

PUL

Preliminary Views on Revolutionary Work
in the
Afro-American People's Liberation Movement

A Draft Statement Prepared By
The Nationalities Commission
Proletarian Unity League

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FROM THE NATIONALITIES COMMISSION

The following is a draft statement by the Nationalities Commission of the Proletarian Unity League concerning certain questions of importance in developing communist work in the AAPLM. This is not the same thing as "PUL's position on the national question." There are elements of an analysis of the broader issues surrounding the Afro-American national question, but we would not be presumptuous enough to identify this paper with the real analysis. At the same time, in order to deepen our work in the Afro-American national movement, it is important for us to lay out our views, regardless of how preliminary they may be.

The work of our organization in the AAPLM has been admittedly limited. This paper is not an examination of our work. Such a paper would be very narrow and of limited use and interest. Rather, we have attempted to touch on some of the current issues of discussion among revolutionaries over the development of the AAPLM.

The following is an attempt to lay out our views on certain questions particular to the Afro-American People's Liberation Movement (AAPLM). In so doing, we will consciously unite--where we agree--with the views of other comrades, as well as make clear where there are differences. It is perhaps appropriate that with the beginning of a new decade we take the opportunity to lay out some views which we believe will assist the practice of comrades from our group, other fraternal communists and genuine revolutionaries.

By 1971, a substantial section of the revolutionary wing of the AAPLM had been destroyed or thrown into confusion and disorganization. The Panthers split into two factions, neither fully grasping the overall necessities and concrete reality of doing revolutionary work in the United States. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers was also in a period of decline, some elements going on to form the Black Workers Congress, others drifting off in a variety of directions. In part because of the forces of US repression; in part because of the disunited character of the consciously revolutionary forces in the AAPLM (and their eclectic grasp of revolutionary theory), as well as the dominant strength of national reformism, the Afro-American movement went through a period of decline.

We emphasize these points as being part of the reason for the decline for the following reason. No mass movement, regardless of how strong, can continue in a constant state of "excitement." Many

revolutionaries and progressives have believed otherwise and the reality of the situation has caused them to become depressed and cynical. Mass movements must always go through some period of regroupment and reassessment.

There are important reasons for this. One reason which was particularly true in the AAPLM was a change in the objective situation. With the beginnings of the 1970's, the overall economic picture began to steadily decline. The importance of this decline and its effect on the mass of Black people necessitated new and different solutions. The leadership of the AAPLM, both the reformist and revolutionary wings, were generally unprepared for these developments. Thus, a decline in the movement was encouraged. Additionally, many of the legal objectives of the "Civil Rights Movement" had been gained in the form of specific reform legislation. With the notable exception of the Charleston, South Carolina Hospital Workers' strike (1969) and the Joan Little case, the reformist leadership of the AAPLM failed to adjust its tactics and program to the change in the objective situation.

When the leadership of a mass movement is revolutionary and united, such a retreat or regroupment can be somewhat orderly. Such periods are important as times for all sections of the mass movement to assess the positive and negative aspects of what has happened and thereby plot a path forward. In the case of the 1970's, however, the

ebb in our struggle was not led, but spontaneous. And in the absence of a credible left-wing to answer some of the serious questions posed by the masses, the background was prepared for cynicism and frustration.

As this decade begins, communists are attempting to unite in order to provide necessary leadership and assistance to the various mass movements. In order to develop/redevelop and strengthen our practice, we must understand what has been done before, what the basic situation is today, as well as some of the general theoretical precepts which will help to guide our work.

A word of warning: proclamations, self-criticisms or position papers, regardless of how interesting and profound, are only as valuable as they are useful for developing our revolutionary work. In this sense, they must be considered working documents, irrespective of how complete they may be. We must never come to feel that we have learned "all" the lessons of a past situation and will thus be ready for the next wave of struggle because struggle and practice constantly pose new, exciting and complicated problems to which our theory must respond. We are reminded of an interesting anecdote from Lukacs book on Lenin:

. . . when the German Communists drafted some highly intelligent, self-critical theses after the Kapp Putsch in 1920, as guidelines for the eventuality of the recurrence of such a putsch, Lenin is reported to have asked them: How do you know that German Reaction will repeat such

a coup at all?

(Lukac, Lenin, p. 97)

Our paper is only an initial step for us in trying to get a better hold on the work which needs to be done in the AAPLM. It is far from a last word, in part, because there will be no last word.

SECTION I

A GENERAL OVERVIEW

In the United States, the Negroes (and also the Mulattos and Indians) account for only 11.1 percent. They should be classed as an oppressed nation, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861 to 65 and guaranteed by the Constitution of the republic was in many respects increasingly curtailed in the chief Negro areas (the South) in connection with the transition from the progressive, pre-monopoly capitalism to the reactionary monopoly capitalism (imperialism) of the new era.

(Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 23, pp. 275-6.)

The post-war era witnessed a great upsurge of the movements of the oppressed nationalities in the United States. The Afro-American movement together with the Puerto Rican independence movement (on the island which was underway well before the 1950's) encouraged a militant rise in other quarters, including movements among the Puerto Rican national minority in the United States, the Chicano people's movement; the various Asian nationalities, as well as the Native American peoples' movements. These upsurges showed the various communist and socialist groupings to be irrelevant to the needs of the national movements. This is in no way to say that Marxism-Leninism was irrelevant. If anything, a better grasp of Marxism-Leninism by the leading revolutionaries of the times could have assisted in the development of this strategy and tactics for these

movements and their relationship to the overall socialist revolutionary struggle.

In both Puerto Rico as well as the United States, the old line (read: pro-Soviet Union, pro-revisionist) Communist Parties found themselves at the tail of the mass upsurge. In the case of Afro-America, for all the Communist Party's insistence on "taking a new look" at the Afro-American question, and supposedly "abandoning dogmatism," (see: Harry Haywood, For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question), it was completely unable to grasp the realities of the situation and elaborate a set of politics capable of both learning from and leading the Afro-American movement. Those communists opposing the tail-ism of the Communist Party were basically unable to make any serious breakthroughs on the national question, in part because of other political problems.¹

The fragmentation of the communist forces in addition to their incorrect, abstract, and generally ultra "left" notions of US reality, caused many of them to be swept aside during the 1960's. In their place arose new revolutionary organizations which, in many cases, had to begin from scratch in gaining an appropriate ideological understanding of the science of revolution.

Many of the new revolutionary forces, such as the Black Panther Party, Revolutionary Action Movement, the Young Lords Party, Brown Berets and Red Guards Party played a significant role in both placing

the national movements in an international context, as well as insisting on a revolutionary solution to national oppression in the United States. Yet a clear definition of a "revolutionary solution" was not available, and as a logical consequence, a variety of theories on national oppression began to emerge. These forces, nevertheless, recognized two important features of the national question, which many communists of the time failed to grasp: (1) that U.S. capitalism was built on the national oppression of Africans, Chicanos, etc.; and (2) that the national movements had an independent character to themselves. Further, they recognized that the national movements represented an anti-imperialist force within the United States. Some revolutionaries took this to mean a revolutionary party for each nationality, downplaying the relation between the oppressed nationalities and the multi-national workers movement. Regardless, these revolutionary forces expressed an essential aspect of the national question.

Background Data

As of 1977, 54% of Black people in the United States lived in the South. This is a drop from 60% in 1960, but a rise from 52% in 1975. (See: Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 1978, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, p. xiii). As of 1975, Blacks con-

stituted 18.8% of the total population of the South, compared with 20.6% in 1960. (Keep in mind the political problems with the census. Figures here should be looked at as relative indicators.) The largest percentage was located in the South Atlantic region. (*Ibid*, p. 33) The states with the highest percentages of Afro-Americans were South Carolina (30.8%), Georgia (26.1%), Alabama (25.4%), Mississippi (35.9%), and Louisiana (29.8%). Significantly, these are the main states which include the counties which together constitute the Black Belt region. Black people, it should also be noted, are an overwhelmingly urban people, though this stands in very stark contrast with population statistics from 40 to 50 years ago. (See: *The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the U.S., An Historical View 1790-1978.*)

In 1910, for example, 73% of Black people were found in the rural areas. This contrasted with 51% of whites found in rural areas. In 1940, 51% of Black people were found in rural areas, 35% of Blacks being on the farm. Whites, during the same year, were found in rural areas at a rate of 43% with 22% as farmers. Compare these figures with 1970: 19% of Black people are found in rural areas, with 2% on the farms, while 28% of whites are in rural areas, with 4% on the farms. Allowing for an overall decline in the agricultural sector, one must still realize that something is wrong. The rapid decline in the Black rural sector must signify something. In fact it

does, and we will discuss this later.

The decline in the agricultural sector, including the decrease in the number of Black farmers and rural workers has been matched by the increase in the Black working class. Today Black workers account for about 85% of the Afro-American population and at the same time a sizeable section of the industrial workforce. At the same time unemployment rates run at least double that of whites.

The Afro-American Question is Fundamentally Political

This description of the Afro-American people is not designed to be comprehensive nor a way to go through each and every characteristic. We would say that we must first and foremost examine the political question and place such issues as economics, demography, etc., within this context.

Lenin's writing on the national question clearly places the Afro-American issue within the context of a specific national question. Africans who were brought to the U.S. were largely concentrated in the South. The reasons were clearly economic. As has been stated so very often, Africans came to the U.S. from a variety of tribes, kingdoms, and empires. It was in the U.S. that tribal distinctions and background began to evaporate in favor of the development of one national character. This development began during the period of slavery. The

status, however, of Afro-Americans as an oppressed nation must be seen in the light of the relation of Afro-Americans to the larger US society. The fact that Afro-Americans, concentrated in the South with " . . . 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 . . ." (Stalin, Marxism and the National Question, p. 22) were additionally deprived of their basic democratic rights and robbed of the fruits of the Civil War together determined the status of Afro-Americans as an oppressed nation. In many respects, losing sight of the political question, i.e., the question of the deprivation of basic democratic rights after the end of the Civil War, has been at the root of many deviations on the Afro-American national question.

Communists have not been the only ones to recognize the Afro-American question as a genuine national question. While it is true that there have been many Afro-Americans who have viewed the oppression of the Black Americans as a racial question, there has been another current running within the movement. The fact of the matter is that after the Civil War, and later with the defeat of Reconstruction, there were movements and individuals raising demands from some sort of national self-determination, such as the demands for the South Carolina "Sea

Islands," or the McCabe Movement (calling for the establishment of a separate Black state in Oklahoma) (see: Imari Obadele, Foundations of the Black Nation). There was also the 1890 demand of the Nationalist Education Association for the South as a territory belonging to Blacks (see: Earl Ofari, "Black Activists and 19th Century Radicalism," Black Scholar, 2/74, p. 25). The 20th Century witnessed more well-known examples of a continued placing of the Afro-American question within the context of a genuine national question. The African Blood Brotherhood, many of whose members would later enter the CPUSA and contribute to the development of its overall line and work, held to the demand for national self-determination in the South. The Nation of Islam continuously popularized the demand for national statehood, though in an admittedly non-revolutionary way, till the death of Elijah Muhammad. Some bourgeois as well as leftist sources have identified the demand for land and national self-determination only with the Communist Party, USA (with the 1928, 1930 Comintern Resolutions) or in a more contemporary setting, with nationalists (e.g., the Republic of New Africa).

Just as Marx and Engels did not discover the class struggle, so Marxism and Marxists did not first discover or elaborate a theory of the Afro-American question as a national question. Rather Marxism-Leninism further elaborated a theory of the national question and the Afro-American national movement as an objectively anti-imperialist,

revolutionary movement. Further, as opposed to the views of some nationalists on the one hand, and the views of those influenced by economic determinism and syndicalist thought on the other, Marxism-Leninism offered an insight into the role not only of the Afro-American national movement as a whole, but also the role which Black workers play and can potentially play in both movements. In other words, Marxism-Leninism offers an understanding not only of a national revolutionary movement and its independent relationships to the US imperialist state, but also the relationship which the Afro-American national movement and Black workers have vis a vis the entire multinational working class.

Some theorists have stated that the oppressed Afro-American nation has disappeared. We disagree and we must ask whether the political questions which led to the subordination of the Afro-American people to white-supremacist national oppression have been resolved.

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. (Stalin, "Report on the National Question," in Marxism and the National Question, p. 100)

National oppression was (is) certainly an all-round system. As Reconstruction came to an end, the new disenfranchisement of Black people and the elimination of Black politicians began. Concerted propaganda efforts were commenced by white supremacists to discredit

Black officials. The early Civil Rights Acts were overturned and restrictions were placed on the right to vote. In the economic field, we must look at both the question of Black labor and Black capital. Black labor (both rural and urban) was kept in a relatively depressed condition. Blacks were not found in great numbers in industry until the period of World War I. Significantly though, Blacks held key positions in the Southern railroads and in many of the crafts. While the Knights of Labor organized Black labor--if not always on a very progressive basis--craft unionism, represented by the Railroad Brotherhoods and the American Federation of Labor, brought dubious and contradictory results. On the positive side, there were several stirring examples of Black-White labor unity and the active work of Black workers such as the 1892 New Orleans General Strike. At the same time, the organization of labor on a craft basis and the ignoring of rural labor (farmers and rural proletarians) led to the objective exclusion of Black labor.² It should also be noted that in many of the skilled crafts, Black workers were consciously excluded via agreements between white businesses and white trade union leaders. Certain clauses were permitted in the constitutions of various unions legitimizing a secondary status and role for Black workers, and their separation, often into different locals. In opposition to this trend arose the Industrial Workers of the World which carried out heroic and militant work to build labor unity across racial and national boundaries.³

The condition of Black capital was also very obviously affected by national oppression. At the point at which Black business was developing, the US economy was undergoing the transformation from laissez-faire capitalism to monopoly capitalism. Small business was being subordinated, while the commanding heights of the US economy came to be dominated by white monopolists. The development of Black business, (after the defeat of Reconstruction), therefore, was directly and definitively hindered by these objective conditions. In addition, Black business was restricted from development in certain sectors and forced to work only within the Afro-American market and dealing with specific goods. Black business thus developed in some banking, cosmetics and insurance. As for heavy industry, Black business was nowhere to be found. This situation placed Black business in a peculiar situation. Some in business openly accommodated themselves to segregation as a means to insure their control of the Afro-American market. Others wanted to be able to penetrate the white market. And still others fronted for white business. This has led to rather unusual alliances and politics over the last 100 years. "Buy Black" has been one cry of the more nationalist sectors of the Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.⁴ Under the banner of "Buy Black" floated different sectors of Black business--some who were challenging national oppression, and others who were accommodating the situation and defending what they had developed under a segregated market.

The concentration of Black people in the South remained basically intact until the Migrations, beginning with W.W.I. Since then, there has been--at least until recently--a steady outmigration from this area. The outmigration has been a direct result of both political and economic considerations.⁵ This migration raises some important theoretical problems. In particular, to what extent does migration (under imperialism) serve as a basis to declare the dissolution of a nation--specifically, an oppressed nation. In an interesting article on the national question, for example, J. Stalin in his "Report on the National Question," states that to draw individuals of an oppressed nationality together, when they have no common territory would be to artificially create a nation. Stalin later contradicted this argument when--after the seizure of power by the proletariat under the leadership of the Bolsheviks--a Jewish autonomous republic (Birobidzhan) was established to be home to Jews from across the USSR. Also, his statement does not answer the problem of what to do after members of an oppressed nation have dispersed, though leaving a fairly sizeable population (57% in the case of Afro-Americans) within the original territory.

We would answer that the oppressed nation continues to exist. The tendency toward dissolution and formation of nations exists under capitalism. But especially under imperialism, dissolution and migration take on a special significance since they point to national

Always?

oppression. The migrations of Haitians to the US looked at by itself might be seen as the "peaceful" amalgamation of nations. But viewed within the context of imperialism, and in particular, US imperialist domination of Haiti and most the Carribbean, one can see that this migration is a direct result of the plunder of that land. The forced deformation of Haiti--its economy, social system and politics--is directly tied to the role of the US. Thus, Haitians are often forced to migrate to the US in search of work and a better existence. No one would consider this to be a reason for a "disappearance" of the Haitian nation. (Note: this is not to say that those Haitians who migrate and form stable communities within other nations are part of a divided Haitian nation. Rather they come to constitute national minorities within those states.) In the case of the Afro-American question, however, some people view similar tendencies quite differently.

Changes have occurred. Afro-Americans, as we noted, are no longer a mainly rural people. Blacks have found themselves forced off the land or losing the land as a result of

(1) Tax sales--the taking of tax delinquent property by the state and auctioning it off to the highest bidder.

(2) Partition Sales--the number of heirs and the size of property are such that it is physically impossible or impractical to actually divide. Therefore, property is sold to the highest bidder and proceeds are divided among heirs in the proportion of their interest

in the land.

(3) Mortgage Foreclosure--the loss of mortgaged property due to delinquent debt.

(4) Failure to Write Wills--one's defense of right to property is weakened considerably if no will is written specifying heirs of property.

(5) Landownership Limitations Placed on Welfare Recipients--generally, in order to receive welfare assistance, one must not have sufficient income and resources from all sources to provide reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and health and assessed value of property must not exceed a certain amount.

(6) Lack of Financial Resources and/or Technical Skills to Transform Land into Viable Investment--often times land ownership is a financial liability rather than an asset to indigent landowners, due to the hardships created by the payment of mortgage and property taxes without any compensating benefit. Therefore, land might be abandoned and left idle or sold for a nominal fee.

(7) Eminent Domain--the right of government to take private property for public use.

(8) Voluntary Sale--often black landowners do not receive fair compensation for the sale of their property due to their lack of sophistication in real estate transactions and selfish behavior patterns of land officials.

It is worth noting that Blacks have often been overtly denied the opportunity to purchase land more conducive for farming. Much of the black owned rural land has been the less desirable tracts, the rocky, the swampy, and the less fertile. Consequently, an inordinate number were unable to make a living from their

land. (Leo McGee and Robert Boone, "Black Rural Land Decline in the South," The Black Scholar, May, 1977, pp. 8-9)

In 1980, one of the major networks broadcast a story which truly symbolized the plight of many Black landowners. A particular Black family in Florida--due to the mental incompetence of the husband-- failed to pay the property tax for two years. A white person or company paid the taxes for them and at the end of the two years obtained the land and evicted the original owners. Such practices are far from unusual, resulting in the loss of thousands of acres of land per year. Attempts are presently underway, ranging from the work of the Republic of New Africa in Mississippi to more reformist-guided work in other areas of the South, to reclaim land and defend existing ownership. The loss of land, however, will continue to be a tendency as long as Afro-Americans face imperialist/white supremacist national oppression.

Three Slogans to Deal With One Reality

For communists and other progressives, the evil reality of national oppression must be combatted by practicing a defense of the right of national self-determination and political power, a vigilant fight for complete equality, and a determined struggle against any and all national/white-skin privileges. Each of these three points is one aspect of the work which must be carried on against national

oppression. Each complements the other rather than runs in contradiction.

As others have pointed out, it would be dogmatic to see the southern Black population as having the only voice on the question of self-determination solely as a result of the process of dispersion.⁶ The issue of self-determination cannot be restricted to Afro-Americans in the South but has to assume some importance in our nation-wide work. This is not to say that Harlem or Watts will secede, but it should mean that the future of the Afro-American nation must be decided by the entire Afro-American people. Thus, while the particularities of the struggle in the South will differ from those facing the Afro-American national minority in the North and West, the issue of self-determination is not an alien issue.

An example of this is the current Black United Front movements and the cry of "human rights." Revolutionaries should understand the slogan of "Human rights" as first and foremost a "code-word" for self-determination. As a matter of fact, we should and must agitate for an understanding of this slogan "human rights" as placing the Afro-American struggle within the wider context of the international fight against imperialism and for national liberation. Other uses of this term will abstract it from any type of class content. The point which the Afro-American people have in common with the vast majority of the world's peoples--humanity--is its common struggle:

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In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected.

(A. Cabral, "The Weapon of Theory," Revolution in Guinea, p. 102)

--against imperialism and dominationism, i.e., the anti-imperialist content of the Afro-American people's struggle. This should be, from our agitational point of view, the essence of the demand for "Human Rights."

In addition to the overall demand for national self-determination, it is also incumbent upon us to raise the demand for Black political power. This demand means several things and has in the past been used in different ways. The exercising of the right of national self-determination is obviously a step towards the achievement of political power, but this must not be seen as the only way in which we can raise this slogan. In areas of large concentration of Afro-Americans, in addition to the raising of the slogan for national equality, we must raise the demand for greater Afro-American control over the various institutions in the community in addition to greater political power in the system as a whole. Consider the following.

There have been numerous attempts at alternative Black community institutions. These can take the form of economic cooperative projects, community schools, etc. The viewpoint which guides the creation of such institutions can vary greatly, but the basic right

to have these institutions is something which all progressive and revolutionary forces must defend. Although the establishment of alternative institutions will never in and of themselves end national oppression and resolve the national question, these institutions do in fact represent one front of struggle in the battle against national oppression, as well as an arena for the further development of Afro-American national consciousness.

At the same time, most oppressed nationalities, and Afro-Americans in particular do not make use of alternative institutions. In the case of education, for example, Black children are found in the public schools in far greater numbers than in alternative schools. While we defend the right to make use of and establish community schools, especially in a situation where they are under attack, we must also raise the demand for Black political power exercised through greater Afro-American (and oppressed nationality) control of the school system, and the schools in those communities most definitely. This must mean community input into issues of curriculum, hiring, fund allocations, etc., and must not be limited to only those schools in the oppressed nationality communities. Another example of the demand for political power is in our opposition to gerrymandering of district, county, etc., borders as a way to deprive the Afro-American people of voting or population majorities. We must fight for a system of district apportionment that "guarantees" greater Afro-American repre-

the
vote

sentation and power in the existing system. In the South, the link between the demand for land and for Black political power takes on a greater role and degree of importance than in the North. This will be discussed somewhat later in the paper.

The demand for equality is directly related to the demand for self-determination and against national privileges. The greatest national privilege and the greatest example of the deprivation of equality is the restriction on the right of self-determination. The demand for equality and against national privileges, however, is not limited to the particular issue of national self-determination. Rather it is a challenge to the entire framework of U.S. society.

The denial of equality, as we have noted elsewhere, means the establishment and legitimation of national privilege. We will not pursue this issue further but will refer the reader to the publication, A House Divided: Labor and White Supremacy.

The struggle against national oppression of the Afro-American people involves the work encapsulated in the slogans mentioned above. No one fight is sufficient. Our work as revolutionaries and opponents of national oppression will be one-sided and stilted if we only follow the guide of one aspect of the fight. At the same time, we must not see the issues represented by these three areas running in opposition to one another.

SECTION II THE INDEPENDENT REVOLUTIONARY CHARACTER OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

When we use the term "Afro-American People's Liberation Movement" (AAPLM) we are not referring to a specific organization; nor are we referring to an organized force or motion with a clear direction and definite leadership. Rather we are referring to:

. . . the sum total of the efforts of all organizations, groups, and agencies which strive in any manner and to any degree to realize the ideal of Negro equality. Included in this concept is the struggle against all tendencies which conflict with the basic conditions for the achievement of this aim.

(Harry Haywood, Negro Liberation, International Publishers, pp. 168-9).

Our use of the term Afro-American or African-American People's Liberation Movement is an attempt to speak more precisely to this specific national question. Needless to say, there are many non-African-American Black peoples in the U.S., including people from the West Indies and the Cape Verde Islands. An examination of the relation between the West Indian people and the Afro-American is far beyond the scope of this paper, though it is important to note the following. The Afro-American nation developed well before the influx of West Indian immigrants into the U.S. As such, the Afro-American national movement against imperialist/white supremacist national oppression was well underway. At the same time, West Indian immigrants (often coming to the U.S. for economic reasons due to the depressed conditions in their homelands) have played and

continue to play a very prominent role in the Afro-American national movement. Marcus Garvey is only one example, though many of the early founders of the African Blood Brotherhood and subsequently the CPUSA were people of West Indian origin.

Over the last 70 years, with the immigration of large numbers of West Indians there have been changes in the Afro-American national movement. Generally, though, while many West Indians continue to retain their culture independent of Afro-American culture (and this is a right which must be defended) they have not constituted a national movement really independent of the Afro-American people's liberation movement. The West Indian people have introduced important cultural contributions and political direction, but this is generally within the context of the broader Afro-American national movement. Thus, while we would not oppose--by any stretch of the imagination--use of the term "Black Liberation Movement," we believe that Afro-American African-American people's liberation movement speaks more directly to our specific situation and struggle.

Over the past number of years, in part because of the work of several revolutionary groups, it has become more than rhetoric to refer to the AAPLM as having an independent revolutionary character. How are we to understand this term? For one, it means that the AAPLM is a multi-class movement. In other words, the various classes which make up the Afro-American people all have an interest in opposing

imperialist/white supremacist national oppression (this excludes, of course, those individuals who function as direct agents of imperialism). These interests exist in opposition to national oppression, but to different extents and not always consistently. Reformist leaders, such as Rev. Jesse Jackson have represented the interests of the Afro-American bourgeoisie. They have given specific guidance to the national movement, i.e., encouraging it along a special--non-revolutionary--path. Irrespective of their intentions, reformist leadership of the AAPLM directs the movement toward an alignment with the more liberal sections of the ruling class. While the criticism of national oppression and the U.S. system for that matter by the more left-wing reformists are often very accurate, the reformists stop short of pointing to the need for fundamental change. Both mass pressure and changes in the objective conditions can result in a policy reorientation for reformists. In other words, the more prominent national level reformists can be compelled to stand against national oppression, but this stand will generally be weak-kneed and subject to many turns. These reformists do not want to see the movement proceed too far or too fast: "too far or too fast" generally meaning any real challenge to bourgeois legality and the basis of the U.S. system. All progressives should be concerned about the development of the AAPLM but seek to challenge the socio-economic system of the United States. One particular problem faced by the Afro-American bourgeoisie has been the question of its stand toward separation and independence. As a class

it has been seriously divided on this issue. Garvey, who in a number of ways represented the "national" wing of the Afro-American bourgeoisie, stood clearly for separation. The forces of the Nation of Islam, (here, we are referring to the Nation of Islam under the Hon. Elijah Muhammad), also a group which stood in opposition to imperialism and in favor of Black national capitalism, took a stand in favor of separation. Yet neither of these forces could rally more moderate sections and while gaining sizeable support (in their own right) among the masses, did not hold consistently to an anti-imperialist stand.

Understanding the notion of the AAPLM as having an independent revolutionary character means certain additional points.

Leninism . . . recognizes the existence of revolutionary capacities in the national liberation movement of the oppressed countries, and the possibility of using these for overthrowing the common enemy, for overthrowing imperialism . . .

Hence the necessity for the proletariat of the "dominant" nations to support--resolutely and actively to support--the national liberation movement of the oppressed and independent peoples.

. . . the revolutionary character of a national movement under the conditions of imperialist oppression does not necessarily presuppose the existence of proletarian elements in the movements, the existence of a revolutionary or a republican programme of the movement, the existence of a democratic basis of the movement. (J. Stalin, "Foundations of Leninism," in Marxism and the National Question, pp. 285-7)

Concretely this means that the national movements as a whole--and the AAPLM in particular--have a vast revolutionary potential. This potential exists independently of the workers' movement, yet the two movements are directly bound together in the struggle against imperialism. Of particular importance is the fact that the national movements should be viewed as vital allies in the anti-imperialist struggle. In light of certain "left-wing" chauvinist errors in the US movement, it must be reaffirmed that this revolutionary character exists irrespective of the particular class leadership of the national movements. While reformists will undoubtedly set the movement backwards, this is somewhat of a different question from the objective character and role of the national movements.

unless made use of totally. "Zionism"

The Historical Significance of the National Movements in the U.S.

In US history, the development of capitalism was integrally bound with the suppression of the African, the Native American, and the Mexican/Chicanos. The suppression--"racial oppression" so to speak--of the African set the stage not only for the development of the US economy (based on slavery) but also the division of the laboring classes through the development of political, economic, and social privileges for white labor. Thus, opposition to this oppression, a system of oppression which grew into and merged with national oppression with the rise of imperialism, took on a special significance.

Not only did opposition to racial/national oppression represent a threat to the economy, but in some ways more importantly it threatened the basic fabric which holds the US ruling class in power (see: A House Divided: Labor and White Supremacy). As a consequence, and this held true since the development of racial slavery and the beginning of the extermination of huge numbers of Native Americans, each struggle against national oppression, regardless of how "small" or "innocuous" it may appear, has brought forth the wrath of the ruling class. Independent of any particular working class struggle at a given moment, the various struggles against racial slavery, annexations, exterminations and other varieties of national oppression, whether they be struggles around the retrieving of land, the right to vote, the right to bear arms, or being able to sit at a lunch counter, have all sent shudders through the US capitalist system.

The potential power of a united movement of labor as well as the untapped strength of the then "sleeping" African giant became evident in Bacon's Rebellion in 1676. The period in and around this great rebellion witnesses the development of a series of laws and institutions to enslave the African for life and to reduce white labor to the role of property's overseer. A swift military response was necessary in order to stop the spread of this rebellion, not just militarily, but also politically. In another example, the African-Seminole Wars (generally referred to as the Seminole Wars) were, in fact, anti-slavery wars of the African slaves and their Seminole allies

against white oppression. Not only did these wars meet with a serious military response (though not a decisive victory for the whites), but white "scholars" or pro-capitalist/racist propagandists were compelled to re-write and consciously distort the truth concerning these events for fear that the truth would further inspire other African-Americans and their allies to even greater and more varied forms of revolt. (For a detailed and very stunning account of this period, see Lerone Bennett, Jr. The Shaping of Black America.)

We need not retell the history of the Afro-American people's struggle in order to make the point that it is a history of courageous opposition to national oppression; as well as to note the profound implications which motions of the Afro-American people have had on the larger US society. Both of these points have been true regardless of which class has led the struggle. Even those leaders who wish(ed) to arrive at some accommodation with imperialism are often forced by the masses to take this or that stand for equality and against national oppression. Where the working class has played a more significant role in a specific struggle against national oppression, the struggle has been deepened. The role of the National Negro Congress (1936-1940) and the Communist Party, USA of that period in mobilizing the Black worker showed the creativity and importance of this class, not simply as foot-soldiers for the petty bourgeoisie or national bourgeoisie, but as leaders in their own right. The mobilization of this sector under revolutionary leadership (while scaring some reformists) pointed

to an interesting issue. There is no insurmountable wall between the tasks which affect Black workers as part of the AAPLM and the tasks which they face as members of the multi-national working class. Let us draw this point out further.

When Mao noted in 1963 that "In the final analysis, national struggle is a matter of class struggle . . . ,"⁷ he was speaking both generally as well as very specifically to the situation facing the Black worker. Every national struggle is in the last instance a class struggle in that (1) each national struggle has, as its opponent, imperialism. Therefore, there is in the last instance a class struggle, i.e., a struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie for self-determination and full equality; and (2) every national struggle is a class struggle in that in each national struggle there is the fundamental question of which class shall lead the national movement (e.g., AAPLM). In the US, there is the additional question of the role which workers of the oppressed nationalities must have in the multi-national workers' movement. Black workers, for instance, are not only faced with the question of the struggle to build the AAPLM and develop working class hegemony, but they also share the role of helping to defeat white chauvinism and national oppression as manifested in the working class movement. This is a specific feature of the class and national struggles in a multi-national state such as the U.S. It is important to emphasize this point because it often gets lost in the shuffle. Black workers along with the rest of the Afro-American people, are not found in only

one section of the U.S. They are often found in the midst of some very multi-national settings, where workers of various nationalities are located. In these settings, and in the workers' movement as a whole, Black workers have responsibilities which go beyond the particular Afro-American struggle against national oppression, but involves taking up and helping to lead the struggle (including against national oppression) which workers of all nationalities face. This point is true for reform struggles, be they struggles around particular contracts, struggles for democratic unions and unionism, as well as fighting for multi-national leadership of the various revolutionary forces and organizations. This should not be understood to mean that the Afro-American people's struggle against national oppression is only a struggle which should concern the Afro-American. Indeed, particularly given the historic significance of the Afro-American people's movement, it is a struggle which must be taken to the workers' movement and taken up by the workers' movement. Our only point is that in addition to this struggle, there are other issues which also affect the workers' movement as a whole to which Black workers must speak, and about which Black workers have something to say.

Recognition of the independent revolutionary character of the national movements in general, and of the AAPLM in particular, does not relieve communists of the task of giving leadership, or more correctly, of struggling for the revolutionary leadership of the working class. It is not enough to have workers participating (which

they will do in any case); nor is it enough to have workers in leadership roles (though this is important). Developing the role of the working class in the national movements necessitates the development of an independent communist position on the strategy, tactics and program for the national movements. As we noted above, every national struggle is in the last instance a class struggle in part because there is the fundamental question of which class shall lead the movement. Spontaneously, it is the representatives of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie which are "properly" trained and "groomed" for leadership. The development of proletarian leadership must not be left to the realm of spontaneity but must be developed consciously. At the end of this article we shall develop this point further.

Downplaying the Independent Revolutionary Character of the National Movements

What has happened when revolutionaries or progressives have not recognized the independent revolutionary character of the AAPLM? Two interesting errors can occur, for different reasons yet yielding similar results. One historic error is characterized by not recognizing the multi-class character of the AAPLM, but rather focusing on the working class rather exclusively. While this error can come from right opportunism or "left" opportunism, it is generally reflects a more "left," semi-syndicalist notion of the tasks of the revolution. Daniel DeLeon, the U.S. revolutionary and champion of dual unionism⁸

saw noneed to focus special attention on work in the South among the oppressed Afro-American masses:

In 1895, Charles G. Baylor, a black member of the Socialist Labor Party, expressed his desire, in a personal letter to DeLeon, to go South and organize blacks into the Party . . . As anticipated, DeLeon did not even bother to reply to this request.

At none of the Socialist Labor Party's eight conventions before 1900 is there any record of even a motion being raised on the question of black rights. Blacks were so ignored by the organization that even DeLeon's biographers in treating his life did not mention them. (Earl Ofari, "Black Activists and 19th Century Radicalism," The Black Scholar, February 1974, 23.)

Rather than taking the correct Marxist point of view that states that the working class and its party must oppose all forms and acts of tyranny (such as national oppression), DeLeon and the Socialist Labor Party looked only to the working class, believing, as the Socialist Party did later, that Marxism offered nothing "special" to the Afro-American.⁹

There have been more recent examples of the entrance of (objectively) syndicalist theories into the national movements and the left under the cover of Marxism-Leninism.¹⁰ The 1973-76 experience of the African Liberation Support Committee, so important for the development for a new generation of dedicated Afro-American communists, was plagued with this problem. As we noted elsewhere (in our paper on the slogan "Black Workers Take the Lead"), in opposition to a

*early
Communists
too.*

ALSC

reactionary nationalist viewpoint which downplayed the class struggle, or for that matter the existence of classes among the Afro-American people, the Left-wing responded with a practice and policy which helped to drive out many moderate, reformist elements: this all done under the line of promoting Black working class leadership, and upholding class struggle. In reviewing the polemics from that period, it becomes clear that the Left-wing responded to one-sided reactionary nationalist arguments with one-sided and "left" economist formulations which counter-posed the class and national questions. This all or nothing approach helped to blur the dialectical relationship which both questions have with one another, particularly in view of US history.

More recently, with the development of the Black United Front movements and the National Black United Front, two different forces began attacking the necessity for an independent AAPLM and a Front to unite it. Some groups which oppose the thesis of the differentiation of three worlds (first elaborated by the Communist Party of China), instead following or giving critical support to the ultra "left" line of the Party of Labor of Albania, attack the notion of a National Front either outright or by ignoring the potential of winning over the petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie among the oppressed nationalities. Through harangues about Black workers taking leadership of the national movement, these forces ignore the work and compromise which is essential to win over the non-proletarian stratas.

Some of these forces, or consolidated "left" revisionists (e.g., the Communist Workers Party), insist that Black United Fronts immediately take on a consciously revolutionary character, thereby excluding those reformist forces interested in opposing national oppression.¹¹

At the same time there are those forces linked with the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee and the Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center, who for all intents and purposes repudiate the Afro-American question as a legitimate national question. While correctly recognizing the dispersion of a large section of the Afro-American people from the Black Belt and the growth of the Black proletariat, these forces then conclude that the Afro-American question is essentially a proletarian question and as such, the main focus of struggle is the "anti-racist struggle" in the working class. This view has led to a series of zig-zags in policy and practice. Most recently the PWOC, as one of the main leaders of these forces, has downplayed the necessity for Black unity and a National Black United Front and attacked the correctness of an independent Black political party, instead insisting that progressive formations must always be multi-national in character. It has become clear that the PWOC does not see the necessity for addressing the non-working class sections of the Afro-American people nor does the PWOC recognize the existence of a legitimate national movement. The PWOC/OCIC forces end up dove-tailing with the "left" revisionist in that both sets of forces downplay the multi-class character of the AAPLM. These forces attack the demands

of non-proletarian classes in the AAPLM as necessarily being antagonistic to the demands of the Black proletariat. In practice these forces either openly attack or take an arrogant and self-righteous stand in opposition to the petty bourgeois forces which are presently playing a central role in leading the National Black United Front and National Black Independent Political Party. Instead of a point of view which involves unity and struggle with the non-proletarian classes in the AAPLM, these "defenders of the interests of workers" either take an all-struggle point of view or abstain from struggle. Either practice is anti-Marxist and self-serving. What makes the forces aligned with the PWOC/OCIC dangerous is that their opposition to the growth and demands of the AAPLM is cloaked in "anti-racism" and "anti-dogmatism." The anti-Marxist thrust of the PWOC/OCIC line of the national question makes their current campaign "against white chauvinism" so particularly curious. Their attempt to eradicate white chauvinism from within their organizations is being carried out while their overall line encourages this deviation. Speaking of a frighteningly parallel situation in the CPUSA (1949-52) during its move toward revisionism, Harry Maywood noted:

Rather than coming out wholeheartedly in support of our revolutionary position, a kind of moral crusade was launched which was completely divorced from any mass work. Refusing to examine the full implications of Black oppression as national oppression, it was assumed that chauvinist practices could be eliminated by wiping out wrong ideas and attitudes of the Party rank and file. White chauvinism came to

be considered as a sort of phenomenon, a thing in itself, separate from the fight for Black rights and proletarian revolution.
(Harry Maywood, Black Bolshevik, p. 587)

Another means to liquidate the independent revolutionary character of the AAPLM is to ignore, downplay or fail to recognize that this movement, regardless of its conscious leadership, represents an objectively revolutionary, anti-imperialist force. Interestingly enough, this error can also take two forms. Some ultra "leftists" such as the RU/RCP saw the AAPLM as being independent, in a sense, but not having particularly revolutionary tasks.¹² The revolutionary capacity of the AAPLM was only seen to the extent to which this movement had a relation with the workers' movement. For the RU/RCP, and to a great extent also the Workers' Viewpoint/Communist Workers Party, the national movements' tasks were viewed as being bourgeois democratic and reformist, while the workers' movement was really revolutionary. The WVO developed an entire "theory" or description of this phenomenon when they stated that the national movements, and the uprisings of the 1950's, were essentially like "fire in the tree tops," while the proletarian movement was the "fire in the tree trunks," i.e. that while the national movements were "important," the proletarian movement was "more" important.

It is true that the national movements--in particular the AAPLM--fight for the completion of certain bourgeois democratic tasks never resolved in the U.S. It is also true that the proletarian revolution-

ary movement represents the most consistently revolutionary force and position. Yet for Marxist-Leninists this should not mean that the AAPLM assumes any less importance in our work or in the anti-imperialist struggle. The fight for full democratic rights, for oppressed nationalities, one of which includes the demand for the right of national self-determination is not a narrow, reformist/nationalist position of interest only to the Afro-American people. Rather it represents a demand or motion relevant and essential to all revolutionary forces in the US. It additionally represents the central political struggle for revolutionary forces in the US. To downplay the revolutionary character of the AAPLM is to essentially throw history to the wind and ignore the role which this movement has played in all aspects of US society, all social movements in the US, as well as the role which national oppression/national privilege has in propping up bourgeois rule.

Lenin was right in saying that the national movement of the oppressed countries should be appraised not from the point of view of formal democracy, but from the point of view of the actual results, as shown by the general balance sheet of the struggle against imperialism, that is to say, "not in isolation, but on a world scale."

(J. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question, p. 288.)

^{WR} The revolutionary character of the AAPLM can also be ignored in another direction, i.e., from the Right. The CPUSA recognized the independent role of the AAPLM but they see it as essentially a reform

movement. Additionally, the independent nature of the AAPLM is seen as a "problem" for which Black activists must find a means to overcome. The CP saw integration as a solution to the national question. It saw the Civil Rights Movement as positive essentially because it was "mixed." In part tied to their shift to the Right in the late 1950's, the CPUSA began to see the AAPLM as being defined by its leadership, usually this meaning the more consciously reformist elements (such as the NAACP). For them (the CP) there was no need to build revolutionary leadership and direction for the AAPLM, nor for "open communist" presence. Those forces which pushed a revolutionary viewpoint, particularly focusing on the independent tasks and anti-imperialist development of the AAPLM (e.g., Malcolm X) were defined as being "divisive." The CP did not show the correct relation between the AAPLM and the workers' movement (i.e., the specific tasks of the AAPLM and its necessity to ally with the workers' movement). In other words, their talks of an alliance between "labor" and the "Negro People" showed neither that labor included workers of many different nationalities nor that the so-called "Negro People" was a viable social movement with its own definite and revolutionary tasks. ¹³

This seems to be the "LH" error on p. 37

SECTION III

POLITICAL TRENDS AMONG THE AFRO-AMERICAN PEOPLE

*what about class
analysis?*

A full examination of this topic would necessitate a book. We are not prepared nor in a position to undertake such an examination. We will briefly comment on three general tendencies--Right, Center, and Left--found in all mass movements. We are not looking at each category as being monolithic blocs. Rather we are looking at general characteristics which often tie these forces together. We define groups within each category according to their attitude toward the masses, and imperialism/white supremacist national oppression.

The Right

This section of the people includes some forces which act as direct arms of the imperialists within the Afro-American people. It also is generally composed of the "legalist" sector, i.e., those forces which push a view and practice which denies the need for mass struggle and resistance, but rather relies on legal pressure. In addition, this sector lacks a genuine sense of Black people as having a national identity.

Included within the Right are the Urban League, which while at times expresses differences with the imperialists, openly defends the US ruling class on major positions on domestic and foreign policy. It

has attached itself generally to the Democratic Party.

The National Business League, descendant of Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League, speaks for the right-wing and moderate sections of the Afro-American bourgeoisie. The NBL has been a long time exponent of the value of Black business and the view that business ventures and Black capitalism are the solutions to national oppression.

The NAACP which has gone through many twists and turns must be evaluated concretely on both a national and local levels. The national leadership is basically conservative and, much like the Urban League, sees itself as part of the New Deal (Liberal) coalition forces. While the NAACP can and does come out in favor of many progressive causes, it openly pushes a legalist orientation and a reliance on the state as the "giver of justice." While some of its most right-wing policies have been played down, it retains a basic distrust of the masses, and faith in US capitalism. Locally, though, there can--at times--be varying degrees of difference with the national leadership and its orientation. Some chapters and youth councils have shown themselves willing to engage in struggle and mass work. This can and should mean that revolutionaries, if conditions permit, work in or with such chapters.

In sum, the right-wing can be counted upon to agitate for legalism and a basic defense of the institutions of US imperialism. The right-wing can and will set themselves up as a leadership pole to be recognized

by whites as the "legitimate" representatives of the Afro-Americans. Especially during the 1960's, this sector proved to be very dangerous and counter-productive. They can, at times, be united with around certain specific issues of national oppression.

The Center

The Center is not a very well defined grouping. In fact, in any political movement, the Center is generally hard to define. For the purposes of this paper, though, we shall speak of the Center as the essentially pro-capitalist forces who utilize mass actions and legalism, with legalism generally being in the dominant position. This sector is generally characterized by a reliance on non-violence as a principle of mass work. Organizations from the Center tend to speak for the interests of the "national" wing of the Afro-American bourgeoisie, and as such are not particularly consistent, principled or reliable. The Center forces feel compelled by mass pressure to speak for the demands of the Black masses, but are sure to combine these with the demands of the Afro-American bourgeoisie holding first place. In practice this may mean that they take up a demand for jobs, but push the ideological position that the development of Black business will be the solution to the basic economic problem of the Afro-American.¹⁴

Organizations such as SCLC and PUSH fit into this category. This

also includes many of those holding prominent leadership positions in social service and community agencies. And one group often ignored are the major Black trade union officials, particularly these grouped around organizations such as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. While the membership of the CBTU varies, the general orientation of the leadership vis a vis both the labor movement and national movement can be described as being basically Center to Center-left. Many honest and not-so-honest revolutionaries are often ready to write-off many Center forces. Why? Because, as Center forces, these organizations and leaders will move back and forth between the Left and the Right. This by no means lets a number of Center forces off the hook. Some of the leaders within the Center are opportunists. But these leaders or leadership groups exert influence over sectors of the AAPLM and they cannot be discounted. At the same time, we must distinguish leaders from mass members and also examine political tendencies within these groups.

The Center will certainly make appeals to nationalism or militancy. And as can be seen by some of the recent work of the SCLC, the Center will lead militant struggle. The Center, though, cannot be relied upon anymore than the Right. If confronted with sharp and concerted pressure from the Right of the AAPLM, the Center has and will buckle.

The Center is a very broad grouping. Within the Center itself there are some very wide differences. There are differences over issues of US foreign policy, and especially differences over the question

of independent political action and movement for the AAPLM. The defections from the National Black Political Assembly in its early years cannot just be attributed to opportunism or careerism, but must be seen within the context of serious differences over the direction of the AAPLM. As in the trade union movement, the development of a (Black) left-wing or united action of the components of the left-wing can have a dramatic effect on forcing the Center to move in a generally correct direction. At the same time, isolationist moves by the Left, as can be seen in some recent motions (such as within some of the BUI's) will push the Center towards the Right.

The Left

As with the other two categories, the Left is a very broad assortment of basically revolutionary and consciously anti-imperialist forces. Within the Left are left-wing nationalist, Pan-Africanists, socialists and Marxist-Leninists. Within each of these categories can be found many subsections and a variety of differences. Included within the Left are groups such as the Afrikan People's Party, African People's Socialist Party, as well as most components of the National Black United Front. In addition are such groups as the United League. The current leadership of the NBUF groups, as well as the NBIPP, appears to be dominated by the nationalist petty bourgeoisie. These forces are actively anti-imperialist, hold certain pro-socialist

views and emphasize the role and need for the masses in social change. At the same time, the petty bourgeois section of the left-wing will vacillate in terms of how far to push the struggle, in what direction, and in what manner. One example is the "cult of leadership." The petty bourgeoisie encourages the view that a small group of committed intellectuals can and should guide the mass movement. This sometimes results in problems of democratic procedure and methods of leadership (in some mass organizations), but also raises the question of "where do correct ideas come from?" Objectively, the petty bourgeoisie promotes the view that while the masses are essential for a social movement, that they basically remain foot-soldiers of the struggle.

Over the past ten years Marxism-Leninism as a tendency within the Left has grown, declined and at the present juncture finds itself at the cross-roads. In no uncertain terms it must be made clear that the future of Marxism-Leninism within the AAPLM depends on the correct practice of united front tactics and the concrete elaboration of an anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist view of not only the path for the AAPLM, but also the relationship which it and other mass movements in the US should hold toward the anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World, particularly in Africa.

Ultra "leftism," which has so greatly plagued Marxist-Leninists, affected both the issue of united front tactics and an anti-revisionist

Eg?

APP
APSP
NBUF
UL
NBIPP

perspective on our tasks. With regard to united front tactics, much is evident and even those forces who would like to pretend or honestly believe that ultra "leftism" has not been the main problem on the part of Marxist-Leninists in the AAPLM, are forced to admit that a poor policy in taking up the question of the united front and the building of the Afro-American national movement has led to major set-backs for the Marxist-Leninist forces, and also for the AAPLM. The inability of Marxist-Leninists to rally the left wing and move the Center towards greater and more diverse forms of mass action encouraged both retreat and disarray. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who, during the 1974 recession felt compelled to publicly address the specific problem of the Black worker, subsequently retreated into a more "boot-strap" approach to Afro-American liberation. The Marxist-Leninists helped to destroy their own credibility and that of the left wing through "left" opportunist maneuvers and views. And without a viable and militant left-wing, more reformist and backward tendencies proliferated.

what is context of this?

Some Thoughts About Class Struggle Among the Afro-American People

Marxist-Leninists in the AAPLM must take a unity and struggle attitude toward the non-Marxist and petty bourgeois forces in the AAPLM. There are two points to make here: (1) the question of petty bourgeoisie, and (2) the different views on socialism held by various

forces. When one speaks of petty bourgeois forces in the AAPLM, it is important to differentiate between those groups and individuals which consciously represent the interest of the Black petty bourgeoisie within the AAPLM. Professional associations and some academicians fit into this category. On the other hand, there is the question of the petty bourgeois viewpoint held by some revolutionary forces. This is an ideological question and not necessarily an issue of a one-to-one correspondence between one's class origins and their particular views and ideas. Many people from the petty bourgeoisie can and have taken the proletarian viewpoint. There are many examples of the petty bourgeois viewpoint held by some revolutionary forces. We will only note a few. Ideologically, the petty bourgeois viewpoint can be one of blurring over class distinctions or exaggerating class distinctions among the Afro-American people. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the petty bourgeois viewpoints among revolutionary forces is its lack of consistent anti-capitalism. The petty bourgeois viewpoint is or can be strongly anti-imperialist, but in terms of the question of anti-capitalism, it becomes something else.

Why is the issue of lack of consistent anti-capitalism important?

It is tied to petty bourgeois revolutionary views of the nature of socialism. While Marxist-Leninists and many non Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries may share the common aim of the establishment of socialism, there is often a distinct difference in what is meant. The

petty bourgeois view of socialism is a relatively non-class utopian view of a society without contradictions; a society where no particular class plays the leading role; where monopolies are dismantled, but the basic framework of capitalism itself remains in tact. In actuality, this form of society takes on many of the characteristics of a "welfare state." The non-class view of socialism permits the growth and controlled development of capitalism, although the new bourgeoisie will tend to arise in connection with the national state apparatus. Algeria and Libya are two examples of this sort of tendency.

Another and related feature of the petty bourgeois revolutionary view of socialism, particularly among the oppressed nations and nationalists, is the priority given to the nation-state. While in the national democratic stage of struggle against imperialism, the unity of the entire "people" against imperialist-national oppression is key, this does not mean the abolition of intra-nationality class struggle. Again, as noted above, by emphasizing the nation-state, nationality, etc., above all else, there is a very strong tendency for new bourgeois forces to arise cloaked in the national flag, religion, language, etc. of the people.

A final point. Within the petty bourgeois revolutionary conception of the development of the national liberation movement and the establishment of the anti-imperialist national democratic state, there is a strong role placed on the national leader. (This, in fact, can

also arise in socialist nations where importance--sometimes exaggerated--is placed on individual leaders such as Stalin.) The particularities for the petty bourgeois revolutionary view are interesting and has an important practical aspect. Although there is no monolithic petty bourgeois revolutionary view, what these forces often share in common is the notion of the national leader as the arbiter of intra-national/intra-nationality class contradictions. Just as in the case of the nation-state, the national leader is conceptualized as being above the issue of classes and represents the interests of the entire people. From the Marxism-Leninism standpoint, leaders and leadership are also important, but in a different sense. For Marxist-Leninists, the leader is not an arbiter between classes, but both a representative of a particular class as well as embodying the interests of the entire national revolutionary movement. In this sense, the Marxist-Leninist leader, while not always talking about the working class, attempts to show how the interests and role of the working class (and its viewpoint) is the most consistent view to lead the anti-imperialist national movement. Rather than downplaying the issue of class, the Marxist-Leninist leader attempts to show the necessity for a national bloc or class alliance in order to forward the national movement.

Of immediate and practical importance, is the fact that the petty bourgeois revolutionary conception of a leader or leaders, places them above the class struggle and national movement. This conception objectively encourages the dominant bourgeois views of the "great man

theory of history" because it places upon the shoulders of leaders the main role in the development of mass movements, and history generally.

Another indication of the dominant, petty bourgeois viewpoint in much of the Left-wing (although this is true also the Right and Center) is the fascination with NATIONAL events, conferences, marches, etc., rather than a reliance on local work in order to develop successful nation-wide work. This point is not being made to down-play the significance or utility of national events, but a consistent error which has arisen time and again is the tendency to rely on national work as a means to develop local work.¹⁵ To a great extent this error must be laid at the door of impetuosity. Out of frustration with the slow pace of local work, the petty bourgeoisie will turn to outside assistance or support in order to build local work. While outside assistance can be of great help, it cannot and will not be the decisive component in winning a victory. If a mass organization in Baltimore, for example, is not growing, national conferences may help these activists learn from the experiences of others, but they will not decide whether the mass organization grows or dies. Even if a group of organizers come from the national level, it will remain to the activists of Baltimore to actually build the organization there, for it is they who have some knowledge of the concrete conditions of their city. Before getting outside assistance, it is always important for organizers to ask: (1) what happens when the outside support ceases and (2) will there be a base to carry on

further struggle?

The Left-wing must show itself capable of uniting with and leading more than the Black working class (though such leadership would definitely be an achievement). It might be more appropriate to note that the Left-wing should address more than the Black working class, since at present the Left leads very little. The tactics and program which the Left develops must be capable of winning over the non-proletarian sections of the AAPLM. We can make a start by answering the question of: what will it take to broaden the membership and influence of the Black United Front movements?

SECTION IV
NATIONALISM

We feel it necessary to address the particularities of Black nationalism since incorrect understandings of this phenomenon have given rise to many disastrous deviations. As we understand nationalism, it is an "ideology" propagated by the oppressed nation bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie which, briefly stated, breaks down to the following: ". . . My nation (or nationality) first." In the real world there are many variations on this theme, each reflecting: different tendencies within the classes of the national movement; the subjective situation within the mass base of the national movement; as well as the objective situation facing that particular people.

As an ideology, nationalism helped to justify the development and existence of nation-states. The rising capitalist class was able to use nationalism as a means to justify boundaries within which it could claim existed its "own" market and its "own" exploited class (the working class). It would be inaccurate and non-Marxist to leave us with this view of nationalism. While at its kernel nationalism reflects the view of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, this is not enough to understand the hold which it can have on the masses of laboring peoples.

Nationalism, as every other phenomenon, itself divides into two, this division representing the realities of the modern world.

The
The so-called nationalism of the oppressor nations (this being fully reactionary, chauvinist ideology) and the nationalism of the oppressed nations (which, in the main, is positive). We will not dwell on oppressor nation so-called nationalism since it is more open in the US (white chauvinism) and there is a much clearer understanding of how to deal with it. But the nationalism of the oppressed nationalities has always been a difficult problem for Marxists.

Nationalism of the oppressed nationalities, as noted by Lenin, has a democratic content. As a view, it speaks against the all-round suppression and restrictions on the rights and historical development of the oppressed nationalities. While it is indeed propagated by the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, it is generally grasped by the oppressed nationality masses from the start of efforts to unite against national oppression. Therefore, when Lenin noted years ago:

You will have to base yourselves on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening, and must awaken, among those peoples (the peoples of the oppressed nations--Editor), and which has its historical justification.]
At the same time, you must find your way to the working and exploited masses of every country and tell them in a language they understand that their only hope of emancipation lies in the victory of the international revolution, and that the international proletariat is the only ally of all the hundreds of millions of the working and exploited peoples of the East.

(Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919," Collected Works, Vol. 30, p. 162)

He was making a generalized assessment of where the masses of the oppressed nationalities' consciousness lay. This did not mean that communists of the oppressed nationalities should take a stand-offish or a no-struggle attitude toward bourgeois nationalism (as can be seen from the preceding quote, Lenin was speaking of moving people from where their consciousness was to a broader perspective on the tasks of the national liberation struggle), but it was a recognition that oppressed nationality nationalism could indeed be a positive force in the struggle against imperialism.

Once again, though, nationalism divides into two. Within the oppressed nationalities themselves there is reactionary nationalism and progressive or revolutionary nationalism. These distinctions are important and must not be "simplified" to mean "cultural nationalism" vs. "revolutionary nationalism." Cultural nationalism in the AAPLM, for example, has come to mean--at least among revolutionary circles--a view which downplays political struggle in favor of a "boot-strap" approach and a fixation on one's culture. This is usually tied to mysticism and a belief in "getting one's self together" in disconnection from political struggle. At the same time, particularly in the early stages of national liberation struggles, struggle on the cultural front represents one of the most important arenas for anti-imperialist motion. This is a point which many revolutionaries downplayed in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

The study of the history of national liberation struggles shows that generally these struggles are preceded by an increase in expression of culture, consolidated progressively into a successful or unsuccessful attempt to affirm the cultural personality of the dominated people, as a means of negating the oppressor culture. Whatever may be the conditions of a people's political and social factors in practicing this domination, it is generally within the culture that we find the seed of opposition, which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement.

(Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," in Return to the Source, p. 43)

Reactionary nationalism has certain general characteristics. For one, as noted above, it moves the masses away from political struggle against imperialism. Different varieties of reactionary nationalism can encourage anything from mysticism and astrology to an internal focus on non-political activity (such as the creation of certain types of alternative institutions) while awaiting Armageddon. Secondly, reactionary nationalism encourages exclusiveness among Blacks, in other words a Black-only mentality. This has a particularly dangerous side when it involves attacks on other oppressed nationalities. Reactionary nationalism, for example, discourages alliances with other oppressed nationalities or openly attacks these other groups, seeking to foster an atmosphere of competition between various oppressed groups. One can see examples of this in the midst of the current economic problems faced by the U.S. In this situation, some directors of poverty programs and some politicians openly encourage competition

between Afro-Americans and Puerto Ricans for a greater "stake" or "piece of the pie." While such competition may be carried out under the banner of Black nationalism, it has no progressive aspect at all, but rather is a means to pit the various oppressed nationalities against one another.

We do not use the term "narrow nationalism." This term has generally been used as a way of blurring over all distinctions within nationalism. Additionally, it has been used to attack the justifiable concern among oppressed nationalities for their national rights, full equality, and a correct addressing of the national question. The term "narrow nationalism" also means very little. What is narrow about this nationalism? Should this term cover all nationalism? We think it to be more correct to distinguish the two general tendencies within nationalism--reactionary and progressive--and understand their meanings in the real world. Blanket condemnations of nationalism often cover for outright chauvinism. They may also cover for a downplaying, on the part of oppressed nationalities, of their own national identity.

Revolutionary or progressive nationalism should not be confused with reactionary nationalism. There are also differences--often critical--among revolutionary nationalists (e.g., the Black Panther Party, Afrikan People's Party, African People's Socialist Party), but there are some defining characteristics. For one, revolutionary nationalists recognize the existence of classes and class struggle within the oppressed nationalities in addition to the anti-imperialist

national liberation struggle. At the same time the consequences or ramifications of this recognition tend to be blurred; or interestingly enough, exaggerated. The vision of class struggle as articulated by some revolutionary nationalists (e.g., the Black Panther Party in the 1960's and early 1970's) was a somewhat left-wing populist view of the "poor" against the "rich." The exaggeration of certain intra-nationality class differences, as mentioned above, is a peculiar view of many revolutionary nationalists. The Afro-American bourgeoisie is not analyzed dialectically, but is viewed empirically with regard to its relations with the Black masses. While trying to compensate for the reactionary nationalist position that classes do not exist among the oppressed nationalities, or that they are insignificant, some revolutionary nationalists go to the other extreme and do not understand that a basis may exist for united action with a segment of the oppressed nationality bourgeoisie. Thus, the entire class is viewed as "Uncle Toms." Needless to say, this view can and does support ultra "left" notions, notably those elaborated by the articulate voices of "left" fanaticism--the CWP. ¹⁶

Revolutionary nationalism differs with reactionary nationalism over the question of working with other nationalities. For the most part, revolutionary nationalists recognize the need for a common front against imperialism. From the perspective of revolutionary nationalism, this may include the workers of the oppressor nation. This recognition

of the need for a common front against imperialism is very important for joint work between revolutionary nationalists and Marxist-Leninists.

Fundamentally, revolutionary nationalism, while not a single fully elaborated theory, is profoundly political. It is essential for communists to recognize this. Revolutionary nationalism stands for the full mobilization of the oppressed nationality masses against imperialism. It stands for opposition to imperialist and the monopoly capitalists and for full democratic rights and political power. Therefore, it is vital that a working relationship between communists and revolutionary nationalists not be obscured by deeper ideological differences. 17

There are reasonable and principled differences between communists and revolutionary nationalists. In order to get to the root of this difference it is important for us to answer the question of what should be the stand of oppressed nationality communists toward their own nationality and its anti-imperialist struggle?

Can a Communist, who is an internationalist, at the same time be a patriot? We hold that he not only can be but must be. The specific content of patriotism is determined by historical conditions . . . Thus in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism.

(Mao, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," Selected Works, Vol. II, p. 196)

Communists can be both patriots and internationalists precisely because

patriotism is not the same thing as nationalism. While nationalism, in the last instance, breaks down to a view of " . . . my nationality first . . . ," patriotism involves the love and respect for one's people, culture and history. Patriotism involves the justified hatred of the oppressor nation ruling class, though this is not transmitted into a hatred of the people of the oppressor nation.

Unlike the petty-bourgeois and national bourgeois parties, our Party (the Vietnam Workers' Party--Editor) had educated the masses in our country to discriminate the French colonialists--our oppressors and exploiters--from the French working class and people--our allies who supported our just struggle. (Truong-Chinh, "For the Centenary of Lenin's Birth," Selected Works, p. 696)

Communists as both internationalists and patriots defend and encourage the development of their (and other peoples') national culture, but do not condone nor conciliate any development of a chauvinist bias towards other nationalities. And, in a word, when their own nationality is being led in a wrong direction (e.g., attacks on other oppressed nationalities); when reactionary sentiment is being whipped up, communists, as internationalists and patriots are called upon to take a stand against such xenophobia. Indeed, as Mao noted, patriotism--for the oppressed nationalities--is applied internationalism.

One of the most important differences between communists and revolutionary nationalists concerns the role of the Black worker. The

more left-wing revolutionary nationalists, in addition to communists, speak to the need to struggle for the leadership of the Black working class in the AAPLM. This is one more area of practical, and principled political unity. Both communists and left-wing revolutionary nationalists see that there is presently an important ideological struggle underway within the AAPLM over which class--and which class viewpoint--will lead the national movement. At the same time, revolutionary nationalists believe that there must be a revolutionary party for each nationality while communists fight for one multi-national revolutionary proletarian party to lead the anti-imperialist struggle in the U.S. This may appear to be two separate questions, but in actuality it really comes down to a fundamental point. For communists, Black workers are part of both the AAPLM and part of the multi-national working class. The U.S. working class is itself very divided with the oppressed nationality workers facing not only the exploitation and oppression which they receive as workers, but also the national oppression which they receive as members of these nationalities.¹⁸ As mentioned above, Black people as a whole, and Blacks workers definitely are not just in one region of the U.S. Black workers have been integrally involved in countless struggles of the working class and were essential at key moments in labor history. Take, for example, the development of the CIO. By the admission of the leadership of the early CIO, several of these industrial unions could not have successfully developed had it not been for the active

participation and role of the Black workers (e.g., steel, auto). Groups such as the National Negro Congress played vital roles in the development of the steel workers union and the neutralization of anti-union forces in the Black community. In both labor reform struggles, as well as the struggle for working class power in the U.S., Black workers have an essential role to play. At the minimum this must mean that they have some organized political relationship with workers of other nationalities. It is in relation to the rest of the working class that the left-wing revolutionary nationalist line falls short since it cannot adequately address the struggle which Black workers, Chicanos, etc., face as workers. We believe that this necessitates winning the vanguard of the mass movements in the U.S. into one, revolutionary proletarian party. This is not in opposition to various separate forms of mass organizations (such as Black United Fronts, or minority workers' caucuses). The development of separate forms of mass organization should develop as needed. But leading these mass organizations and the various struggles which are underway in the U.S.--simultaneously--we believe necessitates one revolutionary line and one revolutionary party. The development of this line and this party will be an important task for Black workers. In addition to leading the AAPLM, Black workers have a central role in the development of the struggle for socialism in the U.S. as a whole. The organizational particularities of building and leading the struggle for Afro-American liberation will have to be examined

elsewhere. There will have to be conscious attention devoted to developing the various organizational forms for building the role and leadership of the Black working class and its line in the AAPLM.

In sum, we are saying the following about nationalism: nationalism in and of itself, does not necessarily identify a particular tendency, group or individual as being progressive. In the main, the nationalism of an oppressed nation or nationality is progressive in its stand against imperialism and national oppression. But this nationalism divides into two tendencies: a progressive or revolutionary tendency and a more backward, or reactionary tendency. Communists of the oppressed nationalities must build upon the existing national sentiment found among the masses; they must show in practice that patriotism is applied internationalism; they must be good at building the national revolutionary movement of the oppressed nationalities; and they must encourage and insist upon close united action with revolutionary nationalists, while not blurring the genuine, principled differences which each side holds.

SECTION V THE TASKS FACING US

The purpose of this paper was not to review the entire experience and history of communists in the AAPLM. We would refer the reader to a variety of other publications.¹⁹ There are certain brief points which we would like to note, however.

Many of today's oppressed nationality Marxist-Leninists were once nationalists. For a variety of reasons they felt that nationalism was insufficient (and in error on many points) in order to lead the AAPLM. In part, as a response to the problems of working in such a broad movement; in part due to the social base and background of many of these activists, and a certain amount of subjectivism, some of the most important steps in further developing the AAPLM were set back as a result of some very serious errors on the part of the Marxist-Leninists.

With regard to the AAPLM, the development and consolidation of a disastrous and strong "left" opportunist trend assisted in the destruction or partial paralysis of a number of mass organizations (e.g., African Liberation Support Committee, National Black Political Assembly, Black Women's United Front, February First Movement), as well as the deterioration and disintegration of several predominantly Black or oppressed nationality Marxist-Leninist formations (e.g., Black Workers Congress, Workers Congress, Revolutionary Workers

League, Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, August 29th
Movement, Congress of African Peoples, Revolutionary Communist
League.) Most of the errors can be seen to derive from an incorrect
understanding of the relationship of (1) reform to revolution, (2)
the independent revolutionary character of the AAPLM, (3) an incorrect
understanding of nationalism. We have dealt with some of these errors
elsewhere and will not repeat the points. We note them in order to
frame some of the tasks which we feel confront Marxists and other
revolutionaries in the AAPLM.

Build the AAPLM and the Black United Front Movements

This slogan is very "simple" and to the point, though the task
is far more complicated. Our work will necessarily involve several
aspects. For one, the AAPLM which exists as an objective phenomenon,
must become united and more conscious of its anti-imperialist tasks.
The key to this is the building of strong, viable Black United Fronts.
Concretely this means more than the formal creation of organizations
calling themselves Black United Fronts, but in fact means the pulling
into an actual structure and motion the various organizations and
tendencies within the AAPLM which are interested in furthering the
struggle against national oppression. This can only be done on the
basis of the adoption of a concrete program which addresses the demands
of the different classes and strata represented by various groups and

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organizations. By program we are not simply referring to different
points of interest; nor are we referring to "X" number of resolutions.
In fact, we are saying that a strong national front will be constructed
by concretely addressing--in words and in deeds--the demands which flow
from the Afro-American people's struggle against imperialism and
national oppression.

In practice this point of view would be expressed by a concrete
investigation and examination of the situation facing the different
classes of the Afro-American people. By way of example, look at the
land question. The Black farmer is threatened immensely by both the
"natural" tendency of monopoly capitalism with regard to the land
question as well as the specifics of national oppression. The land,
as we noted, is being robbed. A national front would have to provide
the legal resources, organizers and any other type of assistance to
help pull the farmers together in order to further the land struggle.
Clearly this issue cannot remain on paper.

The urban petty bourgeoisie and aspiring national bourgeoisie
can also be brought into the struggle. Black entrepreneurs are often
denied necessary loans which are essential for the pulling together
of small businesses, contracting firms, etc. In the past, the Left
has been noticeably absent in supporting such struggles. The Left-
wing, and particularly the Marxist-Leninists, must champion the basic
democratic rights of all classes within the Afro-American people.

even now, when M-L movement is tiny,
white base among workers

This must mean more than simple vocal support, but must at some point involve actually taking up the work.

Building the united front of the Afro-American people also means cherishing the principled unity of the AAPLM and opposing all those who would split and further divide the struggle. (This is increasingly recognized by revolutionaries and especially Marxist-Leninists who were often responsible for some serious errors. RWIq, CPML, and others note this as well.) Such split-ism and sectarianism need not always arise from the antics of the Left. Experience has shown that various non-revolutionary elements can be just as sectarian as some of the worse ultra "leftists." One example can be seen in struggles around construction. The objective basis for united action between Black workers and Black contractors (or subcontractors) is an important potential which can and must be transformed into a working alliance. At various moments, however, we have seen examples of where this unity has been broken by the contractors in favor of "go-it-alone" schemes to enhance their own role and position. Needless to say, this leaves the Black workers in a much more weakened position. Marxist-Leninists must do their utmost to oppose such splits and show the practical importance of a united, anti-discrimination challenge--of Black workers and Black contractors--to the reactionary, racist Building Trades union leadership, the large white contractors and the developers.

The 1930 Comintern/CPUSA statement of the Afro-American National Question still holds many relevant points. The central issue being the

need for agitation and organization in order to develop the "Southern Wing" of the AAPLM in favor of land and national self-determination. In our view the demand for self-determination does not only apply as a slogan for Afro-Americans in the South. It just as much applies to Blacks in the North, given the realities of dispersion and the particularities of the national question in the U.S. But what this slogan means or should mean is a demand for the right of Afro-Americans to decide, as a people, on their own national future. In other words, when we raise the demand for self-determination, we must connect this to the demand for a plebiscite which involves the entire Afro-American people. Self-determination, i.e., the demand for the right to an Afro-American republic, must be realized in a specific geographic context--that being the Black Belt South. In view of this, the demand for land and reparations takes on a special role in Southern work. For the most part, the other demands raised by the CI/CPUSA remain correct.

Build the Strength, Role and Leadership of the Black Working Class and Its Line in the AAPLM

This slogan has many different implications and ramifications depending on how it is practiced. Additionally, it can hold profound implications on how one works and (hopefully) builds the AAPLM. As noted elsewhere (on the slogan "Black Workers Take the Lead") the

orientation practiced by many Black Marxist-Leninists in the early-to-mid 1970's, supposedly to build the role of Black workers, was particularly destructive. This was not because these folks were trying to build the role of the Black worker. Rather, the essence of the ultra "left" orientation of these forces led to a counter-posing of the task of building proletarian leadership and the task of building the AAPLM.

A necessary rectification of these past errors must involve a number of aspects. For one, building the strength, role and leadership of the Black working class does not mean fixating on the Black worker, nor does it mean attempting to compel a national front or mass organization to accept the slogan of leadership to the Black workers. Part of this rectification involves taking the immediately preceding point seriously (i.e., building the AAPLM . . .).

The line of the working class should include the necessity for (1) independent political action, (2) opposition to all forms of tyranny, (3) alliances with other non-Afro-American sectors, and (4) consistent opposition to imperialist/white supremacist national oppression.

(1) Independent political action divides into two: both independent political action for labor (through a labor party) and the independent political action of the AAPLM as a whole (via the BUF's and/or NBIPP). Independent political action means making the break

with the two major capitalist parties and the development of a progressive popular bloc which, in the final analysis, is led by working class politics. Independent political action includes but is not limited to electoral work. (2) Opposition to all forms of tyranny, particularly within the context of the AAPLM, means concretely recognizing that several classes within the Afro-American people have a concrete material interest in opposing national oppression. Thus, it is important to seek a close alliance with these forces. It is essential for the working class to be won to take up struggles in opposition to national oppression which affects other strata. (3) Alliances with other nationalities and forces means winning the AAPLM to seek its common pursuit of unity (in opposition to imperialism) with other nationalities, without subordinating its basic interests. (4) Consistent opposition to imperialism/white supremacist national oppression means the development of a line which does not conciliate national oppression, nor seek some sort of "special relationship" with the imperialists, but recognizes that the cause of Black liberation and equality cannot be reformed into existence. Black liberation and equality cannot be reformed into existence. Black liberation must develop as a result of a concerted, militant struggle for political power and national self-determination.

Additionally, Black workers must be organized to participate at all levels of the Fronts and various mass organizations. Within the BUF's, for example, this work may take the form of building Black labor

committees to serve to express the viewpoint and concerns of Black workers. Such committees could also serve to rally the support of the Black community as a whole behind the demands of Black workers (example: Local 1199's struggle to organize hospital workers in Charleston, South Carolina in 1969). Additionally such committees or councils could serve as one means to bring various issues of the mass organization into the shops or to the unemployed. Some mass organizations presently have labor committees. Marxist-Leninists must help guard against the tendency for some careerist elements to use these forms of organization as a spring-board for bureaucratic ambitions.

This slogan, however, has a broader meaning. Building the strength, role and leadership of the Black working class and its line also must mean the further development and enrichment of scientific socialism/Marxism-Leninism as a real force within the AAPLM. Before we get condemned for "denying the advances made by Marxist-Leninists in the AAPLM," let us clarify this point. Marxists of various stripes are ever present in the AAPLM. Marxist-Leninists are also a real component. Members of organizations and groupings of Marxist-Leninists have played both positive and negative roles in this mass movement.

But the reality of our present situation is instructive: Marxism-Leninism is not making the great advances which it did several years ago. Beginning in the very early 1970's with the "Free Angela Davis"

campaign, the revisionist CPUSA through a variety of mass organizations (e.g., National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression) has been making new strides and has become a serious force in the movement. Other forces including many pro-USSR forces have also been gaining ground. This tendency must be countered by anti-revisionists. We realize profound implications of revisionist and centrist theses (even if they pertain or appear to pertain only to international line) to the national question. Yet despite these implications (such as what relation a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would have for the question of national self-determination in the U.S.) many honest and not-so-honest activists continue to give (at best critical) support to various affronts to national liberation and independence, affronts which are carried on under the banner of "socialism" and "opposition to capitalism."

The development and enrichment of Marxism-Leninism within the AAPLM must mean the further elaboration of the Marxist-Leninist view on the theory and practice of the national question, including the question of the strategy and tactics of the united front. In addition, and especially applicable given the current world situation is the struggle with the revisionist international line and its implication for the Afro-American and other national questions in the U.S. The Marxist-Leninist voice must be heard in journals, newspapers as well as (where possible) the air waves. Our view is solidly for national independence and liberation and consistently anti-imperialist, although

the revisionists are trying to portray us as caricatures of their earlier practice (i.e., the 1960's soft-peddling of the anti-imperialist struggle). Our voice must be combined with our practice and this practice must involve placing ourselves in the main arenas of political and ideological struggle in the AAPLM.

Develop the All-Round Struggle Against National Oppression and For Equal Rights

While this should go without saying, it cannot. There are two aspects which we must mention here. One, developing the struggle against national oppression in all spheres of U.S. society, and, two, developing the role of the Black workers in the working class movement.

All too often, the struggle against national oppression has been seen as equivalent to oppressed nationality community struggles of various sorts (e.g., police brutality, housing, etc.). This by no means should be interpreted as meaning that community struggles are unimportant. What we are saying is that this struggle pervades all spheres, and particularly, must be addressed concretely and forthrightly in the workplace. One aspect of this is the development, where applicable, of Black workers' organizations (tied to the Black United Fronts or other mass organizations where possible) to lead the various anti-discrimination struggles. In addition, though, white workers must be won to the struggle against national oppression and

racist discrimination. An independent Black Workers group, for example, should not be used as an excuse by white workers and white Marxist-Leninists to drop the anti-discrimination struggle. If anything, the closest possible working relationship should be established between any multi-national worker's group (e.g., trade union caucuses) and independent Black workers groupings.

The development of the role of Black workers in the working class movement is an essential task for revolutionaries. Labor history shows concretely the integral role--as noted above--which Black workers have had in the labor movement. Whether in the Knights of Labor, UMW, or the CIO, Black workers played a key, and often forgotten, role in the progress of the organized labor movement. Yet the composition of the leadership of the labor movement does not reflect this integralism. In reform struggles, as well as the revolutionary proletarian struggle, the necessity for multi-national leadership must be fought for politically and consummated organizationally. It is unfortunate that words and promises alone will not suffice even within the context of a Marxist-Leninist organization.

Although we have touched upon mainly one aspect of the building of the all-round fight against national oppression, it is important that, while Marxist-Leninists may concentrate on certain aspects of this struggle, they keep an open mind to and encourage a variety of struggle. As we have noted above, struggle on the cultural front is often one of the early fronts of struggle against imperialist national

oppression. This does not or should not mean that as the national movement develops and becomes more sophisticated and politically conscious that cultural work is liquidated. In point of fact, this has been the practice of many communists.²⁰

Another example is the issue of the media. While it is true that advances in the media can only be seen as a component part of the anti-national oppression struggle, it has often proven to be (historically speaking) an important arena of contention between progress and reaction on the national question. Whether we are talking about William Monroe Trotter's vocal and active opposition to the film Birth of a Nation; whether we are discussing the image (or lack thereof) of Black people in various situation comedies; or whether we are addressing the controversy surrounding Beulah Land in 1980, these ideological struggles have an impact on the "hearts and minds" as well as practices of the audiences. If connected with the broader struggle, the significance of class and national struggle in the media realm cannot and should not be underestimated.

Some Concluding Remarks on the Tasks Facing Us

There are many possible organizational forms and possible pragmatic thrusts to follow in developing revolutionary work in the AAPLM. The following points should be appraised from the standpoint

of what assists the strengthening and enhancement of the AAPLM, rather than what promotes our own particular groups. We believe that the following questions and points need further examination toward such an end.

(1) The Necessity to Build Real Black United Fronts: We include here a paper which we prepared recently on the question of Black United Fronts. It serves to summarize some of the points raised earlier with regard to the building of genuine fronts. See Appendix I.

(2) The Role of the Left Wing: This must be further examined. The BUF movements (and within this we can include, to a certain extent, the NBIPP) are, for the most part, consciously anti-imperialist. The point which we have made throughout this paper is that real united fronts must be broader than the Black Left. If that is the case, should the anti-imperialist Black Left (which is far broader than communists) have its own organizational form? Several suggestions have been made along these lines, including:

(A) a publication, discussion circles, forums, etc. of the Black Left which would serve to organize discussion around various issues of importance to the AAPLM;

(B) an anti-imperialist Black mass organization, whose purpose would be, among other things, to openly struggle for a broad united front of the Afro-American people;

(C) working mainly within the framework of existing mass organizations;

(D) creation of Black workers' organizations.

(3) Program: Programatic issues for which communists must struggle in the AAPLM have been generally lacking. The following are some suggested areas which need further exploration, criticism, and discussion.

(A) Repression: This has arisen spontaneously, but given no programatic coherence. If addressed, it could possibly include: development of local campaigns around Black electoral enfranchisement; Voter Education/Registration (since necessity for public overseeing of police); community self-defense (rifle/gun clubs); opposition to Senator Kennedy's revision of the federal criminal justice code.

(B) Labor: Organizing the unorganized. Blacks and other oppressed nationalities make up a disproportionate section of unorganized labor. We must pressure the union movement to organize the South and Southwest. Additionally, there is the necessity for the organization of filler industries, e.g. the high technology industries and industries which replace larger scale developments. Our program should include: support for full equality, affirmative action and opposition to racist discrimination; full equality in union leadership; building Black worker participation in union rank and file movements; development of Black and all-oppressed nationality unemployed workers' organizations.

(C) Budget Cuts: While anti-budget cut struggles can and often do become "catch-all" struggles, in the face of the Reagan

offensive they offer an opportunity for concrete and broad unity of action. Such struggles include opposition to hospital closings and the gutting of other social service programs; restrictions on unemployment insurance; the cuts in social security and many other programs people have come to accept.

(D) Equality for Black Women: The special oppression faced by Black women is both a question internal to the AAPLM and a societal question. Organizations within the AAPLM must practice complete equality for women within their ranks, but the struggle must not stop there. There are various issues which particularly speak to the question of the oppression of Black women, including child-care, welfare cuts and humiliation, safety on the streets, equality on the job and female battering.

(E) Land: This is related to the question of political power, though somewhat different. As noted earlier and elsewhere, there is a tremendous threat to the holdings of Black land-owners. Special legislation and court proceedings must be fought for in order to "guarantee" this land. National Black organizations must develop a special consciousness in support of land struggles (some groups have been taking up this struggle). Where land has been stolen or swindled away from its rightful owners, it will be the task of organizations to build campaigns for reparation.

(F) Political Power: This covers both urban and rural Afro-

America and means the demand for national self-determination as well as a greater local role for Afro-Americans in the determination of their futures. The 1970's saw, in many large cities, a conscious motion to remove Black and other oppressed nationalities from areas of concentration in the inner cities and replace them with white professionals (the process known as "gentrification.") This has been accompanied by further moves to deny political rights.

(G) Education: In the realm of education, it is important to fight for full equality in resources, schools, etc. along with an end to segregated school systems. At the same time the burden of desegregation must not fall on oppressed nationalities alone. In practice this latter point generally means opposing one-way busing plans and attempts to destroy Black colleges via chauvinist "integration plans."

(H) International Situation: An anti-imperialist perspective is essential to the AAPLM. In the current situation, we must fight for a perspective which recognizes and opposes the dangers from "old and new dominationist powers." Real united action should not be predicated on a profound analysis of the USSR, but recognizes the need to support national liberation, self-determination, and world peace.

SECTION VI CADRE POLICY

After reading several position papers as well as observing and studying practices in many revolutionary organizations, we thought it important to spend some time addressing basic points concerning cadre policy.

With respect to Afro-American cadre we must guard against two errors. One: seeing Afro-American cadre as only having a role vis a vis the AAPLM. Two: seeing some sort of "formal equality" of roles and tasks for Afro-American cadre and white cadre.

Afro-American cadre must be developed and operate on all levels of work and leadership within a multi-national organization or party. Afro-American cadre, even for the best of intentions, should not be limited to work in the AAPLM. There are a variety of tasks, be they propaganda, women's movement or trade union work, that can and must involve Afro-Americans. These cadre will undoubtedly bring a new and different perspective to the work. This is not to say that should someone have a special interest in the AAPLM that they must be forced to do something else. The point is, however, that as communists and as Black communists we have views on every major and minor question. It would be the height of liberal chauvinism to only pay attention to Afro-American cadre when discussions turn to the national question.

At the same time, "formal equality" would also be wrong. This does not mean that equality between the nationalities and sexes should not be observed, but there are different conditions and factors which influence Black cadre, especially those from the working class. One example that recently surfaced in the work of another group showed this well. In this particular group, and this point may be true in other formations as well, the "advanced" elements of the communist movement were judged by certain very static skills (e.g., their ability to write very lengthy papers). Such a view cannot but help to restrict the all-round participation of many cadre of the oppressed nationalities and the working class as well as helps to insure that it is petty bourgeois intellectuals (especially those who happen to be white) that are left to be the "theoreticians" of the communist movement. No cadre should suffer the humiliation of being patronized, but different skills should and must be taken for what they are: skills. The ability to lead and organize involves a great deal more than the ability or desire to write long papers.

We have considered some measures which we believe can help to deal with the question of cadre policy. They include the following:

(A) A strong commission system: Commissions of the various oppressed nationalities directly responsible and a part of the national leadership of communist organizations is an essential aspect of good cadre policy. We do not see the commissions as separate organizations

within the overall group, but as integral committees of the organizations which should have responsibilities such as reviewing the work of the organization concerned with the various national questions (review reports, offer suggestions, examine the situation in an area where an organization's cadre may be working and make general assessments); develop the theoretical level and line of the organization (produce position papers, articles, and separate pieces which help to elaborate the line of the group with regard to the national question, speak to some of the crucial political, ideological and organizational questions and problems in the national movements, and further "enrich" Marxist-Leninist theory with regard to the national question); and review the health and well-being of the oppressed nationality cadre in the group, including the question of recruitment (while this task should be of concern to the leadership of the organization, it is vital that the commissions also keep on top of the situation. They must be available through some sort of apparatus to hear the problems and complaints of the oppressed nationality cadre and be a means to help to resolve outstanding difficulties).

(B) Cadre Meetings: Some organizations practice this presently. The idea is to have periodic meetings of oppressed nationality cadre on local levels as well as national level meetings sponsored by the commissions. Such mini-conferences could serve as a means to encourage criticisms and suggestions which may not have been offered elsewhere. Such meetings are also important for the various oppressed nationality

groups to discuss the concerns which are particular to their own nationality. For example: to what extent is the Party or organization taking up the concerns of the Cape Verdian national minority in New England? What resources is the organization offering to develop this area of work? What moves have been made to translate material of the organization into Portuguese? Or to what extent are Puerto Ricans or Dominicans being addressed? What of the special relationships to their national homelands? Once again, while these questions should be an issue of the entire organization and its leadership it may be the case that for reasons of chauvinism or for legitimate reasons some of the forementioned questions have not been consistently addressed.

(C) Consistent opposition to white chauvinism: This should not be taken to mean practicing the campaigns such as the PWOC/OCIC anti-white chauvinism campaign of 1980-81 or the CPUSA's anti-white chauvinism campaign of 1949-52. Such campaigns are filled with moralism and are separate from a revolutionary line on the national question. At the same time, it must be the responsibility of the leadership to review the work of the organization as well as internal relations with an eye on deviations from a correct line on the national question as well as white chauvinist policies and practices in the organization or by the cadre. One example of this is the question of utilization of cadre. Leadership must insure that all

cadre are involved in productive revolutionary work and are not being left aside for "lack of training" or because they are supposedly lacking in qualifications. A correct Marxist understanding of white chauvinism and its roots in U.S. society must be an essential component of the training of all entering cadre.

(D) Ideological training: This is essential on two fronts. For white cadre, as mentioned above, there must be a keen awareness of white chauvinism as an ideological deviation, rather than a moral question. Proper ideological training also means instructing incoming cadre on basic Marxist-Leninist theory with special attention given to the national question. This is not to say that cadre can be "innoculated" against deviations of any variety on the national question (or any other question for that matter) but it should mean that through some Marxist education there is a higher degree of awareness among cadre of potential problems as well as guidance on how to develop revolutionary work related to the national question. Proper introductions to Marxist-Leninist theory also make internal discussions which involve all or most the cadre possible, rather than a situation where there is a clear and incorrect distinction between "theoreticians" and "practical workers."

While there is much more to be said about the national question, it is here that we will stop--at least for the present. There are entire areas where we have neither the experience nor the understanding in order to further develop a Marxist-Leninist position. There are many areas in this paper alone that can be discussed in greater detail. At the same time, that would all go beyond the scope of this piece. It is our hope that the ideas in this paper will help to sum up the ideological and political point where we are in order to move our work and the work of other revolutionaries further down the socialist road.

FOOTNOTES

1. Within the context of this paper, it would be impossible to lay out the history of the early anti-revisionist communist movement and the problems which it had getting together. We would recommend a reading of Haywood's letter of resignation to the Provisional Organizing Committee, found in the first issue of the journal Class Struggle. There are also the papers by Bill Epton upon leaving the Progressive Labor Party. The point to examine, however, is that when many forces split from the CP they had more or less an oppositional analysis, i.e., a viewpoint opposed to the CP's revisionism, but they were not themselves consolidated on very much. This made it difficult to pull things together. In addition, groups like PL never really understood revisionism and began, as a consequence, developing ultra "left" and semi-trotskyist formulations about the relation between reform and revolution, as well as the relation of the socialist struggle to the struggles for national liberation. This latter point was a problem for PL as well as the POC and the Hammer and Steel grouping.
2. Table 6, p. 14. Distribution of the Population, The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the U.S., An Historical View 1790-1978. This means that special forms of organization were necessary to organize Black labor.
3. An interesting example of this work was in organizing they did in the South among the Brotherhood of Timber Workers. Significantly, the INW failed to address national oppression as it affected Black people as a whole. Rather, the INW opposed racist discrimination in the economic realm.
4. This nationalism, however, has had both reactionary and progressive aspects. We will deepen this later.
5. For more details on this situation, see such works as Henry Haywood, Negro Liberation; and Philip S. Foner, Organized Labor and the Black Worker.
6. RWH's paper on the national question, "Build the Black Liberation Movement."
7. Mao Tse Tung, Quotations from Chairman Mao, p. 10 from the August 8, 1965, "Statement Supporting the American Negroes in their Just Struggle Against Racial Discrimination by U.S. Imperialism."

8. Dual unionism is that tendency within the labor movement to establish separate and opposing trade unions to those in existence previously on the basis that:

- (1) the current unions are led by reactionaries;
- (2) the workers need a pole of correct leadership to lead them;
- (3) there is no point in struggling with the reactionaries.

The objective result of dual unionism has generally been to isolate the more progressive unionists from the mass of workers. In addition, the position of the reactionaries in union leadership is strengthened.

9. More serious perhaps than the failure to recognize that Marxism has something to say to all classes and strata oppressed under capitalism, was the fact that DeLeon and the SLP, as well as the Socialist Party, failed to use Marxism to understand the special significance and role of the AAPLM in U.S. history. In both cases, from the "Left" as well as from the Right, both parties dogmatically "understood" Marxism as only dealing with the class question. The tendency to counterpose the class question and the national question would run throughout the errors of many later-day revolutionaries.

10. "In its basic aspects, Syndicalism, or more properly Anarcho-Syndicalism, may be defined very briefly as that tendency in the labor movement to confine the revolutionary class struggle of the workers to the economic field, to practically ignore the state, and to reduce the whole fight of the working class to simply a question of trade union action. Its fighting organization is the trade union . . . ; its basic method of class warfare is the strike, with the general strike as the revolutionary weapon; and its revolutionary goal is the setting up of a trade union 'state' to conduct industry and all other activities.

(Four Characteristics of Syndicalism)

- (1) failure to provide the closely knit organization of the most developed revolutionary elements (which must be the Communist Party) indispensable for uniting and leading the less developed masses;
- (2) failure to utilize the many political methods of struggle vitally necessary to carry on the workers' daily fight against the state and the capitalists for the eventual overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat;
- (3) failure to establish a basis for the unity of the worker with the poorer sections, of the farmers and petty bourgeoisie against the capitalists, a unity fundamental for effective

struggle against capitalism;

(4) failure to work out a practical plan for the operation of the workers' society after the abolition of capitalism."

W.Z. Foster, The Communist.

11. For an excellent example of the "left" revisionist point of view, see the March 1980 issue of The Black Scholar in which there is an article by Nelson Johnson/Phil Thompson, "Which Way Forward for Black Liberation?"
12. See again, RWHQ's paper on the national question, "Build the Black Liberation Movement."
13. While some good work did take place under the slogan of the "Negro-Labor Alliance," we believe such a formulation is both imprecise and inaccurate, thereby encouraging mistakes and deviations.
14. Jesse Jackson, in the early days of Operation PUSH, articulated this view in the so-called "Kingdom Theory." The original formation of Operation PUSH must be seen within the political context of the early 1970's and the interplay of class forces. While it is probable that there was some "power politics" going on in SCLC which led to Reverend Jackson's withdrawal, PUSH, upon formation, was a lot more than a split-off from SCLC and its Operation Breadbasket. The original orientation of PUSH was toward a militant program in favor of the Afro-American bourgeoisie and sections of the petty bourgeoisie. The notion of the "Kingdom Theory" while recognizing and speaking of the problem of national oppression--if even in incorrect and unscientific terms--nevertheless pointed to the clear role of leadership for Black business in the AAPLM. Additionally, PUSH encouraged a revitalized and active role for the Black church. Since that time, however, PUSH's strength has diminished as a result of the general economic crisis in the U.S. and its effect on Black business; the downturn in the AAPLM; and probably some specific internal difficulties. While the Reverend Jackson still is a prominent political figure, it is significant to note that in a Black Enterprise survey only one third of those polled viewed Reverend Jackson as a real leader of the AAPLM. This is interesting and thought provoking since Black Enterprise's audience is directly that group which PUSH and Reverend Jackson attempted to reach and for which it wished to speak: new Black professionals, educators/academics and the more activist sections of the Black bourgeoisie. We can see in PUSH the problem faced by the Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie in attempting to exert organizational leadership and hold to a consistent position. As the AAPLM regains its strength, however, and achieves a new level of activism, we should not be surprised to witness sections of the Black business community coalesce around one or two definite

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organizations and through them, attempt to lead the struggle.

15. As we will note later, what the present left-wing of the AAPLM lacks is a nationwide vision which is quite different from nationwide events. For all of the nation-wide events held, there is a general lack of program and the orientation to coordinate and unite the left-wing, as well as win over the other sectors of the Afro-American people.
16. As of the writing of this paper, we have not summed up the full implication of recent line changes in the CWP.
17. As we noted above, there are often very critical differences among revolutionary nationalists. Some view themselves as Marxist-Leninists, but see themselves more in the tradition of "national communism." A full examination of the history of the "national communist" trend is far beyond the scope of this paper, but we suggest the reader examine the works by Alexandre A. Benningsen and S. Enders Winbush, Muslim National Communism in the Soviet-Union, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979; and the work by Serhii Mazlakh and Vayl' Shakhrai, On the Current Situation in the Ukraine, edited by Peter J. Potichnyj, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1970. Both works are excellent treatments by or about national communists. Briefly, national communism generally speaking is a theory that calls for the merger of Marxism-Leninism and nationalism. It has developed among oppressed nations and nationalities generally as a response to the failure of oppressor nation communists to seriously and consistently address the national question.
18. The dialectic of national privilege for the white workers and national oppression for the oppressed nationalities has been the main base for reactionary white chauvinist thinking and practices among the white workers--this, in fact, constituting one of the main obstacles to principled unity. As part of the working class, Black workers have a responsibility to and relationship with other nationalities, and to that movement as a whole.
19. Davidson, In Defense of the Right of Self-Determination; Haywood, Toward a Revolutionary Line; Foner, Organized Labor and the Black Worker; articles from the CPUSA, found in The Communist; Robert Allen, Reluctant Reformers; Manning Marable, The Road Toward Black Power and Rethinking the Seventies; Wilson Record, The Negro and the Communist Party; Spero and Barris, The Black Worker.
20. Although we have never liquidated cultural work in principle, PUL has not paid sufficient attention to its development. For this we are self critical. It points to our weaknesses in understanding the all-round nature of the national question. As for M-L as a whole, where cultural work was continued, it took on an abstract, rhetorical and "left" character (e.g., the singing group of PRRWO, WVO, etc.) Cultural work can be an integral part of the development of the

revolutionary consciousness of a national movement and the AAPLM specifically. Particularly given U.S. history and the white supremacist practice of attacking Afro-American history and culture, progressive and revolutionary cultural work takes on a special significance. Such work can include, but not be limited to, poetry, literature, music, art, film, and dance. To their credit, the LRSM and comrade Amiri Baraka, in particular, have continued to emphasize and demonstrate in practice the importance and significance of revolutionary cultural work.

APPENDIX I

DISCUSSION POINTS CONCERNING BLACK UNITED FRONTS

In June of 1980, Black activists from across the country met in New York to form a National Black United Front. Preceding this historic occasion, several cities had already developed local Black United Fronts or pre-Front formations. These efforts to unite all who can be united are of short-term as well as long-term (or strategic) importance. In the short-term, Black communities are largely fighting defensive battles against racist attacks, far reaching cuts in social services and to maintain political gains won in the 1960's (e.g., school desegregation, voting rights). United fronts which draw in the range of forces in our communities and mold them into a strong fighting force will prove to be invaluable organizations. But united fronts are not only defensive organizations. Almost all liberation movements make use of united front formations to draw on the strength and traditions of existing organizations in fighting the agreed upon enemy.

Since the Black Liberation Movement is a multi-class movement, successful struggle will necessitate an organizational form that facilitates the joint action of Black workers, petty bourgeois forces, and yes, even members of the national bourgeoisie. It is because of the necessity that Black revolutionaries take an active interest in the growth and political development of Black United Fronts that we present the following eight (8) discussion points.

(1) Black United Fronts must be coalitions of organizations and individuals committed to the struggle against imperialism and white-supremacist national oppression. These must be broad formations and include all those forces who can achieve a basic level of working unity in opposition to a common opponent. These forces need not define the problem in the same terms.

(2) Black United Fronts (BUFs) cannot be consciously revolutionary mass organizations in this period. If BUFs are to be truly united fronts in name and character, they must speak to the current problems in the Black community. They must additionally seek to encompass and represent the broad range of forces active in the Afro-American national movement. This can range from Marxist-Leninists to cultural nationalists to reformist activists.

(3) For BUFs to seek to encompass the broad range of organizations and progressive thought in the Afro-American national movement, they must not replace existing organizations. Rather, they must be a means to pool resources toward attacking a common target. This will undoubtedly mean a relative fluctuation in participation by different groups.

(4) The key to building Black United Fronts is the development of a minimum, working program and basic rules of non-sectarian behavior within the Fronts. Program does not equal principles of unity. In some ways, principles of unity are a lot less substantive and critical to the development of BUFs.

A program can include certain specific areas around which the BUF makes the commitment to work. This is not the same thing as a "laundry list."

(5) Of these areas, there will generally be one area which is the main focus while the other areas continue to operate but do not necessarily receive the time and attention which the main focus does.

(6) For the BUF program to be actively supported, we should guard against BUFs being called into existence by proclamation, but rather Fronts should form as a result of consultation and cooperation by different sections of the more active Afro-American forces: consultation and cooperation tested in actual joint work. This is not to say that BUFs should be formed by the left-wing of the Afro-American movement in isolation from more moderate forces. Consultation and cooperation with active forces can include NAACP youth councils or chapters which show a commitment to struggle. It can include active Black trade unionists or Black professionals' groups, as well as block clubs. The essential point is that rather than working from the top down, i.e., rather than first proclaiming the Front and then asking people to come in and join, it is essential for the Black Left to work patiently in winning over broader sectors of the Black population to recognize the need for practical, working unity.

(7) Progressive, mass organizations and united fronts are not the same thing. They must not be confused. If we want to build Fronts,

we must be good at building alliances of a variety of forces. While it is essential to win the active support of unaffiliated individuals, Fronts necessitate the close, working collaboration of already organized forces.

(8) We must pay close attention to questions of organization. Bureaucracy can kill an organization, coalition or Front. Structure must flow from the needs of the work and not the other way around. Develop only as many committees and committee heads as there are interested people to do the work. Also, once leadership is determined, it is important to develop a workable method of criticism/self-criticism as a safe-guard against bureaucracy as well as other errors.

APPENDIX II
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAPLM----Afro-American People's Liberation Movement
CBTW-----Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
CPML-----Communist Party Marxist-Leninist
CPUSA----Communist Party USA
LRSML----League of Revolutionary Struggle (ML)
NBIPP----National Black Independent Political Party
NBUF-----National Black United Front
OCIC-----Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center
PRRVO----Puerto Rican Revolutionary workers' Organization
PUL-----Proletarian Unity League
PNOC-----Philadelphia Workers' Organizing Committee
RU/RCP---Revolutionary Union/Revolutionary Communist Party
RWHq-----Revolutionary Workers' Headquarters
WVO-----Workers' Viewpoint Organization