

The Revolutionary National Struggle of the Negroes

By TOM JOHNSON

(This is the second of a series of three articles by comrade Tom Johnson. The first appeared in last week's Southern Worker and the third will appear next week.)

The fact that the Negroes are black-skinned and the whites are lighter in color is not the reason for the special oppression of the Negroes, as we have seen. This fact merely makes this oppression easier and is used to incite the white workers against the Negroes.

This intolerable oppression and discrimination against the Negroes; the fact that they are deprived of all so-called "democratic" rights which the whites have; the added fact that this special oppression and discrimination is practised against all sections and classes of the Negro population, particularly in the South, has the effect of binding the Negro people more firmly together as an oppressed nation, struggling against the oppressing nation, ruled by the white master class. Further, there exists in the South the economic basis for this national struggle of the Negro people. In a whole section of the South—the Black Belt, which starts up in North Carolina and runs down thru South Carolina, across Central Georgia and southern Alabama and over into Mississippi—the Negroes outnumber the whites. In this wide belt, in which there are 264 counties, where the Negroes are in a majority, the oppression of the Negro masses takes its sharpest and most brutal form. Here all of the "democratic" rights granted the white population are denied the Negro. Here lynching and mob violence rule supreme. Here the millions of Negroes are carefully segregated from the whites by Jim Crow laws. Here actual slave conditions exist on the farms.

Struggle Against White Bosses

In the struggle against such conditions the Negro people are bound to see that this struggle is a hopeless one as long as the state power remains in the hands of the white ruling class. Here the Negro people are bound to see that the only way they can throw off this intolerable system of oppression and can win and keep for themselves even those few rights granted the white population, is by a struggle against the white ruling class and against the powerful white ruling class government which is the instrument used to oppress the Negro people and deprive them of all rights. Here they are bound to see that the only guarantee to end lynch law and this existing oppression of a whole nation; that their only guarantee for full equality with the whites, is the transfer of the government power from the hands of the white ruling

class to the hands of the oppressed Negro nation.

This developing struggle of the Negro people against national oppression in the Black Belt is certain to be expressed in the demand by the Negro nation for the right, in the Black Belt where they are in a majority, to separate from the rest of the United States and to set up their own government, controlled by the Negro people and not by the white ruling class. This means a demand that the Negro nation shall have the right to itself determine whether or not it shall separate from the rest of the United States. It means a demand that the Negro people shall have the right to determine their own national existence. It means a demand for the right of self-determination. Around this demand for the right of self-determination there can be rallied the vast possible masses of the Negro toilers.

Same Enemies as White Workers

But this struggle of the Negro people for the right to a separate national existence is taking place at a time when the revolutionary struggle of all workers, both Negro and white, against the white ruling class and against capitalism is growing and developing. Therefore this special national struggle of the Negro people becomes bound up with and a part of the general working class struggle against capitalism. This is true because both the national struggle of the Negroes and the revolutionary working class struggle are directed against the same common enemy—the white ruling class. Therefore, these two revolutionary movements supplement and support each other. In other words a blow against the white ruling class struck in the struggle for self-determination is a blow in defense of the working class revolution against capitalism, and the struggle against capitalism is at the same time a struggle for the right of the Negro people to self-determination.

Furthermore, as we have seen above, one of the main sources of extra profits and hence of power of the ruling class in the United States is exactly the extraordinary oppression of the Negro people. Therefore fighting any movement which is directed against this special oppression of the Negroes tends to weaken the power of the ruling class, and to the extent which it does this, aids the working class revolution.

For these reasons it is clear that the revolutionary white workers must give every possible support to the struggle of the Negro people against oppression and for the right of self-determination.

(Third Article Next Week)