## A False Orientation in Negro Work

# ARE THE U. S. NEGROES A NATION?

*Error has its logic as well as truth!* And sometimes the iron logic of error destroys itself. Thus the recent *Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States*, "confirmed by the Political Commission of the ECCI," (*The Communist*, Feb. 1931), carries the present fundamentally false orientation of the Communist Party upon the Negro question to such (strictly logical) absurdity that the essentially non-Marxian character of this orientation stands self-exposed.

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### WHAT IS THE NEGRO QUESTION?

There are three fundamental approaches possible to the Negro question in the U. S. A. Do the Negro masses in this country constitute: (1) a colony of American imperialism (like the Virgin Islands, for example); (2) a national minority within the United States; or (3) an oppressed race?

The first possibility obviously does not correspond to the facts since the regions populated by the Negroes in this country very clearly constitute an integral part of the *national* economy of the United States. The second approach is the basic point of view of the Comintern and of the Party today.

*"The Negro question in the United States must be viewed . . . as the question of an oppressed nation."*

In *essence*, therefore, the Negro question in the United States, according to the Comintern, is really identical with the problem of the Croatians in Yugoslavia, the Germans in Hungary, etc.; that is, it is a question of a *national minority*.

Does this correspond with the facts? Do the American Negroes constitute a *nation* in the sense in which the Croatians, Ukrainians, or Greeks do? We quote an "unimpeachable" authority, none other than Comrade Stalin himself, who writes quite well on this question:

*"A nation,"* he says in his article, Marxism and the National Question, written in 1913, *"is an historically developed, consolidated and enduring community of language, territory, economic life, psychic structure—which manifests itself in the community of culture."*

Have the American Negroes a "community of language, territory, economic life, psychic structure" as distinct from the white people at all comparable in *type* (not merely in degree) to the distinctions between the Hungarian and the German, between the Great-Russian and the Ukrainian? To maintain such a position is possible only for those who know absolutely nothing of the situation of the Negro masses in this country.

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### THE "BLACK BELT"

The champions of the "national minority" theory realize the fatal weakness of their case and are reduced to the most absurd dodges to bolster it up. The first prerequisite for a nation is certainly a "community of territory" (even the most enthusiastic of the official theoreticians will not insist on a special "Negro language"). Here they appeal to the "Black Belt." What is this "Black Belt"? In the South there are about 200 contiguous counties in various states in which the Negroes constitute a majority of the population. In these counties there are about 3½ million Negroes (out of a total Negro population of the U. S. A. amounting to 12,000,000). These 200 counties are gathered together, by the official theoreticians (under the inspiration of John Pepper—see his pamphlet *American Negro Problems*), as the "Negro-land" of the "Negro nation" just as the Ukraine is the land of the Ukrainian nation, Ireland of the Irish nation, etc.

But of course it is clear that this is absurd. Quite apart from the fact that only 25% of the Negroes in the U. S. A. live in this "Negro-land," who will maintain that the "Black Belt" has any real economic, historical, or social unity—that it is very much more than a grouping of counties not basically different from those counties where the Negroes form, not the majority, but a very large section of the population? But the Comintern *Resolution on the Negro Question* even goes further: it maintains that the "Black Belt" was once (when?) a political unity and that its political unity was deliberately destroyed by an *artificial* division into states!!!

*"At the present time the Negro zone—precisely for the purpose of facilitating national oppression—is artificially split up and divided into a number of various states . . ."*

Imagine a man, pretending to understand American problems, who insists that Alabama and Arkansas and Mississippi were deliberately created in order to divide (gerrymander!) the "Black Belt"! When the official theoreticians have to resort to such phantasies their case must be bad indeed!

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### THE QUESTION OF "SELF-DETERMINATION"

The conception of the Negro question as a *national* question leads directly to the formulation of the slogan of *self-determination* as the "main slogan of the Communist Party in the Black Belt." What does this right of "self-determination" mean?

" . . . *It is necessary . . . to bring together into one governmental unit all districts of the South where the majority of the settled population consists of Negroes.*"

This "unit" should have the right of *"determining for itself the relations between its country and other governments, especially the United States"* —the "Black Belt" (the 200 "contiguous counties") is to have the right of secession from the United States! Then why not the secession of the "contiguous wards" in Harlem from the City of New York and from the United States? There is at least as much "community of territory, and economic life" in Harlem as in the "Black Belt."

But not only should we preach the right of the Black Belt to secession; the movement for separatism in the "Black Belt" is growing, and soon *"the question of the independence of the Black belt will become a question of the day."* No less!

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### SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

All this nonsense may seem mere absurdity—but it has serious consequences. *It entirely removes the Marxist basis for the work of the Communist Party among the Negro masses; it makes effective work impossible.* And the *Resolution* itself bears testimony to the falseness of the road pointed out by it:

1. The new course completely underestimates the significance of the Negro proletariat and of the tendencies in the direction of the proletarianization of the Negroes. Since the peasantry is the historical bearer of the national-revolutionary movement, and since the Negro question is a "national" question, the Negro peasantry (in the South) is therefore the fundamentally decisive section of the Negro population. Therefore, the struggle of the Negro workers in the North is to be *subordinated* to the "national-liberation" struggle in the South (See section 12 of *Resolution* and elsewhere), where there is a "rapid approach of a revolutionary crisis". (section 5)..

2. As a result of its fundamentally false estimation of the Negro question, the new course offers the strongest objective support to the reactionary-separatist tendencies among the Negro masses in the U. S. A. (the Garvey movement, etc.) which are based on almost the same premises. The Garveyites recognize this quite well and even the *Resolution* itself is forced to take cognizance of this in a distorted form (section 9).

3. So thoroly wrong is the new official course on the Negro question that it leads—*of course against the will of its champions*—to Jim Crowism—exactly as the same premises lead the Garveyites in the same direction. The Communists must give support to the *"Negroes' right to their own special schools"*— precisely in the South! (See section 3). But that's exactly what the white rulers of the South want—"special schools for Negroes," Jim Crow schools. What the Communists must fight for is precisely the opposite: for the *abolition* of "special schools"—for the most complete social and political equality for the Negroes.

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In this article only *one* phase of the Comintern *Resolution* is considered: the question of fundamental estimation of the Negro question. The Negro question is *not* a *national* question; it is a *racial* and *class* question. *Primarily the Negro question is the question of an oppressed race.*

—Will Herberg

howling."

Evidence in affidavit form indicated rather clearly that various law enforcement officials, including the sheriff, his deputies, various jailers and policemen, three relatives of the then governor of the state, a member of the State Legislature were all members of the mob.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING TO "SOCIAL-FASCISM?"

1. The Daily Worker publishes an article by Upton Sinclair (a leading member of the Socialist Party and recent California gubernatorial candidate of the SP).

2. The California District Committee of the Communist Party sent an official invitation to the Los Angeles Central Trades and Labor Council (A.F. of L.) asking it to participate in the unemployed "hunger march".

3. Johnstone declares, in the name of the TUUL, that the A. F. of L. organizations as well as Workmen's Circle branches will be invited to help the N'T WIU dress strike.

Well, well, well! What's happening to good old "social-fascism"? Are there no real "champions against opportunism" left in the Party to raise their heroic voices against such crass "Lovestoneism" permeating the Party?

## NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

The former editor of the central organ of the Communist Party of Switzerland, the Basel **Vorwerts**, Th. Wieser, has announced his withdrawal from the Communist Party. Comrade Weiser is among the founders of the Swiss CP. Our Swiss Opposition organ, the Schaffhausen Arbeiterzeitung, brings forward information to prove that Comrade Wieser was in fact expelled from the Party. Since the V Congress of the Party Wieser found himself in greater and greater opposition to the Party leadership and the attacks of the Party upon him became more and more provocative.

### Will Rogers Scores Again

"I don't want to discourage Mr. Mellon and his carefully balanced budget, but you let this country get hungry and they are going to eat, no matter what happens to budgets, income taxes or Wall Street values."

# The Economic Wee

As we have repeatedly pointed out, the "Sunshine" movement is beginning to peter out. It is coming down with a violent bang, the repercussion of which will be costly. All the "favorable" trade statistics are now so exploded that their boomers and boosters are flying to cover. Steel ingot output, tho larger for the month, still shows operations at less than 46% capacity and as compared with January of last year, already in the slump, was 1,312,884 tons less. For the first time, car loadings last week dropped below their 1922 level to the lowest point since 1921. Electric power consumption fell 6.3% below the corresponding period of 1930 and a poorer position than at the beginning of January. Building contract awards are far below last years. The motor car improvements are very slight. Chain stores sales show a 2.73% drop for the month. The week's figures for bank clearings and failures are distinctly unfavorable for comparison. The downward trend in commodity prices