the more common manifestations of white chauvinism in the Party are passivity in the fight for Negro rights, failure to develop social contact with Negroes, refusal of homeowners to rent rooms to Negroes, hypocritical attitudes toward Negro Party and union functionaries, failure to upgrade Negro workers in industry and to elect them as union officials in progressive unions, disapproval of intermarriage, the practice of white chauvinist language and habits, etc.”³⁰

³⁰ *Political Affairs*, July, 1953.

Obviously the problem of chauvinism was severe and this is intolerable in a communist organization. If this situation were even half as serious as this, there should have been sweeping purges, but no doubt it was twice as serious. Whenever there is this degree of chauvinist degeneration among cadre, it has to reflect an incorrect policy and line of the party on the struggle against chauvinism. But, instead of addressing this question, Foster tries to use this situation to launch an attack on “Left sectarianism,” treating it as the main problem in reality, and as even the cause of white chauvinism! For Foster the principal error of left sectarianism is in the struggle against white chauvinism: “In the fight against white chauvinism, to the degree that it is being waged, the main hindrance to a successful struggle is sectarianism and distortion of the battle against white chauvinism.”³¹ Foster explains this “sectarianism and distortion” this way: “The left-sectarian tendency isolates the Party from the masses, makes a caricature of the fight against white chauvinism, considers white chauvinism as virtually ineradicable and proposes impossible disciplinary measures to combat it... It is, therefore, a basic necessity, if our Party is to make a solid fight for Negro rights and against white chauvinism, that it must eliminate these Leftist errors which are widely prevalent in the Party and are crippling its Negro work. These errors are the more dangerous because they have been but little discussed and not at all fought.”³²

So here is the admission that these “Leftist errors” are more dangerous than white chauvinism in the party, and it is the “Left sectarian tendency” that must be disciplined. It must be disciplined because it wants to apply disciplinary measures to chauvinism in the party. Given Foster’s own description of the problem in the Party quoted above, it is quite understandable why some Black cadre would feel that the problem is virtually

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

“ineradicable.” particularly when they faced it right from the top of the leadership.

It is rightism that breeds Left sectarian errors. No doubt some of the positions taken in the face of the extensive chauvinism in the party were sectarian sometimes, but what could be expected under the circumstances! These errors could only be very secondary compared to the problems of white chauvinism. The way to get rid of white chauvinism is not to attack the people trying to get rid of it, however flawed their attempts. The way to get rid of the white chauvinism and problems of sectarianism is to show the correct way to fight and defeat white chauvinism in the party. But Foster and the other leaders wanted as wide a membership as possible, and the struggle against chauvinism prevented the rallying of those infected with chauvinism. For that reason the struggle against white chauvinism had to be curtailed. For a real Bolshevik party, the consistent struggle against chauvinism is the means by which to keep out chauvinists and to consistently take the severist disciplinary action against those who sneak in or those who degenerate. How can the Black proletariat be won to the side of communism, how can it consent to be part of an organization that can have a non-Black majority, if that organization does not take the severist disciplinary action against any and all manifestations of white chauvinism? If a party has a fundamentally revolutionary point of view, it understands the absolutely essential role that the Black proletariat and the Black national liberation struggle has for revolution in America, and would allow no cheap popularity among backward white workers to get in the way of forging the necessary unity. But if a party has a fundamentally reformist point of view, and is abandoning revolution in favor of electoral, social-democratic style politics, it will sacrifice the revolutionary possibilities of the Blacks for the sake of popularity among the majority of the country that is still infected by chauvinism.

But the question here is much more than just a correct stand on the national question. It is a fundamental question of what kind of party is going to be built and struggled for, a Bolshevik party or a

Menshevik social-democratic party. Stalin, in explaining the difference and in defining the character of Bolshevik parties, says:

“The theory of ‘defeating’ opportunist elements by ideological struggle within the Party, the theory of overcoming these elements within the confines of a single party, is a rotten dangerous theory, which threatens to condemn the Party to paralysis and chronic infirmity, threatens to make the Party a prey to opportunism, threatens to deprive the proletariat of its main weapon in the fight against imperialism... Our Party succeeded in achieving internal unity and unexampled cohesion of its ranks primarily because it was able in good time to purge itself of the opportunist pollution..., because it was able to rid its ranks of the Liquidators and Mensheviks. Proletarian parties develop and become strong by purging themselves of opportunists and reformists, social-imperialists and social-chauvinists, social-patriots and social-pacifists. The Party becomes strong by purging itself of opportunist elements.”³³

This is the path that Foster rejected. He denounces it as “impossible disciplinary measures,” and it is clear where this Menshevik path led the CPUSA. Foster demanded that chauvinism be dealt with inside the party, that it be “defeated” and “overcome” without purging the Party of opportunism. The result has been that the Party was first condemned to paralysis and chronic infirmity and has fallen prey to opportunism, and this has left the proletariat without its revolutionary party, without its principal weapon in the fight against imperialism. Today the CPUSA has become a party of opportunists and reformists, social-imperialists and social-chauvinists, social-patriots and social-pacifists.

One of the most fundamental questions around which this happened, one of the most important questions that was at the

³³ *Foundations of Leninism*, pp. 116-7.

basis of the degeneration of the CPUSA, was the Black national question. In 1948 the Party attacked and purged Bolsheviks on this question, it did it again in 1953 and would again and again throughout the fifties.

In 1953 Foster says that, “The most serious sectarian error now being made by the Party in its fight against white chauvinism, and one which gives birth to various other sectarian mistakes is to neglect work in general among the Negro masses and to develop the fight against white chauvinism primarily as an inner-Party campaign. Many comrades—Perry, Henderson, Haywood, and others— have indicated this serious lack of mass work in the NAACP, the Urban League, and among the Negro people in general.”³⁴ With typical Menshevik demagogy, Foster tries to paint the struggle for the purity of the Party as sectarianism from the masses, instead of it being the only way to insure that the masses have a revolutionary party. Instead of this Bolshevik struggle, Foster wants the Black comrades to submerge themselves in reformist organizations that liquidate the Black national question.

Already in 1931, a programmatic document of the League Against Imperialism, a mass organization of the Comintern, entitled “Negro’s Struggle against Capitalist and Imperialist Exploitation and Oppression,” describes the nature of the two organizations that Foster wanted the Black communists to submerge themselves in. These organizations certainly did not change in the intervening period, except to continue even further on the path of development described at that time. Of the Urban League this document says: “The Urban League cooperated with the United States Department of Labor, the United States Chamber of Commerce and with managers of Industrial and manufacturing concerns, employing large numbers of Negroes. They say that the American capitalists are friends of the Negroes. They do not concern themselves with the working conditions,

³⁴ *Political Affairs*, July, 1953.

wages, hours, etc, of the Negro workers, but on the contrary, say that the Negro workers should accept the conditions which 'their friends' impose upon them. They actively support strike breaking policies." Of the NAACP it is said:

"This organization also has the support of white capitalists, like Julius Rosenwald the multi-millionaire of Chicago; John Rockefeller Jr., the oil king; the ammunition magnate, Dupont of New Jersey, and others. This is a happy combination. Certainly, such an organization will not struggle against American imperialism, and cannot represent the interests of the toiling masses. It is quite natural that it will take a reformist character. Its leadership has given up the struggle for full social, political and economic equality of the Negro toilers. It even tries to play with the fight against lynching through reformist methods. It is a petty-bourgeois organization that is now beginning to represent the interest of the rising Negro bourgeoisie."³⁵

So this is where Foster wanted the Black communists to put their effort, instead of struggling against white chauvinism in the party! There is no question that at that time some form of work should have gone on in the NAACP and the Urban League, but to pose it as Foster does is not the question of whether to work in reformist organizations to defeat reformism and win the masses influenced by it away from the reformist leaders. The question for Foster was to make reformist work in these reformist, pro-imperialist organizations the principal activity of the Black communists so as to stop their struggle against chauvinism in the party. This was the meaning of "collective leadership" of the work on the Black question.

³⁵ League Against Imperialism, *The Negro's Struggle Against Capitalist and Imperialist Exploitation and Oppression*, 1931, pp. 20-1.

Foster criticizes the “typical sectarian attitude to consider white chauvinism as a sort of detached phenomenon, especially within the Party, and to shoot into it on this basis. But this whole trend is basically incorrect and tends to cripple our work generally among the Negro people. White chauvinism cannot be fought as a thing in itself by a separate campaign. It can be fought only in connection with the struggle of the Negro people for full economic, political, social and cultural equality. The fight against white chauvinism is an organic part of this broad struggle for Negro rights and cannot be divorced from it without itself becoming reduced to an empty harmful abstraction.” For Foster the solution to the problem of white chauvinism generally, and in the party in particular, is for the Black communists to subordinate themselves to the “collective leadership” of the chauvinists in the party, and to subordinate themselves in the Black movement to the most pro-imperialist bourgeois nationalist organizations.

What this amounts to is a liquidation of the special double role that the Comintern declared for the Black proletariat. It is both a denial of the hegemony of the proletariat in the Black movement and a denial of the particularly important role the Black proletariat must play in the revolutionary struggle for socialism of the entire proletariat in the US. Foster, in the name of battling “left sectarianism,” is demanding hegemony in the party for white reformists and in the Black movement for bourgeois reformists, who are united on one point, the liquidation of the right to self-determination and the struggle for it. Instead they wanted a reformist struggle for equal rights to replace it. This does not mean the revolutionaries were against the struggle for equal rights, far from it, but they see these reforms as the by-product of revolutionary struggle and not the aim of the struggle itself. We need only ask the question of which situation would have produced more gains in the attainment of equal rights— the reformist movement that the CPUSA tailed behind these many years, or a revolutionary vanguard party of the white and Black proletariat, fighting for the revolutionary programme adopted by the Comintern, including the Resolutions on the Negro Question?

Think of this in combination with the spontaneous rise of the Black movement, the anti-war movement and the student movement in the sixties, and then with the coming to life again of the workers' movement in the seventies and early eighties. Only thinking about the possibilities will show the importance to the bourgeoisie to stop any attempt to break the antagonism that exists between labor in white skin and labor in black skin. Indeed this is the secret of the impotence of the white proletariat in America.

To understand the importance of the possibilities for the growth of the revolutionary movement in the US, is also to understand that what Foster and others were doing at this time is not just some sterile intellectual debate in some insignificant left wing maoist sect. The fate of the revolutionary proletariat in the US for several decades was hanging in the balance. We do not want to engage here in a series of "what if" speculations, but rather we want the reader to understand the vital historical importance of reviewing the victory of chauvinism in the party of the proletarian vanguard in this country, and what an influence this has had on creating the present weakness of both workers' and Black national organizations.

Today, in the period of trying to reconstitute a vanguard organization of the proletariat, the struggle to build a Bolshevik party, it is important to look at the subtle centrist ways in which chauvinism was defended in the CPUSA. It is easy to look at the finished product and condemn it. It is, however, much more difficult to examine the process as it is happening, to be able to detect it in its early stages and to combat it. This is why examining Foster's 1953 article is important. At this time Foster did not deny the right of self-determination, he only criticizes "the early Leftist presentation of the slogan of self-determination", i.e., in the way that the Comintern presented it. Foster poses as an opponent of white chauvinism, and no doubt to a degree he was, at least in its most overt forms. The next year Foster published a huge book entitled, "The Negro People in American History," which might be the best history ever written from a Marxist point of view, despite its considerable theoretical weaknesses. There were leaders of the

CPUSA that wanted to liquidate the Black national question completely, and at that time Foster opposed them. But we aim our fire at Foster because he was a cowardly opportunist, a centrist who prepared the ground for the victory of the right by his hypocritical defense of the self-determination slogan, by his hypocritical struggle against white chauvinism, and by his very real fight to liquidate the correct Bolshevik line from the CPUSA on the Black national question. We aim our fire at him also because of his attempts to eliminate any cadre that made even an inconsistent defense of this position. The right wing of the party hid behind Foster's hypocrisy and his reputation of opposing Browder to prepare the ground to subordinate and then liquidate first the genuine left in the party, and then force the center to capitulate to the right, as Foster did in his last years.

An example of the kind of centrist hypocrisy that Foster promoted at that time is when he admits that "those who are openly or covertly advocates of white supremacist ideas and practices, are enemies of the Negro people and the working class, and they should be treated as such. Our Party cannot tolerate the membership of such elements; expulsion is the answer for them." Indeed the membership policies of the party have to seriously be brought into question if open advocates of white supremacy could find their way into the party in the first place. But Foster puts up this facade of "firm" action against chauvinists to turn around and subtly defend the existence of what were the far more serious manifestations of chauvinism in the party. "There are large numbers of workers, however, many of them members of our Party, who, although genuine friends of the Negro people, sometimes, through lack of sensitivity or understanding of the Negro question, give vent to white chauvinist expressions and acts. Obviously the treatment in such instances is friendly education, not harsh disciplinary measures." What is "obvious" is that with friends like these, the Black people do not need enemies. Indeed white workers who have some manifestations of chauvinism cannot be treated like the KKKers, but on the other hand they do not have to be members of the proletarian vanguard either. Indeed

the party must educate white workers infected with the disease of chauvinism, but this treatment must be outside the party and not in it. If the party is not quarantined from this infection, then it can only spread in the party as it does throughout the rest of society. How can the party become the vanguard fighter against white chauvinism if it itself is half crippled with the disease? It is only natural that at the time the so-called “left sectarians” would concentrate on ridding the party of this disease, as the necessary precondition to fighting it in the whole working class. Foster preaches the menshevik line of “overcoming” and “defeating” chauvinism in the party, of opening the doors of the party to all kinds of similar “genuine friends of the Negro people” who “give vent to white chauvinist expressions and acts”!

When Foster attacks the “left sectarians,” if we understand where he is coming from and realize that he is offering a caricature of their line, we can get a glimpse of their struggle: “There is, in the Party, however, a strong Leftist sectarian tendency to evaluate white chauvinism as a uniform political disease and to lump together and to throw into one pot as white chauvinists all those who are in any way, however slightly, tainted by this weakness. The sectarian tendency also sharply condemns as conciliators of white chauvinism, if not as outright chauvinists, all those others who see any difference in degree of contamination with white chauvinism. This sectarian definition of chauvinism practically eliminates education as a corrective measure and puts the whole stress upon organizational measures. Consequently, not only have comrades been unjustly disciplined, and even expelled, but the whole fight against white chauvinism has been confused and weakened... Especially charges of white chauvinism should not be thrown around so recklessly as is now the case. This is a most serious charge, and it should not be leveled against a Party member until it is clearly justified. A comrade in our Party, convicted of white chauvinism, is crippled from then on, if not politically dead. Such severe penalties should be reserved for real white chauvinists, not for comrades where need is for more education on the Negro

question. Also we should not dull the effects of the white chauvinist appellation by applying it indiscriminately.”

Those who have had a few years experience in the movement should not have difficulty recognizing this kind of double-talk to avoid a real struggle against chauvinism. But unfortunately this kind of blandishment still has its effects. It is a common technique of opportunism to hide in a Bolshevik organization on the basis of maintaining that opportunism only really exists outside the organization, and it is sectarianism to suggest otherwise. That it is “uncomradely” and even if there are “errors” they need to be “patiently” corrected “over time” and we must not do anything “hasty” etc., etc., ad nauseum. Indeed, errors must be corrected through education, and indeed not every error requires organizational exclusion, etc. but there are errors and again there are errors. Giving “vent to white chauvinist expressions and acts” does not exactly fall into the category of minor errors. It is instructive to repeat the problems that Foster admits openly existed in the party: “Among the more common manifestations of white chauvinism in the Party are passivity in the fight for Negro rights, failure to develop social contact with Negroes, refusal of homeowners to rent rooms to Negroes, hypocritical attitudes toward Negro Party and union functionaries, failure to upgrade Negro workers in industry and to elect them as union officials in progressive unions, disapproval of intermarriage, the practice of white chauvinist language and habits, etc.” This is not a new party. It was one that had been in existence for more than thirty years. Obviously the theory of overcoming these problems with education had already been a complete failure. But even the education that Foster was proposing was that the Black communists subordinate themselves in the NAACP and the Urban League in the reformist struggle for equal rights, and when this struggle was won and chauvinism did not exist in the American working class, it would not exist in the party either!

But it is not only in the party that Foster wanted to liquidate a real and consistent struggle against white chauvinism. He also wanted to liquidate it in the mass movement as well: “The

development of a correct definition of white chauvinism also carries with it a more correct application among the masses of the Party's fight against white chauvinism. Our Party fights resolutely, upon every occasion, for Negro rights and full equality. How much, however, it is able to insist upon its advanced stand against white chauvinism in a mass organization depends upon Communist tactical considerations in the given circumstances. Undoubtedly those comrades have taken a Leftist sectarian position on more than one occasion who have laid down as the basis for cooperation with non-Party masses, heavily infected with white chauvinism, the full acceptance of the Party's advanced stand on the Negro question." What Foster is advocating is precisely the retrograde trend in the socialist movement that Lenin condemned at the beginning of the century:

"To reduce the entire movement to the interests of the moment means to speculate on the backward condition of the workers, means to cater to their worst inclinations. It means artificially to break the link between the working-class movement and socialism, between the fully defined political strivings of the advanced workers and the spontaneous manifestations of protest on the part of the masses."³⁶

The kind of struggle Foster was leading against the "left sectarians" was the same kind of struggle the right opportunists waged against Lenin. Lenin said:

"The objection will also probably be raised that the working-class masses are not yet able to understand the idea of the political struggle, an idea that is comprehensible only to certain, more developed workers. To this objection, which we hear so frequently from 'young' Russian Social-Democrats, our answer is that, firstly,

³⁶ "A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 284.

Social-Democracy has everywhere and always been, and cannot but be the representative of the class-conscious, and not of the non-class-conscious, workers and that there cannot be anything more dangerous and more criminal than the demagogic speculation on the underdevelopment of the workers. If the criterion of activity were that which is immediately, directly, and to the greatest degree accessible to the broadest masses, we should have to preach anti-Semitism or to agitate, let us say, on the basis of an appeal to Father Johann of Kronstadt.”³⁷

It is precisely this kind of dangerous and criminal demagogic speculation on the underdevelopment of the workers that Foster engages in by demanding that the party hide its program on the Black national question in the mass movement, that it cater to those “heavily infected with white chauvinism” in order to build some kind of unprincipled bloc on some other issue, like some kind of pacifist action in defense of “peace”. The question here is not a question of maximum program. Of course we can participate in mass struggles without adherence to the party program by all those involved, but even on the question of maximum program we do not hide our program for the sake of some unprincipled alliance. But in the case of the Black question, we are not dealing with maximum program, we are dealing with minimum program, with basic democratic rights. We are also dealing with the question that is the secret of the impotence of the American proletariat. To abandon this question in the mass movement is to abandon not only socialism but even democracy itself. Indeed it is difficult at the best of times to be a champion of the national and democratic rights of Black people, let alone in the kind of reactionary period that existed in 1953. But if the vanguard of the most conscious and revolutionary class is not going to face this situation with courage, then who is? How will the working class progress if its vanguard does not only not oppose the wave of chauvinism but heroically

³⁷ “Apropos of the Profession De Foi”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 291.

combat it, no matter what the cost? Indeed in any struggle there are tactics of battle, but precisely tactics to win the struggle, not tactics to capitulate to the most backward tendencies in the working class and thus to capitulate to imperialism and its offensive. How is the American working-class ever going to overcome the crippling disease of white chauvinism if there is not the most determined struggle by the vanguard to use every occasion to struggle against it. Who is to cure it, the NAACP and the Urban League? This is what Foster would have the party believe. The Comintern called for “the combating of every expression of Negrophobia,” but Foster considered this sectarian even in the Party let alone in the mass movement.

The Comintern made it clear that “this Yankee arrogance towards Negroes stinks of the disgusting atmosphere of the old slave market.” There is certainly no place for this “disgusting atmosphere” in the Communist party, but even this is not enough, although it is too much for Foster. There is no place for conciliation with this “disgusting atmosphere” anywhere, particularly where the Communists organize their activities in the mass movement. Of course, we are not idealists and know that the stench of this disgusting atmosphere of the slave market will exist even until after the socialist revolution. The question is not its existence even into the most advanced sections of the proletariat. The question is how to struggle against it and destroy it, because without this struggle from the very beginning there will be no revolution, there will be no socialism, there will only be the continued domination of US imperialism.

There is no way to defeat US imperialism by making concessions on this question, there is no way to defeat it by ignoring the disgusting atmosphere that exists even in the proletariat for the sake of some kind of unity on trade union issues, peace issues etc. It is the maintenance of this disgusting atmosphere of the slave market that is the secret strength of the American bourgeoisie and it persistently uses it to divide its enemy, the proletariat. Sectarianism on this question is the view that the entire white proletariat is put in the camp of the enemy

because of the existence of chauvinism. But this kind of sectarianism can be defeated by the Black communists if every effort is made in practice to demonstrate that the proletarian vanguard is not infected with this disease and is doing everything to combat it in the white proletariat. It is a matter of understanding that the horse goes before the cart and if the vanguard wants to be followed, it has to prove it is marching in the right direction with something more than a lot of fine-sounding words.

We have seen how Foster wanted to maintain the disgusting atmosphere of the slave market even in the party. He goes even farther in this regard by criticizing “leftism regarding Negro national sensitivity.” Towards those afflicted with white chauvinism the party has to combat the “sectarian” methods that offend these people, who are “poorly educated” in such matters. But on the other hand the party has to struggle against the Black members who react against this. Although Foster admits that Blacks have reasons for a certain “national sensitivity” because of the history of their oppression, he objects to the “sectarians” who say that “No white comrade should ever do anything to offend a Negro.” Foster says that “This idea, often expressed, is sheer nonsense.” and calls it “patronizing”. It is incredible that someone who fancies himself as a great defender of the Black race could sink to such levels in the defense of chauvinism. It is amazing how concepts can be turned on their heads—how can Blacks feel patronized by whites who take care not to offend their national sensitivities, who make the daily effort to make sure they do not spontaneously fall into the disgusting atmosphere of the slave market. Blacks feel patronized by liberals like Foster, who mouth a lot of things about the rights of Blacks, but in practice defend and exhibit the kind of patronizing chauvinism of the missionary to Africa. Blacks know too well the patronizing chauvinist liberals “whose best friends are Black.” and would like to know more white proletarians who make every effort to not offend their national sensitivity and do everything they can to offend the chauvinist inclinations of even the most liberal chauvinists by their consistent and persistent struggle against chauvinism.

Foster then proposes to deal with this problem by advocating an increased level of criticism of the Black communists, “constructive criticism” to be sure! In other words, to launch a campaign against the “left sectarianism” of the Black communists who wanted a revolutionary position on the Black national question and a struggle against chauvinism in the party.

Foster then goes on to explain that it is necessary to maintain the disgusting atmosphere of the slave market in the language of the daily life of the party in his criticism of “sectarianism regarding white supremacist terminology.” Foster explains that: “During the past few years, however, our Party has tended to tolerate a number of crass Leftist-sectarian errors in this general matter, especially in its efforts to cleanse the American language of its white chauvinist infection. Thus, impossible language standards are being set up and comrades are often called to order or disciplined as white chauvinists for using speech expressions which are devoid of white chauvinist content.. The problem becomes more complicated, however, when it comes to words and phrases which, while not in themselves white chauvinist, are used in a white chauvinist manner against Negroes. Thus, among many, are the words ‘boy’ and ‘girl’, which are widely used insultingly to adult Negro men and women. The leftist reaction to this practice is the trend to play down or discard altogether these words as applied to Negroes. But this is nonsense. Our task is not to eliminate such basic words from the vocabulary, but simply to war against their being used in a derogatory sense against Negroes.” Unfortunately, Foster does not attempt to explain how it is possible to call a Black man a “boy” in a “non-derogatory sense”! The fact that today even some of the most backward sections of the population know that it is wrong and offensive to use this kind of language is proof enough how far Foster wanted to go in conciliating with chauvinism. But this change is not the result of liberals like Foster, but because Blacks stood up verbally and otherwise to this kind of abuse.

It might be possible in this or that instance to go too far in these questions, but in which direction is it better to err—in the direction

of chauvinism or the direction of the national sensitivity of an oppressed people? A communist can give only one answer to that question. The kind of example Foster gives is disgusting, and it can only be imagined what other use of language from the disgusting atmosphere of the slave market he wanted to preserve in the party.

Then Foster proceeds to equate “Left sectarianism” with bourgeois nationalism among Blacks, saying that they are different but that “Left-sectarianism cultivates and feeds Negro nationalism and often closely resembles it.” The examples that Foster provides includes views that “whites cannot be depended upon to lead Negro masses in struggle,” but this was the view of the Comintern that said it is the Black proletariat that leads the Black masses. Another example is “when people within or without our ranks criticize the Party almost as though it were cultivating white chauvinism instead of combatting it.”

This was exactly the case in the CPUSA. Although it waged a struggle against many of the most overt manifestations of chauvinism, it denounced as “left sectarian” a consistent struggle against chauvinism, particularly in the party, and this had the result of cultivating chauvinism. We have seen how Foster cultivated chauvinism in the party and capitulated to it outside the party in the mass movement. In a desperate attempt to give a theoretical fig leaf to cover his own chauvinism, Foster quotes Stalin about the necessity of struggling on “two fronts” against both right and left deviations. This kind of comparison is often used by opportunists, who ignore the real content of the struggle against opportunist deviations by applying some formula in a totally meaningless way. Indeed there must always be a struggle on two fronts, but what is the real content of those fronts on the national question generally, and on the Black national question particularly.

The two fronts that Stalin was struggling on were the right opportunists led in the CPSU(B) by Bukharin, and the “left” opportunists led by Trotsky. Where did these two opportunist fronts stand on these questions? The right opportunist trend was not confined to the CPSU(B) but was widely present in the

Communist International. One of the principal spokesman of the right deviation internationally was Jay Lovestone, the head of the CPUSA, who advocated the theory of “American exceptionalism,” that maintained that the principles of Bolshevism and the programme of the Comintern did not really apply to America because of its “exceptional” development. A key aspect of this theory is the liquidation of the Black national question. The very arguments that were used by the CPUSA in 1956 to liquidate the question entirely were used by Lovestone in 1928, to oppose the Comintern Resolution. Theories of “mass exodus,” “dispersion of the nation,” etc., caused by the development of capitalism were all rejected by the Comintern.

Because of resistance in the American party by the right deviation, the Comintern had to pass another Resolution on this question in 1930, which put particular emphasis on upholding the national aspect of the Negro question against both right and left deviations. Browder followed the course that would latter be followed by Foster, which was acquiescence to the correct position at the beginning, then carrying out various centrist subterfuges to undermine the application of the correct line by the party, to open liquidation of the question. Foster would oppose Browder in 1945 and criticize his liquidation of the national aspect of the Black question. But by the end of his life he too would end up liquidating the question as well, after passing through the centrist subterfuges that we have started to outline here. The technique was always to recognize the right of self-determination in words but to first minimize its importance in theory and practice, to liquidate the revolutionary aspects of the question, such as the agrarian revolution, to maintain that it is secondary to the struggle for equal rights, to then decide that the position was correct at one time, but the various changes brought about by the development of American capitalism have liquidated the national question, to finally concluding that the position was incorrect all along and was a manifestation of “Left sectarianism.” In order to cover the real nature of the right opportunist deviation on this question, Foster tries to pass off open racism as right opportunism, revolutionary

struggle as Leftism, and the correct position the center, of struggling for equal rights. This is a bourgeois conception of these terms, and has nothing in common with how Stalin used them. It was precisely in the struggle against the right deviation that the Comintern passed the 1928 Resolution. It was precisely to strengthen this struggle that the 1930 Resolution was passed to expose Lovestone and the deviation towards great nation chauvinism in the CPUSA. Of course for right-opportunists such a position is “Left sectarian”.

This does not mean there are no actual “Left” deviations on this question. The “left” deviation on the national question became prevalent at the very beginning of the struggle to reconstitute a Communist International after the collapse of the Second International. The Second International had collapsed under the weight of its thoroughly right-opportunist and chauvinist positions of supporting their own imperialist bourgeoisies in the imperialist war. In reaction to the prevalent national chauvinism of the Second International, which openly supported imperialist annexations and violations of people’s right to self-determination, there was a leftist reaction that advocated the total liquidation of the national question, since the attainment of real independence was “impossible” under imperialism, because the right of self-determination was only a “bourgeois demand,” etc. This position was advocated by Luxemburg, Bukharin, Trotsky and others. Lenin struggled against and defeated “left” opportunism on the national question and established the importance of the national question in the epoch of imperialism as a part of the question of world proletarian revolution. This deviation was reanimated by Trotsky and his “theory of permanent revolution” in his struggle against the Comintern. Specifically, on the Black national question, the Comintern had to demarcate from certain “left” opportunist views. These views maintained that self-determination should only be supported if there is Black proletarian leadership of the movement, that it should only be supported on the basis of the Soviet form, that it can only be realized and struggled for by struggling for proletarian revolution

in the US generally. It is easy to see how these “left” views end up serving the right opportunist liquidation of the national question. Of course, when these kinds of views are put into practice, it is a sectarian practice in relation to the national movement.

These are the two fronts in the oppressor nation. In the oppressed nation they have certain different characteristics, where right opportunism can take the form of capitulation to the oppressor nation or it can take the form of bourgeois nationalism and narrow nationalism. Among communists from the oppressed nations, rightist deviations can be made in both directions. In the CPUSA the right deviation among Black communists, particularly in the leadership, was the same as the general direction of the Black intelligentsia in organizations like the NAACP, which is the line of imminent integration and liquidation of the national question. There were also deviations towards bourgeois nationalism, particularly in reaction to chauvinism in the party, but it is incorrect to equate the defenders of the Comintern Resolutions with bourgeois nationalists, the way that Foster does. In the struggle in the CPUSA over the Black national question in the forties and fifties, there was not an actual left sectarian front on this question. There were semi-trotskyites, but generally they also liquidated the Black national question. The left opportunist front on the Black national question was to emerge strongly in the maoist movement and persists today.

In the collapse of the CPUSA into modern revisionism there were generally three trends on the Black national question. These three trends were similar in content to the three trends that Lenin defined in the period of the collapse of the Second International. The main trend was a social chauvinist trend that capitulated to US imperialism and painted its policy of tremendous national oppression towards the Black nation in progressive colors. When US imperialism drove Black peasants forcefully from their land and stole their land and gave it to white supremacists and the big monopolies, these chauvinists praised this as the “solution” to the national question. When the dispossessed Black peasants were forced out of their nation by the Jim Crow policies of whites only

in Southern factories and were forced North by the imperialists to work at the hardest and lowest paying jobs, forced to live a horrendous existence in ghettos as an unemployed reserve army of labor, the chauvinists praised this as integration and the achievement of the historical aspirations of the Black people. The following words of Earl Browder should live in infamy: “Therefore we see now, sharply and clearly, the right of the Negroes as a people to the determination of their own destiny. It is just as much an inviolable right as it ever was; and that right is being exercised today in the form of a decision by Negro people themselves, without any pressure from special interests, to choose the path of the integration of the Negroes into the whole American nation as one united nation. It is this choice which gives the possibility in this period of integrating the Negro people into the general democracy of our country, on the basis of complete and unconditional equality, of solving this question now, and of no longer postponing it. The immediate achievement in this period, under the present American system, of complete equality for the Negroes, has been made possible... America can expect in the next few years to achieve an approximation of the full aim in this respect. I won’t promise that ten years from now we shall be able to say of the United States what someone, in one of the panels of the recent Congress of American-Soviet Friendship, said in introducing a prominent speaker—that in the Soviet Union there is no problem of national minorities any more. Perhaps that complete and unconditional achievement is possible only under socialism. But I think we can say that an approximation of that achievement is within our reach today under capitalism, under the existing American system.”³⁸ It was not ten years, but twenty years later in 1963, that hundreds of thousands of Blacks marched on Washington demanding recognition of the most elemental rights, and now another twenty years have passed and Blacks are still waiting for Browder’s “promised land”.

³⁸ “Communists in the Struggle for Negro Rights,” New Century Publishers, 1945.

The second trend was a “centrist” trend headed by Foster, that upheld the right of self-determination in word, but their stand was a hypocritical defense of this national right and they liquidated the struggle for it in practice, like Kautsky who proclaimed his internationalism in WWI, but who refused to carry it out in practice. Not only this, but Kautsky allied with the chauvinists against the genuine Left trend, the internationalists, who wanted to and who did put internationalism into practice. The centrists attack the Left to help the right. They preach unity with the chauvinists and they denounce as sectarians and splittists those who do not want unity with the chauvinists. Centrism is, as Stalin explained, the policy which consists “in embellishing the opportunism of the Rights with Left phrases and subordinating the Lefts to the Rights.”³⁹ This was Foster’s job when he replaced Browder. His centrism on the Black national question was for the purpose of subordinating the Black proletariat in the party to the right opportunist liquidators, the chauvinists. This is exactly how the chauvinists and Zionists used Foster and this was the meaning of the attack on “Left sectarianism.” It was in reality an attack on the genuine Lefts, on Stalin and the Comintern and the legacy they gave to the communist movement in the US. It was also an attack on those communists who tried to defend that legacy and continue to use it as their beacon in struggle. This was the third trend, the trend of internationalists in the CPUSA.

It is not our purpose here to analyze the development of that trend. This has been started in the introduction to the book, *The Communist International in America*, and will continue in the future. What we want to accomplish here is to establish that there was a genuine Left that was struggling, even if inconsistently at times, for the maintenance of the theses of the Comintern on the Black national question. What we want to demonstrate here is that the attack on the correct position was not led by the open chauvinists so much as it was led by the disguised hypocritical

³⁹ “Industrialization of the Country and the Right Deviation in the CPSU(B),” *Works*, Vol. 11, p. 293.

centrism of the Foster type. Foster's attack on the "Left sectarians," i.e., the Black revolutionary proletarians, was done under the cover of a hypocritical defense of the right of self-determination, for the purpose of undermining the hegemony of the Black revolutionary proletarians over the Black question in the party and to liquidate the developing hegemony of the revolutionary Black proletarians in the Black movement.

One of the "Left sectarians" attacked by Foster was Harry Haywood, a Black proletarian leader who was one of the authors of the 1928 Comintern Resolution. In a document which led to his purge from the Party in 1957, Haywood explains how the attack on them in 1953 and 1954 and the attack on the "left centers" in the mass movement, i.e., the mass organizations under the hegemony of the Black proletariat, was a sneak attack on the genuine Left. "Now it has become clear that the debate on left centers which raged in the movement in 1953-1954 was not just a matter of tactics, this was simply an early manifestation of right liquidationism which later blossomed into a fully rounded theory. It was a sneak attack upon the vanguard role of the Party—an initial stage in the war on left leadership and initiative. It was a diversionist move. The attack focused on left centers, a main vehicle for left initiative, counter-posing the existence of left centers to work in reformist-led organizations. The result was the liquidation of both left centers and organized work in the 'mainstream'."⁴⁰ It was also the subordination of the Lefts to the Rights, that was preparatory to the liquidation of even a hypocritical defense of self-determination.

In May of 1955 Foster was saying: "Those comrades who are placing all the stress upon building 'Left centers' are not abreast of the actual situation prevailing among the Negro people, especially in the North, and among the broad American masses. 'Left centers,' correct 25 years ago, may now be highly sectarian." The

⁴⁰ H. Haywood, For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question, 1975, p. 27.

question here was not a question of doing any work at all in reformist organizations that had mass influence among Blacks, but the question of whether in addition to the reformist organizations, whether any other form of Black mass organization should exist. The “Left centers” that Foster is talking about were mass organizations under the hegemony of the Black communist proletariat. Foster demands that since the majority of Blacks are still under the influence of reformist organizations, these ‘Left centers’ should be abandoned. Foster explains that “with the Northern Negro workers members en masse of the trade unions—both AF of L and CIO—with their building of the NAACP into a mass body, with their playing an increasingly important role in the Democratic Party, and with their entering into many other types of mass organizations from which they had hitherto been barred. Obviously, in such a situation it is our task to base our Negro work upon these mass organizations.”⁴¹

So for Foster, the Democratic Party was not a bourgeois party of monopoly capital, but a mass organization that communists, particularly black communists should subordinate themselves in, along with subordination to the labor aristocracy in the AFL and the CIO, and to the capitulationist bourgeois and petty bourgeois leadership of the NAACP. This was nothing but a call for the liquidation of the vanguard role of the party and the vanguard role of the revolutionary Black proletarians in the Black movement. This becomes painfully obvious when we consider just exactly what “Left centers” were liquidated for the sake of building the Democratic Party and the NAACP. Haywood explains: “As a result of this policy, such organizations as for example the Civil Rights Congress (which was a continuation of the International Labor Defense, led by William L. Patterson), which filled a vital need for militant, mass campaigns in behalf of victims of Dixiecrat lynch terror, and as late as the early 50’s, led mass struggles around the Willie McGee, Martinsville Seven and Ingram cases, and exposed to the world the savage oppression of the Negro people in the US

⁴¹ *Political Affairs*, May, 1955.

in the historic appeal to the UN embodied in “We Charge Genocide’. There was the Negro Labor council which became a leading and directing center of the spontaneous Negro caucus movement which sprang up throughout the country, as a necessary, special instrument to wage a consistent battle for the rights of Negro trade unionists. This spontaneous movement expressed lack of faith of Negro workers in the trade union bureaucracy to carry on a consistent struggle for Negro rights... Can it be denied that the liquidation of these centers left a vacuum in the struggle for Negro rights? These liquidationist moves resulted in the dispersal of an important core of Party and non-Party cadres of these organizations, cutting the ground from under them, destroying their base of operations from which they felt they could make their best contributions, resulting in the dispersal and demoralization of many of them.”⁴²

Indeed this was exactly the purpose, to destroy the organizational base of the “Left sectarians,” to destroy the development of Black proletarian hegemony that had been built since 1928, in campaigns like the Scottsboro case, and to destroy the base for revolutionary struggle. This also was a particular attack on the right of self-determination of the Black nation, because Foster admits that these organizations, in which he wanted the Black proletariat to submerge itself, had a weak or non-existent presence in the South. It was in the South, in the Black Belt, that there was a desperate need for the work of the “Left centers” to be expanded and built, but this could only be done on the basis of the struggle for self-determination in a revolutionary way against the power of the land owners and the bourgeoisie. This would have “distracted” Blacks from the struggle for equal rights, in Foster’s view. In reality, it is only this revolutionary struggle that, as a by-product, can produce significant gains in the struggle for equal rights under capitalism. These “Left centers” were attacked by the right opportunists and the centrists in the CPUSA as part of their campaign to defeat the “main danger” in the work

⁴² Haywood, op. cit.

among Blacks, the “Left sectarians”. Previously lip service had been given that right opportunism was the main danger, but in reality it is the Left that was attacked most. After most of the work of liquidation had been done, the centrists advanced the theory that: “As far as the Party’s work among the Negro masses is concerned at the present moment the main danger which confronts us is Left sectarianism. This Left sectarianism has led to the isolation of the Party in the Negro communities from the mainstream of the Negro liberation movement.”⁴³ This “mainstream” being the Democratic Party, the NAACP, and those great champions of Black rights in the bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO. But as Haywood pointed out, with the liquidation of the “Left centers” there was also in practice a liquidation of the work even in this “mainstream.”

The centrists attacked the Left in three particular areas. The first was the Left’s refusal to be swept up in the hysteria over McCarthyism to the point of liquidating everything else, and its resistance to seeing McCarthyism as a “fascism” that was more important than the question of the struggle of Black people, who already were living under “McCarthyism” for many years. The centrists complained: “There is a failure to join with the masses of Negro people in the fight against McCarthyism. Instead, everything is geared to a different task, to the ‘revolutionary, anti-imperialist struggle of the Negro people’.” With what contempt revolutionary and anti-imperialist struggle is spoken of. This is simply an open confession of reformism. The second objection of the centrists was that the Lefts were making “an overestimation of the radicalization of the Negro masses,” and were making “an exaggerated concept of the role of Left committees and centers”, i.e., of proletarian hegemony. “Correspondingly, there is opposition and resistance to placing chief emphasis upon work within the main organizations of the Negro people—NAACP, Elks, churches, etc.”

⁴³ *Political Affairs*, May, 1955.

Only thoroughgoing reformists could be attracted by this charge. This kind of statement is only a testimonial that there were some revolutionaries left in the CPUSA at that time, but obviously not very many. The third charge against the Lefts was that they underestimated the recent reforms that had been granted on the question of equal rights, that they were not taken in by these sops, and that they “conclude that the only way the Communists can break the Negro masses from the influence of the reformists who are being give credit for these concessions, is to project ‘more advanced’ slogans, e.g., propaganda for socialism.” Indeed revolutionaries would not want to be caught advancing “more advanced slogans” than the NAACP, the churches and the Elks! And by all means let us not engage in the “sectarian” propagation of the slogan of socialism among Blacks. They might “get ideas”! Foster did not want any “upitty Black boys” to do anything “more advanced” than the NAACP, the churches and the Elks wanted them to do! From being the main support of the revolutionary Black proletariat, the CPUSA was becoming its worst enemy and a chauvinist and racist swamp. Such was the nature of its revisionist degeneration. The Lefts cannot be faulted for putting the main emphasis on the struggle against chauvinism in the party.

This attack on the Left was preparatory for the total liquidation of the Black national question. These attacks on Left sectarianism were carried out on the basis of a verbal adherence to the right of self-determination. It is not our intention here to review all the arguments put forward by the revisionists in their total revision of the correct position recognizing the right to self-determination for the Black nation. We recommend that the reader read Harry Haywood’s 1957 article, “For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question,” which offers refutation to many of the chauvinist arguments that were advanced. We have tried to establish the nature of the attack on the correct position as represented in the Comintern resolutions, and to demonstrate some of the aspects of how chauvinism became dominant in what had been the vanguard organization of both the white and Black proletariat. In the future we will examine Haywood’s and others’ positions in more depth

and develop the critique of the chauvinism of the CPUSA as well as a critique of some of the deficiencies in the struggle against it.

The important lesson is the necessity to struggle against centrism and its hypocritical defense of self-determination. This hypocrisy can be clearly seen in Foster's case because of his own liquidation of his own centrist and hypocritical defense of self-determination. In the CPUSA's last "debate" on this question and in one of Foster's last articles before his death he said: "It was during this general period, in the late 1920's, that the Communist Party adopted the theory that the Negro people in the South were a nation, and when it seriously over-stressed the theory of self-determination. At the present time, however, the Negro people are developing a strong trend towards integration with the dominant institutions of the United States... In this movement for integration, the slogan of self-determination is altogether inapplicable for the American Negro people."⁴⁴ The only problem was that the "dominant institutions of the United States" have never developed a "strong trend towards integration" of Blacks, and this is part and parcel of the policy of national oppression of Blacks.

The fraud that Foster pulls is that because Blacks want equal rights they are not entitled to self-determination. But a communist principle is that nations retain this right no matter how they choose to exercise it. In the Soviet Union it was written into the constitution, even though the nations that had been oppressed under Tsarism consciously chose to be part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Article 17 of the Soviet Constitution, which was drafted by Stalin states that, "The right freely to secede from the USSR is reserved to each constituent republic." Foster and the others refused to support this right for the Black nation in the United States, regardless of what relationship Blacks chose to have with the United States. Browder said that the situation in the US in ten years would be like that in the Soviet Union, but ten years

⁴⁴ missing in original – نبع

later the situation in the Soviet Union had become like the one in the US; and Foster was saying that Blacks in the US did not have the rights that nations in the USSR were once given, and now were taken away by the modern revisionists that Foster supported. By the 1950's the complete betrayal and reformist course of Foster's CPUSA was more and more openly seen by many communists, although belatedly. The CPUSA's chauvinism and liquidation of the Black national question had finally come to the fore. The CPUSA reduced the Black struggle to one of civil rights, promoting the bourgeois national reformists and even pro-imperialists like the NAACP as the "vanguard" of the Black people's movement.

Foster's CPUSA, like Lovestone and Browder previously, and like the maoists and ex-maoists after Foster (PLP, RCP, Line of March, MLP, USA, etc.). all deny the struggle for self-determination and the existence of an oppressed Black nation on the grounds that Blacks are overwhelmingly proletarian, the South is industrialized, that there are no Black peasants or significant sharecroppers, hence, no land question, hence, no national struggle for self-determination. They all fail to understand the process of development of oppressed nations in the imperialist epoch, especially within an imperialist state. Though, generally speaking, Marxism teaches that the national question is in essence an agrarian question, it is not absolutely only an agrarian question. Otherwise, national and agrarian question would be one and the same thing. They fail to understand or just simply disagree with what Stalin meant when he stated that: "Oppressed nationalities are usually oppressed not only as peasants and as urban working people, but also as nationalities, i.e., as the toiler of a definite nationality, language, culture, manner of life, habits and customs."

Lenin even stated that in the struggle for self-determination, Marxists are particularly interested "first and foremost, in the self-determination of the proletariat within a given nation."⁴⁵ Instead, the various national chauvinists in the US are objectively

⁴⁵ "The Rights of Nations to Self-Determination". *LCW*, 22:145.

protecting their source of national privileges by repudiating and rejecting the right to secession of the Black nation.

The effects of this chauvinist and revisionist betrayal was that the working class movement and the Black national movement proceeded in separate ways. No longer was chauvinism combated even at a “weak” level amongst the American proletariat.

National reformist leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King assumed complete hegemony of the Black people’s movement. With King’s assassination, the illusions of non-violence and peaceful reform for self-determination and equal rights were shattered among many Blacks. As a result, in the absence of a vanguard Bolshevik Party, revolutionary nationalism came to the fore, opposing the national reformist and collaborationist path of King, the NAACP, etc. Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and other petty bourgeois and revolutionary nationalist tendencies led broad masses of Blacks, producing new generations of revolutionaries. Despite the dominant incorrect petty bourgeois revolutionary nationalist lines, the Black liberation movement (followed by the growing Chicano liberation movement of the 1960’s, the Puerto Rican movement, and the pacifist student anti-war movement) shook the edifice of US imperialism internally. The potential for a Black liberation movement sparking a proletarian revolution in the US was shown in the 1960’s. Absent was a proletarian movement (which was in an ebb) and the existence of a Bolshevik Party.

Nevertheless, the Black liberation movements’ relationship to the struggle for socialism in the US was clearly shown to be real. It reflect Lenin’s comments long ago that: “The socialist revolution may flare up not only through some big strike, street demonstration or hunger riot or a military insurrection or colonial revolt, but also as a result of a political crisis such as the Dreyfus case or the Zabern incident, or in connection with a referendum on the secession of an oppressed nation, etc.”⁴⁵ ...Or if we were to substitute America for Europe in the following comment by Lenin... “The struggle of the oppressed nations in Europe, a struggle capable of going all the way to insurrection and street fighting, capable of breaking down the iron discipline of the army

and martial law, will 'sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe' to an infinitely greater degree than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony."⁴⁶

Clearly, the importance of having a correct Bolshevik policy on the Black national question (as well as the Chicano and all other national questions) is a fundamental question for the success or failure of socialist revolution in the US.

The 1970s Maoist movement that came out of the 1960's generally followed Mao's ambiguous line of support for the Black masses and Martin Luther King. The October League (forerunner of the liquidated CPML) attempted to combine Mao's national reformist line on the Black masses with the Comintern's Resolutions and ended up implementing a Fosterite national reformist interpretation of the right to self-determination of the Black nation. As stated previously, the RCP denied the existence of a Black nation in the Black Belt South. So did the PLP and other predominantly white, supposedly "anti-revisionists." Maoist organizations that originated from the movements of the oppressed nationalities, like the Black Workers Congress, the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, the Revolutionary Workers League, etc., demarcated from the more open national chauvinist lines of the RCP and the hidden chauvinist (or national reformist) lines of the OL-CPML, MLOC, (Marxist-Leninist Organizing Committee, today, the pro-PLA circle known as "CPUSA.M-L"). However, their recognition of the right to self-determination of the Black nation was, to say the least, inconsistent and degenerated into a semi-trotskyite interpretation of Black liberation or self-determination, but only through socialist revolution. In practice, these groups applied a sectarian policy towards potential allies in the Black national revolutionary movement, and ended up liquidating the Black national question. These groups disintegrated and/or degenerated into sectarian and even social-fascist sects. Despite their upholding of the CI

⁴⁶ *LCW* 22:356.

Resolutions of 1928-1930 on the Black National Question, the BWC, PRRWO, RWL, etc., failed to understand the following statement by the Comintern: "... the Party cannot make its stand for this slogan (self-determination –BL) dependent upon any conditions, even the condition that the proletariat has the hegemony in the national, revolutionary Negro movement or that the majority of the Negro population in the Black Belt adopts the Soviet form (as Pepper demanded), etc....so long as, the majority of this population wishes to handle the situation in the Black Belt in a different manner from that which we Communists would like, its complete right to self-determination must be recognized. This right we must defend as a free democratic right."⁴⁷

Hence, as we've attempted to show, today national chauvinism remains the principal danger in the communist movement. Like all other aspects of the socialist revolution, the American maoist movement failed to present a correct policy on the national question in general, and the Black National Question in particular. As a result, the Black national revolutionary movement, as well as all the other national movements, are in crisis, with ideological confusion and organizational chaos, and under the hegemony of either the national reformists or petty bourgeois nationalists. Likewise, the dominance of national chauvinism and the liquidation of the Black national question of the 1970's is again giving rise to currents of Black petty bourgeois and revolutionary nationalism.

The maoist movement, or the "anti-revisionist" movement, never really demarcated from the chauvinist and centrist positions that existed in the CPUSA on the Black national question, not even the October League that had Harry Haywood as a member of its Central Committee. Most of the maoists, like Mao himself as well as the PLA, supported Foster and they generally carried forward his line on the Black national question, either in its hypocritical centrist form, or in its open liquidationist form. In the future we

⁴⁷ 1930, Sec. 8.

will analyze in depth the development of the maoist movement on this question. What we have established here is that the confusion and incorrect positions on this question are a product of the revisionist liquidation of this question, and only a further continuation of this liquidation. In the maoist movement this liquidation came in Rightist, Centrist and “Left” forms but as in the CPUSA, it remains today that chauvinism is the main danger in the Communist movement and in the working class movement, and that until this chauvinism is defeated, it will not be possible to overcome the impotence of the white proletariat weakened by its antagonism to labor in a Black skin, an antagonism that is continuously propagated by US imperialism. To achieve proletarian revolution, to achieve the genuine liberation of the Black, nation, to defeat racism and establish true equal rights of all Black people, to accomplish these tasks for the other oppressed nations and nationalities in the United States, it is necessary to overcome this antagonism. Central to doing this is waging the struggle for the right of self-determination up to, and including, political separation for the Black Nation.

The capitalist offensive, imperialist war preparations, and the increased national chauvinism and racism have already given rise to spontaneous outburst of both the oppressed nationality movements and to a re-awakening workers’ movement. This is inevitable. In the Black national movement, the left wing, or the anti-imperialist sectors, has begun to mobilize and attempt to once again find a platform of unity to begin to organize a Black national revolutionary movement. Formations like the National Black United Front and the National Black Independent Party, and the conference on Self-Determination held in New York City in December, 1981, are indications of this direction. However, the present state of all these processes displays also the crisis that persists.

Within the communist and workers’ movement there exists the fundamental task of exposing and defeating national chauvinism and racism. Within the Black national revolutionary movement there exists the task of exposing and defeating the various forms of

petty bourgeois narrow nationalism and reformism. The Bolshevik League is of the opinion that the central task confronting all revolutionary communists of all nationalities in the US is the construction of a Bolshevik Party. But this task is not to be carried out to the exclusion of organizing the proletarian and national revolutionary movements. In order to even construct a Bolshevik Party, we must first resolve what will be the programme of this Party. If there is anything we can learn from the history of American Communism it is that the National Question must be a component part of the Programme of the Party. The Comintern of Lenin and Stalin long ago stated:

“There can be no Bolshevization without a correct policy on the national question.”⁴⁸

In regard to the development of a correct Bolshevik line and policy on the Black movement, and in the interests of actively organizing a Black national revolutionary movement under the hegemony of the proletariat, we propose that all Black revolutionary nationalists and revolutionary communists who agree in deeds on the necessity to struggle for self-determination of the Black nation, come together to organize the polemics that would result in the formulation of a correct policy to guide the Black national revolutionary movement. There is an absence of a means or tool to organize the debate, which could at the same time provide some minimal guidance and organization to the growing spontaneous movement of the Black masses. The careerist ambitions of various individuals must be severely criticized and exposed and the sectarian squabbles must come to an end. The real revolutionaries must seriously address the crisis and begin to plan out how to resolve it.

It is our opinion that the time is ripe for Black revolutionary nationalists and communists to jointly sponsor activities addressing key topics of the Black movement, outlining the unities and differences in front of the masses of workers and progressive

⁴⁸ *Communist International in America 1925-1933*, p. 29). reprinted by B.L.

people, and that a consistent publication be published with the aim of putting forth the various political views. Let the debate enter every mass organization and trade union. But let it be organized and based on principle. Such activity can take place in a conference or series of conferences on Self-Determination for the Black Nation.

Such activity, however, must not stop the beginning attempts to organize an anti-imperialist Black United Front. On the contrary, all the forces involved should in deeds also aid the process of organizing the Black masses and begin preparing them for revolutionary battles. Immediate tasks and formulation of partial slogans and demands need to be addressed, with the aims of rallying and organizing the Black workers and masses.

Only such activity will produce real proletarian revolutionary cadres that will be part of the Bolshevik Party. In this activity, emphasis must be placed on the proletariat. Otherwise, the struggle for hegemony of the proletariat will be only a wish. If we are to struggle for socialism and for the real liberation of the Black nation, we must ensure that the Black proletariat (and not some self-proclaimed petty bourgeois -communist" or "socialist" or "revolutionary" party), has hegemony of this movement.

Thus, the BL is presenting this issue of Bolshevik Revolution as our contribution to the struggle to formulate the line and policy on the Black National Question. By no means is our analysis complete. On the contrary, it is only a beginning to seriously tackle this fundamental question of proletarian revolution. There are still many weaknesses to resolve and updating of the analysis that needs to be accomplished. However, we present our views to the revolutionary movement in the spirit of promoting discussion and debate, in order to clearly delineate and demarcate the opportunist lines, and thereby advance the struggle to formulate the correct proletarian line on the Black National Question.

*Bolshevik League of the United States
February, 1983*

Bolshevik Revolution, № 9, Spring 1983

Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States (1928)

October 26, 1928

§1. The industrialization of the South, the concentration of a new Negro working class population in the big cities of the East and North and the entrance of the Negroes into the basic industries on a mass scale, create the possibility for the Negro workers, under the leadership of the Communist Party, to assume the hegemony of all Negro liberation movements, and to increase their importance and role in the revolutionary struggle of the American proletariat.

The Negro working class has reached a stage of development which enables it, if properly organized and well led, to fulfill successfully its double historical mission:

(a) To play a considerable role in the class struggle against American imperialism as an important part of the American working class; and

(b) To lead the movement of the oppressed masses of the Negro population.

§2. The bulk of the Negro population (86%) live in the southern states; of this number 74 per cent live in the rural districts and are dependent almost exclusively upon agriculture for a livelihood. Approximately one-half of these rural dwellers live in the so-called "Black Belt," in which area they constitute more than 50 per cent of the entire population. The great mass of the Negro agrarian population are subject to the most ruthless exploitation and persecution of a semi-slave character. In addition to the ordinary forms of capitalist exploitation, American imperialism utilizes every possible form of slave exploitation (peonage, share-cropping, landlord supervision of crops and marketing, etc.) for the purpose of extracting super-profits. On the basis of these slave remnants, there has grown up a super-structure of social and political inequality that expresses itself in lynching, segregation, Jim Crowism, etc.

Necessary Conditions for National Revolutionary Movement

§3. The various forms of oppression of the Negro masses, who are concentrated mainly in the so-called "Black Belt," provide the necessary conditions for a national revolutionary movement among the Negroes. The Negro agricultural laborers and the tenant farmers feel most the pressure of white persecution and exploitation. Thus, the agrarian problem lies at the root of the Negro national movement. The great majority of Negroes in the rural districts of the south are not "reserves of capitalist reaction," but potential allies of the revolutionary proletariat. Their objective position facilitates their transformation into a revolutionary force, which, under the leadership of the proletariat, will be able to participate in the joint struggle with all other workers against capitalist exploitation.

§4. It is the duty of the Negro workers to organize through the mobilization of the broad masses of the Negro population the struggle of the agricultural laborers and tenant farmers against all forms of semi-feudal oppression. On the other hand, it is the duty of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. to mobilize and rally the

broad masses of the white workers for active participation in this struggle. For that reason the Party must consider the beginning of systematic work in the south as one of its main tasks, having regard for the fact that the bringing together of the workers and toiling masses of all nationalities for a joint struggle against the landowners and the bourgeoisie is one of the most important aims of the Communist International, as laid down in the resolutions on the national and colonial question of the Second and Sixth Congresses of the Comintern.

For Complete Emancipation of Oppressed Negro Race

§5. To accomplish this task, the Communist Party must come out as the champion of the right of the oppressed Negro race for full emancipation. While continuing and intensifying the struggle under the slogan of full social and political equality for the Negroes, which must remain the central slogan of our Party for work among the masses, the Party must come out openly and unreservedly for the right of the Negroes to national self-determination in the southern states, where the Negroes form a majority of the population. The struggle for equal rights and the propaganda for the slogan of self-determination must be linked up with the economic demands of the Negro masses, especially those directed against the slave remnants and all forms of national and racial oppression. Special stress must be laid upon organizing active resistance against lynching, Jim Crowism, segregation and all other forms of oppression of the Negro population.

§6. All work among the Negroes, as well as the struggle for the Negro cause among the whites, must be used, based upon the changes which have taken place in the relationship of classes among the Negro population. The existence of a Negro industrial proletariat of almost two million workers makes it imperative that the main emphasis should be placed on these new proletarian forces. The Negro workers must be organized under the leadership of the Communist Party, and thrown into joint struggle together with the white workers. The Party must learn to combine all

demands of the Negroes with the economic and political struggle of the workers and the poor farmers.

American Negro Question Part of World Problem

§7. The Negro question in the United States must be treated in its relation to the Negro questions and struggles in other parts of the world. The Negro race everywhere is an oppressed race. Whether it is a minority (U.S.A., etc.), majority (South Africa) or inhabits a so-called independent state (Liberia, etc.), the Negroes are oppressed by imperialism. Thus, a common tie of interest is established for the revolutionary struggle of race and national liberation from imperialist domination of the Negroes in various parts of the world. A strong Negro revolutionary movement in the U.S.A. will be able to influence and direct the revolutionary movement in all those parts of the world where the Negroes are oppressed by imperialism.

§8. The proletarianization of the Negro masses makes the trade unions the principal form of mass organization. It is the primary task of the Party to play an active part and lead in the work of organizing the Negro workers and agricultural laborers in trade unions. Owing to the refusal of the majority of the white unions in the U.S.A., led by the reactionary leaders, to admit Negroes to membership, steps must be immediately taken to set up special unions for those Negro workers who are not allowed to join the white unions. At the same time, however, the struggles for the inclusion of Negro workers in the existing unions must be intensified and concentrated upon, special attention must be given to those unions in which the statutes and rules set up special limitations against the admission of Negro workers. Primary duty of Communist Party in this connection is to wage a merciless struggle against the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, which prevents the Negro workers from joining the white workers' unions. The organization of special trade unions for the Negro masses must be carried out as part and parcel of the struggle against the restrictions imposed upon the Negro workers and for their admission to the white workers' unions. The creation of separate

Negro unions should in no way weaken the struggle in the old unions for the admission of Negroes on equal terms. Every effort must be made to see that all the new unions organized by the Left wing and by the Communist Party should embrace the workers of all nationalities and of all races. The principle of one union for all workers in each industry, white and black, should cease to be a mere slogan of propaganda, and must become a slogan of action.

Party Trade Union Work Among Negroes

§9. While organizing the Negroes into unions and conducting an aggressive struggle against the anti-Negro trade union policy of the A. F. of L., the Party must pay more attention than it has hitherto done to the work in the Negro workers' organizations, such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Chicago Asphalt Workers' Union, and so on. The existence of two million Negro workers and the further industrialization of the Negroes demand a radical change in the work of the Party among the Negroes. The creation of working class organizations and the extension of our influence in the existing working class Negro organizations, are of much greater importance than the work in bourgeois and petty-bourgeois organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Pan-African Congress, etc.

§10. The American Negro Labor Congress continues to exist only nominally. Every effort should be made to strengthen this organization as a medium through which we can extend the work of the Party among the Negro masses and mobilize the Negro workers under our leadership. After careful preparatory work, which must be started at once, another convention of the American Negro Labor Congress should be held. A concrete plan must also be presented to the Congress for an intensified struggle for the economic, social, political and national demands of the Negro masses. The program of the American Negro Labor Congress must deal specially with the agrarian demands of the Negro farmers and tenants in the south.

§11. The importance of trade union work imposes special tasks upon the Trade Union Educational League. The T.U.E.L. has completely neglected the work among the Negro workers, notwithstanding the fact that these workers are objectively in a position to play a very great part in carrying through the program of organizing the unorganized. The closest contact must be established between the T.U.E.L. and the Negro masses. The T.U.E.L. must become the champion in the struggle for the rights of the Negroes in the old unions, and in the organizing of new unions for both Negroes and whites, as well as separate Negro unions.

White Chauvinism Evidenced in the American Party

§12. The C.E.C. of the American Communist Party itself stated in its resolution of April 30, 1928, that "the Party as a whole has not sufficiently realized the significance of work among the Negroes." Such an attitude toward the Party work among the Negroes is, however, not satisfactory. The time is ripe to begin within the Party a courageous campaign of self-criticism concerning the work among the Negroes. Penetrating self-criticism is the necessary preliminary condition for directing the Negro work along new lines.

§13. The Party must bear in mind that white chauvinism, which is the expression of the ideological influence of American imperialism among the workers, not only prevails among different strata of the white workers in the U.S.A., but is even reflected in various forms in the Party itself. White chauvinism has manifested itself even in open antagonism of some comrades to the Negro comrades. In some instances where Communists were called upon to champion and to lead in the most vigorous manner the fight against white chauvinism, they instead yielded to it. In Gary, white members of the Workers Party protested against Negroes eating in the restaurant controlled by the Party. In Detroit, Party members, yielding to pressure, drove out Negro comrades from a social given in aid of the miners on strike.

Whilst the Party has taken certain measures against these manifestations of white chauvinism, nevertheless those manifestations must be regarded as indications of race prejudice even in the ranks of the Party, which must be fought with the utmost energy.

14. An aggressive fight against all forms of white chauvinism must be accompanied by a widespread and thorough educational campaign in the spirit of internationalism within the Party, utilizing for this purpose to the fullest possible extent the Party schools, the Party press and the public platform, to stamp out all forms of antagonism, or even indifference among our white comrades toward the Negro work. This educational work should be conducted simultaneously with a campaign to draw the white workers and the poor farmers into the struggle for the support of the demands of the Negro workers.

Tasks of Party in Relation to Negro Work

§15. The Communist Party of the U.S.A. in its treatment of the Negro question must all the time bear in mind this twofold task:

(a) To fight for the full rights of the oppressed Negroes and for their right to self-determination and against all forms of chauvinism, especially among the workers of the oppressing nationality.

(b) The propaganda and the day-to-day practice of international class solidarity must be considered as one of the basic tasks of the American Communist Party. The fight — by propaganda and by deeds — should be directed first and foremost against the chauvinism of the workers of the oppressing nationality as well as against bourgeois segregation tendencies of the oppressed nationality. The propaganda of international class solidarity is the necessary prerequisite for the unity of the working class in the struggle.

“In the internationalist education of the workers of the oppressor countries, emphasis must necessarily be laid on their

advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for it. Without this there can be no internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat every Socialist of an oppressor nation who fails to conduct such propaganda as a scoundrel and an imperialist.” (Lenin, selected articles on the national question.)

§16. The Party must seriously take up the task of training a cadre of Negro comrades as leaders, bring them into the Party schools in the U.S.A. and abroad, and make every effort to draw Negro proletarians into active and leading work in the Party, not confining the activities of the Negro comrades exclusively to the work among Negroes. Simultaneously, white workers must specially be trained for work among the Negroes.

§17. Efforts must be made to transform the “Negro Champion” into a weekly mass organ of the Negro proletariat and tenant farmers. Every encouragement and inducement must be given to the Negro comrades to utilize the Party press generally.

Negro Work Part of General Work of Party

§18. The Party must link up the struggle on behalf of the Negroes with the general campaigns of the Party. The Negro problem must be part and parcel of all and every campaign conducted by the Party. In the election campaigns, trade union work, the campaigns for the organization of the unorganized, anti-imperialist work, labor party campaign, International Labor Defense, etc., the Central Executive Committee must work out plans designed to draw the Negroes into active participation in all these campaigns, and at the same time to bring the white workers into the struggle on behalf of the Negroes’ demands. It must be borne in mind that the Negro masses will not be won for the revolutionary struggles until such time as the most conscious section of the white workers show, by action, that they are fighting with the Negroes against all racial discrimination and persecution. Every member of the Party must bear in mind that “the age-long oppression of the colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers, has given rise to a feeling of bitterness among the masses

of the enslaved countries as well as a feeling of distrust toward the oppressing nations in general and toward the proletariat of those nations.” (See resolution on Colonial and National Question of Second Congress.)

§19. The Negro women in industry and on the farms constitute a powerful potential force in the struggle for Negro emancipation. By reason of being unorganized to an even greater extent than male Negro workers, they are the most exploited section. The A. F. of L. bureaucracy naturally exercises toward them a double hostility, by reason of both their color and sex. It therefore becomes an important task of the Party to bring the Negro women into the economic and political struggle.

§20. Only by an active and strenuous fight on the part of the white workers against all forms of oppression directed against the Negroes, will the Party be able to draw into its ranks the most active and conscious Negro workers — men and women — and to increase its influence in those intermediary organizations which are necessary for the mobilization of the Negro masses in the struggle against segregation, lynching, Jim Crowism, etc.

§21. In the present struggle in the mining industry, the Negro workers participate actively and in large numbers. The leading role the Party played in this struggle has helped greatly to increase its prestige. Nevertheless, the special efforts being made by the Party in the work among the Negro strikers cannot be considered as adequate. The Party did not send enough Negro organizers into the coalfields, and it did not sufficiently attempt, in the first stages of the fight, to develop the most able Negro strikers and to place them in leading positions. The Party must be especially criticized for its failure to put Negro workers on the Presidium of the Pittsburgh Miners’ Conference, doing so only after such representation was demanded by the Negroes themselves.

§22. In the work among the Negroes, special attention should be paid to the role played by the churches and preachers who are acting on behalf of American imperialism. The Party must conduct a continuous and carefully worked out campaign among the Negro

masses, sharpened primarily against the preachers and the churchmen, who are the agents of the oppressors of the Negro race.

Party Work Among Negro Proletariat and Peasantry

§23. The Party must apply united front tactics for specific demands to the existing Negro petty bourgeois organizations. The purpose of these united front tactics should be the mobilizing of the Negro masses under the leadership of the Party, and to expose the treacherous petty bourgeois leadership of those organizations.

§24. The Negro Miners Relief Committee and the Harlem Tenants League are examples of joint organizations of action which may serve as a means of drawing the Negro masses into struggle. In every case the utmost effort must be made to combine the struggle of the Negro workers with the struggle of the white workers, and to draw the white workers' organizations into such joint campaigns.

§25. In order to reach the bulk of the Negro masses, special attention should be paid to the work among the Negroes in the South. For that purpose, the Party should establish a district organization in the most suitable locality in the South. Whilst continuing trade union work among the Negro workers and the agricultural laborers, special organizations of tenant farmers must be set up. Special efforts must also be made to secure the support of the share croppers in the creation of such organizations. The Party must undertake the task of working out a definite program of immediate demands, directed against all slave remnants, which will serve as the rallying slogans for the formation of such peasant organizations.

Henceforth the Workers (Communist) Party must consider the struggle on behalf of the Negro masses, the task of organizing the Negro workers and peasants and the drawing of these oppressed masses into the proletarian revolutionary struggle, as one of its major tasks, remembering, in the words of the Second Congress resolution, that "the victory over capitalism cannot be fully

achieved and carried to its ultimate goal unless the proletariat and the toiling masses of all nations of the world rally of their own accord in a concordant and close union.

Political Secretariat, Communist International

Moscow, October, 1928

Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States (1930)

October 26, 1930

§1. The Communist Party of the United States has always acted openly and energetically against Negro oppression and has thereby won increasing sympathy among the Negro population. In its own ranks, too, the Party has relentlessly fought the slightest evidences of white chauvinism, and has purged itself of the gross opportunism of the Lovestoneites. According to the assertions of these people, the “industrial revolution” sweep away the remnants of slavery in the agricultural South, and will proletarianize the Negro peasantry, so that the Negro question, as a special national question, would thereby be presumably solved, or could be put off until the time of the socialist revolution in America. But the Party has not yet succeeded in overcoming in its own ranks all underestimation of the struggle for the slogan of the right of self-determination, and still less succeeded in doing away with all lack of clarity on the Negro question. In the Party discussion the question was often wrongly put and much erroneous counterpoising of phases of the question occurred; thus, for instance: Should the slogan of social equality or the slogan of the right of self-determination of the Negroes be emphasized? Should only propaganda for the Negroes’ right to self-determination be

carried on, or should this slogan be considered as a slogan of action? Should separatist tendencies among the Negroes be supported or opposed? Is the Southern region, thickly populated by Negroes, to be looked upon as a colony, or as an “integral part of the national economy of the United States”, where presumably a revolutionary situation cannot arise independent of the general revolutionary development in the United States?

In the interest of the utmost clarity of ideas on this question, the Negro question in the United States must be viewed from the standpoint of its peculiarity, namely, as the question of an oppressed nation, which is in a peculiar and extraordinarily distressing situation of national oppression not only in view of the prominent racial distinctions (marked difference in the color of skin, etc.), but above all, because of considerable social antagonism (remnants of slavery). This introduces into the American Negro question an important, peculiar trait which is absent from the national question of other oppressed peoples. Furthermore, it is necessary to face clearly the inevitable distinction between the position of the Negro in the South and in the North, owing to the fact that at least three-fourths of the entire Negro population of the United States (12,000,000) live in compact masses in the South, most of them being peasants and agricultural laborers in a state of semi-serfdom, settled in the “Black Belt” and constituting the majority of the population, whereas the Negroes in the northern states are for the most part industrial workers of the lowest categories who have recently come to the various industrial centers from the South (having often even fled from there).

The struggle of the Communists for the equal rights of the Negroes applies to all Negroes, in the North as well as in the South. The struggle for this slogan embraces all or almost all of the important special interests of the Negroes in the North, but not in South, where the main Communist slogan must be: The Right of Self-Determination of the Negroes in the Black Belt. These two slogans, however are most closely connected. The Negroes in the North are very much interested in winning the right of self-

determination of the Negro population of the Black Belt and can thereby hope for strong support for the establishment of true equality of the Negroes in the North. In the South the Negroes are suffering no less, but still more than in the North from the glaring lack of all equality; for the most part the struggle for their most urgent partial demands in the Black Belt is nothing more than the struggle for their equal rights, and only the fulfillment of their main slogan, the right of self-determination in the Black Belt, can assure them of true equality.

The Struggle for the Equal Rights of the Negroes

§2. The basis for the demand of equality of the Negroes is provided by the special yoke to which the Negroes in the United States are subjected by the ruling classes. In comparison with the situation of the other various nationalities and races oppressed by American imperialism, the yoke of the Negroes in the United States is of a peculiar nature and particularly oppressive. This is partly due to the historical past of the American Negroes as imported slaves, but is much more due to the still existing slavery of the American Negro which is immediately apparent, for example, in comparing their situation even with the situation of the Chinese and Japanese workers in the West of the United States, or with the lot of the Filipinos (Malay race) who are under colonial repression.

It is only a Yankee bourgeois lie to say that the yoke of Negro slavery has been lifted in the United States. Formally it has been abolished, but in practice the great majority of the Negro masses in the South are living in slavery in the literal sense of the word. Formally, they are “free” as “tenant farmers” or “contract laborers” on the big plantations of the white land owners, but actually, they are completely in the power of their exploiters; they are not permitted, or else it is made impossible for them to leave their exploiters; if they do leave the plantations, they are brought back and in many cases whipped; many of them are simply taken prisoner under various pretexts and, bound together with long chains, they have to do compulsory labor on the roads. All through

the South, the Negroes are not only deprived of all rights, and subjected to the arbitrary Will of the white exploiters, but they are also socially ostracized, that is, they are treated in general not as human beings, but as cattle. But this ostracism regarding Negroes is not limited to the South. Not only in the South but throughout the United States, the lynching of Negroes is permitted to go unpunished. Everywhere the American bourgeoisie surrounds the Negroes with an atmosphere of social ostracism.

The 100 per cent Yankee arrogance divides the American population into a series of castes, among which the Negroes constitute, so to speak, the caste of the “untouchables” who are in a still lower category than the lowest categories of human society, the immigrant laborers, the yellow immigrants, and the Indians. In all big cities the Negroes have to live in special segregated Ghettos (and of course, have to pay extremely high rent). In practice, marriage between Negroes and whites is prohibited, and in the South this is even forbidden by law. In various other ways, the Negroes are segregated, and if they overstep the bounds of the segregation they immediately run the risk of being ill-treated by the 100 per cent bandits. As wage earners, the Negroes are forced to perform the lowest and most difficult work; they generally receive lower wages than the white workers and do not always get the same wages as white workers doing similar work, and their treatment is the very worst. Many American Federation of Labor trade unions do not admit Negro workers in their ranks, and a number have organized special trade unions for Negroes so that they will not have to let them into their “good white society”.

This whole system of “segregation” and “Jim-Crowism” is a special form of national and social oppression under which the American Negroes have much to suffer. The origin of all this is not difficult to find: this Yankee arrogance towards the Negroes stinks of the disgusting atmosphere of the old slave market. This downright robbery and slave whipping barbarism at the peak of capitalist “culture”.

§3. The demand for equal rights in our sense of the word, means not only demanding the same rights for the Negroes as the whites

have in the United States at the present time, but also demanding that the Negroes should be granted all rights and other advantages which we demand for the corresponding oppressed classes of whites (workers and other toilers). Thus in our sense of the word, the demand for equal rights means a continuous work of abolishment of all forms of economic and political oppression of the Negroes, as well as their social exclusion, the insults perpetrated against them and their segregation. This is to be obtained by constant struggle by the white and black workers for effective legal protection for the Negroes in all fields, as well as actual enforcement of their equality and the combating of every expression of Negrophobia. One of the first Communist slogans is: Death for Negro lynching!

The struggle for the equal rights of the Negroes does not in any way exclude recognition and support for the Negroes' right to their own special schools, government organs, etc., wherever the Negro masses put forward such national demands of their own accord. This will, however, in all probability occur to any great extent only in the Black Belt. In other parts of the country the Negroes suffer above all from being shut out from the general social institutions and not from being profited from setting up their own national institutions. With the development of the Negro intellectuals (principally in the "free" professions) and of a thin layer of small capitalist business people, there have appeared lately not only definite efforts for developing a purely national Negro culture, but also outspoken bourgeois tendencies towards Negro nationalism. The broad masses of the Negro population in the big industrial centers of the North are, however, making no efforts whatsoever to maintain and cultivate a national aloofness. They are, on the contrary, working for assimilation. This effort of the Negro masses can do much in the future to facilitate the progressive process of amalgamating the whites and Negroes into one nation, and it is in no circumstances the task off the Communists to give support to bourgeois nationalism in its fight with the progressive assimilation tendencies of the Negro working masses.

§4. The slogan of equal rights of the Negroes without a relentless struggle in practice against all manifestations of Negrophobia on the part of the American bourgeoisie can be nothing but a deceptive liberal gesture of a sly slave owner or his agent. This slogan is in fact repeated by “socialist” and many other bourgeois politicians and philanthropists, who want to get publicity for themselves by appealing to the “sense of justice” of the American bourgeoisie in the individual treatment of the Negroes, and thereby side-track attention from the one effective struggle against the shameful system of “white superiority”: from the class struggle against the American bourgeoisie. The struggle for equal rights for the Negroes is, in fact, one of the most important parts of the proletarian class struggle of the United States.

The increasing unity of the various working class elements provokes constant attempts on the part of the American bourgeoisie to play one group against another, particularly the white workers against the black, and the black workers against the immigrant workers, and vice versa, and thus to promote the divisions within the working class, which contribute to the bolstering up of American capitalist rule. The Party must carry on a ruthless struggle against all these attempts of the bourgeoisie and do everything to strengthen the bonds of class solidarity of the working class on a lasting basis.

In the struggle for equal rights for the Negroes, however, it is the duty of the white workers to march at the head of this struggle. They must everywhere make a breach in the walls of segregation and “Jim-Crowism” which have been set up by bourgeois slave market morality. They must most ruthlessly unmask and condemn the hypocritical reformists and bourgeois “friends of Negroes” who, in reality, are only interested in strengthening the power of the enemies of the Negroes. They, the white workers, must boldly jump at the throat of the 100 per cent bandits who strike a Negro in the face. This struggle will be the test of real international solidarity of the American white workers.

It is the special duty of the revolutionary Negro workers to carry on tireless activity among the Negro working masses to free them

of their distrust of the white proletariat and draw them into the common front of the revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie. They must emphasize with all force that the first rule of proletarian morality is that no worker who wants to be an equal member of his class must ever serve as a strikebreaker or a supporter of bourgeois politics. They must ruthlessly unmask all Negro politicians corrupted or directly bribed by American bourgeois ideology, who systematically interfere with the real proletarian struggle for equal rights for the Negroes.

Furthermore, the Communist Party must resist all tendencies within its own ranks to ignore the Negro question as a national question in the United States, not only in the South but also in the North. It is advisable for the Communist Party in the North to abstain from the establishment of any special Negro organizations, and in place of this to bring the black and white workers together in common organizations of struggle and joint action. Effective steps must be taken for the organization of Negro workers in the Trade Union Unity League and revolutionary trade unions. Underestimation of this work takes various forms: lack of energy in recruiting Negro workers, in keeping them in our ranks and in drawing them into the full life of the trade unions, selecting, educating and promoting Negro forces to leading functions in the organization. The Party must make itself entirely responsible for the carrying through of this very important work. It is most urgently necessary to publish a popular mass paper dealing with the Negro question, edited by white and black comrades, and to have all active followers of this paper grouped organizationally.

The struggle for equal rights for the Negroes must certainly take the form of common struggle by the white and black workers

§5. It is not correct to consider the Negro zone of the South as a colony of the United States. Such a characterization of the Black Belt could be based in some respects only upon artificially construed analogies, and would create superfluous difficulties for the clarification of ideas. In rejecting this estimation, however, it

should not be overlooked that it would be none the less false to try to make a fundamental distinction between the character of national oppression to which the colonial peoples are subjected and the yoke of other oppressed nations. Fundamentally, national oppression in both cases is of the same character, and is in the Black Belt in many respects worse than in a number of actual colonies. On one hand the Black Belt is not in itself, either economically or politically, such a united whole as to warrant its being called a special colony of the United States. But on the other hand, this zone is not, either economically or politically, such an integral part of the whole United States as any other part of the country. Industrialization in the Black Belt is not, as is generally the case in colonies properly speaking, in contradiction with the ruling interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie, which has in its hands the monopoly of all the industry; but in so far as industry is developed here, it will in no way bring a solution to the question of living conditions of the oppressed Negro majority, nor to the agrarian question, which lies at the basis of the national question. On the contrary, this question is still further aggravated as a result of the increase of the contradictions arising from the pre-capitalist forms of exploitation of the Negro peasantry and of a considerable portion of the Negro proletariat (miners, forestry workers, etc.) in the Black Belt, and at the same time, owing to the industrial development here, the growth of the most important driving force of the national revolution, the black working class, is especially strengthened. Thus, the prospect for the future is not an inevitable dying away of the national revolutionary Negro movement in the South, as Lovestone prophesied, but on the contrary, a great advance of this movement and the rapid approach of a revolutionary crisis in the Black Belt.

§6. Owing to the peculiar situation in the Black Belt (the fact that the majority of the resident Negro population are farmers and agricultural laborers and that the capitalist economic system as well as political class rule there is not only of a special kind, but to a great extent still has pre—capitalist and semi-colonial features), the right of self-determination of the Negroes as the main slogan

of the Communist Party in the Black Belt is appropriate. This, however, does not in any way mean that the struggle for equal rights of the Negroes in the Black Belt is less necessary or less well founded than it is in the North. On the contrary, here, owing to the whole situation, this struggle is even better founded; but the form of slogan does not sufficiently correspond with the concrete requirements of the liberation Struggle of the Negro population. Anyway, it is clear that in most cases it a question of the daily conflicts of interest between the Negroes and the white rulers in the Black Belt on the subject of infringement of the most elementary equality rights of the Negroes by the whites. Daily events of the kind are: all Negro persecutions, all arbitrary economic acts of robbery by the white exploiters (“Black Man’s Burden”) and the whole system of so-called “Jim-Crowism”. Here, however, it is very important in connection with all these concrete cases of conflict to concentrate the attention of the Negro masses not so much on the general demands of mere equality, but much more on some of the revolutionary basic demands arising from the concrete situation.

The slogan of the right of self-determination occupies the central place in the liberation struggle of the Negro population in the Black Belt against the yoke of American imperialism. But this slogan, as we see it, must be carried out only in connection with two other basic demands. Thus, there are three basic demands to be kept in mind in the Black Belt, namely, the following:

(a) Confiscation of the landed property of the white landowners and capitalists for the benefit of the Negro farmers. The landed property in the hands of the white American exploiters constitutes the most important material basis of the entire system of national oppression and serfdom of the Negroes in the Black Belt. More than three-quarters of all Negro farmers here are bound in actual serfdom to the farms and plantations of the white exploiters by the feudal system of “share cropping”. Only on paper and not in practice are they freed from the yoke of their former slavery. The same holds completely true for the great mass of black contract laborers. Here the contract is only the capitalist expression of the

chains of the old slavery, which even today are not infrequently applied in their natural iron form on the roads of the Black Belt (chain gang work). These are the main forms of present Negro slavery in the Black Belt, and no breaking of the chains of this slavery is possible without confiscating all the landed property of the white masters. Without this revolutionary measure, without the agrarian revolution, the right of self-determination of the population would be only a Utopia or, at best, would remain only on paper without changing in any way the actual enslavement.

(b) Establishment of the state unity of the Black Belt. At the present time this Negro zone — precisely for the purpose of fascinating national oppression — is artificially split up and divided into a number of various states which include localities having a majority of white population. If the right of self-determination of the Negroes is to be put into force, it is necessary wherever possible to bring together into one governmental unit all districts of the South where the majority of the settled population of Negroes. Within the limits of this state there will of course remain a fairly significant white minority which must submit to the right of self-determination of the Negro majority. There is no other possible way of carrying out in a democratic manner the right of self-determination of the Negroes. Every plan regarding the establishment of the Negro state with an exclusively Negro population in America (and of course, still more exporting it to Africa) nothing but an unreal and reactionary caricature of the fulfillment of the right of self-determination of the Negroes, and every attempt to isolate and transport the Negroes would have the most damaging effect upon their interests. Above all, it would violate the right of the Negro farmers in the Black Belt not only to their present residences and their land, but also to the land owned by the white landlords and cultivated by Negro labor.

(c) Right of Self-Determination. This means complete and unlimited right of the Negro majority to exercise governmental authority in the entire territory of the Black Belt, as well as to decide upon the relations between their territory and other nations, particularly the United States. It would not be right of self-

determination in our sense of the word if the Negroes in the Black Belt had the right of determination only in cases which concerned exclusively the Negroes and did not affect the whites, because the most important cases arising here are bound to affect the whites as well as Negroes. First of all, true right to self-determination means that the Negro majority and not the white minority in the entire territory of the administratively united Black Belt exercises the right of administering governmental, legislative, and judicial authority. At the present time all this power is concentrated in the hands of the white bourgeoisie and landlords. It is they who appoint all officials, it is they who dispose of public property, it is they who determine the taxes, it is they who govern and make the laws. Therefore, the overthrow of this class rule in the Black Belt is unconditionally necessary in the struggle for the Negroes' right to self-determination. This, however, means at the same time the overthrow of the yoke of American imperialism in the Black Belt on which the forces of the local white bourgeoisie depend. Only in this way, only if the Negro population of the Black Belt wins its freedom from American imperialism even to the point of deciding itself the relations between its country and other governments, especially the United States, will it win real and complete self-determination. One should demand from the beginning that no armed forces of American imperialism should remain on the territory of the Black Belt.

§7. As Stated in the letter of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI of March 16, 1930, the Communists must «unreservedly carry on a struggle» for the self-determination of the Negro population in the Black Belt in accordance with what has been set forth above. It is incorrect and harmful to interpret the standpoint to mean that the Communists stand for the right of self-determination of the Negroes only up to a certain point but not beyond this, to, for example, the right of separation. It is also incorrect to say that the Communists are only to carry on propaganda or agitation for the right of self-determination, but not to develop any activity to bring this about. No, it is of the utmost importance for the Communist Party to reject any such limitation of its struggle for this slogan.

Even if the situation does not yet warrant the raising of the question of uprising, one should not limit oneself at present to propaganda for the demand, “Right to Self— Determination”, but should organize mass actions, such as demonstrations, strikes, tax boycott movements, etc.

Moreover, the Party cannot make its stand for this slogan dependent upon any conditions, even the condition that the proletariat has the hegemony in the national revolutionary Negro movement or that the majority of the Negro population in the Black Belt adopts the Soviet form (as Pepper demanded), etc. It goes without saying that the Communists in the Black Belt and must try to win over all working elements of the Negroes, that is, the majority of the population, to their side and to convince them not only that they must win the right of self-determination but also that they must make use of this right in accordance with the Communist program. But this cannot be made a condition for the stand of the Communists in favor of the right of self-determination of the Negro population. If, or so long as, the majority of this population wishes to handle the situation in the Black Belt in a different manner from that which we Communists would like, its complete right to self-determination must be recognized. This right we must defend as a free democratic right.

§8. In general, the Communist Party of the United States has kept to this correct line recently in its struggle for the right of self-determination of the Negroes, even though this line — in some cases — has been unclearly or erroneously expressed. In particular, some misunderstanding has arisen from the failure to make a clear distinction between the demand for “right of self-determination” and the demand for governmental separation, simply treating these two demands in the same way. However, these two demands are not identical. Complete right to self-determination includes also the right to governmental separation, but does not necessarily imply that the Negro population should make use of this right in all circumstances, that is, that it must actually separate or attempt to separate the Black Belt from the existing governmental federation with the United States. If it desires to separate, it must

be free to do so; but if it prefers to remain federated with the United States it must also be free to do that. This is the correct meaning of the idea of self-determination, and it must be recognized quite independently of whether the United States is still a capitalist state or whether a proletarian dictatorship has already been established there.

It is, however, another matter if it is not a case of the right of the oppressed nation concerned to separate or to maintain governmental contact, but if the question is treated on its merits: whether it is to work for state separation, whether it is to struggle for this or not. This is another question, on which the stand of the Communists must vary according to the concrete conditions. If the proletariat has come into power in the United States, the Communist Negroes will not come out for but against separation of the Negro Republic from federation with the United States. But the right of the Negroes to governmental separation will be unconditionally realized by the Communist Party; it will unconditionally give the Negro population of the Black Belt freedom of choice even on this question. Only when the proletariat has come into power in the United States the Communists will carry on propaganda among the working masses of the Negro population against separation, in order to convince them that it is much better and in the interest of the Negro nation for the Black Belt to be a free republic, where the Negro majority has complete right of self-determination but remains governmentally federated with the great proletarian republic of the United States. The bourgeois counter-revolutionists, on the other hand, will then be interested in boosting the separation tendencies in the ranks of the various nationalities in order to utilize separatist nationalism as a barrier for the bourgeois counter-revolution against the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship.

But the question at the present time is not this. As long as capitalism rules in the United States, the Communists cannot come out against governmental separation of the Negro zone from the United States. They recognize that this separation from the imperialist United States would be preferable, from the standpoint

of the national interests of the Negro population, to their present oppressed state, and therefore, the Communists are ready at any time to offer all their support if only the working masses of the Negro population are ready to take up the struggle for governmental independence of the Black Belt. At the present time, however, the situation in the national struggle in the South is not such as to win mass support of the working Negroes for this separatist struggle; and it is not the task of the Communists to call upon them to separate, without taking into consideration the existing situation and the desires of the Negro masses.

The situation in the Negro question in the United States, however, may undergo a radical change. It is even probable that the separatist efforts to obtain complete state independence of the Black Belt will gain ground among the Negro masses of the South in the near future. This is connected with the prospective sharpening of the national conflicts in the South, with the advance of the national revolutionary Negro movement, and with the exceptionally brutal fascist aggressiveness of the white exploiters of the South, as well as with the support of this aggressiveness by the central government authority of the United States. In this sharpening of the situation in the South, Negro separatism presumably increase, and the question of the independence of the Black Belt will become the question of the day. Then the Communist Party must also face this question and, if the circumstances seem favorable, must stand up with all strength and courage for the struggle to win independence and for the establishment of a Negro republic in the Black Belt.

§9. The general relation of Communists to separatist tendencies among the Negroes, described above, cannot mean that Communists associate themselves at present, or generally speaking, during capitalism, indiscriminately and without criticism with all the separatist currents of the various bourgeois or petty bourgeois Negro groups. For there is not only a national-revolutionary, but also a reactionary Negro separatism, for instance, that represented by Garvey. His Utopia of an isolated Negro state (regardless of whether in Africa or America, if it is

supposed to consist of Negroes only) pursues only the political aim of diverting the Negro masses from the real liberation struggle against American imperialism.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the «right of self-determination» slogan is a truly revolutionary slogan only in connection with the demand for complete separation. The question of Power is decided not only through the demand of separation, but just as much through the demand of the right to decide the separation question and self-determination in general. A direct question of power is also the demand of confiscation of the land of the white exploiters in the South, as well as the demand of the Negroes that the entire Black Belt be amalgamated into a state unit.

Hereby, every single fundamental demand of the liberation struggle of the Negroes in the Black Belt is such that — if once thoroughly understood by the Negro masses and adopted as their slogan — it will lead them into the struggle for the overthrow of the power of the ruling bourgeoisie, which is impossible without such revolutionary struggle. One cannot deny that it is just possible for the Negro population of the Black Belt to win the right to self-determination during capitalism; but it is perfectly clear and indubitable that this is possible only through successful revolutionary struggle for power against the American bourgeoisie, through wresting the Negroes' right to self-determination from American imperialism. Thus, the slogan of right to self-determination is a real slogan of national rebellion which, to be considered as such, need not be supplemented by proclaiming struggle for the complete separation of the Negro zone, at least not at present. But it must be made perfectly clear to the Negro masses that the slogan «right to self-determination» includes the demand of full freedom for them to decide even the question of complete separation. We demand freedom of separation, real right of self-determination, wrote Lenin, «certainly not in order to “recommend” separation, but on the contrary, in order to facilitate and accelerate the democratic rapprochement and unification of nations». For the same purpose,

Lenin's party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, bestowed after its seizure of power on all the peoples hitherto oppressed by Russian Tsarism, the full right to self-determination, including the right of complete separation, and achieved thereby its enormous successes with regard to the democratic rapprochement and voluntary unification of nations.

§10. The slogan for the right of self-determination and the other fundamental slogans of the Negro question in the Black Belt do not exclude but rather pre-suppose an energetic development of the struggle for concrete partial demands linked up with the daily needs and afflictions of wide masses of working Negroes. In order to avoid, in this connection, the danger of opportunist backslidings, Communists must above all remember this:

(a) The direct aims and partial demands around which a partial struggle develops are to be linked up in the course of the struggle with the revolutionary fundamental slogans brought up by the question of power, in a popular manner corresponding to the mood of the masses. (Confiscation of the big landholdings, establishment of governmental unity of the Black Belt, right of self-determination of the Negro population in the Black Belt). Bourgeois-socialist tendencies to oppose such a revolutionary widening and deepening of the fighting demands must be fought.

(b) One should not venture to draw up a complete program of some kind, or a system of "positive" partial demands. Such programs on the part of petty-bourgeois politicians should be exposed as attempts to divert the masses from the necessary hard struggles by fostering reformist and democratic illusions among them. Every positive partial demand which might crop up is to be considered from the viewpoint of whether it is in keeping with our revolutionary fundamental slogans or whether it is of a reformist or reactionary tendency. Every kind of national oppression which arouses the indignation of the Negro masses can be used as a suitable point of departure for the development of partial struggles, during which the abolition of such oppressions, as well as their prevention through revolutionary struggle against the ruling exploiting dictatorship, must be demanded.

(c) Everything should be done to bring wide masses of Negroes into these partial struggles. This is important — and not to carry the various partial demands to such an ultra-radical point that the mass of working Negroes are no longer able to recognize them as their own. Without a real mobilization of the mass-movements — in spite of the sabotage of the bourgeois reformist Negro politicians — even the best Communist partial demands get hung up. On the other hand, even some relatively insignificant acts of the Ku Klux Klan bandits in the Black Belt can become the occasion of important political movements, provided the Communists are able to organize the resistance of the indignant Negro masses. In such cases, mass movements of this kind can easily develop into real rebellion. This rests on the fact that — as Lenin said — «Every act of national oppression calls forth resistance on the part of the masses of the population, and the tendency of every act of resistance on the part of oppressed peoples is the national uprising».

(d) Communists must fight in the forefront of the national-liberation movement and must do their utmost for the progress of this mass movement and its revolutionization. Negro Communists must clearly dissociate themselves from all bourgeois currents in the Negro movement, must indefatigably oppose the spread of the influence of the bourgeois groups on the working Negroes. In dealing with them they must apply the tactic laid down by the Sixth CI Congress with regard to the colonial question, in order to guarantee the hegemony of the Negro proletariat in the national liberation movement of the Negro population, and to coordinate wide masses of the Negro peasantry in a steady fighting alliance with the proletariat.

(e) One must work with the utmost energy for the establishment and consolidation of Communist Party organizations and revolutionary trade unions in the South. Furthermore, immediate measures must be taken for the organization of proletarian and peasant self-defense against the Ku Klux Klan. For this purpose, the Communist Party is to give further instructions.

§11. It is particularly incumbent on Negro Communists to criticize consistently the half-heartedness and hesitations of the petty-bourgeois national-revolutionary Negro leaders in the liberation struggle of the Black Belt, exposing them before the masses. All national reformist currents as, for instance, Garveyism, which are an obstacle to the revolutionization of the Negro masses, must be fought systematically and with the utmost energy. Simultaneously, Negro Communists must carry on among the Negro masses an energetic struggle against nationalist moods directed indiscriminately against all whites, workers as well as capitalists, Communists as well as imperialists. Their constant call to the Negro masses must be: Revolutionary struggle against the ruling white bourgeoisie, through a fighting alliance with the revolutionary white proletariat! Negro Communists must indefatigably explain to the mass of the Negro population that even if many white workers in America are still infected with Negrophobia, the American proletariat, as a class, which owing to its struggle against the American bourgeoisie represents the only truly revolutionary class, will be the only real mainstay of Negro liberation. In as far as successes in the national-revolutionary struggle of the Negro population of the South for its right to self-determination are already possible under capitalism, they can be achieved only if this struggle is effectively supported by proletarian mass actions on a large scale in the other parts of the US. But it is also clear that «only a victorious proletarian revolution will finally decide the agrarian question and the national question in the South of the US, in the interest of the predominating mass of the Negro population of the country». (Colonial Theses of the Sixth World Congress.)

§12. The struggle regarding the Negro question in the North must be linked up with the liberation struggle in the South, in order to endow the Negro movement throughout the US with the necessary effective strength. After all, in the North, as well as in the South, it is a question of the real emancipation of the American Negroes, which has in fact never taken place. The CPUS must bring into play its entire revolutionary energy, in order to mobilize the

widest possible masses of the white and black proletariat of the US, not by words, but by deeds, for real effective support of the struggle for the liberation of the Negroes. Enslavement of the Negroes is one of the most important foundations of the imperialist dictatorship of US capitalism. The more American imperialism fastens its yoke on the millions-strong Negro masses, the more must the CP develop the mass struggle for Negro emancipation, and the better use it must make of all conflicts which arise out of the national difference, as an incentive for revolutionary mass actions against the bourgeoisie. This IS as much in the direct interest of the proletarian revolution in America. Whether the rebellion of the Negroes is to be the outcome of a general revolutionary situation in the US, whether it is to originate in the whirlpool of decisive fights for power by the working class, for proletarian dictatorship, or whether on the contrary the Negro rebellion will be the prelude of gigantic struggles for power by the American proletariat, cannot be foretold now. But in either contingency it is essential for the CP to make an energetic beginning the resent moment — with the organization of joint mass struggles of white and black workers against Negro oppression. This alone will enable us to get rid of the bourgeois white chauvinism which is polluting the ranks of the white workers in America, to overcome the distrust of the Negro masses caused by the inhuman barbarous Negro slave traffic still carried on by the American bourgeoisie — in as much as it is directed even against all white workers — and to win over to our side these millions of Negroes as active fellow-fighters in the struggle for the overthrow of bourgeois power throughout America.

Political Secretariat, Communist International

Moscow, October, 1930