
THE "WHITE" SOUTH AND THE PEOPLE'S FRONT

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A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF
THE ARTICLE "FOR A FREE, HAPPY AND PROS-
PEROUS SOUTH," BY FRANCIS FRANKLIN, IN THE
JANUARY, 1938, ISSUE OF *The Communist*.

THE American public has recently witnessed a disgraceful spectacle in the Congressional sideshow staged by the Old Guard Democrats of the Bourbon South, in their shameless filibuster against the Anti-Lynching Bill.

It has witnessed the flagrant violation of elementary democratic procedure, the contemptuous flouting of the expressed will of the overwhelming majority of the people, both North and South, by a handful of reactionary Southern Senators. And, it must be clear by now that this reactionary minority was able to do this only with the clandestine backing of the Republican Party. The "gentlemen's agreement" through which Northern reaction sold out democracy to the slave-driving interests of the South at the end of Reconstruction is brought up to date in conditions of struggle between democracy and fascism. This legacy of reaction, left by the betrayers of democracy in 1877 (the Hayes-Tilden Agreement) rises now as a stumbling-block in the path to national progress and unity.

The slavocracy speaks again, out of the past. In a situation where unity

of the nation behind a platform of social progress is demanded, the representatives of the landlords and mill-owners of the South attempt to fence off "their" private kingdom, appealing to all the outworn shibboleths of racial and sectional animosity, arrogantly disregarding the expressed desire of the great masses of Southern people to attain full equality of economic and political status with the rest of the United States.

Behind stage, pulling the strings of its puppets, stands Wall Street.

No extraordinary insight is needed to understand the real aims behind the filibuster: to preserve the rule of reaction in the South, now being menaced by an advancing labor and progressive movement in that section. For some time now, it has been clear that the South is no longer the undisputed fief of reaction; the concept of a solid South is being challenged. The awakening white masses are joining forces with the national liberation movement of the Negro people. Together, these two democratic currents are breaking through the age-old barriers of sectional and racial hatreds, which served reaction so well in the

past, and are surging their way to the main stream of the growing American People's Front.

These developments raise a whole series of new problems for the revolutionary movement and the Communist Party. They call attention to the urgent need of rendering more concrete the decisions of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International and the tactic of the People's Front to the struggle for democracy in the South. In this connection, a most valuable contribution has been made by a young Southern Communist leader, Francis Franklin, in the January, 1938, issue of *The Communist*, in an article entitled "For a Free, Happy and Prosperous South."

In his generally excellent article, Comrade Franklin calls attention to this new South, to our tasks in hastening the rapprochement between the forces of progress in the North and the rising movement for democracy among the Southern whites. He also treats the problem of cementing the unity between this new movement among the Southern whites and the national liberation movement of the Negro people. He stresses the necessity of taking into account in our approach to the Southern white masses their special problems, of utilizing their democratic traditions. He points to our responsibility in helping to remove the last barriers of sectional misunderstanding and distrust, which still stand in the path to the consolidation of a united People's Front movement in this country.

He warns against erroneous generalizations, the loose use of the term "the solid South," i.e., considering the South as a solid, reactionary mass,

lumping together progressives and reactionaries. He calls attention to the stupid and outrageous slanders of a Leibowitz, directed at the Southern white people, and the harmfulness of such slanders to the cause of unity:

"Our aim should be to introduce a wedge, still farther than at present, into the 'solid' South, not to help solidify the South in the camp of reaction."

Comrade Franklin brings out clearly the peculiar delicacy of the problems facing us, in our approach to the Southern whites, and correctly warns Northern progressives against such affronts to their sensibilities.

"Are we to scoff at Southern pride?" asks Comrade Franklin. "Under no conditions! We must rally that pride for the building up of the South. The present poverty, ignorance and exploitation of the South violently contradict that pride. We must stand for a prosperous and progressive South which will take its place in social well-being, educational opportunities, etc., on a plane of equality with the rest of the nation."

UNFORTUNATE FORMULATIONS

But Comrade Franklin, in his desire to focus attention upon these important problems—as he puts it: "to bring us close to the masses of Southern whites," makes certain unfortunate formulations which could be exploited by the enemies of democracy.

This is particularly obvious in his treatment of the Civil War, the Reconstruction period and the role of the so-called carpet-baggers. Certainly, Comrade Franklin does not mean to minimize the revolutionary role of Reconstruction; but his undue stress on the negative features of that period can result in just such an impression. Comrade Franklin attempts to trace historically the origins of the strong

sectional feelings of the Southern whites, their inclination to regard a "solid" North as their enemy. He wants to make clear "the real cause and the real nature of Southern regionalism." In his analysis he tends to attribute a considerable part of this sectional bitterness of the white Southern masses to the "vandalism" of the Northern armies during the Civil War, which, he says, also "looted" the masses of poor whites, and to the "Carpet-Baggers" many of whom "were looting the entire South."

We quote:

"The war [Civil War] led by the Northern bourgeoisie at the same time resembled a conquest of the South. It was not only the landlords who *felt their vandalism* [of the Northern Republicans]. *The masses of the Southern poor whites were also looted.*"

And further:

"*However, a great number of the Carpet-Baggers were mere adventurers. . . . Many of the Carpet-Baggers from the North were looting the entire South.*" (Our emphasis.)

Of course, Comrade Franklin points out these excesses were the inevitable accompaniment of any revolution, particularly of a bourgeois revolution.

But, we must ask, is it our task to emphasize such isolated and occasional happenings, particularly when they have already been so over-emphasized and exaggerated by bourgeois historians? Does not this stress on the "vandalism" of the Northern armies, the adventuristic motives of a "large number of Carpet-Baggers," serve to detract from the essential revolutionary essence of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and thus play into the hands of reaction?

Yes, we must say that to place the question in this manner is to make an

unwarranted concession to the prevalent reactionary distortions of this period.

After all, as Lenin emphasized on many occasions, revolution is a series of mass actions, which must necessarily involve all kinds of people; that there is no such thing as a "pure revolution." In his article "The Irish Rebellion of 1916"—a brilliant polemic defending the Bolshevik position on the national question against the now Trotskyite accomplice of fascism, Karl Radek, Lenin stated:

"The Russian revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It was made up of a series of battles of all dissatisfied classes, groups and elements of the population. Among them there were masses with the wildest kinds of prejudices, with the most confused and fantastic objects of struggle. There were some small groups financed by the Japanese; there were speculators, adventurers, etc. *Objectively, the movement of the masses was breaking up tsarism, and was clearing the way for democracy. . . .*" (Our emphasis.)

NO CONCESSION TO DISTORTIONS

Not the slightest concession to the shameful distortions of the revolutionary Civil War and Reconstruction period. On the contrary, we must point out concretely to the Southern white masses the positive achievements of this second American Revolution; what it did for the South, how it benefited the poor whites. We must clarify the revolutionary essence of the so-called "Carpet-Bag" governments, during Reconstruction, their social composition and their true role. Yes, these governments, in a certain sense, represented the dictatorship of the revolutionary North over the conquered South. But this dictatorship was based upon a revolutionary demo-

cratic alliance of the "Carpet-Baggers," the Negro ex-slaves, and the landless whites of the South—the so-called "Scalawags."

Therefore, the so-called "Carpet-Bag" governments were in reality the revolutionary governments of the majority of the Southern peoples. They were the dictatorship of the revolutionary forces, established for the purpose of consolidating the military victory of the Northern republican armies over the Southern slave-drivers, and to crush any attempts at reactionary reprisals on the part of the former slave-owners—to "reconstruct" the South on the pattern of democracy.

Who were the Carpet-Baggers? They were in the main Freedmen's Bureau workers, soldiers, doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, and ordinary businessmen, for the most part, leaders of the Abolition movement before the Civil War.

It becomes the obvious duty of every Communist, every true progressive, to tear aside the web of lies, slander and filth with which the reactionaries of every brand seek to cover the truth of this period, to conceal its revolutionary lessons from the masses, particularly the Southern whites. We must expose such slimy distortions as *The Birth of a Nation*, which depicts the Reconstruction as a period of unrestrained violence, bloody terror, carnage, and rapine, directed against the whole South; in which the Negro, presented as naive but semi-savage, freed from a benevolent slavery, roamed the land, robbing and stealing, and venting his lust upon unprotected white womanhood. While in the background, directing this hor-

ror, stalked the "Carpet-Bag" adventurer, that sinister and diabolical figure, motivated by purely selfish and mercenary interests, a sort of Merchant of Venice, exacting his pound of flesh from a ruined and prostrate South.

At the present time, a whole literature has been built up on such reactionary distortions of the Reconstruction period. Particularly in the South, among the poor whites, has this misrepresentation been accepted as an irrefutable fact. The "Carpet-Bag" bogey-man has been used by generations of parents to frighten, not only little children, but a whole population of Southern whites.

The influence of the reactionary myth of "Carpet-Bag Reconstruction" is not confined to the South; this fallacy has been widely accepted as fact throughout the country.

It is one the crimes of capitalist historical "scholarship" that it has buried the profoundly significant revolutionary struggle of the Negro and white masses in the South during the Reconstruction period under a heap of distortions and falsifications.

We can brush aside the maniacal ravings of a Thomas Dixon, Junior, or a Claude Bowers, as the rantings of admitted Negrophobes and spokesmen for Bourbon reaction. However, it becomes exceedingly alarming when such outstanding liberal historians as Charles A. Beard concede to the Bourbon myth of Reconstruction, by saying:

"The freedmen were in no way prepared to become an effective factor in the new order of society. . . . They were powerless in the hands of the governing group that directed the revolution and reconstruction from Washington." (*The Rise of American Civilization*.)

President Roosevelt, in his Jackson Day address, a masterly appeal to the whole country to unite around his program of social betterment, a real blast against narrow sectionalism, concedes to this misinterpretation of history by bemoaning the fact that the South was not left to reconstruct itself, free from outside interference.

Even Congressman Maury Maverick, that doughty warrior of the new progressive South, presents his program, which includes support of the Anti-Lynching Bill, as a "fight against the modern Carpet-Baggers."

The wide popularity of such an utterly false and malicious novel as *Gone With the Wind*, with copies running into the millions, should alarm all true democrats and progressives. It is worth noting that this poisonous novel is about to be produced as a movie in Hollywood.

These crass distortions of Reconstruction, carried over and carefully nurtured by present-day reaction, serve as a subtle weapon in the hands of the Southern ruling classes, to knife the growing movement for democracy. Raising the specter of a second "Carpet-Bag Invasion," and its concomitant horrors of "Black Domination," the demagogues step forward as the "protectors of white womanhood," and preservers of "Anglo-Saxon racial purity." Every progressive move designed to improve the situation of the Southern people—C.I.O., share-croppers' organization, defense of the Scottsboro boys — is immediately branded as a new "Carpet-Bag" invasion, fomented by Northern agitators, etc. They seek in this manner to rally the white masses of the South behind the class interests of the bankers, the

landlords, and the factory-owners. They seek to isolate the white workers, poor farmers, and intellectuals from the movement for democracy and progress; to perpetuate the backwardness, the poverty of the South as a reserve for reaction, as a base from which Wall Street finance-capital can wage its battle against the ever-rising tide of the progressive movement.

With this purpose constantly in view, the Bourbon reactionaries, with the full support of their Wall Street overlords, are fanning the fires of racial and sectional hatreds, seeking to maintain and deepen the gulf between North and South—between Negro and white.

The falsification of the history of Reconstruction, the concealing of its real lessons from the masses, has become a built-in part of the whole system of ideas by which American capitalist reaction seeks to justify its rule. It has become a principal weapon in the ideological arsenal of the ruling class and its apologists. It is clear that real and lasting unity of the democratic forces of this country cannot be achieved, that racial and sectional friction cannot be removed, that a united American People's Front cannot be consolidated, without a persistent and uncompromising struggle against these ideas.

POPULARIZE THE TRUTH ON THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

We must resuscitate and popularize the *truth* concerning the Reconstruction period, its invaluable lessons for the present struggle against fascist reaction. We must answer the Negro-baiting Bourbons of today, by pointing out the impetus given to

the establishment of Civil Rights for the despised "poor whites," as a result of the struggle of the Negro people for democracy and land during this period. We must likewise combat the false assumption that the white Southern people constituted a whole undifferentiated mass arrayed against the Negro and Northern Republicans. It is necessary to point out that the white mountaineers of the Appalachian regions strongly supported the Union throughout the war; that the largest and most important section of the non-slaveholding whites were the small farmers in Northern Alabama and Georgia, Eastern Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina. These were the people referred to as "scalawags" by the Southern Bourbons. It is an historical fact, which the reactionaries of today try to keep hidden from the poor whites of the South, that the first real rights they ever enjoyed were achieved by the joint efforts of the newly-emancipated Negroes and poor white delegates in the legislatures and constitutional conventions following the Civil War.

For example, the State Convention of South Carolina, with more than 60 per cent of its delegates newly-emancipated slaves and the remaining mainly "poor whites," put through a constitution providing for the complete democratic rights of both Negro and white, including the immediate abolition of all property-qualifications for office holding, universal suffrage for Negro and white, proportional representation according to numbers and not on the basis of property, no imprisonment for debt, universal education and a public school system, recog-

nition of the rights of women, no discrimination against Negroes, and the reorganization of the state and county governments to provide for the fullest participation of the people.

It was such conventions as these, in which the Negroes from the plantations, boldly throwing off the heritage of slavery together with Southern poor whites, proclaimed the full sweep of their struggles to democratize the South. It was such proposals as those listed above, the simple elementary proposals of political democracy, which have been spat upon by latter-day historians, echoing the class sentiments of the slave-holders and landlords.

The splendid history of the bitter struggle of the Negro and poor white population for the achievement of democracy, the promise that this struggle held for the rapid development of the South out of its morass of reaction and backwardness, and the liberating effect it had on the "poor whites," have been brilliantly described by Comrade James Allen, in his book *Reconstruction—The Struggle for Democracy*.

It must be pointed out to the white masses of the South that Reconstruction, when the Negro freedmen and poor white masses of the South stepped forward to take their place in the government, was the most democratic period the South has ever seen. That period witnessed a popular mass storm that swept through the foul atmosphere of the South and for a few brief years cleared the air.

This, the true interpretation of Reconstruction, and "Carpet-Bag rule," as the essential carrier of democratic development in the South, must

be salvaged from the garbage heap of filth and slime to which it has been relegated by reactionary historians. It must be brought home to the Southern masses.

This task assumes particular importance in the present period, when the American people and the whole of humanity are menaced by the threat of fascism.

The fascist danger emanates from the policies of the financiers and monopolists of Wall Street, the real owners of the South, its mills, mines, and plantations. The Wall Street robber barons allied with and operating through the local Southern ruling classes are working desperately to hold back the modernization of the South, to keep it from becoming democratic. The industrial bourgeoisie of the North, which led the fight for freedom and democracy during the Civil War and Reconstruction, has now become the imperialist-monopolist of Wall Street, with its best friends and allies among the descendants of the former slave-holders of the South. This unholy alliance of Northern finance capital and Southern reaction, this modern edition of the infamous "gentlemen's agreement," is the main enemy of the white masses of the South in their fight for freedom, for throwing off the oppressive yoke of cultural and economic backwardness, for achieving "a Free, Happy and Prosperous South."

This goal can be attained, and the alliance of reaction successfully combatted, only through a reunion of the struggle of the Southern poor whites, the Negro people, and the forces of labor and democracy in the North. This is the alliance which defeated

Southern slave-holding reaction during the Civil War and Reconstruction and brought democracy and progress for the first time to the South. If the Southern white masses are to attain freedom and democracy, if they are to achieve economic and cultural equality with the rest of the country, they must resume that alliance with the Negro people and the democratic masses of the North which was broken by the treachery of the Northern bourgeoisie in the "gentlemen's agreement" of 1877.

Instead of concessions to the reactionary myth of Reconstruction, the recovery of the truth concerning this period is urgently needed. This truth becomes a powerful weapon for bringing back to life, at this new stage of development, the alliance of democracy, to fight back the rising tide of fascism. Therefore, it is harmful for Southern progressives to interpret the fight against reaction as a fight against "modern Carpet-Baggers," in that this slogan negates the historically revolutionary and democratic tradition of the Southern white masses ("scalawags") during Reconstruction. It is precisely in the tradition of the so-called "scalawags," the allies of the Negro masses and "Carpet-Baggers" during Reconstruction that the new progressive South should find its inspiration in the struggle for unity and democracy.

UNCLARITY ON POSITION OF SOUTHERN BOURGEOISIE

Comrade Franklin's article also reflects certain unclarities as regards the position of the Southern ruling class. A careful study of this article gives one the impression that the author

is not only unclear as to the true role of this bourgeoisie, its relationship to Wall Street, but that he very definitely minimizes its essentially reactionary character. The great stress he places on the relative poverty of the "*South as a whole*," including its bourgeoisie, his reference to Odum's figures which give only seven millionaires in the entire Southeastern United States, cause one to surmise that the Southern bourgeoisie is actually waging a fight for its "rights" against Northern capital, *i.e.*, Wall Street, and that this "fight" to some extent coincides with the interests of the Southern white masses. In other words, the impression is definitely created that Comrade Franklin conceives the Southern ruling class as occupying the position of a colonial bourgeoisie in its relationship to Wall Street. The impression that he tends to regard the South as a colony is confirmed in the section of his article dealing with the role of Southern reaction and the way to expose it. He says:

"The Chinese have a vivid expression for their native exploiters, who have sold themselves body and soul to the Japanese militarists; they call them 'running dogs of Japanese imperialism'. . . . We must denounce these people [the Southern exploiters] as the 'running dogs of Wall Street.'"

This comparison, while attractive, is dangerous and misleading. We are justified in asking: Does Comrade Franklin by his reference to the Southern bourgeoisie as having "sold themselves body and soul" to Wall Street, to their "treason" to the Southern white masses, infer that this bourgeoisie occupies the status of a colonial or semi-colonial bourgeoisie? And if so, does it not imply that there is

a fundamental contradiction between Wall Street and the bourgeoisie of the South?

The Resolution of the Communist International, October, 1930, on the Negro Question, warns specifically against such "artificially construed analogies." This resolution states:

"The industrialization in the Black Belt is not, as is generally the case in colonies properly speaking, in contradiction with the ruling interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie which has in its hands the monopoly of all industry."

It is incorrect to imply that the Black Belt is a colony; certainly, the implication that the whole South is a colony is obviously erroneous.

There is no fundamental contradiction between the local white bourgeoisie in the South, and Wall Street. The industrialization of the South does not conflict with the ruling interests of Wall Street, *i.e.*, American finance capital. The interests of Wall Street are not seriously challenged by any aspiring Southern bourgeoisie. The fact is that Wall Street monopoly capital, together with its staunch allies, the Southern industrialists, have been carrying out such industrialization for a long time. They are doing this while at the same time preserving and perpetuating all the survivals of slavery—sharecropping, peonage, the special oppression of the Negro masses—all of which guarantees them especially cheap labor for the factories, mills, and mines of the South.

Unlike the bourgeoisie of the colonies, the Southern ruling classes have never represented the masses of its people. They have always been utterly parasitic—first as slave-holders, and now as capitalists and landlords.

During the period of Negro slavery, the masses of the poor whites were relegated to the position of pariahs, without rights. They enjoyed the fruits of democracy for the first time during the period of Reconstruction as a result of the liberation of the Negroes from chattel slavery and the alliance of the poor whites with them and the Carpet-Baggers. This "Carpet-Bag democracy" was wiped out by the victorious counter-revolution and the defeat of democracy sealed in the "gentlemen's agreement" between Northern capital and Southern reaction in 1877.

THE HAYES-TILLMAN AGREEMENT

By the terms of this agreement the former slave-holders were allowed to continue as the ruling class of the South on the basis of their acceptance of the reorganization of the South, a basis which would permit the unhampered development of capitalism, that is, under the leadership of Northern capital. On its part, Northern capital agreed to the continued monopoly and ownership of the land by the Southern Bourbons; it agreed to help them to restore the plantation system. This meant the re-enslavement of the Negro and, hence, the continued degradation of the poor whites. Northern capital, in return for the recognition of its "rights" to a lion's share in the plunder of the masses of the South accruing from the new slavery, was willing to re-establish the political rule of the former slave-holders and to help them smash democracy.

Therefore, by the Hayes-Tillman Agreement, Northern capitalism accepted the former slave-drivers of the South to its bosom as members of the

capitalist family, assigning to them the role of partners in the plunder of the Southern masses, black and white.

This reactionary combination continues up to the present day and constitutes a bulwark of reaction's fight against democracy.

Of course, in building the People's Front in the South, one must distinguish between the parasitic upper crust and the middle group, the small and so-called independent capitalists, who, while connected by numerous ties to finance-capital and semi-feudal landlordism, feel, nevertheless, their development cramped by the latter. Undoubtedly, considerable sections of this group have not exhausted their potentialities as regards the struggle for democracy.

It is obvious that to consider the Southern ruling class as a colonial bourgeoisie would leave a loophole through which the fascist demagogues of the type of a Huey Long could creep and spread the poison of reaction among the white masses of the South. The "professional patriots of the South," spokesmen of reaction, are now desperately fanning the dying embers of sectional animosity, in order to conceal from the masses their role as servants of Wall Street in the South. In this manner they are attempting to head off the growing movement for democracy in the South, to split it up, to spread confusion, and to direct the discontent of the Southern white masses upon the shoals of futile and reactionary sectionalism. This is how the descendants of the slave-holders carry out their end of the "gentlemen's agreement" at the present time.

In building the People's Front in

the South, the role of the Southern white Communists assumes particular importance.

TASKS OF THE WHITE COMMUNISTS IN THE SOUTH

First, it is their main task to expose at every opportunity the treacherous swindle which the reactionaries seek to pass off as the real picture of Reconstruction. While pointing out to the masses of Southern whites that their chief enemy is Wall Street finance capital, it is necessary to show them that in order to fight successfully against this enemy, the main fire must be directed against the local allies of Wall Street—the Southern ruling classes and their agents.

It is particularly incumbent upon our white Southern comrades to expose the real role of the Bilbos, the Ellenders, the Carter Glasses—those self-styled champions of a special “Southern interest,” who are now waging a sham battle against a phantom “Northern enemy,” while concluding, behind the scenes, reactionary bargainings with the worst enemies of the Southern white masses for the preservation of their slavery.

This gentry constitutes the “main danger within” for the masses of the Southern poor whites. Without the liberation of the white Southern masses from the influence of these reactionary demagogues, the barriers of Southern regionalism with its accompanying ignorance, poverty and degradation of the Southern masses cannot be broken down. Without this, the unity of the Southern toilers with the Negro masses and the progressives of the rest of the country cannot be achieved.

In the exposure of the Southern reactionaries Communists, especially our white Southern comrades, must point out how these people “protect” Southern white womanhood, by enslaving them in the textile mills and sweatshops of the South; how they “defend” the interests of the Southern white masses by foisting upon the workers wage differentials. It is an open secret that the trade journals of the Southern Chambers of Commerce, seeking to entice Northern industries to the South, shamelessly advertise “cheap and docile Anglo-Saxon labor.” The Southern white Communists must show how these agents of the Southern Bourbons, in order to perpetuate the division between Negro and white, preach “Anglo-Saxon racial purity,” while clandestinely violating Negro womanhood, procreating a whole population of illegitimate and disinherited mulatto children, etc.

The issue is not a “colonial” South, against an “imperialist” North, but the unity of the white and black masses of the South with the progressive forces of the North against Wall Street and the Southern Bourbon reactionaries.

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Comrade Franklin outlines an excellent program for the building of the People's Front movement in the South, for the bringing about of the unity of Negro and white masses there, with the forces of progress in the North in a joint fight for the immediate demands of democracy. But in order to achieve this, it is necessary that the Communists continuously bear in mind our full program on the Negro question—land, and the right to self-determination for the

Negro national majority of the Black Belt. They must constantly point out to the Southern white masses that their poverty, backwardness, and degradation are but by-products of the national oppression of the Negro people, that without the solution of this fundamental problem the real liberation of the white masses of the South cannot be achieved.

The struggle of the Negro masses for national liberation is first of all a struggle for the land, for the overthrow of the Bourbon landlords and their Wall Street backers, for the wiping out of the last vestiges of slavery in the South. This means the elimination of the economic and social base of Southern reaction, which exists in its monopoly of the land, thus depriving the masses of Negro and white poor farmers of the means of livelihood, forcing upon them sharecropping, debt-slavery, and peonage.

"It is also clear that only a victorious proletarian revolution will finally decide the agrarian question and the national question in the South of the United States." (*Colonial Thesis of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International.*)

Therefore, totally apart from humanitarian considerations, the white workers and poor farmers of the South must support the liberation of the Negro people, from a standpoint of their own class interests, as the fundamental revolutionary force against capitalist reaction in the South, against the common enemy of both Negro and white. Any underestimation of this essentially revolutionary role of the Negro liberation movement plays into the hands of reaction.

In view of this it is important that we formulate carefully our Leninist position on the Negro question. Comrade Franklin's reference to the Negro people as a "national minority," instead of an oppressed nation, is therefore incorrect and can lead to serious deviations from our position on the Negro question. In the section of the article dealing with the Negro question, he says: "The Negro people, thus definitely form an *oppressed national minority*."

Of course, it should be made clear at this point that the very same passage sets forth the national character of the Negro people and speaks of the right of self-determination for the Negro people. But the Leninist principle is weakened by the author's incorrect use of the term "national minority" in other places.

The October, 1930, Resolution of the Communist International specifically declares that the Negro question in the United States "must be viewed . . . as the question of an *oppressed nation*."

The purpose of this emphatic formulation of the Negro question as that of an "oppressed nation" was to guard against precisely such misinterpretations, to combat any tendency to regard the Negro question as the question of a national minority, such as the Jews in Poland, or any immigrant group in the United States.

True, the Polish Jews are subjected to a form of national oppression—economic, political, and cultural; but unlike the Negro masses of the South, they do not reside in any contiguous area on a territory where they constitute the majority of the population. The inequality of the Jews in Poland

is therefore not based upon a semi-feudal exploitation of a Jewish peasantry. They are fighting for equality, equal social and political rights; but this fight is not rooted in the struggle of a peasantry for the land. Whereas at the bottom of the struggle for Negro equality is the land question, the question of the right to the land—a struggle which can only be finally won with the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists of the South, with their Wall Street supporters, and the establishment of the right of the Negro majority in the Black Belt of the South to self-determination.

The Negroes in the Black Belt are

not a national minority, but a national majority—an oppressed nation. This distinction is important, from the standpoint of clarity, for making the white workers of the South conscious of the profoundly revolutionary character of the Negro question, and the powerful ally they have in the Negro liberation movement, as a force against the common enemy.

Clarification of the above-treated questions is imperative for winning the Southern white masses for a united People's Front movement, for carrying into effect the many excellent suggestions which are contained in the article by Comrade Franklin.