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## REVOLUTIONARY INTEGRATION

### Draft Resolution on the Negro Struggle

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#### Preface

The Black Revolt in the South is objectively on the threshold of still another new stage in its development: a stage of political organization for revolution -- organization for a show-down struggle against the police-state and for a new democratic political system.

Southern Negro militants, young and old, have sustained a courageous struggle for the past ten years. After the high points of Montgomery, where working class leaders pushed the ministers into the foreground, and Little Rock, officially led by the NAACP while an armed community waited, the movement tended to recede. Restless over the inaction of the clergy and NAACP, the youth then entered the scene, bringing to life struggles all over the South. Sometimes with small numbers, but with indomitable spirit, they capapulted the morale of the movement and shamed their elders into motion.

The movement as a whole operated generally within the confines of reformism, i.e. the attempt to change the racial climate of the South by reform. While the youth, in SNCC, never considered themselves bound to reformism in principle and are politically unprejudiced and open-minded, they have not challenged the theory of reformism.

The Robert Williams movement in Monroe did. It synthesized the activism of the youth, the proletarian ranks and behind-the-scenes proletarian leadership of Montgomery, and the mass aggressiveness later displayed so dramatically in Birmingham. Williams was the first to publically project a radical ideology, a bold and revolutionary strategy, and a proud internationalism.

The three streams of the civil rights movement -- youth, the church, and the working masses -- converged in Birmingham, with the ministers fronting. Birmingham was to be the culminating effort, the key battle, of the ten-year struggle, designed to break the back of segregation in the South. The Negroes fought heroically. They shook the country and the world. They emerged with honor and with new strength -- but with no concessions obtained. All agreements made by the Birmingham petty-bourgeoisie were nullified by the overwhelming pressure of the southern police-state.

For the participants, this only confirms what they already know or feel -- that there is no possibility of winning Freedom Now through pressure-attempts to reform the totalitarian police-state.

The preachers placed ultimate faith in the federal government, which has failed in all of its promises, and here failed again. Kennedy's man in Birmingham failed miserably in his "arbitration" operation and the Brothers Kennedy stood glaringly exposed as fakers. The Reverends, in turn, lost much prestige in the process. And who gained stature? Robert Williams. A figure like Leroi Jones, a northern intellectual in Birmingham as a reporter, assured his audiences of street demonstrators that their experience proved the validity of the concepts of Robert Williams.

Birmingham represented the failure and exposure of reformism in the South; but it also and simultaneously represented a great leap forward in organization, experience and awareness. The mood, the pace, the tremendous dynamic of the demonstrations and reminiscent of great strikes and insurrections; observers and participants reporting back are tremendously stirred by the complex phenomenon they witnessed: an elated but disappointed community soberly evaluating its overwhelming experience.

The militant Negroes of the South are now groping for the handle of a new weapon. They know or sense what it is, but they hesitate to articulate it. The essence of it is:

1. There must be a new leadership, radical and bold.
2. It must be prepared to lead a revolution, because the whole police-state system must be destroyed.
3. A political struggle, requiring a new political party, is the only vehicle.

Being a one-to-four minority in the South, however, dims the prospect of Negroes overthrowing the police-state alone. Consequently, they will realise that they must so fashion their strategy as to break through the racist wall separating them from the white workers. They must persuade the southern white workers and poor farmers to see the identity of political interest between white workers and Negroes, and the common class interest which crosses the color line. Together, they will forge a merged struggle for democratic rights -- for race equality, civil liberties and the rights of labor. As it develops its revolutionary perspective, the southern civilrights movement will orient toward an alliance with a revived northern labor movement. Only northern labor has the power to paralyse the ability of the government to intervene against the southern revolution. And since the southern Negro movement cannot wait until northern labor sheds its passivity and burocratic leadership, it must proceed to shake up and spur northern labor into life. Southern Negroes will thus profoundly stimulate the northern giant into recovering its capacity for struggle.

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Geographically separated, facing two complementary but different forms of capitalist rule, and responding with diverse

tactics and levels of consciousness, the southern movement and the movement "Up South" and West are still bound together by mutual experience, solidarity, and exploding racial consciousness born of frustration too long endured.

Militant currents emerging from the seething ghettos of the North and West recognizing the blind alley of reformism, ignored by the labor bureaucracy, and suspicious or uncertain of the ability of socialist organizations to understand and/or adapt themselves to the needs of the Negro struggle, have long been grappling with the problem of the nationwide crisis of leadership in the movement.

As a consequence of this crisis, they are experimenting with local and regional levers of upsetting the status-quo, and are prepared for more massive and radical assaults upon white supremacy as conditions ripen.

The vacuum produced by the long hiatus of the reformist leaders found poignant expression in the rise of the Black Muslims. As a fiery propaganda sect, they spurred the reformist leaders by unmasking their accommodation to white domination and by agitating the entire country with their pithy truths about race relations in the U.S.

The doctrine of separatism, however, orients this movement away from the physical struggle against racial discrimination into contemptuous abstentionism. They substitute for combat a classical Utopian attempt to build up an independent Negro economy in the U.S.

The Muslim movement is a contradiction: articulate and defiant -- superstitious and backward. It is a transitional phenomenon which will cease to exert its appeal when a more rational and internally consistent movement develops in the Negro community to fulfill the demand for truth, audacity, a goal, and uncorrupted leadership.

From where is such a leadership to come? The Negro movement in the North is extremely complex and its dynamics invariably produce a multitude of leadership sources. A number of militant, race conscious, independent and determined organizations have already appeared in northern cities, headed by new, younger leaders who are developing swiftly and might well become part of the future national leadership.

The impact of the Southern struggle is stirring vast new layers, the broad church section especially.

Many older militants and independent radicals are invigorated by events and ready to return to action.

A new powerful force among the artists and intellectuals is heralded by the appearance of individuals like Baldwin, Worthy, Hansberry, etc.

The Negroes of the North have been ready for a basic social change for decades, and we should expect to find streams of leadership flowing from every walk of life, every institution, every city, every class! Above all, as the revolutionary perspective is increasingly projected, the relatively privileged Negro trade unionists will come boldly forward again.

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The accelerating Black Revolt represents the most significant revolutionary development of our time, the most fertile field for the growth and flowering of socialist ideas, the most dynamic spur to the working class as a whole and the finest source of new radical leadership.

The SWP must be oriented to take advantage of the opportunities this situation offers. Given solid ideological footing and a deliberate sensitivity and flexibility, the party can enhance its image and make giant strides in and with the Negro movement.

PART I -- THE COMING SOUTHERN REVOLUTION

I. The Southern Police State. In Birmingham, the reformist program came to the end of the line. Day and night, wave after wave of children, youth and adults asserted the right to public prayer -- a most elementary form of the right of assemblage. Masses of Negroes fought a sustained, if largely "passive" civil war for days, paralyzing the city, filling its jails, destroying its trade and reducing its industrial production.

In the process, a few reforms were conceded by local businessmen. Within two days the agreement evaporated. It was revealed to anybody who didn't already know it that the white businessmen had no authority to limit segregation, because the true political authority is the White Citizens Council and the Klan. Police, politicians and businessmen belong to and take orders from these bodies.

The whole arsenal of passive resistance was lined up against the police state. It didn't work. The bruised and injured demonstrators returned from battle and jail with a huge moral victory -- but no concrete gains.

Clearly unmasked were the totalitarian character of the police state of the South, its immovable resistance to change and its inability to concede even modest reforms, despite legal action, passive resistance, love, militant mass action and sporadic violence. Most Negroes in the South recognize, in essence, the existence of a police-state. But now it has been exposed in a giant struggle, after preliminary skirmishes and testing in Montgomery, Albany, Monroe and hundreds of other cities and towns.

Modern capitalism rules at home basically through either bourgeois democracy or fascism; various levels and combinations of police and military dictatorship serve as transitions. When a state cannot both protect capital and win public acceptance, it must smash all official channels of political expression and resort nakedly to its repressive forces. Such a state will immediately and exclusively use these forces at the first sign of a mere difference with its policies. Such a state is a police-state, not just quantitatively but qualitatively different than the democratic form of rule.

The southern state provides no legal channels whatever for the democratic process, however strong the democratic movement may be. Even for the southern white workers, there is no meaning in the right to vote, no real freedom of speech, assemblage or press. Elections are plebecites, as under Hitler and Mussolini. Union organizing is virtually impossible. The southern regime freezes all social relations in the rigid mold of legal racism, wherein every action and thought of all southerners must conform to the diseased mores of white supremacy and segregation: the regime is totalitarian. This police-state, moreover, encompasses definite characteristics of fascism, i.e., support by a mass middle class base. But this base is so badly deteriorated that the state can be described only as "fascist-like," in recognition of its retention of some portion of mass support capable of terrorism.

Truman Nelson's description of the emerging consciousness of this phenomenon is to the point: "There is a recognition (by Negroes) that municipal government there is a military one along the lines of troops occupying and controlling an enemy or colonial people."

The lesson of Birmingham is that even mass actions which bring the businessmen and police to their knees are not enough. The enemy is a fascist-like police-state system.

2. The role of the U.S. Government in the South. Nelson calls the South a "lunatic society" and despairs of anything short of coercion by the North to effect any change. If the nature of the southern state does indeed preclude reform, will the U.S. government initiate or force enough reforms to align southern discrimination with the level of "legal" equality in the North and West?

Hardly. The capitalist class, its political parties and its machinery of state helped to create the totalitarian racist regime of the South nearly a century ago, in order to crush the democratic alliance of the Freedmen and the white farmers during Reconstruction. U.S. capital then incorporated this new dictatorship into its national economic, political and social organization. Today far from being inclined to release anew the revolutionary energy of the southern working class, capitalism prepares instead to resort to a police-state in the North.

Present trends towards fascist development (like the Hargis-Walker duet) indicate that the obvious road for U.S. capitalism, as the general crisis deepens, is the nation-wide extension of the southern system, rather than vice-versa.

Short of all-out national fascism, the political stability of capitalist rule must rest in large measure upon the continued disenfranchisement of the southern working class, black and white. The solid and never-changing reactionary southern bloc that dominates congress has provided the formula for the two-party system since 1876. On the one hand, the bloc exercises a chronically retrogressive veto power-an extra-legal check added on to the check-and-balance system. On the other hand, the bloc facilitates survival of demagogic northern liberalism by undertaking a constant parliamentary sham battle. Here, the Bill of Rights, the anti-slavery amendements, and human dignity are stage-props for both sides. ("Senator," said the gentleman from the Deep South to the northern liberal, "Let me know if you are ever in trouble. I'll attack you".-Life.) The present U.S. political structure could not survive without its southern pole.

To obscure the basic dependence of the government upon the southern system, to create the illusion that the government desires and will effect drastic changes in the South, and to project a democratic image for international consumption, the government rattles the sword at the Bourbon South and even sends troops, ostensibly to rescue a few Negroes in distress.

What are the real motives behind the troop movements? What is the actual function of the troops?



(1) To prevent self-defense. Eisenhower only dispatched troops to Little Rock at the mayor's insistence that the Negro community was an armed camp prepared to slaughter the head-strong Klan.

Kennedy developed an ominous new theme during the Birmingham crisis. Not only did he send troops to Alabama only after the Negroes had gained the initiative and whipped the Birmingham police and fire departments, but, having installed them in readiness, he explained their continued presence by the "danger" from "extremists" --from both sides, of course. Negroes have a pretty good idea of which "extremists" will take the beating from federal troops.

(2) To Help Racist Politicians. Kennedy's fantastic invasion of the University of Mississippi with huge armies, all out of proportion to the need for Meredith's safety, was designed to prevent a split in the white community. The town of Oxford, threatened with removal of accredited academic status for the U. of M. as a consequence of Barnett's interference, was prepared to accept Meredith as an alternative to the expected exodus of students. Kennedy's troops offset the emergence of a conflict among whites over Barnett, and held intact the authority and power of the state officials by allowing them to be defeated by an overwhelming outside force instead of by local opposition.

(3) To Appease the Allies. Kennedy used the Ole Miss troops to renew the desired image of the U. S. Government for international consumption, presenting the government as a champion of democracy even in the face of solid racist public opinion. It is highly probable, also, that the mock-battle with Barnett was staged with the ideas in mind of mollifying world public opinion in advance of the forthcoming invasion of Cuba, and stationing a body of troops close to Florida.

(4) To Intimidate the Working Class. The University of Mississippi spectacle, displaying the massive, arbitrary and ruthless power of the government, in readiness to handle domestic conflicts, had a bulldozing effect on workers.

(5) For the Record. Eisenhower used his Little Rock troops operation as a smoke-screen for a drastic retreat on the civil rights front all along the line.

The White House will not change the South; the way federal troops are used divulges this clearly enough. The administration will "take steps", however --enough to mollify Roy Wilkins and Co., et al, and secure their allegiance to the party for another season.

Any gains engineered by the White House will be pure tokens, of temporary character, gilded with big future promises. They will be granted in the context of keeping the Southern System basically intact and for the purpose of forestalling and slowing down the struggle. Neither international pressure nor threats of domestic insurrection will budge the federal government into rearranging the basic pattern of southern totalitarianism.



Further, it is counter to the economic interests of the capitalists to abolish segregation. When the Monthly Review said that "Southern Negroes have a valuable ally in...big Capital," they were stargazing. Wall Street and the Democratic and Republican parties created the South, need the southern system, support and bolster it economically, politically and ideologically, and would collapse if anything happened to it. The nerve center of southern racism is not tropical neurosis, not the backward needs of a plantation economy, not social tradition. The source and patron and chief beneficiary is U.S. Capital.

3. The Southern Labor Party. If the southern police-state is so constructed as to preclude change, and if the federal government is not going to intervene decisively for social reform, the only road left open for achieving civil rights is the political revolution, wherein the racist oligarchy is destroyed and the people take the power directly into their own hands.

Indeed, such action would constitute a very "legal" revolution, merely seeking to return constitutional law to the South. The present lawless regime overthrew, by force and violence, the democratically selected governments of the Reconstruction, and has ruled for nearly a century by force and violence, in complete defiance of the Constitution, 60 years of Supreme Court endorsement notwithstanding.

But legal or not, a revolution is an enormous undertaking, and as the radicalism of the southern movement evolves, its strategy, logically would comprise two main features: (1) The Negro minority in the South needs allies. (2) This political struggle requires a political party as an ideological-organizational center and lever.

The average southern white worker is doomed to poverty and degradation until he is able to identify with the Negro, for the Negro is the symbol of southern labor and his degradation reflects on all labor. Inasmuch as the Negro movement holds the initiative and will probably continue to hold it, upon it devolves the responsibility for encouraging the white workers to join a common struggle against the police-state and jointly build a political party as the instrument of struggle. The concept of a Southern Labor Party is the only one which embodies the needs of class unity this side of socialism. Whatever it may actually be named, the construction of a political party serving the interests of Negroes and white workers is the next higher stage of development of the southern struggle.

This party will not emanate from the unions. There is no broad union movement in the South; only a few unions exist. These owe their generally tenuous hold to special circumstances: a monopoly of skilled labor, contracts derived from national negotiations, etc. These unions for the most part are lily-white, and insofar as they represent an aristocracy of labor tend to be supporters of segregation. Nevertheless, even these unionists have no legal protection or legal avenues of expansion.

However, there are workers in the South and there are masses in motion; they need an independent political party of their own;

they are entitled to form a party called "Labor" or otherwise, with or without the participation of the unions. Significant unionism will never exist in the South short of a new regime, for democratic rights are the foundation of unionism. Consequently, the causal relation between unionism and the Labor Party that characterizes the North is reversed in the South: Southern unionism will be the product instead of the basis of the Labor Party.

4. The Role of Northern Labor in the Southern Revolt. The U.S. government will be even more hostile to the unfolding Southern Revolution than toward Cuba. It will see in the revolt the beginning of the socialist revolution in the U.S. -- which, in fact, it will be. Consequently, the problem arises of how to neutralize and/or paralyse the government's counter-revolutionary tactics.

Northern labor alone has such power; its support is thus decisive for the southern movement. But such support is precluded as long as unions remain impotent under bureaucratic rule. A key task of northern Negroes is accordingly posed: activizing Negro and white unionists into fighting for union democracy and a new left-wing leadership that will place the financial, organizational and political resources of labor at the disposal of the civil rights movement.

What a historical reversal -- and triumph -- this will be! The failure of labor's "Operation Dixie" 15 years ago was one of the important demoralizing pressures aiding the bureaucracy in establishing its stranglehold on the unions. Along with the Taft-Hartley act, it signified the end of the union movement's ability to expand. It ushered in the era of cannibal unionism -- expansion over the corpses of weaker or "Communist" unions. It crystallized the trend to flagrant class collaboration, sufferance of government domination and arrogant white supremacy.

The failure in the South, never adequately explained, disheartened many union militants; their confidence in the working class was weakened. But the politicalization of the southern civil rights movement will spell out the causes of this defeat and give them a new understanding and perspective and a new opportunity to build unionism in Dixie. A new hope for southern unionism will be raised in the northern labor movement when the civil rights movement starts requesting support for southern political action. The ferment in the working class will accelerate. Significant layers of workers will come to understand that their own democratic rights are vitally endangered by southern practice and its threatened northward extension. Workers will want to strike a decisive blow in their own behalf by helping the cause of southern unionism via support to the democratic rights movement there.

Even sections of the labor bureaucracy fear the southern system. The run-away-shop South is the fountainhead of reactionary anti-labor legislation and fascistic movements. Unionism's failure in the South is the Achilles heel of the bureaucracy, rendering it helpless before organizational erosion. Northern labor officialdom today would have to listen to representatives of the impressive southern movement.

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A dialectical interdependence links the Southern Labor Party, southern unionism, and the left wing in northern unions.

In a police-state, simple mass action (picket line, mass meeting, boycott, etc.) is not enough to win any democratic rights, including union recognition. Local tactics must be geared to the real nature of the oppressor, to inter-racial working class solidarity, and to active assistance by the northern Negro and labor movements. This is the historical difference between union organizing in the 30's and union organizing in the 60's; the former demanded class struggle in a bourgeois democratic environment; today what is needed is political struggle against the iron heel of a brutal totalitarian state apparatus, the southern wing of U.S. capitalism.

The very backwardness of the Dixie sector grips the more advanced northern labor movement by the throat, choking and stifling it; to survive, the north must break this stranglehold. Defense of the southern movement is the opening wedge in this struggle for self-preservation.

#### PART II -- THE NORTH:

##### The Prolonged Crisis of Leadership and the Quest for Program

5. The Reformist Leadership. Whereas the southern movement is characterized by mass activism and the beginnings of ideological probing, the northern sector is only just becoming, by reflex, a mass movement, despite its more advanced level of political consciousness. The South is proceeding swiftly and classically from action to thought; the more complex North has been studying programs and parties for 30 years and its passivity syndrome was the outcome of this frustrating search.

Uncertainty, accommodation, cynicism, or blind rage are not programs for action; they cannot mobilize. Only a call and a tactic -- strike! boycott! sit-in! -- can do that. The main "call" up north by Negro leaders before the Till Case and Montgomery was the NAACP's deadening "take it to court" refrain.

Reformism's decrepitude, only just unveiled down south, has been an acknowledged fact in the North so long that it's generally accepted as a joke, like bad bus service.

Working class Negroes in the North, living amidst poverty and injustice, are generally conscious of the need for fundamental social change and have been for decades. Their economic position and their rejection by white society have rendered them immune to the American myth of a progressive, stable and benevolent capitalism supplying plenty for all. In the truth of their lives they find the truth about American society.

This radical awareness, while undirected toward a specific means of social change, has expressed itself in an overwhelming response to every opportunity to demonstrate in breadth against the status quo: Through the old Communist Party, the CIO, the March on Washington Movement, the war-time struggles, the SWP, the racial wars in Harlem and Detroit, the Progressive Party, the Harlem reception of Castro, the pro-Lumumba demonstration, etc.

Consciousness has kept pace with reality. But in the absence of a leadership adequate to the task, decades of disappointment and disgust resulted. Where matured objective conditions and mass consciousness exist without a leadership prepared to advance the struggle to higher levels, all elements of a crisis of leadership are present. The entire movement, denied the logic of its own dynamic, tends to degenerate.

What is the source of this protracted crisis?

The struggle against racial discrimination has centered around the demand for integration. The official leaders of the integration movement have come from the middle class professionals. The inability of this leadership to express the needs of the masses and to develop an effective strategy is lodged in the contradictory position of the middle class in general, compounded by the peculiarities imposed by the race system.

The ghetto petty-bourgeoisie -- the self-employed and the professionals -- feed on the masses and often despise and fear them; at the same time, they are brutally rejected by white society and identified with their "inferiors." On the one hand, they enjoy a racial monopoly of certain businesses and occupations, thereby profiting from segregation; on the other hand, the flagrant gap between their living standard and their social status outside the ghetto is a source of daily humiliation and resentment against racism. A conflict therefore exists between their class and racial interests. By turns cynical, conciliatory or enraged, they still exert a basically conservative pressure upon the leaders of the integration movement, intensifying their hostility toward fundamental change and their habit of compromise and tokenism.

A less conservative but still restrictive pressure on the leadership stems from a section of the new middle class of professionals and semi-professionals who are the main beneficiaries of integration struggles. With good jobs in the white world (government, education, public institutions, and the white-collar sector of industry), this group sees individual assimilation as the goal. Theirs is "the desire to achieve acceptance in American life by conforming to the ideals, values, and patterns of behavior of white Americans." (E. Franklin Frazier.) But the desire can rarely be realized. Revolving in a restricted circle of fellow Negro professionals and white liberals, they, too, are ambivalent. In limbo between two worlds, and unsure of their identity, they have no mass influence.

The leadership of the integration movement comes mainly from these two sectors and reflects their political schizophrenia.

Pushed hard today by the ranks and by national pressures into tough talk and sometimes frenetic activism, they still more or less zealously guard their pro-capitalist respectability and conformism. The failure of the middle class leadership to inspire and advance the movement is caused by reformism. The old-style leaders can provide no solution to the elementary demands of the southern struggle and they lock up the northern movement in capitalist politics.

There is no class-race conflict in the Negro worker. The struggles for civil rights and working class solidarity are complementary and equal parts of the drive of the entire working class for emancipation.

Worker-leaders, however, have been rendered cautious by events. Unions, paralyzed by bureaucracy and government, remain essentially unmoved by civil rights struggles, whether inside or outside the unions. Negro working class leaders within the unions become conservatized and intimidated by the class collaborationist passivity of the unions and by the shakiness of their own privileged jobs and higher incomes (relative to the community norm). At the present moment they provide no alternative leadership to that of the middle class.

From the early 30's to 1950, the cream of Negro militants, numbering many thousands, dedicated themselves to leading the Negro movement toward socialism, first through the Communist Party and after 1941, through the SWP. But neither party was able to demonstrate convincingly its capacity to apply Marxism to the Negro struggle. This failure of theory and practice forced Negroes to seek solutions elsewhere or caged them in doctrinaire formulas. No substantial Marxist leadership was built, and the desire of socialist Negroes to lead the Negro movement in a militant anti-capitalist direction was blunted.

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The contradictory and demoralizing co-existence of a reformist leadership with militant ranks has caused a certain revulsion-reflex against the principle of integration. Negroes are increasingly attracted to newly revived doctrines of separatism. But here, too, they are finding a leadership basically reformist and arbitrary, oriented elsewhere than the field of struggle.

Is there no alternative to reformist-conformist integration versus a black homeland? This 30-year old dilemma can only be answered by Marxist analysis. What do logic, history and sociology provide in the analysis of the Integration - Nationalism - Separatism complex?

6. Nationalism. A Nation, according to orthodox definition, is a people united by an exclusive geography and a common heritage, language, history and mode of production, all comprising a distinctive culture.

Nationalism had long been attained by the powerful nations of western Europe when the developing Russian revolution revealed a new aspect of the National Question. Over a hundred small oppressed nations and pre-national tribal peoples discovered or re-discovered national aspirations long throttled by Great Russian chauvinism and newly liberated by the economic crisis and the Bolshevik slogan

of self-determination. These deep-seated national aspirations became a huge revolutionary centrifugal force, aiding in the destruction of the Czarist empire and the capitalist regime which followed making it possible for the Russian proletariat to win and hold the power.

Long before the Revolution itself, Lenin oriented the Bolsheviks toward these backward, even primitive, agrarian peoples with an analysis of the whole problem of the National Question and the role of Self-Determination. This analysis became a new body of Marxist theory, guiding socialists in the task of trying to awaken latent nationalist drives for the struggle against capitalism,

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U. S. Negroes obviously do not fit into the classical definition of a Nation. But it is contended that they nevertheless are a potential nation, that they may become a Nation if and when they achieve a national consciousness. And what constitutes a national consciousness? Apparently, "a certain group of people, living in a certain place, has decided to take its political destinies into its own hands." So at that point where Negroes fight in their own way for their own goals and with their own leaders, they apparently become transformed. They metamorphose from a race into a Nation, the Negro question turns into the National Question, and the fate of the Negro suddenly becomes determined not by his own history in America but by the laws of national development deduced from the plight of small backward nations under the Czarist empire, who collectively constituted the majority of the population of the empire.

That Negroes are a potential "Nation" is an unproved assumption. That Negroes constitute a "Nation" or an "incipient Nation" or an "emerging Nation" or even a "Nation within a Nation" requires concrete analysis, rarely supplied.

For instance:

1. If Negroes are not a classic nation, what particular aspects of nationalism in their condition make for the possible emergence of a national consciousness? ("Oppression" is no answer.)

2. Granting, for argument's sake, that some concrete nationalist factors do apply, producing similarities, why is the Right of Self-Determination the correct slogan? Might it just as logically not be correct given the differences? What is decisive here?

3. How can a classic nationally-oppressed group directing its own destiny be equated to any oppressed group fighting for freedom? May a national consciousness someday be achieved by child-laborers, women, atheists, migratory workers, aged pensioners and sharecroppers?

4. The Bolsheviks directed European nationalism into serving the Revolution. Precisely how and why is Negro Separatism progressive and anti-capitalist?

5. Why does the relatively advanced and exploding Negro struggle need the type of slogan designed to raise the consciousness of a very backward agrarian European or Eurasian tribal people?

6. If a dormant nationalism will awaken under conditions of self-awareness and crisis, how explain the rejection of separatism by Negroes over a 300-year period of revolutions, revolts, wars, upheavals, etc.?

Answers to questions like the above are almost invariably based on abstractions from international experience, and not on the powerful realities and extraordinary history of the Negro in the U. S. Marxists tend to minimize the voluminous works of Negro scholars who investigated and dissected the Negro question, but their opinions are weighty and must be considered.

7. Race and Segregation. These Negro scholars (O. C. Cox, E. F. Frazier, James W. Johnson, Alain Locke, etc.) consistently maintain that the Negro question is a unique race question, that the kind of oppression suffered by Negroes in the U. S. is unique in history, that never before on earth has a group been persecuted purely because of skin color, i.e. race.

What is race? It is not a valid biological category. It is a social relation. It arose out of capitalist necessity to justify the slave trade and human chattel slavery to a western world simultaneously discovering the inalienable rights of man and social justice. Thus the fictions of race superiority-inferiority and the non-human nature of Negroes were invented.

In the southern United States with its unlimited expanse of virgin land, slavery took firm root. Initiated by mercantile capitalists, the southern slave system became more powerful than they, producing an independent ruling class which eventually ruled the U. S. itself.

The pervasive economic and political power of the slaveowners disfigured American society from the outset by imposing upon the entire nation the ideology of white supremacy, the hypocrisy and irrationality of race and race relations, and a tolerance of the horrors of chattel slavery.

After the Civil War and Reconstruction had destroyed the old slaveowning class, northern capital, from both economic and political motives, betrayed its promises and created a revised, capitalist form of race relations, based upon many of the traditions and social relations of slavery. Segregation took the place of the chattel as the main prop.

An analysis of this tortuous history reveals that race, i.e. race relations, is a peculiar and independent category of social relations. Race stands in relation to historically necessary social categories -- class, nationality, caste -- as irrational.



Social relations deriving from class, nation, etc. may be unjust, oppressive, reactionary. Still, these categories have a material foundation in modes of production and play progressive roles during certain historical periods (the class struggle is "the motive force of history").

Race exploitation, on the other hand, has no necessary relation to any mode of production. A system of exploitation and discrimination, revolving around the axis of skin color, arbitrary and perverted; it serves no progressive function whatsoever. It has caused all of American society to become organized around race relations, and, therefore, around prejudice. The race consciousness of white workers supercedes even their class consciousness, dulling their minds, doubling the obstacles for Negroes, preventing the organization of the proletariat as a class.

Because of the utter irrationality of race as a reason for social partition, segregation is absolutely required for the perpetuation of racial exploitation and because of this interdependence of segregation and discrimination, the Negro movement for nearly two centuries has directed its main line of struggle against segregation, against that barrier which prevents Americans from becoming a whole people, from becoming themselves.

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Can't we, nevertheless, call the Negro question a National question because of some similarities? Not without denying its unique character. The Negro question is not merely different than the National question, but diametrically opposed to it.

(1) Segregation is no factor whatsoever of National oppression. On the contrary, forced assimilation is the rule and mode of oppression.

(2) In oppressed Nations, the bourgeoisie tends toward assimilation with the oppressor; among Negroes, the bourgeoisie (the small but rich capitalist class) is the only consistently pro-segregation class.

(3) Separatist movements among oppressed Nations are almost universally progressive and liberating in philosophy and ideology, attacking concretely the institutions and practices of the National oppressor. Negro separatist movements have all accommodated to the form of oppression -- segregation. They accept and cater to the irrational concept of race as a scientifically legitimate biological category that justified social division. Some separatist movements have been militant, but within the framework of retrogressive concepts. Other separatist movements objectively capitulated to white supremacy on almost every score.

(4) The historic drive of oppressed nations is towards separatism; the historic drive of the Negroes is against separatism and segregation.

(5) For an oppressed nation to become integrated is a reactionary concession to the status quo, a defeat; integration for Negroes is revolutionary, because American capitalism incorporates segregation in its fundamental structure and cannot survive without it.

(6) Potential and pre-nations, once aroused, have no difficulty in perceiving a qualitative difference of identity in themselves and their oppressor. Negroes are Americans in nationality according to all basic criteria, and recognise only the unfair white-imposed color line as the difference between them and whites.

Among the oldest non-native inhabitants of this country, the Negro has contributed a huge share to its wealth, progress and world pre-eminence. He has played heroic and sometimes decisive roles in all of the historically important events. His life is inextricably involved with whites. Precisely because this is his homeland, prejudice and discrimination are infuriating. He has no other home. His Afro-Americanism doesn't indicate a previous nationality, for a continent is not a nation, and his culture and customs are not those of any African nations. Indeed, he knows not where in Africa his ancestors lived, and often feels strange with Africans (and vice-versa). His affinity for Africa is racial and internationalist.

Africans themselves are Pan-Africans first and nationals second. In defiance of the laws of European national development, the African revolution pushed national sovereignty into the background of its independence struggles almost from the beginning. In Kenya, for example, the Kikuyu gave their first military-defensive organizations not national but continental designations, such as "The African Fighting Forces" and "Defense Council of the Whole of Africa, Kenya Branch." Africa for the Africans is the central rallying slogan of the revolutions there; the strictly national aspirations of the peoples of Black Africa (scores of nations and incipient nations, most of which had few or no relations with each other historically) has long been superceded by race consciousness, deriving from the added burden of racial oppression under colonialism. What is commonly called African "Nationalism" is more accurately described as African Internationalism.

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On every score, the Negro question stands by itself as a unique phenomenon among exploited minorities, demanding independent analysis based on the key factors of race and segregation. To lump it together with its opposite, with European nationalism, obscures its character and its goals.

Do the momentary forms of the struggle for existence reveal or conceal its real nature? When the movement does assume nationalist-like forms, are these expressions representative or singular? Again, logic and history must provide the clues.

8. Negro Separatism. Negro "Nationalism," an expression of race consciousness, assumes the extreme form, under certain conditions, of separatism. An examination of the main historical expressions of separatism will illustrate the nature of these conditions and the ensuing character of the organizations.

(1) The first Back to Africa movement was the American Colonization Society. Initiated by the slaveowners in 1800 and supported by them, it was popular with a large section of free Negroes. Theirs was a desperate reflex against the new power of the plantation system which had become transformed from a dying tobacco economy into a flourishing and expanding cotton economy that held the government in the palm of its hand. This turn of events produced a wave of terrorism against the Negro community both free and slave, reversing the trend toward emancipation begun by the first American Revolution and completely isolating free Negroes from white society.

The separatist recoil ended abruptly in 1817 after the emergence of the first national organization of free Negroes, the Convention Movement. Its first meeting repudiated the tenets of the Colonization Society and laid down the principle of "stay where you are and fight for immediate and unconditional emancipation." This was the decisive turning point in the Negro struggle and laid the foundation for Abolitionism.

(2) The Garvey Movement emerged from three main sources: the doctrine of Booker T. Washington, the exclusivist "Talented Tenth" nature of the NAACP, and the growth of Harlem and industrial employment for Negroes during World War I.

Booker T. Washington reflected the dismal hopelessness of Negroes after the agonizing and bloody defeat of Reconstruction. Adapting to reaction, he proclaimed acceptance of segregation, creating a doctrine for Negroes that echoed the judicial formula of Separate but Equal (1893). In the absence of any channel for mass struggle, he accepted Negro inferiority as a premise and the race-structure of the south as a virtue. He urged industrial education to "fit" Negroes for separate equality and called integration "folly."

These concepts were quickly negated by Monroe Trotter and then by W. E. B. DuBois, who profoundly rejected the doctrine of separatism and exposed its source in the oppressor. DuBois organized the intellectuals for leadership of the Negro movement for equality; they shook up the white liberals with their revelations of the horrors of the New South and built a legal and propaganda apparatus for the Negro movement: the NAACP (1909).

World War I labor shortages caused southern Negroes to migrate to the North, where industrial employment considerably increased their income. Harlem became the center of the Negro world. The Negro movement, no longer an agrarian body of exslaves terrorized by the K.K.K., began to recover its social energy.

... But the NAACP was oriented elsewhere and Marcus Garvey, a West Indian, unscarred by defeat and uninhibited by sophistication, stepped into the breach.

Starting with Booker T. Washington's doctrine of Separate but Equal, he added the old "Back to Africa" slogan and the new Buy Black, Live Black, Think Black idea, injecting hope and defiance into Washington's doctrine of despair and turning it on its head. In 1916, he began establishing the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Harlem, launching a meteoric career. For the "Redemption of Africa" he created, in Harlem, an "entire government," an "aristocracy" (Duke of the Nile, Overlord of Uganda, High Potentate of Africa, etc.), dazzling uniforms the Black Legion military guard and elaborate rituals. He presided as "Provisional President of the Empire of Africa."

A century before, the Back to Africa movement had meant exactly what it said: it repatriated thousands of free Negroes to Liberia. But very few Negroes in the Universal Negro Improvement Association wanted to go back. They chanted "Back to Africa" as a means of protesting their intolerable condition in white America. They demanded dignity and economic security in the U.S.

Garvey understood this. Accompanying "Back to Africa" was the slogan "Black Star Line" -- a projected Negro-owned-and-operated steamship company which served the dual purpose of symbolizing the Return to Africa and providing a program for a Negro economy in U.S.

"Rise up you mighty giant!" Garvey exhorted. "Trade among yourselves and trade with Negroes abroad. Build a Negro Church based upon African religion, Negro schools and a Negro society."

The UNIA was the most powerful Negro movement of its era, representing a genuine social awakening of the Negro masses after defeat; yet it neither confirmed the correctness of Washington's philosophy, nor the fundamental separatist nature of the Negro movement. It was a vehicle of protest upon the only ground open to Negroes in that time of continued isolation: internal community self-organization and activity. It proved that race-uplift, black business and a militant spirit were not enough either to hold a movement together indefinitely or to serve as a vehicle of direct struggle against oppression.

The predominance of Garveyism in the Negro community proved transitory; rent by internal contradictions and crises, it evaporated as soon as realistic instead of romantic avenues of resistance to racial discrimination opened up. This occurred in 1925 when the organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was achieved, merging Negro socialist leadership with the proletarian struggle. In alliance with the NAACP, these new working class leaders undertook a campaign for jobs in Harlem, popularizing labor unionism and paving the way for later Negro entrance into the main stream of working class struggle: the CIC.

There have been minor separatist movements, such as that for a 49th State (in the early thirties). This was an attempt by the Negro bourgeoisie to turn the movement away from integration opportunities offered by interracial trade unionism. It never received popular support, nor have others until recently.

The only two separatist movements since 1800 (Colonization and Garveyism) which attracted a mass support were transitional vehicles to higher stages of struggle which repudiated separatism. They both served a function in the Negro movement, but never represented an important historical objective of Negroes. Rather, they were a mode of existence after demoralization and/or the closing of mass avenues of struggle. In both cases when doors of struggle opened, separatism, always born of demoralization, disappeared.

(3) The Black Muslims are the latest major separatist movement, resulting somewhat from the isolation of the Negroes from the labor movement, but more specifically from the closing of the doors of struggle by the bankrupt northern reformist leaders.

The Muslims' anti-conformist and anti-reformist posture strikes a responsive chord among the **most exploited sections of the unrepresented Negro workers**. Their ruthless unmasking of race reality in the U.S. through blistering blitzkrieg attacks on whites and on the discredited Negro gradualists and opportunists reflects and deepens the wisdom of their audiences on this score. Through their businesses and schools, the Muslims train men for jobs and women for domestic virtue; they rehabilitate former habitues of police court and prison and offset degeneration among the demoralized and backward. They project, like Garvey, an economic program for black business, both cooperative and private, within the ghetto, heightening race consciousness and community solidarity through this program. Even at worst, such proposals do bring more money into the Negro community, through jobs and surplus value, and the community needs both.

But like all previous separatists, the Muslims are ambiguous; they embody retrogressive as well as progressive ideas, Utopian as

well as rational objectives.

Their organization is militaristic and autocratic. Their schools preach a doctrine of defensive racism, absolute male supremacy, anti-Semitism, descent from Allah, and cosmic vengeance. Their call for an independent state opens no channel for struggle against oppression. Their concept of black business as a cure-all is Utopianism in classical form.

Many analysts have noted the 'pathetic' aspect of the Muslims -- their wild reach for a glamorous identity. This is a by-product of the post World War II trend among some Negro intellectuals to disdain the study of Negro history and culture, equating it with the segregationists' glorification of Uncle Tom. Negro leaders, subsequently, not only had no program but no historical race-identity and race-tradition to offer. The Muslims had both. An old program -- but a new God and a new invented identity, which imparted to some of the poorest Negroes a new sense of security and solidarity.

So once again, in the absence of a realistic and inspiring program of action, mysticism, razzle-dazzle and speak-bitterness became the mode of existence for sections of the most oppressed.

Much more serious, however, is their sectarian abstention from struggle, as graphically revealed in Birmingham. Amid the greatest mass actions in the modern South, they scoffed from the sidelines. After the demonstrations subsided and the results were in, they did a brisk business in memberships on the following basis: they wrote off the tremendous mass experience, from which such rich lessons are being learned, as a dismal defeat proving the folly of struggle.

Incapable of fundamentally advancing the struggle, they actually retard it in their own way, no less than the Wilkinsons and Kings. For, similar to the Garvey movement in every respect, the Muslims suffer by comparison:

1. Historical Background. Garvey introduced American workers to their real heritage in Africa. To a large extent, he popularized the findings of the integrationist scholars, building race pride in the truly dramatic historical achievements of Black Africa.

The Muslims, connecting Negroes to Islam, have produced an absurd fiction. Moslem Arabs were the original organizers of the African slave trade, becoming partners with the Christians in the devastation of the pagan tribes and nations of central and western Africa.

2. Internationalism. Garvey's 'Africa for the Africans' protested white imperialist domination of Africa, inspiring race solidarity and internationalism among American Negroes and vitally stimulating Africans. Garvey did perhaps as much as DuBois in awakening the Pan-African revolution from afar. Independently, these implacable foes -- each possessed of long-range historical vision -- helped to create that interpenetration of the African and U.S. Negro movements which had such revolutionary consequences in Africa and has such revolutionary implications for the U.S.

The Muslims offer Africa nothing and even deprive it of its rightful place in the heritage and the politics of U.S. Negroes.

3. Mysticism. After the defeat of Reconstruction, the Negro movement ebbed back into religion, which provided virtually the only expression of the mass aspiration for a better life. While the Garvey movement was by no means devoid of mysticism, it represented the first mass development away from post-Reconstruction religious expression of discontent. The UNIA was a social protest organization wherein religion took a distinctly subordinate place.

The Muslims are a religious organization, luring essentially materialistic modern proletarians backward into the Temple. The Temple is the focal point; the condition for participation is religious conversion.

In the political field, the Muslims are more astute than were the Garveyites, who served the Booker T. Washington Republican machine. Should they take their threatened plunge into politics and still maintain the contempt they now affirm for the existing white political structure, they would find themselves involved in a profound anti-capitalist struggle whose logic would force them to seek political rather than racial allies. A crisis of their own ideology would result, severely shaking their organization.

9. Black Nationalism of White Radicals and the Question of Self-Determination. Until the complete Stalinization of Comintern, the radical movement in the U.S. was vaguely integrationist. The IWW, militantly interracial, recognized no special Negro question; it was a class question, like everything else, to be solved through industrial unionism. The SP-CP attitudes are discussed by John Reed in his report to the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920: "The IWW, of course, organized the Negroes. But the old SP undertook no serious attempt to organize. In several states the Negroes were not accepted into the Party; in others they were separated into special sections; and in the Party units in the South, in general, spending Party money on propaganda among Negroes was forbidden.



"....(After World War I) The Messenger was founded, edited by a young Negro Socialist named Randolph. The magazine combined Socialist propaganda with a call to race consciousness... but at the same time...insisted on closest union with the white workers despite the fact that at times they took part in the pogroms on Negroes.

"Among (Negroes) arose and exists a movement for an armed uprising against the whites. Negro soldiers, returning from the front, were organized for self-defense...Communists, strongly in favor of a Negro movement for self-defense, must at the same time speak out against the idea of a separate uprising of Negroes... (which) without the support of the white proletariat...would only be a signal for the counter-revolution.

"Every movement aimed at an independent national existence does not meet with success among Negroes, as, for example, the "Back-to-Africa" movement which existed several years ago. They consider themselves first of all Americans whose home is the U.S. This greatly simplified the problem for Communists. The policy of the Communist towards Negroes should be to look at them first of all as workers.

"...the Communists must not stand aside from the movement of the Negroes for social and political equality which now, at the moment of growth of race consciousness, has widely developed among the Negro masses...social revolution...will be the only means of liberating the Negro as an oppressed nation."

But Garvey's mass support in the 20's was very impressive. Stalin sent a Comintern representative to the 1929 Jamaica convention of the Garvey movement to debate the question "Should Negroes join the Comintern?" (instead of Garvey's organization). Garvey won.

That same year ushered in the "Third Period" of international Stalinism, characterized by an anti-reality adventuristic program which took form on the Negro question in the imperative slogan of "Self-Determination for the Black Belt." Not only was the now-obvious independent and special nature of the struggle equated to nationalism, but separation was proclaimed as the only revolutionary course.

White Communists promptly undertook a search for some historical foundation to this theory, seeking to discover national peculiarities of the Negroes and trying dutifully to uncover separatist trends which would verify the prognosis of Negroes constituting an incipient Nation needing only to have their consciousness and will to struggle awakened in order to discover that what they really

wanted all along was a separate territory, independent government and racial exclusiveness.

The research yielded meagre results; its continuity was, moreover, regularly disrupted by the twists of Kremlin policy which alternately injected Self-Determination during leftish periods and withdrew it during ultra-rightist swings. Communist militants thereafter came to identify Self-Determination with "real Leninism" and with Foster, while Integration was associated with "social-democratic reformism" and Earl Browder.

The Trotskyist leadership (apparently with the exception of at least Ohler) took the position that not a national but a racial question was involved and that the struggle for civil rights, not racial autonomy, was the militant anti-capitalist direction of motion.

From the meagre documentary material available, it would appear that while they didn't have a fully worked out position, they had basically correct political instincts on this question, and these were brought before Trotsky in 1933.

Trotsky, suspicious of a political organization in a bi-racial country composed exclusively of the dominant race, defended the basic nationalist line of the CP (1933 Conversations). He stated that while his knowledge of the U.S. Negro question was too inadequate for a decisive opinion, he felt in the American attitude a similarity to that of Rosa Luxemburg and the reformist Social Democrats on the issue of the Eastern European nationalities.

The only thing he urgently proposed, however, was an immediate and thorough discussion of the question in the Communist League of America, but apparently no such discussion was held. American Trotskyism on the Negro question grew over into its opposite: from integration to Nationalism. This process was crystallized in the 1939 Resolution, committing the SWP to Nationalism and the Right of Self-Determination.

So from 1929 on, as the modern integration movement gained steam, no radical parties could see or understand the revolutionary implications of integration. The spectre of nationalism and its corollary principle of self-determination hovered constantly over the Negro question, with confusing results.

1. White radicals could support integration only tentatively because they expected the Negro movement to "mature" and reject integration. They tended to equate integration with opportunism of petty-bourgeois intellectuals and confidently awaited the

Negroes' "decision" for a separate Nation, the only goal capable, they believed, of inspiring and activating the backward mass.

Where integration cannot be supported in theory or principle, it is very difficult to project a consistent strategic or tactical orientation towards it. At best, virtually all that can be done is to support from the outside and initiate small-scale action from the inside. This stance is politically uncomfortable.

2. Not-so-confident white radicals agreed to "wait and see" and "hold the door open." This often inhibited their participation in the ideological discussion within the Negro community. It is difficult to participate if one really does not know what the goal of Negroes is, and if Marxism-on-the-Negro-Question means the right to choose separatism, the neutral white radical must make this offer to militant Negroes. The result sorely tries his neutrality; his generosity and democratic spirit go unappreciated, at best.

A Negro radical making the same offer in the name of the Party fares little better.

The formula runs the risk of offending them. By dangling before the Negroes the bait of "right of self-determination," the white Stalinists expose themselves to the danger of seeming to want to impose upon them a new form of segregation, to relegate them to a new "ghetto." But it is not certain that the Negro masses, despite their "nationalism," deliberately want separate institutions. It seems more probable that they aspire to being treated, in all phases of their life, on an equal footing with whites. In fact, the slogan of the "Negro nation" never stirred more than a very feeble echo in the Negro population. It was even badly received in the beginning by the Negro Stalinists, who finally had to yield, reluctantly, to the imperious orders of Moscow...The only point on which the Stalinists saw correctly is this:... The Negro masses have "nationalist" tendencies and will participate in the struggle to establish socialism in the U.S. only if this over-all struggle is accompanied by a special struggle for the emancipation of the Negro race as such. --Daniel Guerin, Negroes on the March.

It proves impossible in life to support the right of self-determination and also stay neutral on separatism.

Lenin frankly designed the slogan to awaken the desire for a national state among backward agrarian peoples previously deprived

of an opportunity to consider whether or not they wanted one. He wished to arouse this desire because of its highly likely revolutionary consequences for both the oppressed nation and the revolution as a whole. However, he said, having created and encouraged the desire for a national state, the Party, to be tactful, might officially take a "hands off" position in order not to prejudice the discussions of the problem. But basically, it was understood that to issue the slogan was to extend an invitation to separatism.

To support the Right of Self-Determination, then, is to invite Separatism. The purpose of raising the slogan is not to show how democratic or impartial the Party is, but to express precisely its partiality for a particular course in acceptable terms -- as a choice which the Nation has a Right to make, rather than an injunction from the Party. There can be no ambiguity on this score. By its very nature the slogan is inferentially pro-separatist. Both Negro and white workers understand it to be pro-separatist. And in a country where separatism connotes the old Separate but Equal or a new form of self-segregation, this slogan is like a hot potato, making impossible a genuine neutrality on separatism.

(3) "The Negro people haven't spoken yet." It may be that the white people have not heard them yet. Not in 30 years, or 100 years or 300 years of resistance, can a predominant direction of motion be cited by white Nationalists. History, empirical evidence, the universality of the integration struggle -- all lose meaning as the inevitable question mark is stamped upon every stage and facet of the movement. Since little can be proved or known in advance of the Year of Decision, the door must ostensibly always be left open to either variant. Yet the intense commitment of Negroes to winning their demands, here and now, is adjudged inconclusive, as are the integrationist principles of the foremost Negro analysts of the struggle. Neutrality in operation becomes the practice of viewing as indecisive or "peculiar" (in terms of theory) the integrationist surge and welcoming the separatists as significant.

In granting to Negroes the Right to Decide to Separate, many white radicals seem to have appropriated the Right to Pre-Judge the Decision.

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Is there no place, then, for democratic self-determination? Don't Negroes have the right to decide their own fate?

Of course! -- but in deference to their special history of oppression, not their "nationhood." A workers' government in the

U.S. could grant, as an elementary democratic right, an autonomous territory to Negroes, a section of Negroes or a tiny group of Negroes, should it be requested. But this has no earthly connection with the Right of Self-Determination of small nations. This is a right which a workers' government may offer to any special group having some cultural, religious, psychological, or other element in common which they wanted to preserve and which was not politically counter-revolutionary.

The Soviet Government granted the Jews a separate and autonomous national state in spite of the fact that the Bolshevik Party had opposed Jewish separatism during the struggle against Czarism. Lenin had condemned the demand for the cultural autonomy of the Ghetto as serving no purpose in the struggle. He never viewed the Jewish question as a question of self-determination, precisely for the same reason that it does not apply to the Negro question in the United States: separatism provides no avenue of struggle against the fundamental institutions of oppression.

The unique feature of racial oppression is its organization around segregation. The Negro movement can grapple with oppression only by attacking segregation. Separatism, by its very nature, can not participate in this real struggle.

10. The Resultant: The Negro Movement Today. The complex interrelations among Negro history, segregation, the reformist leaders, the advancing mass consciousness, the backwardness of white labor and corruption of its leaders, the theories of the radicals and the present international conjuncture have produced the current phenomenon sometimes called Negro Nationalism.

This movement is "nationalist" because, like the Africans, it wants an end to white domination and is prepared to wage war in its own behalf. But there the resemblance ends. Its chief components--intolerance of gradualism and moderation and whites in general; independence, pride and responsibility; a now-or-never, do-or-die defiance--add up to a powerful method of self-mobilization for justice through integration. It fights independently, but not for independence; it moves separately and almost alone, but not for separation; it demands the freedom of an equal partnership, not a divorce. It is Negro and not nationalist. It insists on its historically proven right to belong.

Negro "nationalism", then, is not classic nationalism; indeed, it isn't nationalism at all. It is simply the current form and stage of the drive for integration, a stage completely consistent with the needs of the struggle. Baldwin's prognosis of integrated disaster, the fellowship of the flames, if an equalitarian society does not emerge from the struggle, is the final summing-up of this inexorable choice: integration or mutual disintegration. There is no room for a "nationalist" alternative.

Separatism is usually frankly utilized (except by Muslims) as a tactic, as a pretended alternative and means of retribution.

Northern Negro "nationalism"--the most advanced ideological sector of the movement--and southern Negro direct action jointly forced the entire movement into Freedom Now, which almost everybody is for. This is not the great question of the day. The double-barrelled question on today's agenda is: Freedom How? and Freedom for What?

The Freedom Now movement is independent, but not homogenous. In the South, forces are already assembling around the point-blank issue: Reform or Revolution. In the North, political thinking, long grappling with the manifest crisis of leadership and absence of program, has evolved to an advanced point on the bridge to revolutionary internationalism. This stage is symbolized by the "cultural" dilemma, the growing rejection of "white" values.

The slaves created a distinctive culture: A philosophy of life expressing the greatest aspirations for freedom of any people of the era; a thoroughly equalitarian and democratic attitude; a folk-art in story and song; a musical speech.

Distinguishing this culture from the national cultures of Europe was the fact that it was never circumscribed, isolated or exclusive. On the contrary, it rapidly inundated the transplanted Anglo-Saxon culture of the slaveowners. In the rest of the country a cultural vacuum prevailed, born of the melting pot, of class fluidity, of constant migration and immigration. Negro folk culture was absorbed like a sponge. It was readily apparent that barriers between black and white were socio-political, not cultural, and that whites basically needed and responded to the black culture.

White culture was predominately European (art, literature, classical music, theatre, main religions, education, political principles, Puritan morality, etc.). What was original were certain progressive institutions reflecting America's unusual economic and political conditions: the Plebian folk-hero; democratic - informal manners; advanced position of women; unionism; individualism and free-speech; the public school; etc. But these were all corrupted by the victory of Jim Crow and segregation.

Denied the opportunity to further absorb Negro creativity, white American culture was left in a feeble state. The mores and habits of the imperialist Robber Barons took over. This new capitalist class produced by the Civil War stamped its ruthless, vulgar and Philistine image on American thought. A new house of culture was built on White Supremacy and American Superiority -- "The United States of Lyncherdom" (Mark Twain). And not until jazz artists and black workers came north and the Negro cultural Renaissance exploded in Harlem did 20th-century America start to create unique forms (modern novel, drama, music, dance, movies, industrial unions, organized sports, etc.),

Still, the predominant culture of anti-culture holds sway

today, in the "materialistic, T.V. crazy . . . H-bomb wielding paradise of the white man," offering little humanity or truth. Artificial and hypocritical, mean and sanctimonious, this culture is easily exploited by the master class for its ends.

The feeling of cultural and psychological alienation among Negroes is at bottom a political rejection of capitalist practices and standards, a view shared by most of the people in the world and even by many white Americans.

The Negro may reject everything "white", but his own humanistic culture, expressed by way of bitter honesty, cutting sarcasm, insult, etc. is hardly non-white--and is enormously popular with whites (Dick Gregory). An exclusive Negro culture today is an impossibility; it has no geographical base; born in the ghetto, it swiftly escapes it, becoming everybody's. This, too, is resented, but it is precisely Negro cultural expression (in music, literature, drama, etc.) that originally attracts many whites to the Negro cause and the human cause. White youth especially feel passionately involved; they have to help. How long they "stay on the train" will be determined by the level and momentum of the social struggle.

Earlier demands of the integration movement, as expressed by Du Bois, for instance, took cognizance of the need of Negroes to value and cherish their own culture and outlook, to learn their history and to affirm the identity which chauvinism had all but destroyed.

But reformist integration was ashamed of its slave heritage and culture. Racial equality meant that the Negro should become just like white. Many Negroes, appalled at what they were supposed to become just like, reversed direction.

They feel the need to halt the tendency to aspire to social assimilation. They intend to re-establish their own special identity and viewpoint as the condition of any future assimilation. "Black is Good." They demand the reconstruction of society on a non-racial basis, but are unwilling to vanish as Negroes from the American scene, dissolving into white America.

Cultural alienation for any American signifies objectively a rejection of imperialist standards and capitalist ethics. That the Negro self-differentiation from white Christian evil is growing signifies not a national peculiarity but an advanced class consciousness, which, like everything else about the Negro movement, is contagious. Negro cultural dissociation is showing the way to the white workers--to the "enemy"--reminding them of their youthful past and indicating their future role of status quo rejection and struggle.

Freedom-for-What, even expressed as a cynicism, is a serious question; it can only be answered by socialism. And in the merged interracial struggle to come for jobs for all, homes for all, schools for all, unions for all, free speech for all, and anti-war for all, the white worker-devils will have their historic chance for culture,



i.e. for class solidarity and revolutionary politics.

Even now, where mass protest marches and meetings are called, whites are invited and respond. The most impressive recent mass action of the northern movement, generated by solidarity with the southern movement but utilizing the occasion to protest local conditions, all included whites. When people are in motion, en masse, their momentum dwarfs their prejudices. In Seattle, the young ministers who originated the protest march after Birmingham publically demanded that the white clergy and politicians join them!

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That Negroes should lead white workers in social awareness, militancy and class solidarity is an illustration of the vanguard role they play; the next likely area for its expression will be the trade union movement.

Negro trade-unionists must serve a triple-headed master; the whites, the boss and the union officialdom. The hand of bureaucratic intimidation, corrupting and stifling the white unionist, presses even more heavily on the Negro unionist, who finds himself in a peculiarly contradictory position: on the lowest rungs in the shop but on a relatively privileged economic level inside the ghetto. The latter status restrains his resistance to the bureaucracy; the former drives him to seek a means of resistance compatible with the climate and his special problem of skin-color.

Behind this contradiction lies the history of U.S. unionism. The growing predominance of the ideology and practice of racism in the unions is one of their characteristics in the epoch of imperialist decay, although discrimination is traditional in industry. The small privileged section of better paid workers, the base of the bureaucracy, is almost exclusively white. In return for selling out many of the rights and conditions won in the 30's, they were awarded the consolation of becoming the guardians of white supremacy in industry.

The Taft-Hartley Act closed the door on union expansion through class collaboration and dependence on the government, thus stopping the growth of unionism and automatically shutting off unionism for the majority of Negroes.

The red-baiting purges which immediately followed placed the unions firmly in the hands of the largely white conservative aristocracy of labor, preventing further advancement of Negroes on the job or in the labor movement.

This lesson should be clear by now to those intimidated Negro reformist leaders who thought they could escape some of the wrath of reaction by siding with it on the "Communist" issue. It was red-baiting which locked the door of unionism on the Negro.

Negro workers were left to their own fate outside the labor movement, a fate marked by skyrocketing unemployment, youth

disorientation, and the shock of migrating southern Negroes at discovering that their traditional trades were the property of a white aristocracy in the North. They often found themselves excluded even from the service trades, and felt desperate. Automated out of cotton production, they were deeply, if subconsciously, fearful that without a place in the economy only genocide remained as their lot.

The Negro American Labor Council was formed in an attempt to head off the accelerating ferment in the ghetto over jobs, unions, seniority, upgrading, etc. In the wake of its failure came explosions: the decertification suits, the Philadelphia picket line and the growth of independent Negro caucuses--embryonic left wings in the unions.

The fact of these struggles, and the manner in which they are conducted, are part and parcel of the high class-consciousness and basic union loyalty in the Negro community, no matter what the pitch of resentment and indignation over their treatment by the labor aristocracy. Just as Negroes fought fiercely against Right-to-Work laws, and in some cities led the fight, in these latest eruptions, they have shown white jobless and unskilled workers in Philadelphia one way to proceed when all other avenues are blocked.

The Negro unionist occupies a most strategic position in U.S. life today -- that place where the civil rights and union movements connect and merge. In his own way, he is transmitting the dynamic of the one sector to the passivity of the other. He is igniting the spark that will get the left wing off the ground. .

. . . . .

A similar causal relation prevails in the sphere of independent class politics. The reluctance of the Negro movement to break from capitivty in the Democratic Party in the North and West stems from the objective lack of an immediate realistic alternative that would effectively mirror its advanced political calibre. Negroes are a smaller minority in the North than they are in the South, and while they hold an electoral majority now in several metropolitan areas, they cannot by themselves be more than a political minority nationally. Their independent political spirit is deep-seated and of long duration, but their numbers are few.

In terms of parliamentary politics, Negro politicians realistically write off their areas of numerical strength in the South where Negroes don't vote and will not in the immediate future. The political stagnation of the labor movement encourages opportunistic deals by the Negro reformist leaders, leaving no way out for the militants short of support to the few socialist candidates in the field. But the drive to independent political expression is strong, and as militant Negro leaders embark on experimental attempts to end the bondage of their movement to the Democratic Party, they come face to face with the alternatives of United Front-or Peoples Front, Labor Party--or Peoples Party, Independence or Pressure Politics.

Four years ago, Adam Clayton Powell called for a "Third Force" in American politics. This represented a feeling among the more ambitious Negro leaders that the tremendous bargaining power inherent in the Negro vote had been sold altogether too cheaply in the past. He proposed that the third force be the Negro clergy. These "spiritual leaders" of the community could, if united, effectively manipulate the Negro vote so as to wring substantial concessions on civil rights, black candidates, etc. from either party. Via threats, revenge, and bargaining, they would reward their friends and punish their enemies. Such a rehash of the old Gompers policy is inherent in the concept of a political party that would unify the Negro community, hold a balance of power, and operate accordingly. While running independent local candidates where victory is assured and contesting some House seats, such a party still would inexorably be drawn into supporting one capitalist politician over another, and finally one party over another, inasmuch as its function is not to smash the old political foundations and create an entirely new Labor Party-type of parliamentary majority.

Such a vote-black unity party, containing everybody (Bunche, Wilkins, Powell, King, Malcolm X, the militants and radicals, etc.) could never be programatically independent and would shortly, like an ALP maneuver, deliver the Negro vote en toto to the Democrats. Such a party, based on the now respectable, minimum and formless plank of Freedom Now, would be a Peoples Front of the minority occupied with balance-of-power politicking.

Socialist support for a Freedom Now unity party apparently derives from a convergence of white Negro-Nationalism and Trade Unionism. With an anticipation amounting to certainty, radical socialists foresee an organizational break between the unions and the capitalist parties that will create a situation infinite with revolutionary potential. But to superimpose this need and prospect upon the Negro movement is to see more than reality indicates. The Negro movement is not a congress of trade unions; neither is it a nation. If it were either, an independent Negro political party would be logical and viable. Since it is neither, an all-inclusive unity party is unrealistic and undesirable.

A truly independent party, on the other hand, with an anti-capitalist program and outlook, would not be a vehicle of political unity. Exactly the opposite: it would illuminate, clarify and polarize the discordant elements within the movement, creating an explosive class differentiation.

Worthy's proposal for a party emphasized the anti-capitalist program: anti-war, anti-imperialist, pro-colonial revolution, pro-social change. Essentially, his is a call for a radical vanguard party, broadly if not explicitly socialistic. It is, in effect, an audacious move to unify the radicalized militants, who, if organized, would certainly exert a mass influence. But in order to ultimately unify the Negro masses around their socialist perspective, they would have to fight the Bolshevik fight against very big guns --the expensive and powerful apparatus of the Powells, Kings, etc.

The present united front of the Negro community is capable of massive and potent actions. Actual construction of an independent "unity" party, necessarily reformist, would deepen the internal class contradictions of the movement and threaten this unity in action -- and for no good purpose. But to launch a black radical vanguard organization would constitute a historic step forward.

(1) It would furnish (a) a principled program, a rostrum and an apparatus for independent Negro candidates; (b) a graduate school for militants, specializing in political theory, the strategy of the struggle, and electioneering; and (c) an object lesson for the labor, and peace "progressive" movements.

(2) It would assemble a resolute and dynamic new leadership for the black united front, marking the beginning of the end of the long-thwarted quest for program and the paralyzing crisis of leadership.

### III. The SWP in the Negro Struggle

11. The Record. The party has several parallel tasks in the Negro struggle: theoretical, political, propagandistic, organization, agitational.

A prevalent approach to the SWP's role in the Negro struggle (presumably in all these areas) often is, "We were right in '39, in '48, in '57. We are right today. Everything is going to be all right if we work hard and implement our decisions".

Yet rarely has such a vast social problem caused such extended difficulties and debates for Marxists. Our record is erratic, marked by high successes and deep crises, particularly in the key area of party-Negro cadre relations. Confusion and discord have often prevailed over that 25-year period of always being right.

In truth, we have lost much capital and injured our own relationship to Negroes to a degree more expensive proportionately than the exodus from the Communist Party.

Why? What is to be done about it? Why can't we come to grips with this sustained problem openly? If the proof is in the pudding, should we not look to our recipe? Are more reverses and deeper isolation indicated before we evaluate our theories, politics, propaganda, and organizational practices in depth? Either that, or as has been suggested, we must remain a white party to win white workers, so let us stop fretting and get on with our main, white business. Yet the very fact that such proposals are made seriously and evidently meet with some agreement dictates the opposite course.

A. Theory. What is our theory? Comrade Roberts, in a 1957 statement defending the P.C. position on the Little Rock crisis, wrote as follows about tendencies in the party:

There are actually three points of view in the party on what has brought the civil-rights issue to crisis proportions in the U.S. The point of view embodied in the last convention resolution holds that, while the Negro struggle was well under way in its own right, its advances do not explain the Supreme Court decision and other legal victories scored in recent years by the Negro people. . . . Rather, we believe that what has made the civil rights issue such a paramount domestic concern in the past years has been the black eye that the Jim-Crow system gives U.S. imperialism abroad and especially in the colonial world.

A second viewpoint is the one advanced by Lois Saunders . . . and by Arne Swabeck . . . They see the main impetus to a sharpening of the civil-rights question in Northern Big Business finding the Southern race system an obstacle to free investment of their capital in the South (Comrade Saunders objected to this interpretation of her position. R.K.)

Finally, Kirk holds that the acuteness of the civil-rights issue is an accurate measure of the strength and revolutionary drive of the Negro people themselves and is caused directly by it. (No objection was registered by Kirk. R.K.)

While the above is somewhat oversimplified, it provides a starting point: what are the various tendencies in the party on the Negro question?

There are at least six more or less distinct areas of opinion, not all clearly defined, and some overlapping. Nevertheless, they reflect most of the attitudes in the civil rights movement and on the "left".

(1) Black Nationalism for White Radicals. This broad tendency, discussed previously, holds (a) that integration ultimately is reformist and Social Democratic, and the demand for a separate state is the only revolutionary demand; or (b) that either road may validly be chosen when the decision is made; or even (c) that the Negro question is a national question, but integration will be chosen.

Ironically, hardly had the ink dried on the 1939 Nationalist Resolution when there occurred an influx of militant integrationist Negroes into the party. Under the combined pressure of these workers and the integrationist movement of the 40's, comrades adhering to Nationalism genererally restrained their views, never advancing them publically and rarely privately. Consequently, until 1948, scores of new comrades in the party never dreamed that self-determination was the official line and never even heard of it. Negroes sensed something strange and ambiguous and assumed it was prejudice. Tortuously expressing itself in policy, tactics and social relations over the years, it played its part in the alienation of almost an entire generation of Negro revolutionaries.

(2) The Negro Question as an Appendage of Trade Unionism. This is not so much a theory of the Negro Question as an unbalanced emphasis on trade unionism, an over-identification of unions with the working class and a myopia about non-unionistic facets of the class struggle.

Not a formal doctrine, it is a prejudice in favor of trade unionism, giving rise to the feeling that the Negro struggle, though independent organizationally, is tactically dependent upon the labor movement for virtually every move or advance -- something like the Russian proletariat-and-peasantry relation.

In this connection, Daniel Guerin may be pardoned for dissociating himself (Negroes on the March) from SWP maritime policy. On the West Coast, the white Deck and Engine departments were equated to the proletariat while the largely Negro Stewards Department was considered dependent, and destined to follow the decisive proletariat. This is an a-typical example but illustrates

the extremes to which this ideology may lead.

When unions are dormant, however, and the Negro movement is obviously in motion, Negro dependence is promptly shifted from unions to the Colonial Revolution or some other more "decisive" category.

Another characteristic of this tendency is its assumption that the Negro movement is similar enough to the labor movement for the general laws of trade union development to apply.

For example: From the early '40's until quite recently, a fetichism of the NAACP existed around the idea that the NAACP was the ordained organization of Negro struggle and to organize anything outside it would approximate the dual unionism of the CP's ultra-left period.

Because of this arbitrary subordination of the Negro movement to a trade union principle, our Negro cadre was imprisoned in this orientation for years, unable even to probe the possibilities of independent, militant, and working class Negro organization. Many Negro comrades finally contrived their escape from this policy and from the party as well.

All party unionists are not of this opinion, and non-trade unionists may hold it. There are no rules in this tendency about what other theories its adherents may subscribe to. Some believe in integration, others adhere to extreme nationalism, etc. Both Nationalism and Trade Union Primacy entail the danger of reinforcing the prejudices of white workers, the former by indicating a probable and endorsable segregated socialism, the latter by ascribing a dependent and subordinate role to the Negro struggle.

(3) Economic Determinism. The vanishing idea that the needs of production (skilled labor, etc.) require the capitalist class to do something drastic about the South.

(4) The Activists. These include most of the Negroes in the party. They feel detached or skeptical about the theoretical discussion; the party has been discussing for years and nothing has changed very much. They are anxious for the party to collectively devise a means of intervening more effectively than has been the case, and they expect the party leadership to take the lead in achieving this.

They are generally dissatisfied with party grasp of and performance in the Negro movement, considering it inadequate; while they play their role in the transmission-link operation, informing the party of developing moods and groupings, they feel that no reciprocal levers for effective intervention are given them in exchange.

Outside the party they must cope daily with the hostile white world; inside the party, many resent having to criticize, complain or



push, believing that awareness of the need for a better orientation and climate should be the entire party's responsibility and concern.

Some deduce that no meaningful interrelation of party and Negro movement is currently objectively possible, and more fuel is added to the flame of separatism.

(5) The Official Compromise Resolutions. Here, the differences among all recognized tendencies are usually softened and then "unified". The party is offered some integration, a great deal of nationalism, just enough separatism, much trade unionism, plenty of self-determination, a pledge of increased activism, a great deal of theoretical neutralism and an over-all injunction to wait-and-see.

Inasmuch as this type of resolution, speech, and article determines and expresses party theory over the years, it may be said that in terms of a guide to action, we have no fundamental theory at all.

(6) Revolutionary Integration. --the viewpoint expressed in this Resolution, i.e. the Negro Question is a unique racial (not national) question, with a movement marked by Integration (not Self-Determination) as its logical and historical motive force and goal, thereby producing a struggle that is necessarily transitional to socialism and a revolutionary vanguard for the entire working class.

B. Politics and Propaganda. What do we stand for. It is difficult to know from week to week; it depends on what is read (bulletins, resolutions, ISR, Militant) and what issue.

The 1957 Resolution found us as admirers of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Rev. Dr. King hasn't changed much, except that mass pressure keeps him very, very rushed. But, because King's obstructive reformism has been inevitably exposed by events, Elijah Muhammad evidently replaces him as today's most promising leader.

We never acknowledge the crisis of leadership. Self Determination seems to mean that anyone who is leading at the moment is a good leader and a destined leader, regardless of program. Is this because he has been chosen? Have the masses chosen their leaders already, even though their destiny is uncertain? Perhaps there is another explanation: Since Negroes are a Nation, they are politically homogenous and united; an anatomy of the class divergences among them is accordingly academic, because it isn't decisive for a national movement. The important thing is to cement unity and not provoke dissensions (not a classic Trotskyist approach to nationalism, but one which seems to prevail nevertheless).

In any event, such vast tolerance on the part of the precise SWP comes out looking like indulgence and paternalism.

Do we have any criticism of the new leaders, tendencies or organizations? Not publicly. Comrade Brietman made a timely and cogent criticism of CORE and Freedom Rides in an internal bulletin. But there is almost never a word of such matters in our press,

unlike the rest of the Negro and radical press which discusses controversial issues. Articles criticising the pacifist leadership of 1957 were refused publication in the Militant at that time, and we may assume that such articles about the Muslims would meet a similar fate today. But have we nothing to say about those ideas of the Muslims that are obnoxious? Or is it slanderous to discuss them in this vein?

Similarly, disagreements from the field on Militant articles are referred to internal publications, and articles for the Militant containing a critical treatment of Negro leaders are printed as letters. All this is properly within the province of responsible editing; in this case, the editing serves the paper's policy of SWP non-intervention into disputes unresolved as yet by all Negroes.

Do we have any praise for new leaders, organizations, etc.? James Baldwin, who carries tremendous weight with both Negroes and whites, is engaged in a running duel with separatism. He wrote of Mr. Muhammad, whom he loves and understands, "We would always be strangers, and possibly, one day, enemies." James Baldwin has spoken, but we haven't commented (outside of book reviews).

On every other kind of question from community clubs to the international conjuncture, we conceive it our most elementary duty to state our position clearly, particularly anent controversies; class analysis is our tradition. But the Negro struggle we only report -- and that very selectively; we never intervene politically except to report or support what somebody else says -- except where trade unionism is involved, as in the Decertification suit, and here we were wrong.

Our one-sided neutrality becomes increasingly awkward as we apprehensively keep hands off more and more public disputes. How does this help Negro comrades "to help the race form its opinion on separatism?" How does this help white comrades become better acquainted with the ideological pace of the Negro struggle? The unfortunate fact is that the Negro movement, like the SWP record, is always generally right and doing well, according to our press, and that is all we are told about it.

Are Federal Troops to solve the problem of Negro defense in the South? Yes and no. For several issues the Militant pounded away at solving the Birmingham crisis through Federal Troops. At the height of the crisis, the paper, without any warning, switched to "Arm the Negroes" -- a welcome if abrupt development.

Our politics and propaganda are deliberately non-interventionist, and proclaim, in effect, that we consider it our theoretical obligation to go no further.

### C. Organization and the Cadre.

(1) Campaigns. The Militant over-compensates for its abstention from the ideological life of the Negro community by maintaining a constant agitational fever over the struggle. This agitation, which should be primarily directed toward white workers, is sent instead into the ghetto, the only mass market for socialist literature.

In days gone by, the novelty of The Militant, often the only paper supporting a then-unrespectable cause, gained us enthusiastic support and a foundation for organizational growth. As support and civil rights became more general among whites, even receiving official sanction, the fact that The Militant had little to say about the intense theoretical and political inner struggle of the movement denied it the revolutionary stature it demanded.

(2) Mass Organizations. The NAACP's loss of the exclusive franchise on organization and the emergence of a host of more viable rivals broke the old spell cast by the NAACP on the SWP. Even so, our Negro comrades still appear to be restricted in the scope of the area open to them for probing, experimenting and generally intervening as initiators, members, etc. -- and the bewildering CAMD-MDC split indicates a continuing tactical rigidity.

(3) Recruitment and Assimilation. Our record over a 25-year span: brilliant recruitment, little or no assimilation into the party, followed by slower and slower rates of recruitment and even less assimilation; the stream becomes a trickle and then -- as the Negro struggle reaches its highest point in decades -- virtually stops.

### 12. The Source.

From Letter to Claude McKay. 1923:

In North America the matter is further complicated by the abominable obtuseness and caste presumption of the privileged upper strata of the working class itself, who refuse to recognize fellow-workers and fighting comrades in the Negroes. Gompers' policy is founded on the most effective guarantee for the successful subjugation of white and colored workers alike. The fight against this policy must be taken up from different sides...One of the most important branches of this conflict consists in enlightening the proletarian consciousness...amongst the black slaves of American capital. As stated above, this work can only be carried out by self-sacrificing and politically educated revolutionary Negroes.

Needless to say, the work is not to be carried on in a spirit of Negro chauvinism which would then merely form a counterpart of white chauvinism, but in a spirit of solidarity of all exploited without consideration of color.  
With Communist greetings, --L. Trotsky

From Letter to the International Secretariat. Copy to the National Committee of the American League, 1932:

...The difference in our attitude to a petty-bourgeois group and to the proletarian group does not require any explanation. But if a proletarian group functions in an area where the workers are of different races, and in spite of this, remains composed solely of workers of a privileged nationality, then I am inclined to view them with suspicion. Are we not dealing perhaps with the labor aristocracy? Isn't the group infected with slave holding prejudices, active or passive? --L. Trotsky

A prevalent attitude in the SWP is that as long as we maintain good relations with Self Determination, we uphold the tradition of Trotsky. We publish only his transcribed and uncorrected conversations on Self Determination. (He never wrote on this subject). But, from the above-quoted passages, is there any doubt as to what his approach to the question of Negroes and the SWP would be today? He would disdain to discuss the merits of this or that theoretical question until he inquired into the political-sociological reasons for the party's inability to maintain the allegiance of its oppressed-race members.

Trotsky is not sitting in judgment over us. But there is another judgment, one that Trotsky would have solicited, the judgment of a thousand radical Negroes who have been in and out of the party over the past 25 years.

Neither theoretical discussions nor the adoption of resolutions will take on living meaning unless the opinions and feelings and attitudes of these Negroes (and the scores of thousands of Negroes in and out of the CP as well) have been stated, understood, evaluated and the results incorporated into the daily life of the Party.

. . . . .

Comrade Vernon says that the SWP can never understand or have significant relations with even radical Negroes because it is comfortable and at home in a world which is alien to the Negro and which the Negro despises -- the world of white America, whose general cultural attitudes are reflected in the SWP. It is right and proper that this should be, he says (with superbly objective resignation) for it is the duty of white revolutionaries not to become isolated from the white working class, that decisive class which is going to make the revolution.

Vernon is both stunningly right and fortunately wrong. He is right in his enumeration of the qualities estranging Negroes from us; he is wrong in thinking our bad habits are good socialist tactics.

We are isolated from the white working class. We are isolated because of our revolutionary program and principles. No amount of conformity to cultural mores or anything else will compensate for this, and our isolation will prevail until objective conditions force a change in working class opinion. However, our concessions to the general illiberal folkways of white America do estrange us from its key victims -- Negroes, women, youth -- leaving us very isolated indeed.

Johnson often said, "... (the inadequacy of white radicals) is not a matter of prejudice, it is a political question." Taking this as a clue, what political question?

The political evaluation of the Negro's relation to the working class.

It would be impossible to encourage separtism, given a realization of how it would affect the proletariat. What, for example, would the working class in the auto industry do if all its Negroes marched back to Africa or off to somewhere else? As SWP advocates of the Right of Self Determination, we would be obliged to support, help, and theoretically justify this decision. But in the process, key sections of the proletariat might very well become emasculated, deprived of their most conscious and militant sector, and rendered incapable of a struggle for socialism for an indefinite historical era -- prey of fascism.

Put positively, the Negro question is the key question for the proletariat, more important to the working class than the trade union question, because the Negro workers carry the key to even that: political action can be accomplished only through class consciousness, which can only be realized through the destruction of race-conscious white supremacy.

The IWW used to say that the Negro question was a class question, but actually the converse of this is true: the class question is in large measure the Negro question. It funnels into and concentrates around the Negro issue. What else explains the fact that 200 years of American history -- politics, wars, union organization, domestic turmoil, culture -- revolve around this issue? That the very survival of American civilization depends upon the outcome of the struggle for Negro equality is taken for granted by militant Negro spokesman -- who, furthermore, warn white America that Negroes won't stop at "civil rights" but will pull the white masses with them as they ascend to real freedom.

When the SWP recognizes the Negro struggle as the core of U.S. politics and labor, it will understand both the proletariat and the Negro a little better.

13. The Future: Proposals. What are the tasks of the SWP in relation to the Negro struggle?

(a) Theoretical. The central theoretical responsibility of the SWP is to re-awaken, by example and invitation, Negro Marxist scholarship on the Negro question, helping to reverse the "anti-Negro history" attitude among intellectuals described by E.F.Frazier as "escape (from) the Negro heritage." After years of quiescence, a renaissance is in the making and we should both pioneer and encourage it.

Negro intellectuals will return to the Negro question if the Negro militants demand it of them. This process will resurrect the real identity of the Negro, uncovering the truth of his African past and its relation to him today, and rediscovering his heroic past in the U.S.

This re-awakening will occur under the ideological auspices of revolutionary integration, as opposed to nationalism, separatism, reformist integration and pragmatism. We shall not advocate integration into the "burning house" status quo. Integration into a Revolution is our answer to freedom-for-what.

A fundamental aim of the revival-of-theory process will be to convince the Negro vanguard of the fundamentals of materialism, which begins with the proposition that ideas have no color. Marxism can be utilized by Negroes for their liberation, and in the land of the most powerful capitalists on earth, no other weapon will be adequate.

(b) Political. We should first of all become the leading representatives of the southern struggle, projecting an extensive propaganda and action campaign on its behalf.

(1) Help cement and broaden the United Front of the northern Negro community in the defense of the southern struggle.

(2) Elaborate a program designed both to popularize the illegal and lawless character of the southern regime and to provide transitional slogans toward its destruction.

Central to the southern struggle is the demand upon Congress that southern Congressmen be denied their seats on the grounds of not representing their constituents who are denied the

right to vote, and not representing legal state governments, but a regime imposed after violent overthrow of legal authority and maintained for nearly a century by force and violence.

(3) Some derivative demands can be worked out along the following lines:

That after having unseated the southern Congressmen, Congress shall take the responsibility for the administration (or for designating an administration) of these areas, pending the establishment of legal democratic governments.

That all armed forces under the jurisdiction of these state governments, including local police and sheriffs' bodies, be disbanded and disarmed.

That a volunteer militia be recruited from amongst those who support the U.S. Constitution.

That governments be formed under the authority of Congress and the supervision of the militias on the basis of universal suffrage of all persons over 18.

The use of this program in all election campaigns, memorials to congress, threatened injunctions, etc. would not only go a long way toward legalising the southern revolution, but would polarize the Negroes and their allies, and the capitalist parties, creating a real crisis in the political system.

The key to improvement of our relations with the Negro movement given a correct theoretical foundation, is knowledge of how to intervene politically in it.

The Militant must take the lead in this by correcting its reportorial-agitational approach to civil rights. To the job of reporting the facts must be added the responsibility of analysis, drawing the political lessons of the circumstances, and being willing to take sides in disputed questions on the basis of principle.

Led by the center in these matters, branches and individuals will be able to adjust their approach to local problems, keeping in mind Comrade Vernon's advice: that white comrades who are good at seeing short-comings of the various Negro movements should learn how to make their criticism known to the Negroes involved, utilizing such relations to broaden their general understanding.

Internal education, political work, and dissemination of information and experience in the Negro struggle should become a central concern of the Party, centrally organized and coordinated by Negro comrades.

(c) Organizational. How is such a theoretical and political program to be implemented? Some of it could be accomplished through our press and organization as it exists today. But other aspects cannot be properly handled by a white party.

Can we change the racial character of the SWP?

The past ten years of struggle have thrown up a large new Negro cadre, relatively youthful. These young leaders, together with the thousands of unaffiliated radical Negroes, comprise a revolutionary reservoir of unknown depth.

A significant number of these militants should be recruited directly to the party now, but Negroes' distrust of white radical parties and their powerful urge to independence make this difficult to accomplish. Nevertheless, our primary task, without which all other proposals are meaningless, is to organize this Negro vanguard under the banner of socialism, imbue it with the spirit and science of Marxism, and prepare it for the role Trotsky predicted for it: a vanguard of the American working class.

This poses a tactical problem: if they will not come to us, shall we go to them? The only realistic solution to this problem is to create a Negro vanguard movement. This is the heart of Worthy's proposal; we should offer to join with him or any others who will launch an anti-capitalist-Freedom party.

Such an organization, essential for guiding the southern struggle toward its mass political phase, would be the most dynamic political development of this era. It would have many characteristics of the future mass party of Socialism and would be able to fight on all the issues of the day, from local police brutality to defense of the colonial revolution. It would be able to develop the theoretical discussion of the Negro question within the Negro community.

There is plenty of room for the entire party membership to participate politically and organizationally in the Negro movement, be it with the vanguard; be it independent, integrated, separatist or racially exclusive. We must bring Marxism to these movements to illuminate their problems with theory, Bolshevism to advise on the political struggle, Trotskyism to teach the strategy of revolution.

This can be done in our political campaigns, in day to day propaganda, in our theoretical magazine, and individually by any comrade who sees that the Negro question is the key question of the American Revolution and who will take the time to learn of the Negro struggle before trying to teach.



(d) Unions. Central to our work among Negroes is the regrouping of Negro and white radicals in the unions, the indispensable starting point of the future left-wing.

Questions of policy must be carefully thought out, and here the advice and recommendations of the Negro comrades to the trade unionists is critical.

Unionists are not required to be silent on all questions pertaining to the Negro struggle until "the Negroes have spoken," On certain questions, the white worker must know the precise opinions of at least the leading Negroes before projecting a policy. On others, the white worker must take the initiative.

Examples of two sides of this problem are Negro representation, and racial seniority.

(1) For Negro Representation. On this question we must let the Negroes take the lead, unless exceptional circumstances dictate differently. In this first place, Negroes sometimes prefer to enter this struggle in the concrete: trying to elect a Negro to a given post without reference to the need for Negro representation. We must be sensitive to their desires in such matters. On the other hand, there are many circumstances where Negroes may not want representation -- and for good reasons, similar to those that prevent us from taking responsibility for class-collaborationist unionism.

(2) Against Racial Seniority. Here, white radicals must take the lead. They are the beneficiaries of the racial character of seniority, and it would be wrong for them to sit back and demand that the Negroes take the initiative in remedying it. It seems improbable that the demand to alter the seniority system will be pushed, given the central preoccupation of so many unions with defending seniority as-is against the employers. However, by citing the injustice, indicating various ways it could be adjusted, and proposing the 6-hour day as a way of ameliorating the racial effects of the lay-off, radical white workers can address themselves effectively to this problem.

. . . . .

The myth of the nationhood of U.S. Negroes and their Right of Self-Determination will continue to haunt the radical movement until the SWP issues a clear statement on the basically integrationist nature of the Negro struggle for equality.

The traditional respect we have earned for our theoretical precision has been gradually dissipated over the years as our theme of "remaining neutral until the Negro people have spoken" carries us further and further away from the living movement, rendering Marxism incomprehensible to Negroes and Negroes incomprehensible to Marxists.

It may be that Negroes will impress the SWP with the truth of the problem; even non-Marxists close to the moods and needs of their race and familiar with the white radical's habit of operating from a priori positions, might manage to unmask the flaws of such reasoning in a sufficiently forceful manner to shake us out of our complacency.

Still, it would be infinitely preferable for us to be able to resolve this dilemma without pressure from outside the party. The unique Negro struggle is the most serious test of our ability to Americanize Marxism and it would be gratifying if we could solve it on our own initiative and through our own internal powers.

END