

**Struggle In The RU:  
IN OPPOSITION TO THE  
CONSOLIDATION  
OF THE  
REVISIONIST LINE  
ON THE  
BLACK NATIONAL  
QUESTION**

A POLEMIC WRITTEN BY EX-MEMBERS OF THE RU AND COMRADES OF THE  
BLACK WORKERS CONGRESS.

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This pamphlet was first produced as part of the internal struggle within the RU and between the RU and BWC/PRRWO on the Black national question. This struggle began towards the latter part of 1973 and continued on through the first part of 1974, and it continues today. This pamphlet represents the line of the BWC.

Chou En Lai clearly stated in the 10th Party Congress Report, that that this is the era of Leninism and that Lenin's teachings on imperialism still guide our thinking. The theoretical presentation on the question of imperialism has not changed even though the world is indeed a great deal different today than it was in 1917, 1940, or even 1950. It is our contention that the theoretical presentation of the national question in the U.S. must be the same today as it was in 1930 even though the USA has changed a great deal. We refuse to follow the RU revisionists, whose line is exactly the same as that of the CPUSA, down the path of discovering "new nations", changing the fundamental principles of the Bolshevik theory of nations, etc., etc. At the same time, we fully understand that it is necessary to thoroughly investigate the Black Belt South, as well as all other areas of the country, in order to develop the most scientific program which reflects present day social reality and the deepest aspirations of the masses. We certainly don't need the RU and CPUSA revisionists to tell us that Black people work in factories and live in cities, and that therefore they have disintegrated as a nation whose territory is the Black Belt South.

The further unfolding of our line on this question will come fundamentally through our newspaper "The Communist", which can be ordered from our national office.

We hope that this pamphlet can help the honest Marxist-Leninists, revolutionaries, and advanced workers achieve revolutionary unity among comrades, and hasten the development toward the building of a genuine Communist Party.

DOWN WITH REVISIONISM AND OPPORTUNISM

BUILD A PARTY OF A NEW TYPE-A MARXIST -LENINIST COMMUNIST PARTY

## PREFACE

The following document was originally circulated, in mimeographed form, as part of a two line struggle in the RU. Many comrades have found it a valuable weapon in their struggle to defeat the revisionist line being consolidated in the RU, and have asked us to put it into pamphlet form so that it could receive wider circulation.

We have already received some valuable criticisms and can see a number of ways to improve the paper. For example, it needs more elaboration on two basic positions: first, that race is a factor, not the source, of national oppression and second, that the Black nation is not a colony, and to consider it such leads to some very serious errors.

We are prepared to defend our position as it stands, and to elaborate on these points, but have decided instead to print the paper as it originally appeared. (There are some changes, but nothing which alters the basic thrust or content of the original statement.) We have made this decision at this time because we believe that wider circulation, more serious study of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, and the general sharpening of the ideological struggle now raging in the communist movement, will provide a better and firmer basis for improving and clarifying the basic line of the paper.

However, there is one point, which is essential to the paper, which we feel needs clarification. This is the *agrarian question*. Specifically, we would like to make clear distinctions between the *agrarian question*, which is one particular aspect of the Black national question, and the overall, general question of the *material basis* for the oppression of the Black nation.

The Black masses were molded into an oppressed nation in the period following Reconstruction. With their victory in the Civil War, the northern capitalists had to insure control of the Black Belt area as a source of super-profits. And they, in alliance with the southern planters, ruthlessly set about the task of forcibly subjugating the political, social, and economic life of the Black Belt territory. They accomplished this subjugation by armed force; by use of vicious Black codes and Jim Crow laws and *primarily* by stripping the Black masses of any control of the LAND—the principle means of production. The bolstering of the plantation system drove the Black masses into the position of being landless and powerless peasants.

It was on this basis that the basic social relations between the oppressed Black nation, and the oppressor white imperialist nation, were established. The development of the Black nation, of the entire Black Belt region, rested in the hands of the oppressor nation bourgeoisie.

Thus the Yankee imperialists and their southern allies, through control of the land, maintained the political and class rule of the Black nation. This was the material basis of the subjugation of the Black nation, and this same material basis *remains today*—it is not just an historical fact.

The struggle for self-determination is fundamentally a struggle to regain control—to determine the fate—of the Black nation. It is the struggle to rip the entire Black Belt territory, this source of super-profits, from the hands of the imperialists.

One particular, but essential part of this struggle is the agrarian question, that is the question of land reform. Although this question has lost some of its specific weight, it remains a fundamental part of the struggle for emancipation of the Black nation. It CANNOT be ignored or lightly dismissed by communists. Rather communists must proceed

from the basic starting point that imperialism cannot entirely eliminate the semi-feudal and slave survivals characteristic of the South. It cannot fully carry out these revolutionary changes because it is a dying decaying system. The important changes that have taken place in the South, principally industrialization and mechanization of agriculture, have taken place within the context of maintaining these fundamental social relations, and the super-exploitation that arises from them. In other words, industrialization cannot occur to such an extent that it fully excludes the semi-feudal social relations characteristic of agriculture in the South.

The understanding that there is still an unresolved agrarian question means that communists must recognize the need to develop specific demands and programs around land reform in the South; and that communists recognize these special demands as a part of the overall struggle for liberation of the Black nation—which is an integral and component part of the proletarian revolution in the U.S.

—suspended members of the Detroit RU

## INTRODUCTION

Comrades! The imperialist crisis is deepening. It is focusing its deadly blows at the American working class. In particular it is intensifying its terrorist repression against the oppressed masses of the Black nation. The coming period will undoubtedly bring forward a powerful upsurge of the Black liberation movement. A correct revolutionary understanding is essential if Communists are to lead this struggle, forge the unity of the national and class struggle, and lead both onto victory.

We feel RU hasn't got even the beginnings of a correct position. For us, the publication of Red Papers 5 meant the beginning of a sharp struggle in our collective. At the end of many weeks of struggle, we united as a minority behind RP5. We at that time, did not realize the absolute necessity of thoroughly refuting RP5. Rather than intensifying our study of the classics and the development of the National Question in this country, and thus improving our ability to struggle for a correct line within the organization, we let this struggle over basic line come to an end. Instead, in the following months, struggle focused over particular application of the basic line. This was a mistake on our part that reflected a general attitude of belittling theory and not recognizing the importance of line. We criticize ourselves for making this error and for adopting an attitude of waiting to see which direction the organization would take.

The time for waiting is over. For the last six months the struggle on the National Question has escalated. The struggle to develop a correct Leninist position is now raging in the Communist movement. It can be seen as not less than a two line struggle, a class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

The direction of the organization has become clear. We are convinced that the RU secretariat is leading the organization down the road of revisionism. This is reflected not only in theoretical documents, but also in the organizations in practice, and its refusal to allow the struggle over line within the organization to take place.

A study of RU work through its *United Front papers* and *Revolution* will very quickly show that work in the Black liberation movement is miniscule. Here in Detroit, a key center of the Black proletariat, the work in the Black liberation movement and with Black workers in general is at a very low level. Most of what has been done, like the Shelton McCrainey Defense, has been together and with the help of the BWC. This situation does not exist because the cadres here are bad or dishonest—they aren't. It is not the cadres but the *line* which is at fault. *Without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary practice.* Without a correct line on the National Question, RU will not be able to lead or even play an important role in the Black liberation struggle.

The Secretariat's whole approach to this struggle reveals their opportunist position. The publication of NB 13 in our organization represented a summing up, a major development in the line of our organization around the National Question. We sincerely question whether the huge majority of rank and file cadre participated in the formulation and decisions on line that his document reflects. Nor is there any indication that the NCC—this organization's highest body—met to sum up the work and carry out ideological struggle over line. In sum, nationwide debate, discussion and thorough-going ideological struggle has not taken place.

RU leadership has consistently insisted that this kind of

struggle is not necessary, because there is not real opposition to their line within the organization. We do not believe this is true. We are convinced that RU cannot possibly be uniting every cadre, and especially Blacks and other Third World cadre around its revisionist line. We feel the leadership has purposely squashed any opposition to their line. And we feel this reveals their true character. It is the revisionists who are afraid of ideological struggle, not the Marxist-Leninists. It is the opportunists who lie, who purposely isolate and root out any opposition to their bankrupt line.

The sum result of all the Secretariat's activities has been to isolate the RU and pit it against the rest of the Communist movement. In fact, the line is already being run to cadre that the RU is the only Communist organization in the US. That we must stand up and go against the tide.

Only outright chauvinists could claim that the RU, a basically white, petit bourgeois organization, represents the only Marxist-Leninist organization in the US today. It is true that we must go against the tide—the tide of revisionism and opportunism in the ranks of our leadership.

Comrades! it is time to take a stand. We must not accept the line that all the other Marxists-Leninists organizations are opportunist. We must reaffirm that both the BWC and PRRWO are Marxist-Leninist organizations. That they have made, and will continue to make important contributions to the revolutionary movement.

For over two years our organizations functioned as fraternal organizations. In many cities (and Detroit is a good example) this gave RU cadre a chance to work and struggle with Black and Puerto Rican Communists. This experience was invaluable, both for the individuals and because it helped the unity of all three organizations. Eventual merger was on everyone's mind.

What happened? This same class struggle over line is the main reason we are no longer fraternal organizations. We cannot take lightly the fact that both the BWC and PRRWO are in complete disagreement with the RU line. We can't ignore the fact that this means many cadre have little or no contact with Black and Puerto Rican Communists. That they are doing work in cities that are 50% Black, and the local organization is nearly (or entirely) white.

This split represents a serious situation. It leaves RU isolated from the Third World Marxist-Leninists it was closest to. It should be clear to everyone that two line struggle in the Communist movement today is separating the true Marxist-Leninists from the sham revisionists, it is consolidating the proletarian forces and isolating the agents of the bourgeoisie. RU is an integral part of this class struggle and cannot be exempt from it. Both lines are represented inside our organization.

The need for clarity and struggle on line is urgent: *Truth develops through struggle with falsehood!* We therefore demand the unfolding of thorough ideological struggle, with all positions fully represented at local, regional, and national levels.

We present this paper as our contribution to this struggle. We would like to thank Harry Haywood, whose writings have been an invaluable resource. For the past two years we have had the opportunity to work with him on his autobiography and we feel this experience, and the help and guidance he has given us, have been a key factor in developing our ability to grasp the basic starting point for a Leninist position on the National Question. (However, this paper is not intended to be Haywood's position and should not be interpreted as such.)

We have not attempted to cover every aspect and every problem and error RU puts forward. Nor have we attempted to formulate a complete revolutionary position on the National Question in the US. Clearly, the investigation, summing up, and ideological struggle necessary to achieve a complete revolutionary position cannot be done by a handful of individuals. It can only be fully achieved by a true multi-national Communist Party, capable of summing up the theory and practice of the US working class.

We feel the weaknesses this paper undoubtedly has are directly tied to the fact that it is the work of a few individuals and not the result of a summing up of Marxist-Leninist organization. However, in another sense, the line we present here does not represent the position of a few individuals, but instead has historically been the line held by the Marxist-Leninists of this country. On the contrary, RU line echoes that of the revisionist before them.

Through our study and struggle around the National Question we have come to understand that the right errors being made are tied directly to the practice of belittling theory and bowing to spontaneity. And we believe this to be true of other areas of work (i.e. trade unions, support committees). One of the forms this takes is great underestimation of the need to study and ideologically arm the cadre in the science of Marxism-Leninism. This reflects itself in the fact that most cadre have little or no grasp on the question of Party building and its relationship to building the United Front and the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. The understanding of what is necessary to build the Party and what this means for our practical work is not grasped. This is sharply reflected in the organization's basic inability to unite with advanced workers (or even to identify them in the work place) and train them in the science of Marxism-Leninism.

Ridding our organization of its opportunism and its practice of bowing to spontaneity is directly linked to a better understanding of Party building. We therefore feel that the present struggle against opportunism on the National Question cannot help but call into question RU's formulation of the central task which places Party building as a secondary task.

This paper is divided into four distinct sections. The first section is a presentation of the two historical periods of the national question. That is, the period when it was part of the bourgeois democratic revolution and the period when it was part of the proletarian revolution. We attempt to bring forward the class struggle occurring in Russia and Europe at the time, and the basic Marxist-Leninist principles that were forged in the midst of this struggle.

The second is a critique of Red Papers 5 and National Bulletin 13. It outlines what we feel are the main errors in RU's position. It also explains why this revisionist position in essence underestimates the revolutionary potential of the Black liberation struggle and effectively liquidates the National Question.

The third section presents what we feel is the necessary starting point for the development of a correct Leninist position on the National Question.

The last section is divided into 2 parts. The first part contains a brief explanation of the position that has historically been taken by Communists in this country with regard to the National Question. In particular, there is a run down of the Comintern's 1928 and 1930 Resolutions on the National Question. We also explain how this affected the CP's practice and enabled it at that time to take the

lead of the national movement. The second part describes the glaring similarities between the RU's position today & the position of the revisionists of the 1950's. With this revisionist position came the corresponding destruction of the CP's practice in the Black liberation movement.

In the second and third sections we spend quite a bit of time dealing with the agrarian question. This is because we agree with the Comintern when it said that the industrialization of the South *would in no way bring a solution to the agrarian question which lies at the basis of the national question*. To gain a clear understanding of the National Question and its revolutionary character, it is crucial to grasp that the unresolved agrarian question is still at the basis of the National Question, still the source of national oppression. It is important not to dismiss the agrarian question simply because the majority of Blacks are now workers.

This entire document is devoted to the National Question. This does not mean that we feel the National Question is a separate, isolated struggle that can be solved outside the realm of the overall class struggle. We don't. We would also like to clarify that we feel it is essential to study and develop a correct position for other aspects of the National Question in the US. In particular, the question of Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, because the solution of both of these questions also represents pressing tasks facing the US working class. To repeat, the National Question is an integral part of the proletarian revolution and it is subordinate to the class question. However, the National Question is a special phase of the class struggle that requires special demands for its solution.

We present this paper in the hopes that it will help us all gain clarity on line, and a better grasp of the correct solution to the National Question. We realize that it is a very long document, and it will take a lot of time to read and study it. But we hope that every RU cadre will take that time, will grasp the fact that there is a two line struggle inside our organization and will join with us in our demand for full and open nation-wide debate on the questions facing the RU today.

*This document and the line which is presented has the support of the BWC Secretariat, along with the Chairman of the organization, Mike Hamlin.*

*Note: Whenever reference is made to the National Question in the US it should read Black National Question. This is because use of the general term National Question in the US is incorrect when reference is being made to one aspect of the National Question in this country, i.e. the Black national question, and not all of its aspects, i.e. Chicano, Puerto Rican, etc. The rest of the document will make a distinction between the National Question in general and the Black Black national question in particular.*

## The National Question in the Epoch of Rising Capitalism and the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution

Communists have always studied the national question for the purpose of furthering the class struggle of the proletariat, to enable it to achieve its fundamental revolutionary goal of overthrowing the bourgeoisie. Stalin wrote that:

*Neither before nor after the October Revolution did the Bolsheviks ever separate the national question from the general question of revolution. The essential feature of the Bolshevik approach to the national question was that the Bolsheviks always considered the national question in inseparable connection with the prospects of the revolution. (Stalin, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p. 170)*

What can be said about the development of the Bolshevik position on the national question and its relation to the Russian Revolution as a whole? Stalin notes that:

*It can be said without straining the point that in the history of Russian Marxism there were two stages in the presentation of the national question, the first, or the pre-October stage, and the second, or the October stage. In the first stage, the national question was regarded as part of the general question of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.... In the second stage, when the national question assumed wider scope and became a question of colonies, when it became transformed from an internal political question into a world question, it came to be considered as part of the general proletarian revolution, as part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. (Stalin, The National Question in Yugoslavia, p. 171)*

What were the concrete features of political life in Russia when the national question was a part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution?

The proletariat found itself oppressed by the crushing weight of tsarist absolutism. The destruction of tsarism, the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution was the first task of the Russian proletariat. Only with the overthrow of tsarism could the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat come to the fore. Only with the destruction of tsarism could the stage be set for the proletariat's revolutionary onslaught against the bourgeoisie. The accomplishment of this task required a marshalling of all forces opposed to tsarism in Russia. At the same time, it was absolutely essential to maintain a position of independence for the proletariat.

It was from this standpoint, the requirements of the proletariat's class struggle, that the Bolsheviks studied the national question in Russia. The theoretical works of Lenin and Stalin of this period—*Critical Remarks on the National Question (1913)*, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1914)*, and *Marxism and the National Question (1912-1913)*—were written to answer the practical problems presented to the proletariat in the realm of the national question in the period of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

Russia was a 'prison house of nations.' In Russia the unifying of the nationalities was undertaken by the Great-Russians, who were headed by a *historically formed, powerful and well-organized aristocratic military bureaucracy.* (Marxism and the National Question, p. 72) In fact, over half (57%) of the entire all-Russian population consisted of subject peoples suffering savage national oppression.

Clearly, only a correct position on the national question could bring about unity of the proletariat of the oppressor and oppressed nations, bring an end to tsarism and set the

stage for the proletarian revolution. Toward this end, Lenin and Stalin analyzed the impact of national oppression on Russian political life, the bourgeois democratic movements for national liberation and the role of the bourgeoisie in these movements. Stalin wrote:

*But capitalism also began to develop in the Eastern states. Trade and communication were developing. Large towns were springing up. The nations were becoming economically consolidated. Capitalism, erupting into the tranquil life of the nationalities which had been pushed into the background, arousing them and stirring them into action...*

*But the nations which had been pushed into the background and had now awakened to independent life, could no longer form themselves into independent national states; they encountered on their path the very powerful resistance of the ruling strata of the dominant nations, which had long ago assumed control of the state... The struggle began to flare up, to be sure, not between nations as a whole, but between the ruling classes of the dominant nations and of those that had been pushed into the background. (Marxism and the National Question, p. 72-73)*

Further, Stalin makes it clear that in these struggles 'the bourgeoisie plays the leading role.' (Ibid., p. 73), and that 'under the conditions of rising capitalism the national struggle is a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves... In its essence it is always the bourgeois struggle, one that is to the advantage and profit mainly of the bourgeoisie.' (ibid., p. 74)

Analyzing the economic foundations of the national movements, Lenin wrote:

*Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speak a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements... Therefore, the tendency of every national movement is towards the establishment of national states, under which the requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied... therefore we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.*

Did this mean that the national struggle, the struggle against all forms of national oppression was not in the interest of the proletariat? No, it did not. For:

*restriction of freedom of movement, disenfranchisement, repression of language, closing of schools, and other forms of persecution affect the workers no less, if not more, than the bourgeoisie... (and) the policy of nationalist persecution is dangerous to the cause of the proletariat on another account. It diverts the attention of large strata from social questions, questions of class struggle, to national questions. questions common to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie... (Further), the policy of persecution does not stop there. It not infrequently passes from a 'system' of oppression to a 'system' of inciting nations against each other, to a 'system' of massacres and pogroms.*

(Stalin, Marxism and the National Question, p. 74-75)

Clearly, one could not speak of the 'development of the proletariat as a class' where the proletariat of the oppressed nations were forbidden to use their native languages in their schools, political meetings, etc. One could not speak of 'unity of the proletariat' where workers of the various na--

tions were being incited to massacre each other.

What then was the policy of the Bolsheviks in this situation—where, on the one hand, national oppression threatened to 'drown the course of unity of the workers in blood and tears' (Marxism and the National Question, p.75) and on the other hand, the national struggle was 'a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves?' (MNQ, p.74)

In this situation, it was the task of the proletarians to 'advance their principles in the national question.' (Lenin, Right of Nations to Self-Determination, p.18). The proletariat had to stand for the most resolute struggle against all national oppression, but the proletariat could give the bourgeoisie 'only conditional support' for what 'every bourgeoisie is out for in the national question: either privileges for its own nation, or exceptional advantages for it.' (Right of Nations to Self-Determination, p.18)

What were the principles of the proletariat in the national question? Lenin answers this in the conclusion of the Right of Nations to Self-Determination:

*Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations—such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers. (p.31)*

Opposition to the Bolshevik position on the national question was fierce. It could not have been otherwise for the Bolshevik position represented the revolutionary interests of the Russian proletariat. In essence, all anti-Bolshevik positions on the national question represented either the interests of the Great Russian landlords and bourgeoisie or the interests of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations, or attempted to reconcile the interests of these classes at the expense of the proletariat. Let us examine the most important deviations from the Bolshevik position.

The position of the Black Hundreds was that of unbridled Russian chauvinism. They said:

*All non-Russians should be ruled with an iron rod to keep them from 'getting out of hand'. Russia must be indivisible, and all the peoples must submit to Great Russian rule for it was the Great Russians who built up and united the land of Russia.*

(Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, p.13)

Their views, representing the interests of the Russian landlords and bourgeoisie in open, undisguised form, could scarcely be called a 'deviation' from Leninism. As such, they were the most easily exposed among the masses.

Rosa Luxembourgh attacked the Bolshevik position mainly from the standpoint of its lack of 'practicality'. Analyzing her demand for practicality, Lenin concluded that:

*It means one of three things: support for all national aspirations; the answer 'yes' or 'no' to the question of secession by any nation; or that national demands are in general immediately 'practicable'.*

(Right of Nations to Self-Determination, p.18)

Why? Because the proletariat was concerned first and foremost with building the revolutionary unity of the workers of all nations and was therefore opposed to all privileges, however slight of any nation. The bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation would call for support of all of its national aspirations or a simple 'yes' to its demand of secession. But these aspirations and the 'yes' might trample upon the rights of another nation or be in contradiction to the interests of 'its' proletariat. The demand of the oppressor nation bourgeoisie and feudal aristocracy was for a simple 'no' to the question of secession and concession only to those national demands which were 'practicable', i.e. did not chal-

lenge its power and privileges. Clearly this would leave the edifice of national oppression unchallenged.

It is in this context that Lenin wrote: *the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the right of self-determination, without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give anything at the expense of another nation.*

(Right of Nations to Self-Determination, p.19)

It is clear from this that what Lenin meant by 'negative' is that communists could not in general take a 'positive' stand for or against secession. They must uphold the right of every nation to self-determination. In this way the proletariat could maintain its independence and determine whether each particular demand for secession of a nation was revolutionary or reactionary depending on conditions of class struggle and historical development at the time.

RP5 misinterprets Lenin's meaning of 'negative demand' in order to belittle the importance of the demand for the right of self-determination.

*Whether the Ukraine, for example, is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by thousands of unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle 'guesses', we firmly uphold something that is beyond doubt (our emphasis): the right of the Ukraine to form such a state...We educate the masses in the spirit of recognition of that right, in the spirit of rejecting state privileges for any nation*

*...We proletarians declare in advance that we are opposed to Great Russian privileges, and this is what guides our entire propaganda and agitation.*

*In her quest for 'practicality' Rosa Luxembourgh has lost sight of the principal practical task both of the Great Russian proletariat and of the proletariat of the other nationalities: that of day-by-day agitation and propaganda against all state and national privileges, and for the right, the equal right of all nations, to their national state. This (at present) is our principal task in the national question for only in this way can we defend the interests of democracy and the alliance of all proletarians of all nations on an equal footing. (Right of Nations to Self-Determination, p.21)*

Lenin emphasized the significance of upholding the right of self-determination:

*If, in our political agitation, we fail to advance and advocate the slogan of the right to secession, we shall play into the hands, not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the feudal landlords and the absolutism of the oppressor nation. ...When in her anxiety not to 'assist' the nationalist bourgeoisie in Poland, Rosa Luxembourgh rejects the right to secession in the programme of the Marxists in Russia, she is in fact assisting the Great-Russian Black Hundreds, (the vilest, most unbridled advocates of Great Russian chauvinism, ed.) (Right of Nations to Self-Determination, p.20)*

These fiery words, in the first stage of the national question, when it was a part of the bourgeoisie revolution, when if we are to believe the RU leadership the key words describing the Bolshevik position on the right of self-determination was 'negative demand'!

Do we slander the RU leadership by saying they play into the hands of the Wall Street imperialists and their Dixiecrat allies, failing so miserably as they do to 'advance and advocate the slogan of the right to secession' of the Black nation.

Another deviation the Bolsheviks struggled against was represented by the 'national liberals'. Like any other

nationalism, Great Russian nationalism passes through various phases, according to the classes that are dominant in the bourgeois country at any given time. Up to 1905, we almost exclusively knew national-reactionaries. After the revolution, national liberals arose in our country.' (The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, p. 30)

The rise of this trend accompanied the rise of the Great Russian bourgeoisie that the Revolution of 1905 had brought about. Discussing the liberals stand on the language question Lenin wrote:

*The liberals' approach the language question in the same way as they approach all political question—like hypocritical bucksters, holding out one hand (openly) to democracy and the other (behind their backs) to the feudalists and police.*

(Critical Remarks on the National Question, p. 2)

The liberals did not oppose all democratic reforms in Russia. They stood united, however, in their opposition to the principle of the right of nations to self-determination. Lenin wrote:

*The liberals hostility to the principle of political self-determination of nations can have one, and only one, real class meaning: national liberalism, defence of the state privileges of the Great Russian bourgeoisie, And the opportunists among the Marxists in Russia, who today, under the Third of June regime, are against the right of nations to self-determination—the liquidator Semkovsky, the Bundist Liebman, the Ukrainian petty-bourgeois Yurkevich—are actually following in the wake of the national liberals, and corrupting the working class with national liberal ideas.*

(Right of Nations of Self-Determination, p. 22)

Do we slander the RU leadership by saying they follow in the wake of our national liberals (Kennedy, et al) ready as they are to support struggles for partial reforms in the system of national oppression, but loathe as they are to even speak (publicly) of that which is 'beyond doubt,' the right of the Black nation to self-determination.

The cultural national autonomists constituted another major group of deviators from the Bolshevik position on the national question. What was cultural national autonomy? Quoting Stalin:

*This means firstly that autonomy would be granted, let us say, not to Bohemia or Poland, which are inhabited mainly by Czechs and Poles, but to Czechs and Poles generally, irrespective of territory, no matter what part of Austria they inhabit. That is why this autonomy is called national and not territorial...*

*The starting point of national autonomy is the conception of a nation as a union of individuals without regard to a definite territory.*

(Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 80, 82)

As Stalin said, a fundamental opportunist error of the cultural national autonomists was their:

*absolutely unjustifiable substitution of national autonomy for self-determination of nations. One or the other: either Bauer (an Austrian cultural national autonomist) failed to understand the meaning of self-determination, or he did understand it but for some reason or other deliberately narrowed its meaning. For there is not doubt that (a) cultural national autonomy presupposes the integrity of the multi-national state whereas self-determination goes outside the framework of this integrity, and that (b) self-determination endows a nation with complete rights, whereas national autonomy endows it with only 'cultural'*

*rights.*

(*Marxism and the National Question*, p. 84)

Another feature of cultural national autonomy, and its second fundamental breach with Leninism is its advocacy of the national or federal principle of organization of workers as opposed to the Leninist international principle. This aspect of the cultural autonomist deviation was especially important to struggle against because it dovetailed precisely with the bourgeois program of making national distinctions everything, and of promoting 'national culture.' Lenin said:

*...the general 'national culture' is the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie. This fundamental &, for a Marxist, elementary truth was kept in the background by the Bundist, who 'drowned' it in his jumble of words, i.e., instead of revealing and clarifying the class gulf to the reader, he in fact obscured it. In fact, the Bundist acted like a bourgeois, whose every interest requires the spreading of a belief in a non-class national culture.*

(Critical Remarks on the National Question, p. 4-5)

For this reason, Bolsheviks opposed building organizations along national lines. They insisted on one, all-Russian Social-Democratic Party, and on multi-national workers organizations. '...the international type of organization serves as a school of fraternal sentiments and is a tremendous agitational factor on behalf of internationalism.' (Marxism and the National Question, p. 103)

## CONCLUSION

The first stage of the national question was the period of rising capitalism, when the national movements were part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. In this period the Bolsheviks' policy on the national question was developed in struggle against incorrect policies on the national question. These deviations took different forms but they were basically reformist: they did not attack the source of national oppression, the tsarist empire. Lenin and Stalin however, developed a correct policy by viewing the national question 'in inseparable connection with the prospects of the revolution.'

On the one hand, the cultural autonomist deviation left the state privilege of Tsarist Russia unquestioned by removing the national question from the political arena and limiting it to 'cultural' and 'educational matters.' At the same time it threatened to bury the proletariat in the national movements by splitting workers along national lines, and promoting the non-class 'national culture' of the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the Polish deviation took the position that struggle against 'their own' bourgeoisie was everything. In their concern that the masses would be 'swept up' in the national movements lead by the Polish bourgeoisie, they lost sight of the main source of reaction, the tsar and Great Russian nationalism. By not recognizing the revolutionary, democratic character of these movements, they found themselves actually aiding the tsarist policy of national oppression and promoting Black Hundred nationalism.

Both deviations had in common their opposition to including the right of self-determination in the Party's program. Thus, Lenin and Stalin saw the right of self-determination as a key demand in the struggle against these deviations and for uniting the proletariat of all the nations 'imprisoned' in the tsarist state.

Equality for all nations, right of self-determination, and insistence on organizational unity and promoting the common class interests of all workers—such was the basis of the

Bolshevik policy on the national question in the first period.

### The National Question in the Era of the Downfall of Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution

The outbreak of the first World War in 1914 represented the first major crisis of imperialism. The war revealed the predatory character of moribund capitalism. It dramatically changed the objective conditions facing the working class and the revolutionary movement. It signaled the beginning of the era of proletarian revolution. And it ushered in a new wave of opportunists—the social-chauvinists.

The war laid bare the fundamental contradictions of the imperialist system. While the objective conditions in Europe were never more ripe for revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the majority of the Communist parties wavered. While the situation demanded revolutionary tactics and organization, the parties of the 2nd International hesitated. And while the imperialist crisis deepened, these Communists capitulated. They became outright agents of 'their' bourgeoisie—traitors to the working class.

In sharp contrast stood the Bolsheviks led by V.I. Lenin. Steadfastly charting a revolutionary course, they exposed the opportunists in theory and practice. The Bolsheviks alone defended the cause of the proletariat in the imperialist war—demanding that the communists turn the imperialist war into civil war. It was in this period of fierce class struggle that the principles of the Leninist position on the national question were forged into an invincible weapon.

This section puts forward these principles as we understand them and attempts to show how they developed in class struggle. We rely entirely on the works of Lenin and Stalin, mainly *Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self Determination*, *Discussion on Self Determination Summed Up*, *Foundations of Leninism*, *Once Again on the National Question*, and *The October Revolution and the National Question*.

In Russia the war meant increased misery and exploitation of the masses. It intensified all forms of oppression, including national oppression. Great Russian chauvinism 'ram-paged' across the tsarist state, encouraged by the bourgeoisie and taken up by opportunist Socialists. These contradictions were mirrored in the Western European countries where national chauvinist propaganda inundated the masses, justifying the war, encouraging and fostering national antagonisms and hatred. 'Defense of the Fatherland' became the slogan of the warring bourgeoisies. The opportunists, fearing the revolution and refusing to take up the class struggle against 'their' own bourgeoisie, succumbed to this chauvinist propaganda. The lines of class struggle were drawn. The communist movement was split:

*...but the fact that in the epoch of imperialism, owing to objective causes, the proletariat has been split into two international camps, one of which has been corrupted by the crumbs that fall from the table of the dominant nation bourgeoisie—obtained among other things from the double or triple exploitation of small nations—while the other cannot liberate itself without liberating the small nations, without educating the masses in an anti-chauvinist, i.e. 'self-determination,' i.e., anti-annexationist spirit.*

(Lenin, *Discussion ...Summed Up*, p. 45)

Lenin directed his polemical attacks at the social-chauvinists, to the opportunists who tried to avoid the national question or limit it to a narrow circle of question. The ur-

gency with which Lenin writes is easy to grasp when you understand that these opportunists were standing two feet on the side of the bourgeoisie, betraying the working class, when the need for bold revolutionary action was at its greatest.

In order to wage struggle against the imperialist bourgeoisie it was urgent and necessary that the Communist parties educate and ideologically arm the working class of their countries as to the real nature and character of the war. That is, that the war was an imperialist war, a war between a handful of the great powers to divide up the vast majority of the world's population. It was a war of expansion, that would intensify national oppression and colonial plunder. It was a war that showed clearly that capitalism had reached its highest stage of development. It was now a moribund, parasitic system.

It was precisely this line that the opportunists refused to take up. They defended their own bourgeoisie's policy of war and colonial plunder, parroting the 'Defense of the Fatherland' line. They carefully avoided taking up the question of the right to self-determination for the nations oppressed by 'their' bourgeoisie and limited themselves to pious hypocritical proclamations about self-determination in general.

But Lenin would have none of this. Imperialism had intensified the scope of national oppression. The world was now divided: in one camp a handful of imperialist, oppressor nations, in the other the oppressed and exploited nations which make up the vast majority of the world's population.

The struggle for socialism was now intimately connected with the national liberation movements throughout the world.

*Victorious socialism must necessarily establish full democracy and consequently, not only introduce full equality of nations but also realise the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to free political separation. Socialist parties which do not show by all their activity, both now, during the revolution, and after its victory that they would liberate the enslaved nations and build up relations with them on the basis of a free union—and free union is a false phrase without the right to secede—these parties would be betraying socialism.*

(Lenin, *Socialist Revolution & the Right of Nations*, p.31)  
A correct policy on the national question was absolutely necessary. And essential to carrying out a correct policy was a thorough understanding of the role of the right of self-determination.

First, the right of self-determination is a slogan of unity. It is aimed at breaking down all barriers and antagonisms between the people of the oppressor and oppressed nations. For this reason it is an essential part of a revolutionary political program:

*The aim of socialism is not only to end the division of mankind into tiny states, and the isolation of nations in any form, it is not only to bring the nations closer together but to integrate them. And it is precisely in order to achieve this aim that we must on one hand explain to the masses the reactionary nature of .... so-called 'cultural national autonomy' and on the other demand the liberation of oppressed nations in a clearly and precisely formulated political programme that takes special account of the hypocrisy and cowardice of socialists in the oppressor nations, and not in general nebulous phrases, not in empty declamations and not by way of 'relegating' the question until socialism has been achieved. In the same way as mankind can arrive at the abolition of classes only through a transition period of*

*the dictatorship of the oppressed class, it can arrive at the inevitable integration of nations only through a transition period of the complete emancipation of all oppressed nations, i.e., their freedom to secede.*  
(Ibid, p. 334)

Following from the understanding that the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations is inevitable under imperialism, Lenin explains that the education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism is a 'two fold task:'

*The proletariat of the oppressor nations must not confine themselves to general...phrases against annexation and in favor of the equality of nations in general....The proletariat cannot remain silent on the question of the Frontiers of a state founded on national oppression, a question so 'unpleasant' for the imperialist bourgeoisie. The proletariat must struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means that they must fight for the right of self-determination... Otherwise, the internationalism of the proletariat would be nothing but empty words neither confidence nor class solidarity would be possible between the workers of the oppressed and oppressor nations.*

*...On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nations must in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organizational unity of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation. Without this it is impossible to defend the independent policy of the proletariat and their class solidarity with the proletariat of other countries...*  
(Lenin, Socialist Revolution..., p. 34)

Lenin is clear that upholding the right of self-determination in words alone is outright opportunism. It was exactly this understanding that Lenin saw as the basis for ridding the revolutionary movement of the social-chauvinist traitors:

*It is possible, however, that five, ten, or more years will elapse before the socialist revolution begins. This will be the time for the revolutionary education of the masses in the spirit that will make it impossible for social chauvinists and opportunists to belong to the working class aparty and gain a victory as was the case in 1914-16. The socialists must explain to the masses that British socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies and Ireland, German socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for the colonies, the Alsations, Danes, and Poles, and who do not extend their revolutionary propaganda and revolutionary mass activity directly to the sphere of struggle against national oppression, or who do not make use of such incidents as that in Zabern for the broadest illegal propaganda among the proletariat of the oppressor nation, for street demonstrations and revolutionary mass action—Russian socialists who do not demand freedom to separate for Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, etc., etc., —that such socialists act as chauvinists and ackeys of bloodstained and filthy imperialist monarchies and the imperialist bourgeoisie.*  
(Lenin, Socialist Revolution... , p. 38)

Such is the basis for a correct policy on the national question in the epoch of imperialism.

What was happening in Russia between 1914 and the outbreak of the imperialist war and the October, 1917? What was the relationship between the national movement and the overall class struggle? Or more importantly, what role did the Bolshevik policy on the national question play in preparing for the proletarian revolution?

The Tsar was still in power. The bourgeois-democratic revolution started in 1905 had not been fully concluded.

The war intensified the contradictions of the tsarist empire and created conditions for revolution. The national movements in the border regions under the leadership of the bourgeoisie intensified. The thrust of these movements was emancipation from tsarism, the basic cause of national oppression.

The February Revolution in Russia transferred power to the bourgeoisie. But rather than end national oppression, the new government replaced the old 'crude' oppression with a more dangerous form of oppression—imperialist oppression. The provisional Russian government organized an entire new campaign to maintain the oppressed nations within the former tsarist state. The bourgeoisie in the border regions had led the national movement because it championed an 'end to national oppression.' Once in power, it cast a deaf ear on the demands of 'its' workers and peasants. And at the same time, it was helpless in the face of the attack of the Russian bourgeoisie which was far stronger. 'The incipient bourgeois nation states began to fade before they could blossom.' (Stalin, The October Revolution and the National Question, p. 110)

In this way the bourgeoisie stood thoroughly exposed. As a class it was incapable of bringing an end to national oppression, and in fact only intensified it.

*It became obvious that the emancipation of the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities and the abolition of national oppression were inconceivable without a break with imperialism, without the overthrow by each of its 'own' national bourgeoisie and the assumption of power by the toiling masses themselves.*  
(Ibid, p. 110)

The continuation of the imperialist war after the February Revolution only intensified the irreconcilable contradictions of the bourgeois democratic revolution. The country was devastated, starvation widespread. A new, socialist revolution was the order of the day—the only way out of the crisis. After the Russian proletariat seized power, the revolution swept across the state. It met stiff resistance on the part of the national bourgeoisie in the border regions. These national governments, established in the February revolution, became the centers of reaction, declaring war on the new Soviet states. It was on the side of these governments that the imperialists entered the civil war and attempted to crush the new soviet state.

But the masses of workers and peasants rallied not to the flag of the bourgeoisie, but to the flag of the Red Army and crushed the centers of reaction.

The victory of the October revolution confirmed the correctness and absolute necessity of the Leninist policy on the National Question. Without it, the unshakeable unity of the Russian proletariat and the peoples of the oppressed nations, a decisive factor in the victory of the proletarian revolution would have not been built.

On the one hand, the Russian proletariat demonstrated to the oppressed peoples by all its activities that it stood for national freedom. It carried out a ruthless struggle against Great Russian chauvinism and for the right of self-determination for all nations oppressed by Russia.

*The revolution would not have been victorious in Russia and Kolchak and Deniken would not have been crushed had not the Russian proletariat enjoyed the sympathy and support of the oppressed peoples of the former Russian Empire. But to win the sympathy and support to these peoples it had first of all to break the fetters of Russian imperialism and free these peoples from the yoke of national oppression.*  
(Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, p. 79)

On the other hand, the proletariat of the oppressed nations maintained close organizational ties with the Russian proletariat (through the Bolshevik Party), pointed out the common interest of the proletariat of all nations, and the fact that national oppression could only be ended through revolutionary struggle to end ALL forms of oppression—socialist revolution.

*Hence, the necessity of fighting against the national isolationism, narrowness, and aloofness of the Socialists in the oppressed countries, who do not want to rise above parochialism and who do not understand the connection between the liberation movement in their own countries and the proletarian movement in the ruling countries.*

*Without such a struggle it is inconceivable that the proletariat of the oppressed nation can maintain an independent policy and its class solidarity with the proletariat of the ruling countries in the fight for the overthrow of the common enemy, in the fight for the overthrow of imperialism.*

*(Ibid, p. 80)*

In this way the October Revolution transformed the national movements. Before they had been a 'weapon' in the hands of the bourgeoisie to further its own narrow class interests. Now in the epoch of imperialism the national movements became a component part of the socialist revolution.

This period immediately following the 1917 victory is one that often confuses people, and is often used by the opportunists to distort the Bolshevik policy on the National Question. 'The Bolsheviks didn't uphold self-determination,' they cry, 'in fact, they crushed the movements for separation by the oppressed nations!!'

The Bolsheviks, together with the oppressed masses of the border regions, did crush the move for separation, because it was a reactionary movement on the part of the national bourgeoisies. This was because self-determination in this period no longer meant the right of the bourgeoisie to its own state, it meant the right of the oppressed masses to their own state.

The principles of the right to self-determination was upheld and applied in practice. Finland and Poland were granted complete independence. From 1917 until the actual establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, various forms of self-government were established. For example, there were no less than 8 separate states, including the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenian, and Georgian Soviet Socialist Republics. There were nearly 20 autonomous regions created including Chuvash, Volga Tartars, Bashkir, Karelian, etc.

Great Russia was a 'prison house of nations' and because of this the solution to the national question was a long, very complicated process. But one thing was certain: the Bolsheviks upheld the right of self-determination and established special governing rights for the border areas. As Stalin said, 'through the independent Soviet republics the people of Russia are coming to a new voluntary brotherly unity,' The basis was thus created for 'that remarkable organization for the collaboration of peoples which is called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.'

In sum, the victory of the Socialist Revolution had radically transformed the National Question. It was now funda-

mentally a class question, a question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is precisely what Stalin meant when he said that:

*Leninism has proved, and the imperialist war and the revolution in Russian have confirmed that the national question can be solved only in connection with and on the basis of the proletarian revolution, and that the road to victory of the revolution in the West lies through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism. The national question is a part of the general question of the proletarian revolution, a part of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.*

*(Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, p. 73)*

It is precisely this point, i.e., that in the era of imperialism, the National Question is part of the general question of proletarian revolution, that is the source of much misunderstanding and confusion. The RU provides a perfect example. Two cornerstones of their position are 1) that the Black National Question is not in essence a 'peasant question,' but has been transformed into a 'proletarian question,' and 2) that the right of self-determination is not at the heart of the question.

First, on the 'peasant question.' With this formulation RU leadership wants to contrast the Black National Question in the US today, when it has been 'transformed' into 'essence a proletarian question,' with Stalin's formulation that the National Question is 'in essence a peasant question.' (RP5, p. 30)

For the authors of RP5 this means that the Black National Question in the US is in a new historical period and the writings of Lenin, Stalin, etc., do not directly apply.

Further, this is the main way that RU justifies their claim that the theory and practice of the CPUSA during the '30s and '40s is not directly relevant for us today. According to them, the CP was dealing with the Black National Question when it was in essence a 'peasant question' and not a 'proletarian question.'

On the surface this sounds like a clear formulation. 'No peasants, Blacks mostly workers...obviously its not a peasant question...It must be something new, a proletarian question.' But in reality it only exposes RU's opportunism.

Let's take a closer look at Stalin's articles on the National Question in Yugoslavia. We are going to refer to the *National Question Once Again*, which was an elaboration and clarification of Stalin's earlier presentation, *Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia*, which is the articles quoted in RP5, p. 30.

Both articles were basically a polemic against a Yugoslav communist named Semich who misunderstood the significance of the National Question in the era of proletarian revolution. This misunderstanding followed from a failure to distinguish between the two periods of the National Question.

Semich considered that the main significance of the national movement in Yugoslavia was the struggle between the Serb bourgeoisie on the one hand and the Croatian and Slovene bourgeoisies on the other. Stalin argues that this conception, based on Stalin's own writings (*Marxism and the National Question, 1912*) was true before the imperialist war and the October Revolution, but was incorrect in the present period. Stalin says, 'the essence of the question today lies in the struggle that the masses of people of the colonies and dependent nationalities are waging against finan-

cail exploitation, against the political enslavement and cultural effacement of those colonies and nationalities by the imperialist bourgeoisies of the ruling nationality.' (National Question Once Again p. 225)

Stalin emphasises that the main point is that these oppressed and exploited masses—the bulk of whom are peasants are brought into struggle against imperialism converting them into allies of the proletarian revolution. Stalin argues that to characterize the National Question as a peasant question is in fact to correctly characterize the National Question as part of the general proletarian socialist revolution—that is, to characterize the National Question as a class question!

Let Stalin speak for himself:

*Evidently, by this Semich is trying to suggest that his formula defining the social significance of the national movement under the present historical conditions is correct. But Stalin's pamphlet was written before the imperialist war, when the national question was not yet regarded by Marxists as a question of world significance, when the Marxists' fundamental demand for the right to self-determination was regarded not as part of the proletarian revolution, but as part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. It would be ridiculous not to see that since then the international situation has radically changed, that the war, on the one hand, the October Revolution in Russia on the other, transformed the national question from a part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a part of the proletarian-socialist revolution. As far back as October, 1916, in his article, 'The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up,' Lenin said that the main point of the national question, the right to self-determination, had ceased to be a part of the general democratic movement, that it had already become a component part of the general proletarian, socialist revolution. I do not even mention subsequent works on the national question by Lenin and by other representatives of Russian communism. After all this, what significance can Semich's reference to the passage in Stalin's pamphlet, written in the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, have at the present time, when, as a consequence of the new historical situation, we have entered a new epoch, the epoch of proletarian revolution? It can only signify that Semich quotes outside of space and time, without reference to the living historical situation, and thereby violates the most elementary requirements of dialectics and ignores the fact that what is right for one, historical situation may prove to be wrong in another historical situation. In my speech in the Yugoslav Commission I said that two stages must be distinguished in the presentation of the national question by the Russian Bolsheviks: the pre-October stage, when the bourgeois-democratic revolution was the issue and the national question was regarded as part of the general democratic movement; and the October stage, when the proletarian revolution was already the issue and the national question had become a component part of the proletarian revolution. It scarcely needs proof that this distinction is of decisive significance. I am afraid that Semich still fails to understand the meaning and significance of this difference between the two stages in the presentation of the national question.*

*That is why I think Semich's attempt to regard the national movement as not being, in essence a peasant question but as a question of the competition between the bourgeoisies of different nationalities is due to an under-estimation of the inherent strength of the national movement and a failure to understand the profoundly revolutionary charac-*

*ter of the national movement.*

*(Stalin, National Question Once Again, p. 226)*

Our point is simply this. The writings of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao on the National Question in the epoch of imperialism apply directly to the Black National Question today because we are in the same epoch. It is the writings of the earlier period—before the outbreak of imperialist war and the October Revolution—that do not apply directly to our situation. And, further, the theory and practice of the American CP relating to the Black National Question is theory and practice in the epoch of imperialism and provide the basic starting point for a correct policy today.

The attempt to evade these facts by characterizing the Black National Question 'then' as a peasant question (when it was in essence a class question), and 'now' as a proletarian question (and it is still in essence a class question), is straight up opportunism.

Now we must deal briefly with Stalin's remarks concerning self-determination. It is important to note that the authors of RP5 do not mention them at all. For they also reveal the opportunism basic to RP5. While the RU insists several times that it upholds right of self-determination it quickly points out that the struggle for the right of self-determination is not at the heart of the Black liberation struggle.

al Question and NOT place the right of self-determination at the heart of the matter? We don't think so and neither did Stalin.

*One thing or the other: either the question of national self-determination, i.e., the question of radically altering the borders of Yugoslavia, is an appendage to the national program, dimly looming in the distant future, or it is the basis of the national program. At all events, it is clear that the point about the right of self-determination cannot be at one and the same time both an appendage to and the basis of the national program of the Yugoslav Communist Party. I am afraid that Semich still continues to regard the right of self-determination as an appendage concerning prospects added to the national program.*

*That is why I think that Semich divorces the national question from the question of the general international situation and, as a consequence, for him the question of self-determination, i.e., the question of altering the frontiers of Yugoslavia, is in essence, not an urgent question, but an academic one.*

*(Stalin, The National Question Once Again, p. 229)*

Is the right of self-determination an appendage in the RU's policy on the Black National Question? Without doubt it is. Why do the authors of RP5 make these errors? Because they do not recognize and base themselves on the fact that the struggle of Black people for emancipation, for existence as a nation, that is for the right of self-determination, is an inherently revolutionary struggle. Rather they see such a movement as basically a struggle of competing bourgeoisies, a struggle that divides the class and diverts it from the task of overthrowing the imperialist ruling class.

This position is nothing more than underestimating the 'inherent strength...and profoundly popular and revolutionary character of the national movement' in the name of proletarian revolution. It is simply waving the red flag to defeat the red flag.

In summary, we emphasize two points:

1) The absolute necessity of distinguishing between the two stages of the development of the national question. First, when it is part of the bourgeois democratic revolutions and second, the present stage, when it is a component

part of the proletarian revolution.

2) The goal of a correct policy on the national question is UNITY of the proletariat, unity of the proletariat of the oppressor nation with the workers and peasants of the oppressed nations. It is the goal of creating an unbreakable revolutionary front against the common enemy—imperialism. The only basis for doing this is carrying out the 'twofold task' in the education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism. This means on the one hand, the necessity of advocating, fighting for, and implementing the slogan of the right of self-determination which serves as the basis for merciless struggle against all forms of oppressor nation chauvinism. On the other; a thorough struggle against all narrow nationalism and exclusiveness, consistently pointing out the common interest of the proletariat of all nations, and insistence on the organizational unity of all workers, primarily a multi-national Communist Party.

### The Fundamental Errors in the RU's Revisionist Line

We feel that the RU leadership purposely confuses the two periods of development of the National Question in order to hide its own revisionist line. This revisionism can be seen in a number of fundamental errors.

First, in the insistence on the fact that the Black national question is 'once again a particular and internal state problem,' (RP5, p. 36) the RU confuses the historical periods, and the concrete conditions in which the Black nation finds itself.

Secondly, the RU holds that the Black nation is a nation of a new type, a dispersed and proletarian nation that has entered a new, third stage of development. Along with this, RP5 states that '...the writings of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao (as well as Marx and Engels) while they are the foundations for our understanding, do not deal with the new and unique conditions of the Black nation in the US today.' (RP5, p. 37) These concepts form the theoretical basis for the old concept of American exceptionalism.

Thirdly, the RU has no understanding of the demand to uphold the right of self-determination. By seeing the right of self-determination as a negative demand, and as a demand that is not at the heart of the struggle (RP5, p. 36) the RU underestimates the revolutionary potential of the Black liberation struggle. By not understanding right of self-determination as the central demand, one that gives a revolutionary solution to the Black national question, the RU in fact upholds right of self-determination in words only.

In their confusion on these basic points, RU has now brought PL's reactionary line back to life: *all nationalism is bourgeois ideology*. This opportunism is based in the fact that they do not proceed from the understanding that it is necessary to make a distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed nations' people and the nationalism of the oppressor nations'. Because they do not make this fundamental distinction, they make no class analysis of 'nationalism' in the oppressed nation. Thus, RU totally confuses the various forms of nationalism in the oppressed nation, lumping them all into one reactionary camp.

#### I. PARTICULAR AND INTERNAL STATE PROBLEM

Let us back up and examine each of these errors more thoroughly. First, the formulation that the Black national question is a 'particular and internal state problem.' Nowhere, in any of Stalin and Lenin's writings can we find the statement that the national question, in any country,

during the epoch of proletarian revolution, is a particular and internal state problem. In fact we find just the opposite. In *Foundations of Leninism* the very article RU uses to explain its position (RP5, p. 30), Stalin very clearly says that the national question in the present epoch has been transformed into a world-wide question, a part of the proletarian revolution.

*During the last two decades the national question has undergone a number of very important changes. The national question in the period of the Second International and the national question in the period of Leninism are far from being the same thing. They differ profoundly from each other, not only in their scope, but also in their intrinsic character.*

*Formerly, the national question was usually confined to a narrow circle of questions, concerning, primarily, 'civilized' nationalities. The Irish, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Finns, the Serbs, and several other European nationalities—that was the circle of unequal people in whose destinies the leaders of the Second International were interested. The scores and hundreds of millions of Asiatic and African people who are suffering national oppression in its most savage and cruel form usually remained outside their field of vision. They hesitated to put white and black, 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' on the same plane. Two or three meaningless, lukewarm resolutions, which carefully evaded the question of liberating the colonies—that was all the leaders of the Second International could boast of. Now we can say that this duplicity and half-heartedness in dealing with the national question has been brought to an end. Leninism laid bare this crying incongruity, broke down the wall between whites and blacks, between European and Asiatics, between the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' slaves of imperialism, and thus linked the national question with the question of the colonies. The national question was thereby transformed from a particular and internal state problem into a general and international problem, into a world problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism.*

*(Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, p. 70—our emphasis)*

In referring to the concept of a 'particular and internal state problem' Stalin was referring to the whole approach that the Second International held on the national question. To them, the national question was a particular problem in the sense that it was particular to, and only included, the multi-national states of Europe. It was an 'internal' problem because it only concerned those nations which were forcibly subjugated within the boundaries of a given state.

Stalin argued AGAINST this whole approach. For one thing, it was incorrect to split the question of the dependent nations from the question of the colonies, because of

the oppression of both was fundamentally the same. Further, it was this narrow, 'internal' view, that allowed the chauvinists in the Second International to keep the oppressed colonies of the world outside of their 'field of vision.' It allowed them to ignore the millions of Africans and Asians suffering national oppression.

From this, and other articles we have cited in previous sections, Stalin's position is clear: in the epoch of proletarian revolution the national question cannot be seen as a particular and internal problem. In order to develop a correct position it is essential to see each particular national problem as part of the overall international and world

problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples.'

With this understanding, analyze RU's position. This position is stated in RP5 on pages 31, 36, and again on page 50 where it says the Black national question is now in a '...third stage, when it is once again a particular and internal state problem, but now on an entirely new basis.' How does RU arrive at this position? Clearly they are confusing a 'particular' aspect of the Black national question with the general 'concept' of 'particular and internal state problem.' One, particular, aspect of the Black national question is the fact that the nation exists within the boundaries of the US, and in that sense is an internal problem.

Again, the 'particular and internal' approach to the national question belonged to a specific period of history, to a particular epoch that had specific and concrete features. That epoch was the epoch of **rising capitalism**, when the national question was part of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. **We are no longer in that epoch. We are in the epoch of proletarian revolution. The national question has been transformed.** It has new features that apply to this epoch. And one of those features is that the national question the world over is no longer a 'particular and internal state problem.'

No new developments in the US, particularly the fact that the Black nation is now overwhelmingly proletarian, is going to change that fact.

Nor will some RU creation of a third state in this country. In the US a dying imperialist state, that is fundamentally no different than any other imperialist state. It is bigger and more powerful, but it still operating under the same basic laws of any imperialist state. So how come it is that we are the **ONLY** one with this special new stage? RU might at this point jump in and say that Puerto Rico is also a 'proletarian nation'; it has also reached a third stage. Can we also assume that Puerto Rico has all the special characteristics of this new third stage? That it too is a 'particular and internal state problem' where right of self-determination is not at the heart of the question? This is hardly objective reality! In fact, it is nothing but American exceptionalism. No other nation in the world has these special characteristics RU gives the Black nation. With both these formulations (particular and internal state problem and a third stage) it seems that rather than transform the national question, RU has transformed Marxism-Leninism.

The Black national question in the US has always had the particular feature of being an oppressed nation within the borders of the US. This was true after Reconstruction, it is true in 1917, 1930, and it is true today. It is not a new characteristic of the Black nation. We ask how it is that the Comintern, under Stalin's guidance, managed to 'misunderstand' this peculiarity and develop a position that did not see the Black national question as a particular and internal state problem?'

We need not remind RU that the Comintern already understood the dual oppression of Black workers, understood that, as RU itself says, the Black national question was 'both a national struggle and an advanced front in the overall class struggle' (RP5, p. 50), and further understood and foresaw the development of the Black proletariat.

with this understanding the Comintern developed a position that the Black national question was a part of the world-wide struggle of oppressed peoples, that it was in fact a part of the colonial question. How is it that RU so confuses the issue? How do they expect to turn back the wheels of history, to put the Black national question today, in the epoch of proletarian revolution, back to the period when the national question was a particular and internal problem? We can only assume that RU expects us to join the ranks of the Second International.

## II. NEW DISPERSED AND PROLETARIAN NATION

RU leadership will at this time claim that the Comintern could not possibly foresee the 'third stage' of the Black national question, could not possibly foresee the 'entirely new basis' and the 'new and unique conditions' of the Black nation today (p. 37). And therefore they could not see that the Black national question would become 'once again a particular and internal state problem.'

Just what are these 'new and unique' conditions? Primarily, the fact that the Black nation today is dispersed and proletarian. We will deal with each aspect separately. First, the statement that 'Black concentration in the South has been broken up, the Black people have been dispersed throughout the country.' (RP5, p. 32) is basically not true. Blacks have been forcefully driven out of the South in large numbers. This itself is a concrete form of national oppression. But even with this oppression, the South is still the home of 52% of the Black population, and the majority are still concentrated in the around the Black Belt. There are 113 counties where Blacks are 50-81% of the population, and 250 with a concentration of 30-49%. All of them are in the Deep South. There are only 7 counties outside the South with a Black population of over 20%. Five of them are in the Midwest. The huge majority of the country still has a Black population of less than 5% and the West Coast has only 2 counties where the Black population is over 10%.

We are not pointing out these facts in order to undermine the importance of Black concentration in a number of industrial cities like Detroit, Chicago, New York, etc. Certainly, this concentration represents an important development.

Instead, the point of these facts is to show that the Black Belt South remains the largest, most continuous area of concentration of Black population. Even with the forced migration the Black Belt still maintains its special significance as the territorial homeland of Black people.

It is no accident that RU ignores these facts. RU never wants to talk about territory, because that would mean talking about the right of self-determination. In reality, RU's line on 'dispersed nation' is nothing more than the classic opportunist position: '...they justify their opportunism, they make it easier to deceive people, they evade precisely the question of the frontiers of a state which forcibly retains subject nations. (Lenin, Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination). RU's nebulous phrases about self-determination being exercised anywhere Blacks are concentrated, their attempt to strip the Black Belt South of its special significance, amounts to evading and ignoring the question of boundaries.

PROLETARIAN NATION

Let's return to the second half of RU's formulation, the 'proletarian' half. RU says that Blacks are now 'overwhelmingly' workers. We do not dispute the fact that the majority of Blacks are wage earners. What we do dispute is how

the RU uses this fact to 1) claim the agrarian question has been solved, and that 'the remnants of feudalism no longer affect the Black national question, and 2) that industrialization and forcing Blacks into the city has meant an advance for Black people.

Is there an agrarian question? What is RU's position on the agrarian question? They go to great pains explaining that the capitalist development of the 1950's broke up the long-standing pattern of semi-feudal relations' and that by the 1960's capitalist relations were fully dominant. (RP5, p. 29).

We would like to remind RU of two points they seemed to have missed here. One is that the claim that semi-feudal relations were broken up in the '50's is in perfect accord with the position of the CP revisionists of the 1950's. These revisionists based the liquidation of the Party's revolutionary position on the Black national question on this exact claim! (See Appendix II for a run down on the similarities between RU's position and that of the CP revisionists of the 50's.)

The other point is that during the Civil Rights movement—when 'capitalist relations are fully dominant'—Black sharecroppers and the rural Black population in general, played a very important role. And one of the main ways that the South white oligarchy attempted to crush the civil rights movement was by throwing sharecroppers and poor farmers off their land.

Ignoring these facts, RU says that the 'productive forces and relations of production are essentially on the same level in the South as in the rest of the country' (P. 29) Generally the South is unmistakably catching up with the North. They do admit that the 'land question remains important,' but clearly all remnants of feudalism and the shadow of the plantation have been done away with (pp. 28-29).

Obviously there have been changes in agriculture in the South. Sharecropping is no longer as crucial a form of exploitation as it once was. But RU's attempt to parade around its one-sided view of the facts will not get over. We feel an all-sided dialectical investigation of the social relations in the South will reveal what is undeniably true: dying, decaying imperialism cannot carry out such fundamental changes in the South's agricultural system. We do not accept RU's claim that all remnants of a semi-feudal agricultural system in the South have been eliminated.

RU makes this error because they do not understand the material basis for the oppression of the Black nation.

Oppression of the Black people as a nation began with the betrayal of Reconstruction. Reconstruction stopped short of completing the bourgeois democratic revolution and instead Black people were deprived of their basic rights. The area of the Black Belt was stolen from Black people by the Yankee imperialists in alliance with the Southern planters. Blacks were stripped of what little political power they had gained during the Reconstruction governments. The institution of Black codes and Jim Crow meant the end to any semblance of democracy.

Blacks were driven back to the plantations, how as sharecroppers and tenants, and the forcible subjugation of the Black nation began. Control of the landed property, the principle means of production, by the white exploiters meant that the political, economic, and cultural develop-

ment of the Black nation was forcibly restrained and retarded. Thus Black people were welded into an oppressed nation entirely within the boundaries of the US.

The entire system of national oppression was based on that fact that Black peoples' land was stolen by the white exploiters. The masses of Black people were forced—by police, Jim Crow laws, the KKK, racist terror—into the position of being landless and powerless. The fate of the region, of the Black Belt, was in the hands of the imperialists and their plantation owner allies.

This is the historical material basis of the subjugation of the Black nation. And it is precisely this unresolved question, that is, the political power based on the control of the landed property, to determine the fate of the region, of the Black nation, that remains the material basis of national oppression of Black people.

Instead of recognizing this, the RU has decided to step right on by the revisionists of the '50's, who also thought industrialization would solve this 'land question' and the political power that was based on it. RU not only thinks industrialization can resolve such a basic question, they say it already has! the semi-feudal remnants of slavery and sharecropping have been eliminated, industrialization and mechanization has transformed the fundamental social relationships in the South.

The magical wonder of US Imperialism! It has taken the place of revolutionary struggle. Now Black people can thank the imperialist ruling class for solved the agrarian question, for wresting control of the land and thus political power from the hands of the south planter oligarchy. Surely RU makes a grave error in attributing such revolutionary characteristics to the US imperialists!

But this isn't all. RU also couples this period of transformation with the breaking up of the Black Belt and the dispersion of the Black nation throughout the country. Blacks have now been proletarianized. All of this, according to the RU, represents an 'important advance for Black people, who once again stand in the front ranks of the 'class struggle.' (p. 54) In reality the mechanization of agriculture has meant widespread displacement of Black sharecroppers and tenants from their land, and it has meant the impoverishment for the few who manage to remain. Put simply, Blacks have been forced into accepting the misery of seasonal agricultural workers, or being forced out of agriculture entirely. For thousands, this has meant being driven out of their homes, off their land, and into the decaying urban ghettos.

Some, during a brief boom in the US economy (like Vietnam) have managed to integrate themselves into urban factory life. But thousands of others have hit the cities during economic crisis. The double obstacles of few jobs, and never ending discrimination has resulted in mass unemployment for Black people.

RU seems to recognize this fact, and indeed they spend pages on facts that show an imperialist economy cannot absorb all the displaced Blacks. And when it can absorb them, it is into the dirtiest, lowest paying jobs. But the point here is that the RU takes the forcible dispersion of Blacks from their land, and because this is happening under imperialism the corresponding rise in the ranks of the unemployed at double the rates of whites, and uses them

to say Black people have undergone an important advance. The forcible subjugation of Black people, the drocible dispersion from their homeland, has been an ADVANCE!

This whole line of thinking is chauvinist to the core. Clearly the RU does not have the interest of the masses at heart. Obviously, we don't want to see Blacks put back on the plantation. And as honest Marxists-Leninists, we certainly see that the main progressive significance of the changes that HAVE occurred in the Black nation is the vast extension of the Black proletariat, and therefore the development of the most advanced, best organized, and most consistently revolutionary class. The breaking down together of Black and white workers has helped build the basis for the unity of the proletariat. But RU is not interested in seeing these changes as important developments. They are interested in using them to justify the need for 'new' theories, which take into account the 'unique' qualities of the Black national question.

In essence, to cover their revisionist theories, they claim the Black national question has not been solved, but that it has been transformed. That industrialization and mechanization has taken the place of any form of agrarian revolution or reform, and done away with the semi-feudal atricultural system in the South—the source of national oppression of Black people. The RU, by not understanding the agrarian question as it exists today, by not understanding the struggle to regain the LAND that was stolen from Black people, has in reality misunderstood the basic revolutionary potential inherent in the struggle for liberation of the Black nation. It is precisely because the struggle to regain political and economic control of the Black Belt nation strikes at the very foundations of the imperialist system, that the Black liberation struggle has always been in the front ranks of the class struggle, playing a key role in driving forward the struggle of the entire working class.

### III. UNDERESTIMATION OF THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION

Their basic underestimation of the Black national question can be most clearly seen in RU's position on the right of self-determination. What exactly is RU's position? '...the correct stand for genuine revolutionaries in the US is to uphold the right of self-determination.' However, right of self-determination is not at the heart of the Black liberation struggle; it is only one current; that 'the essential thrust of Black people's struggle has not been for self-determination in the form of secession but the fight against discrimination, and the denial of democratic rights, violent police repression, and against exploitation and oppression as members of the working class...' (NB 13, p.2). Further, they claim that 'Lenin and Stalin insisted that when the National question is an 'internal state problem' when there is a direct possibility of a single proletarian revolution throughout the entire state, the right of self-determination was a negative demand.' (RP5, p. 36)

On the question of secession (which is one form of self-determination might take) RU says that 'under any presently conceivable circumstances secession would be a step back and communists should politically oppose separatism.' (RP5, p. 37). And that 'the question of secession,

—in the Black Belt or in other parts of the country—is not at the heart of the Black liberation struggle today.' (RP5, p. 41). And finally RU predicts that: 'We do not think that the demand for a separate state will become a mass demand of Black people under socialism because the working class will then be even more strongly united in the fight to eliminate all national oppression. A more likely demand of the Black people might be the establishment of an autonomous region within the same socialist state. But even this may not be demanded by Black people, especially if the level of unity in struggle and equality of leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle is at the highest level at victory.' (p. 56).

In sum, RU says it upholds right of self-determination although it is not at the heart of the Black liberation struggle. What is at the heart is the fight against discrimination, police repression, etc. They say that actual realization of self-determination, in the particular form of secession, would be a step backward. They predict that the demand for state power—even in the form of autonomy—will probably not even arise, especially if 'unity' is at the highest level.

What is wrong with all this? To begin with, it is unsound theoretically and further, its practical and political ramifications—as expressed in NB 13—leads to a classic revisionist position, that denies the right of self-determination and therefore undermines class unity.

### HISTORICAL PERIOD AND MATERIAL BASIS FOR OPPRESSION

Let's deal with the theoretical side. To understand the national question in this country it is necessary to understand the historical period we are now in and the material basis for the oppression of the Black nation.

Since 1917 we have been in the epoch of proletarian revolution. Capitalism has reached its highest stage, imperialism. The advent of imperialism split the world into two camps—that of the oppressor nations and that of the oppressing nations. This oppression has led to the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples against imperialism. This is the period where, as Stalin says:

*The victory of the working class in the developed countries and the liberation of the oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism are impossible without the formation and the consolidation of a common revolutionary front.*

*The formation of a common revolutionary front is impossible unless the proletariat of the oppressor nation renders direct and determined support to the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples against imperialism of its 'own country' for 'no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations' (Marx).*

*This support implies advocacy, defense, and carrying out of the slogan of the right of nations of secession, to independent existence as states;*

*Unless this slogan is carried out, the union and collaboration of nations within a single world economic system, which is the material basis for the victory of socialism, cannot be brought about...*

*((National Problem..., p. 168)*

Imperialism must oppress nations in order to obtain new sources of raw materials, natural resources, and a cheap labor force. To do this they must forcibly and vio-

lently keep nations under their control. Because of imperialism's necessity to oppress nations the struggle on the part of the oppressed nations to free themselves from the yoke of imperialism, to regain their territory, their independence, is a revolutionary struggle.

These same general principles hold true for the oppressed Black nation. Like any other oppressed nation the US imperialists have kept the Deep South a backward region, as an economic hinterland of the nation's industrial establishment. The oppression of Blacks has been the basis for holding down the living standards of the whole South and the rest of the country. The maintenance of the South as a whole, and the Black Belt in particular, as a backward region is in the material interests of the imperialists, because maintaining this backwardness means super-profits, in the form of raw materials, natural resources, and cheap non-union labor; in fact, it means super-profits from the super exploitation of Black people. To the extent that industrialization has been promoted, it has been kept strictly within the limits of maintaining the imperialists' super-profits.

And it is exactly for this reason that the struggle for the realization of self-determination, the struggle to wrest the Black Belt territory from the hands of the imperialists, will strike a direct blow against imperialism. Thus the struggle for the liberation of the Black nation is inherently revolutionary.

Furthermore, this struggle for liberation has always been inextricably bound up with the class struggle of the entire proletariat, inextricably tied to the victory of the proletarian revolution, precisely because it is the struggle on the part of an oppressed people for emancipation and not because the nation is now mainly workers. To say, as RU does, that it is proletarianization and thus the dual oppression of Blacks that had made the Black liberation struggle a 'powerful driving engine' is to totally underestimate the revolutionary content of the national struggle. This revolutionary character would exist regardless of the percentage of workers in the oppressed nation. The RU, in effect, thus liquidates the Black national question.

This of course is not to underestimate the key and important role of the Black proletariat. Its development has brought on stage the most consistently revolutionary class, a class that can gain hegemony and lead the Black liberation struggle. And because Blacks are a part of the single US proletariat they play a dual role in the struggle for proletarian revolution. But we must not, as RU does, use this development to hide the inherently revolutionary character of the Black liberation struggle.

#### MATERIAL BASIS

As we stated earlier, RU does not understand the material basis for the oppression of the Black nation. Control of the land, control of the entire Black Belt territory by the white bourgeoisie; the political power and class rule that corresponds to this control: **this is what constitutes the main material basis for oppression of the Black nation.**

There is no question that Black people have certainly paid for this land with their sweat, their blood, their very lives, a thousand times over. Nor can there be any question that this same material basis still remains. It has not been transformed in any way. If this is not the material basis for

the conditions of Blacks in the South and throughout the country, then what is? Do Blacks find themselves in the lowest, dirtiest jobs simply because their skin is a different color? No, racism is only a factor of national oppression, it is not the source. The oppression that afflicts Black people wherever they are is generated by the concrete material basis we have just described.

RU's refusal to recognize this fact once more leads them into gutting the heart out of the Black liberation struggle. In a single line they claim that the new 'dispersed and proletarian' nation no longer has right of self-determination as its fundamental demand. Instead the struggle is basically a fight for partial demands, even basically reformist demands: end discrimination, stop police repression, etc. They fail to understand that the 'slogan of right of self-determination is a real slogan of national rebellion' ('30 Resolution). It is the demand for the full right of self-determination that challenges the class rule of the white imperialists, because it brings to the fore the material basis of oppression and threatens the source of the exploiters' power. It is the dividing line between a reformist and revolutionary solution to the national question.

*A reformist change is one which leaves the foundations of the power of the ruling class intact...leaves its power unimpaired. A revolutionary change undermines the foundations of power. The reformist proposals in the national program do not abolish all the privileges of the ruling nation... This privilege (state power) was not mitigated by secession (the essence of reformism lies in mitigating an evil and not destroying it), but entirely removed (the principle criterion of the revolutionary character of a program). (Lenin, Discussion....Summed Up)*

The Black national question is an integral part of the class struggle. It is a special phase of this struggle that demands a revolutionary solution. Is it not clear that realization of right of self-determination will 'entirely remove' the basis for national oppression? Is it not equally clear that the winning of partial demands—like 'end police repression' and 'stop discrimination' will only 'mitigate the evil' of national oppression and destroy it?

This attempt to make the immediate partial demands of Black people the essential thrust of their struggle is one more example of RU's consistent practice of bowing to spontaneity.

RU takes the spontaneous demands that have arisen in the Black liberation struggle and places them at the heart of the struggle. They make no attempt to lead the struggle in a revolutionary direction beyond these partial demands.

The Black masses will not spontaneously arrive at a scientific understanding of their oppression. It is the job of Communists to bring forward a clear understanding of the problem and the correct revolutionary solution. It is the job of Communists to link up the partial demands with the fundamental, revolutionary demands, demands that call into question the power of the bourgeoisie.

Apparently RU is only interested in tailing after the spontaneous struggle, trumpeting only the fight for partial reforms.

This type of spontaneity leads RU cadre stright into the ridiculous position of maintaining that 'Communists do

not raise the right of self-determination today because it is not at the heart of the struggle, it is not a demand of the masses at this time. If and when it becomes a demand of the Black masses then Communists can raise it.'

If this attitude was adopted to the overall class struggle, it would amount to saying that proletarian revolution is not at the heart of the class struggle, that it is not a demand of the masses today, and therefore Communists do not raise the slogan of proletarian revolution. That is, until some lucky day. It spontaneously becomes a demand of the masses!

In reality, it is the partial demands for full equality that are part of the overall fight for the right of self-determination. As the Comintern said, *The slogan for the right of self-determination and other fundamental slogans of the Negro question in the Black Belt confiscation of landed property of white landowners, and state unity of the Black Belt, do not exclude but rather presuppose an energetic development of the struggle for concrete partial demands linked up with the daily needs and afflictions of wide masses of wrking Negroes...*

*The direct aims and partial demands around which a partial struggle develops are to be linked up, in the course of the struggle, with the revolutionary fundamental slogans brought up by the question of power, in a popular manner corresponding to the needs of the masses (confiscation of big landholdings, establishment of governmental unity of the Black Belt, right of self-determination of the Negro population in the Black Belt). Bourgeois socialist tendencies to oppose such a revolutionary widening and deepening of the fighting demands must be fought...*

(1930 Resolution—our emphasis)

#### CAN RU DECIDE WHETHER THE BLACK NATION SHOULD SECEDE?

RU's position on separation shows once again that they do not understand the slogan of right of self-determination. As we stated before, RU thinks separation will be a step backward under any presently conceivable circumstances, and that the essential thrust of Black people's struggle has not been 'self-determination in the form of secession.'

This position violates two principles of Marxism—Leninism. First, it equates the actual decision by the Black nation to secede with their right to do so. Secession is only one form of self-determination. The Black nation may decide on regional autonomy, federation, etc. 'The right of self-determination can have no other meaning than the right to secession.' (Lenin) but this doesn't mean that the Black nation will necessarily make use of this right. Right of self-determination does mean that the Black nation must have full possession of its homeland, and with this possession the right to decide the political future of that area. It is the masses of Black people that will decide what type of relations they, as a nation, will maintain with the US. And, if they choose, they have the full right to secession.

Second, RU in no way can predict today whether secession by the Black nation in 5, 10, or any number of years from now will be reactionary or progressive. It is a well known principle that on the question of actual state separation, the stand of Communists must vary according to concrete conditions. We cannot accept RU's use of some crystal ball that can determine the concrete conditions in

which the Black nation will find itself even 2 years from now.

In summary, we do not at this time come out for or against secession. We stand with what is the basic right of Black people as an oppressed nation, i.e., their right of self-determination, right to secession. Further, we do not agree with the clear implication of RU's line that if the demand for separation became the rallying cry for the Black masses, the Black liberation struggle could not help but become reactionary, since any move for separation would be a step backwards.

Apparently RU can make this claim because it assumes that any move for separation will be led by the Black bourgeoisie. Once again, RU is trying to put the Black national question back into the first period, when the bourgeoisie played the dominant role. Reality today, however, will show that in the main, separation is not being raised or demanded by the Black bourgeoisie. The Black bourgeoisie will not lead a struggle for liberation because it is no longer capable of leading this struggle.

Furthermore, if the question of independence of the Black Belt does become the question of the day, the 'Communists Party must also face this question and if the circumstances seem favorable, must stand up with all strength and courage for the struggle to win independence for the establishment of a Negro Republic in the Black Belt.' (1930 Resolution)

#### IS THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION A NEGATIVE DEMAND?

The final theoretical error RU makes on the slogan of right of self-determination is to see it as a negative demand. The concept of right of self-determination being a basically negative demand can only be found in Lenin's writings before 1914 and the outbreak of imperialist war.

Since 1917 in all of Stalin and Lenin's writings you cannot find the concept of 'negative demand.' From all that we have stated previously, we clearly do not agree with RU's formulation that the Black national question in the US has somehow found itself back in the first period of development, or, in a 'new' third stage.

And once again RU leadership reveals their habit of 'quoting outside of space and time, without reference to the historical situation.'

The revisionists of the 50's made the same mistake. They said the Party (based on the Comintern Resolutions) had not fully appreciated the 'specific characteristics of the development of the Negro people in the US, that the Party's position of the right of self-determination was the result of a mechanical inflexible inhistoric approach to the theory of nation and to the national program.' (Harry Haywood, p. 26). RU picks up right where these revisionists left off. The writings of Lenin and Stalin and Mao do not directly apply to the 'unique conditions' of the US. That is, their writings after 1917. Those before 1917 can be freely used and applied directly to the present situation!

#### Critique of NB 13:

#### PL Lives! Revisionist Line Consolidated!

The publication of NB 13 shows even more clearly that the RU is being consolidated around a revisionist position. We would like to address three particular aspects

of NB 13. First, its clear confusion of the historical period. Secondly, its lack of class analysis of both oppressed and oppressor nation nationalism and the statement that 'all nationalism is in the final analysis bourgeois ideology.' (NB 13, p. 5) And third, the fact that RU leadership soft pedals the question of great nation privileges and the divisions within the working class.

The confusion around the historical periods should be clear and we won't repeat our criticism, except to point out that all the readings at the end of the document are articles that were written before 1914. Clearly, the writings that best apply to our situation today are the ones concerned with the epoch we are now in, the epoch of proletarian revolution and the downfall of imperialism.

### Does Nationalism Have a Class Content or Is It All Bourgeois Ideology?

Next is the RU's attempt to claim that all nationalism is nationalism, and in the final analysis, bourgeois ideology. This is saying no more than all nationalism is reactionary. RU's main error here is confusing nationalism as a philosophy, in the abstract, with nationalism as a reflection of concrete class struggle. Certainly we would agree that nationalism as a general, abstract ideology is reactionary. But communists are not interested in such abstractions. We are interested in and base ourselves on concrete analysis of concrete conditions. And today that means it is absolutely essential to distinguish between the nationalism of the oppressor nations and the nationalism of the people of the oppressed nations. Taking this as a starting point, it is then possible, and necessary, to make a concrete analysis of the class content of bourgeois nationalism and revolutionary nationalism.

The nationalism on the part of the bourgeoisie of both the oppressor and oppressed nations is basically reactionism—chauvinism, racism—on the part of the imperialist bourgeoisie. For most Marxists today, it is equally clear that the nationalism of the Black bourgeoisie is basically reactionary. It is the nationalism that reflects the outlook of the bourgeoisie, which at this stage in world history is a reactionary force, against the interests of the masses. As BWC and PRRWO run it down in their critique of NB 13

*...bourgeois nationalism changes with the development of capitalism...As the productive forces continue to develop, and in the oppressed Third World nations this process manifested itself as the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism, the bourgeoisie (Idi Amin, Ghandi, Quadaffi, Ferrer, etc.) becomes reactionary (especially in its internal relations) and bourgeois nationalism becomes a thoroughly reactionary force, even though tactically, the bourgeoisie of these nations may play a progressive role to the extent that they struggle against one or another of the imperialist bloc...*

*The RU speaks of bourgeois nationalism as if it were a completely subjective phenomenon, as if it could be turned on and off at will. To say: 'as nationalism goes beyond that and takes an aggressive even chauvinist stance' is idealism pure and simple, because the very nature of bourgeois nationalism even that of the oppressed nations, at this stage in world history is reactionary. To say: 'all*

*nationalism must be brought forward' means (besides blurring over the distinctions between the two types of nationalism), that the bourgeoisie can transcend its own material conditions and adopt the outlook of the proletariat—that nationalism and internationalism are purely subjective terms devoid of class position. Bourgeois nationalism can never develop or make a leap to proletarian internationalism, just like you cannot turn an egg into a stone.' (p. 14)*

Because RU makes no class analysis of nationalism in the oppressed nations, they even confuse the various tendencies that exist. There have always been two basic trends of bourgeois nationalism that reflect on the one hand the interests of the Black bourgeoisie and on the other hand those of the petit bourgeoisie. The thread that ties the two together and makes them both bourgeois is the fact that both trends are reformist. One trend basically puts forward assimilation and integration. The other is the more nationalist, generally anti-white position.

Although the Black bourgeoisie has various trends within it, in the main they are the proponents of integration and assimilation (as evidenced by NAACP, Urban League, CORE, various Black mayors, etc.) This flows from the fact that the Black bourgeoisie as a class knows that its existence is directly tied to the white imperialist ruling class. The Black bourgeoisie is not in fundamental contradiction with the imperialists. In fact they are basically in their camp.

In return for financial backing, and a piece of the pie, the Black bourgeoisie has faithfully played its role of holding back the Black liberation struggle, of trying to convince Blacks that they can find a place in the capitalist system. The imperialists, in their turn, know they have an interest in maintaining the Black bourgeoisie, in keeping a legitimate mask on their imperialist face. And whenever the Black liberation struggle has surged forward (like in the 60s) the imperialists have pumped millions and millions into maintaining their partners. The economic crisis creates an even greater need to keep Blacks 'under control' and the imperialists are, and will, continue to spend whatever is necessary to try to keep the Black bourgeoisie in leadership of the Black liberation struggle. There just isn't no way in the world the Black bourgeoisie will be willing to sacrifice its interests and its wealth for the interests of the masses. The Black bourgeoisie as a class, or even large sections of it, cannot be strategic allies of the proletariat. In the Black liberation movement, they are the class agents of the imperialists.

This of course does not deny that a small number of individuals from the Black bourgeoisie will give up their class position and side with the proletariat. Nor does it deny that tactically, during a particular period, or in particular struggles, the proletariat will ally with certain sections of the

Black bourgeoisie. Communists, especially, must guard against a sectarian attitude, and should always be ready to unite with sectors of the Black bourgeoisie when they take a progressive stance. We wish to emphasize that a mechanical or dogmatic approach to dealing with the Black bourgeoisie is a great danger. It inevitably leads to isolation from the masses and reflects a purist approach to the class struggle. The Black bourgeoisie as a class is basically reactionary. But it is nonetheless an oppressed bourgeoisie. As

such it has the objective need to struggle against certain aspects of national oppression, especially in the field of civil rights. In this way, in order to extend its influence and further itself as a class the Black bourgeoisie often comes forward to 'champion' the cause of Black people, and in fact, do lead some important struggles, rallying the masses behind them.

At the same time, however, it is not in their interests to allow these struggles to 'get out of hand,' to go beyond limited reforms within the capitalist system. For this reason, they generally preach reliance on courts, so-called 'liberal' politicians, bourgeois legislative action and electoral campaigns—not mass struggle and revolutionary action.

It is in the course of struggle that communists can expose the Black bourgeoisie's reformist character. Exactly for this reason communists must guard against a contemptuous attitude towards, and a reluctance to be involved in, certain campaigns and/or organizations because 'they're nothing but bourgeois movements.'

The petit bourgeoisie however can and will be a revolutionary ally of the proletariat. Their nationalism at times reflects a bourgeois outlook, at others, a revolutionary stance. In all cases, however, what is necessary is a careful class analysis of nationalism, distinguishing between the various trends that exist, and the classes they represent. What we have said above about sectarian tendencies holds doubly true in relationship to petit bourgeois nationalist movements—such as African Liberation Day.

Rather than do this, RU takes the opportunist way out and claims that all nationalism is nationalism.

#### **NATIONALISM OF THE OPPRESSED MASSES IS REVOLUTIONARY**

RU goes even further than just misunderstanding the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nation and its class character. They make the far greater error of considering the revolutionary nationalism of the oppressed masses as part of the same bourgeois camp. At the heart of this error is the fact that RU places the National Question in contradiction to the class question. They ignore the profoundly revolutionary character of the national liberation struggle. The national question in the world today is an integral and component part of the proletarian revolution. In essence the national question is a class question.

The national liberation struggles of the oppressed people of the world is overwhelmingly revolutionary in character; thus, the national aspirations on the part of the oppressed peoples are in and of themselves revolutionary. The revolutionary stand of the oppressed masses against oppression is a concrete reflection of their class stand, their class outlook.

The nationalism on the part of the Black masses is overwhelmingly revolutionary in content and certainly a far cry from the evil of consciousness reflected in a militant trade unionist (NB 13, p. 6). RU's attempt to compare revolutionary nationalism with trade unionist ideology is to say in essence that the aspirations of Black people for freedom, their struggle for liberation, is reformist in nature. If we are to believe RU's line on the need for revolutionary nationalism to overcome its basically reformist nature, we can only conclude that the revolutionary struggle of Black people as

a whole must also overcome its backward state, must make a qualitative leap to class consciousness. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Taking RU's line to its logical conclusion, a Black worker must first overcome his national aspirations and sentiments, must give up his role as a true patriot of his people and make a 'qualitative leap' to the 'stand of the class.' Otherwise he will fall into bourgeois, reactionary nationalism. This is outright chauvinism on the part of the RU.

Revolutionary nationalism on the part of the Black masses is the concrete reflection of their national aspirations for liberation. The Black liberation struggle is a revolutionary struggle that is striking a deep blow right at the heart of US imperialism. The Black liberation struggle is playing the leading role in the overall class struggle, weakening the bourgeoisie and aiding the proletariat with every advance the struggle makes. The 'qualitative leap' that is needed must be taken by the RU theoreticians!

#### **BLACK COMMUNISTS: TRUE PATRIOTS OF THE BLACK NATION**

What should be the stand of Black communists? All communists first and foremost are proletarian internationalists. Their international slogan is 'workers of all countries unite!'

As members of an oppressed nation, it is also their revolutionary duty to have the utmost concern and love for the oppressed Black masses, and they must never for a moment fail to be the true and leading patriots of the Black nation. By patriots we mean that Blacks, once they become Communists, must not consider themselves aliens of the Black movement. They are an integral part of the Black movement and must reflect and embody its revolutionary traditions. Their slogan is: 'the nation at heart and the whole proletariat in mind!' because this slogan reflects a basic Marxist-Leninist principle, that is, 'in wars of national liberation, patriotism is applied internationalism.'

This principle of Marxism-Leninism was formulated by Mao and comes from an article he wrote on the 'Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War.' In this article he also states: 'Can a Communist who is an internationalist, at the same time be a patriot? We hold not only can he be, he must be. The specific content of patriots is determined by historical conditions.'

What conditions do Black Communists find themselves in today? As well as being members of the single US proletariat, they are also members of an oppressed nation that is engaged in a revolutionary struggle for national liberation. The liberation of the oppressed Black nation is an integral part of the proletarian revolution, it is in the interests of the the proletarian movement. Can there be any doubt that Black Communists must be the true patriots of this just and revolutionary struggle on the part of the Black masses? They must, as Communists, 'combine patriotism with internationalism.'

Of course this doesn't mean that all revolutionary nationalists are communists. They aren't and revolutionary nationalism is not the same as proletarian internationalism.

Proletarian internationalism also requires that Black Communists be staunch fighters for the revolutionary alliance & unity between the workers of the oppressed nation and workers of the oppressor nation. They must consistently

keep the whole class in mind, point out the common interests of all workers, and raise the cry for proletarian unity of all nationalities.

Proletarian internationalism means that:

*Negro Communists must carry on among the Negro masses an energetic struggle against nationalist moods directed indiscriminately against all whites, workers as well as capitalists, Communists as well as imperialists. Their constant call to the Negro masses must be 'Revolutionary struggle against the ruling white bourgeoisie through a fighting alliance with the revolutionary white proletariat.' Negro Communists must indefatigably explain to the masses of the Negro population that even if many white workers in America are still afflicted with Negrophobia, the American proletariat, as a class, which owing to its struggle against the American bourgeoisie, represents the only true revolutionary class, and will be the only real mainstay of Negro liberation.'*

(Comintern, 1930 Resolution)

While the RU downgrades and slanders the masses of Blacks for not being 'class conscious' and clearly implies that PRRWO and BWC are bourgeois nationalists, they claim that they are the only proletarian internationalists.

On this we make two points. We restate that we believe that for the oppressed masses and Black communists, 'patriotism is applied internationalism.' RU's arguments that the situation in the US is so entirely unique and different that this basic principle no longer holds is ridiculous. We will not return to the days of American exceptionalism, when Marxists took it upon themselves to ignore the science of Marxism-Leninism and instead decided we need some new principles for our unique conditions.

Secondly, any organization that does not in word and deed uphold right of self-determination cannot claim to be proletarian internationalist. Over the past 5 years. RU has done little or no agitation or propaganda around the demand of right of self-determination. In all of its 'United Front' papers, in its few activities in the Black liberation struggle, RU has not carried out education around the right of self-determination. It has made no attempts to educate the masses or even its cadre on the necessity of raising, advocating, and actively upholding this slogan. They have had no demonstrations, not even forums, that raised this demand. In fact, cadres have been specifically told that it is INCORRECT to raise this demand at this time. At best, RU has mentioned in maybe a dozen places (NB 13, RP 5, Revolution, Guardian) that they uphold the right of self-determination. This is not enough. It is in fact upholding right of self-determination in words only, and barely at that.

Lenin clearly states time and time again that for oppressor nation communists there can be NO proletarian internationalism without the advocacy, without showing by all our actions now, that we uphold right of self-determination.

For RU to even try to claim that they are the internationalists and it is the Third World Communists, i.e., BWC and PRRWO, who must overcome their narrow nationalist tendencies, is sheer opportunism on their part.

Furthermore, by confusing the various trends and giving no class content to the nationalism that exists in the oppressed nation, RU is incapable of distinguishing friends from enemies. And what is even more dangerous is that RU

spends more time dealing with the nationalism of the oppressed nation than it does with the nationalism of the oppressor nation, which is far more dangerous and dominant. By placing so much emphasis on the bourgeois nature of all oppressed nation nationalism, RU misses the main danger in relation to the Black national question, facing the US working class movement today: opportunism in the form of national chauvinism, on the part of white workers—and communists.

RU spends quite a bit of time explaining that the material basis for unity of the class has never been greater. This is certainly true. But there is also a strong material basis for disunity. The imperialists in this country have reaped super-profits off the backs of oppressed peoples the world over, and the Black nation here within the US borders has served as a prime source of super-profits. The imperialists have wasted not time putting a large part of their super-profits into the bribing and corruption of sections of the US working class. White (great nation) chauvinism has long and deep roots in this country. Clearly the division within the US working class is based on a whole lot more than the privilege as RU says, of 'relatively easier ability to move to the suburbs, to get promoted into skilled jobs, to have a little better schools.' (NB 13, p. 3) This is only a part of the basis for divisions within the class.

National chauvinism on the part of whites is the most dangerous form of opportunism in the US working class. Why is this the main danger? Because it is the main ideological weapon of the white imperialists. It is primarily with this razor-sharp knife that they cut through the unity of the proletariat, dividing and splitting the workers. Secondly, the bourgeois nationalist tendencies of the Black masses are used.

Yet RU cadre are supposed to ignore the dangers of white national chauvinism, whose very agents have been the primary source of splits and divisions in the working class. And the fact that RU does ignore this danger is clear.

Internally, in its entire history, RU has made no effort, has paid no special attention to ridding its ranks of chauvinism and opportunism. RU has made no effort to educate the cadre to the fact that white national chauvinism is the main opportunist danger facing the working class today. Are we, a basically white organization, immune from bourgeois ideology? We do not think so. In fact, we think it's time for a resolute struggle to be waged against white national chauvinism in all its forms.

Externally, because RU cadre do not recognize the dangers of white national chauvinism, they don't carry forward the struggle against it within the working class. In fact, cadre usually adopt just the opposite view. 'We must not focus on the weaknesses of white workers, on disunity. We must not emphasize racism and national chauvinism unless it takes on a really balant—kill the niggers—form. Instead, our job is to point to the unity that is developing, and bring these examples forward,' In practice this means the RU rarely even mentions white national chauvinism, even though it expresses itself daily in this country. To do so, they say, would divide the class.

We say the class is already divided, and that by purposely downplaying the divisions that DO exist, RU in fact helps to maintain them. Unless consistent struggle is waged against

white national chauvinism; unless education of the cadre and the working class as a whole is done around this dangerous influence; unless the bourgeois agents and opportunists are routed from our midst, the necessary conditions for unity will not be created. In order to overcome the deep divisions that exist we must have ideological clarity on WHY they exist, we must clearly understand the material basis for their existence. Without fighting to achieve this clarity, in essence without waging a struggle against opportunism, RU actually undermines the unity of the class. And all its phrasemongering about the need for unity remains empty and worthless.

In final summary: RU continually confuses the two distinct historical periods in the development of the national question. And using this 'confusion' as a cover they draw on certain concepts from the first period—namely, 'particular and internal state problem' and the right of self-determination as a 'negative demand'—and use them to justify their revisionist position.

They have raised a whole series of 'entirely new and unique conditions' as the main basis for stripping the Black liberation struggle of its revolutionary content, placing it on the level of a struggle for partial reformist demands. The revolutionary slogan of right of self-determination has been swept out of its rightful place at the heart of the struggle. Blacks are no longer struggling for liberation as a nation, the freedom to choose their own destiny, in essence for the right of self-determination. There is no longer a question of land, of a territory where right of self-determination could be realized. Imperialism has done away with all these problems by industrializing and mechanizing agriculture in the South, by following a revolutionary direction in the South, by fundamentally changing social relations. Clearly only revolutionary struggle, and not imperialism, is capable of fully making such progressive changes.

The line of RU, as formulated in RP5 and even before that in RP4, has taken the only direction it could take—revisionism. Now all nationalism is bourgeois ideology. Now the patriotism of the oppressed masses is no longer applied internationalism. And now it is the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nation and not the national chauvinism of the oppressor, that threatens to keep the class divided. All of these formulations are fundamentally incorrect and non-Marxist.

### A Starting Point for a Leninist Position on the Black National Question

We have gone to great lengths to refute the RU line and lay bare its revisionist content. We also feel it is necessary to present the basic Marxist-Leninist principles around which a Leninist position on the Black national question must be based. We are not going to attempt to produce a thorough and complete position on every aspect of the Black national question, because we do not feel that it is the job of a few individuals. That will be the responsibility of the new Communist Party. Until that Party exists, it will be the job of the Marxist-Leninist organizations now in existence.

We do feel, however, that there are certain principles that are essential as the starting point for a correct position.

They can be summed up as follows:

1) We start with the Marxian principles that 'No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations.' Imperialism has split the world into two camps: 'the camp of a handful of civilized nations, which possess finance capital and exploit the vast majority of the population of the globe; and the camp of the oppressed and exploited peoples in the colonies and dependent countries who comprise the majority...' (National Problem, p. 167). This is the epoch of proletarian revolution and the national question is an integral part of the proletarian revolution. The overwhelming majority of national movements in the world today are unquestionably revolutionary in character, and in general they are directing blow after blow against imperialism. The Black national question must be seen as a part of this world wide revolutionary movement on the part of oppressed people.

The Black nation cannot be considered a colony of the US. But it would also be incorrect '...to make fundamental distinctions between the character of national oppression to which colonial peoples are subjected and the yoke of the oppressed nations. (Comintern 1930 Resolution). The national oppression in both cases are basically the same.

The Black liberation struggle in the US is a struggle directed straight at US imperialism. The national aspirations of the masses of Black people for liberation are revolutionary in and of themselves. All Communists must grasp 'the profoundly popular and profoundly revolutionary' (Stalin) character of the Black liberation struggle.

2) The Black national question must be seen as the question of an oppressed nation. We maintain that Stalin's definition of a nation still holds today:

*A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture...It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation...there is not single distinguishing characteristic of a nation. There is only the sum total of characteristics.*

(Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*)

With this as a guide, a scientific analysis of the Black national question can only conclude that the NATION exists in the Black Belt South and that Blacks outside this area constitute a national minority.

RU's line that there is no longer a need for territory, that you can have a nation that is dispersed across the US, whose territory 'is the large concentrations of Blacks in the urban industrial areas' (Guardian, Feb. 7, 1974) must be rejected as unscientific. Imperialism in the US has not created some special unique stage in this country. And no other nation in history can claim that its people constituted a nation 'wherever they are.' The question of a common territory must remain one of the characteristics that constitute a nation.

It is only in the Black Belt South that all 5 characteristics are present. It is true that the Black bourgeoisie is centered outside the South, primarily in Detroit and Chicago. This is where the richest market is, the northern Black pro-

letariat, whose wages and standard of living is far greater than that of Blacks in the South. But this one fact is not enough basis to create a 'new nation.' Common market is not enough. Market is not the main element that determines a nation, because there is no one distinguishing characteristic. It is the sum total of all five characteristics. Attempts to avoid the question of territory and the question of state boundaries is impermissible.

We would like to clarify at this point the understanding that Blacks outside the Black Belt South constitute a national minority. This is the only scientific analysis of the Black national question. But it by no means implies that the national aspirations of Blacks outside the South are any less powerful or less important than the aspirations of Blacks in the South. The potential for a national revolutionary explosion by Blacks in just as great North and South. Northern Blacks will certainly participate and have a keen interest in the fight for the realization of self-determination in the Black Belt area. But in a scientific analysis it is not these feelings that constitute Blacks as a nation. It is the objective factors, i.e. the presence of all 5 characteristics, that constitute a nation. Blacks do not have a common territory that stretches across the US, that exists throughout the country. The Black Belt South represents the territory that belongs, rightfully to Black people. It represents the only area where the right of self-determination could be realized. The Black Belt South is the homeland of the Black nation.

RU distorts this Marxist-Leninist position, particularly the apparent 'uncomfortable fact that whites now make up a majority,' (RP 5, p. 26) in the Black Belt area.

Really, the main question that faces us is not the racial composition of the Black Belt, but a correct analysis of the Black national question today, which demands a basic understanding of the material basis for oppression of the Black nation, and a correct solution to the problem. Instead of honestly making this analysis RU throws up a smokescreen of various 'problems.' We do not want to deal with 'today's facts,' we cling to 'old (Comintern) theories,' and we just can't deal with this problem of a 'white majority.'

This is nothing but an effort to confuse people and hide RU's revisionist line. In reality it is they who cannot deal with the facts. Because the facts show that the source of national oppression today comes directly out of the history of social relations and the long lasting remnants of the plantation economy, both of which are centered in the Black nation. It comes from the original subjugation of this territory by the imperialists, and the resulting class rule by the white landowners.

This concrete source of oppression is exactly the question RU chooses to ignore. And by doing so they come up with the ridiculous conclusion that land is no longer key and the right of self-determination is not longer at the heart of the struggle. Instead of addressing themselves to the basic questions they throw in the 'problem' that Blacks no longer constitute a majority in the Black Belt, the only area where self-determination could be exercised.

RU has forgotten that one of the concrete forms of national oppression used by the imperialists is the forcible dispersion of Black people from their homeland. Blacks have

been driven out of the Black Belt area. These forced migrations have meant that since 1940, Blacks have been outnumbered by whites in the Black Belt.

Using this as a cover, RU tries to wipe out 350 years of oppression suffered by Black people. They chose to ignore that it is here, in the Black Belt, that Blacks labored as slaves for 250 years. It is here that Black people have lived, slaved, and died for generation after generation. The Black Belt territory belongs to Black people. They have earned it as no other people have earned a homeland. And a simple headcount by RU cannot wipe out this fact!

Rather than see the forcible dispersion of Blacks and the resulting minority in the Black Belt as a concrete form of national oppression, RU uses this fact to deny the Black nation its most fundamental demand: right of self-determination. And there is no doubt that even though RU claims otherwise, they do not in fact uphold right of self-determination. In response to RU's problem we reply:

*We cannot accept the dispossession of the Negro farmer from the land, and the flight of the population from racist terror and oppression in the region, a legitimate reason for withdrawing the right of self-determination for the Negro people of that area.' (Harry Haywood, p. 31)*

3) The national question demands a revolutionary solution, not a reformist one. It demands a solution that challenges the foundations of the power of the ruling class, that undermines that power, and entirely removes the material basis of national oppression. A revolutionary solution to the Black national question demands that Communists advocate and fight for full right of self-determination for the Black nation. The right of self-determination means 'the complete and unlimited right of the Negro majority to exercise governmental authority in the entire territory of the Black Belt, as well as to decide upon the relations between their territory and other nations.' (Comintern, '30 Resolution). And 'The recognition of the principle of self-determination implies an uncompromising fight for the conditions of its realization; that means the fight for equality in all fields, and against all forms of racial oppression, in short, complete democracy in the country. The exercise of the right of self-determination is the crowning point of this struggle and symbolizes that the equality of the given nation has been fully achieved. Self-determination is merely the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form, for complete equality in the South. It is an irrefutable demand of consistent democracy in the sphere of the national problem. (H: Haywood, p 24) Truly upholding the right of self-determination means that a Communist carries out daily agitation and propaganda, that they hold demonstrations and mass actions, that they show by all their actions now that they uphold the right of self-determination and will determinedly fight for the conditions necessary for its actual realization.

The slogan of right to self-determination represents a central and crucial demand. The main underlying source of national oppression is still a question of LAND, of the forcible subjugation of the Black nation. The struggle to confiscate the Black Belt South, the fight to rip this land, a primary source of super-profits, however, from the hands of the imperialists, the fight for the full realization of the

right of self-determination, and an end to the political, cultural, and economic subjugation of the Black nation is undeniably at the heart of the Black liberation struggle in the US today.

#### ON THE PARTICULAR QUESTION OF SECESSION

Communists at this time cannot come out for or against secession. We cannot predict whether secession at any given time will be reactionary or revolutionary. We stand for 'the full right of the Black nation to secession, and with the necessity to fight to bring about the conditions that will allow Black people to choose whatever form of state relations they want.

We feel that regardless of what form of relations the Black nation chooses, it is essential that some form of self-government for the Black nation exists. The RU is wrong in claiming that the level of unity may be so high at the victory of proletarian revolution that the Black nation will not want any form of state power. We are not some special breed of Communists in this country! The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot automatically do away with the affects of national oppression. The amalgamation of nations requires a period of transition. As Lenin said:

*Liberated from the yoke of the bourgeoisie, the masses of toilers will strive with all their might to ally themselves with the great advanced socialist nations...if only they grant them equality in everything, including state construction...*

*Under socialism, the masses of the toilers themselves... will refuse to agree to insularity, whereas the variety of political forms, the freedom to secede from the state, experience in state construction—all this will, until the state itself withers away, be the basis for a rich cultured life, the guarantee of an acceleration of the voluntary establishment of intimacy between and amalgamation of nations. (Lenin, Discussion...Summed Up)*

4. All Communists must be proletarian internationalists. For oppressor nation Communists this is not possible without advocacy and fighting for the right of self-determination. Proletarian internationalism also demands the fight for the unity of the proletariat, for the amalgamation of the workers of all nations. This requires a two sided task. On the one hand, the fight against all bourgeois nationalism, and above all, great nation nationalism. For the communists of the oppressor nation this means waging a staunch struggle against national chauvinism and fighting for the right of self determination. The communists of the oppressed nation must fight all forms of narrow nationalism, aloofness, and insularity. On the other had, and precisely in the interest of successful struggle against chauvinism and narrow nationalism, there is the task of 'preserving the unity of the proletarian struggle and of the proletarian organizations, of amalgamating these organizations into an international association.' (Lenin, Right of Nations to Self-Determination). The main weight of emphasis for white Communists lies in fighting every form of national oppression and defending the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. For Black Communists the weight of emphasis must be the unequivocal fight for the complete unity of the workers of both the oppressed and oppressor nationalities, for the voluntary amalgamation of nations.

All Communists stand for the principles of unified organization. In this country that means there will be one multinational Communist Party.

5) Any formulation that smacks of American exceptionalism must be rejected. Any attempts to grab hold of particular characteristics of the Black nation and use them to claim that the US has new and unique conditions must also be rejected. RU's formulation of 'new, dispersed proletarian nation' of a 'third stage' unique to the US are unsound, and serve as a deceptive cover to a basically revisionist line. Instead, we feel the basic formulations of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, and the 1928 and 1930 Resolutions of the Comintern, which represent and sum up the theory and practice of the American working class, must guide us in the formulation of a revolutionary solution to the national question in this country.

6) There is still an unresolved land question in the South. Communists cannot give US imperialism the progressive and revolutionary characteristics the RU attributes to it. US imperialism cannot solve the agrarian question. There is no doubt that a full view of the facts, instead of the one-sided approach RU takes, will reveal that imperialism has not pursued a policy of political and social progress in the South. Imperialism is not capable of completely changing the social relations in the Deep South. The shadow of the plantation, and the affects of the long history of semi-feudal relations, have far from disappeared. These semi-feudal remnants are dogging the heels of Black people wherever they go.

Only revolutionary change can fully eliminate the remnants of semi-feudal relations in the Deep South. The key to solving the agrarian question today is not primarily a question of giving a plot of land to every Black farmer. But it is a question of 'confiscating the landed property of the white planters and capitalists for the benefit of the Negro farmers.' (1930 Resolution) Black farmers and agricultural wage workers still make up a sizeable percentage of the Southern work force. They are the most impoverished section of the class, with a standard of living and working conditions even worse than those of the farmworkers in the Southwest. They are an important force that cannot be ignored by communists today. (By drawing the similarities between these workers and the farmworkers in the Southwest it is easy to see the potential for struggle.)

We maintain that what the Comintern said 40 years ago still holds true. Today 'this landed property in the hands of the white American exploiters constitutes the most important material basis of the entire system of national oppression and serfdom of Negroes in the Black Belt...These (sharecropping, contract labor, chain gangs, and we add seasonal and agricultural wage workers—ed.) are the main forms of present Negro slavery in the Black Belt and no breaking of the chains of this slavery is possible without confiscating all landed property of the white masters. Without this revolutionary measure, without agrarian revolution, the right of self-determination of the Negro population would be only a Utopia...(1930 Resolution)

7) A determined and resolute struggle must be waged against all forms of opportunism, particularly its most dangerous

form, national chauvinism. This struggle is essential if a true basis of unity between Blacks and whites is to be created.

*Just so long as Negro workers who come in contact with our Party do not naturally unite with us, and stay inside the Party the influence of white chauvinism is still at work, and the responsibility for this rests primarily upon the white comrades, and we cannot compromise by one-thousandths part of an inch on this question. That means the struggle against the influence of white chauvinism must be a permanent feature of our work.*

*(Communist Position on the Negro Question, 1931, p. 20)*

It is also very important for Black communists to struggle against narrow, bourgeois nationalist tendencies, and fight to eliminate the distrust of the Black masses towards whites. They must stand resolutely for the unity of the proletariat and fight for the revolutionary alliance of Black and white workers against US imperialism. However the struggle against bourgeois nationalism cannot be carried out successfully unless it is linked with a ruthless war against the main danger—white chauvinism. National chauvinism represents the stench of the slave market in our midsts and it must be thoroughly routed!

8) We must carefully distinguish who are our friends and who are our enemies. In particular Communists must make a clear distinction between the overwhelming majority of white workers who are part of the revolutionary proletariat, and that small group of white workers who have been bribed and corrupted by the imperialists. There is a labor aristocracy, bribed with the super-profits derived from the oppressed nations, that will forever lick the boots of the imperialists.

And there ARE a certain number of white workers and union bureaucrats who will remain die-hard reactionaries, tied to the imperialists and their ideology, forever lost from the side of the proletariat.

Along with this we must also be clear that the Black bourgeoisie as a class, is not a friend and ally of the US proletariat. They are the class agents of the bourgeoisie, and in the main constitute a reactionary, dangerous, enemy.

On the other side stands the multi-national proletariat; white, black, brown, yellow, and red. Who together with their allies, petit-bourgeois merchants, professionals, students, etc., constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population. We must recognize the leading role played by Black workers who suffer both as members of an oppressed nation and as part of an exploited class.

*The Negro working class has reached a stage of development which enables it, if properly organized and well led, to fulfill successfully its double historic mission: a) to play a considerable role in the class struggle against American imperialism as an important part of the American working class; and b) to lead the movement of the oppressed masses of the Negro population.*

*(1928 Resolution)*

The multi-national US proletariat together with its revolutionary allies will be victorious!

In conclusion, the task facing all of us is the same: we want proletarian revolution in this country. There is no doubt that unbreakable, multi-national proletarian unity is necessary for victory. We all recognize that a correct posi-

tion on the Black national question is absolutely necessary if the iron unity of the proletariat is to be forged. To create the conditions for unity, to lay the groundwork necessary to overcome the divisions within the US working class, we feel it is essential for communists:

1) In the oppressor nations—uphold the right of self-determination and unreservedly carry on the struggle, through mass actions, strikes, agitation, and propaganda, etc. for its full realization. To fight for full social equality of all nationalities. In the oppressed nation, insistence on unity between the proletariat of the oppressed and oppressor nations.

*Oppressing nations insisting on freedom of secession, oppressed nations insisting on freedom of amalgamation—there is not nor can there be any other road leading from the given situation to internationalism and the amalgamation of nations.*

*(Lenin, Discussion....Summed Up)*

2) To struggle resolutely against opportunism, revisionism and the social chauvinists,

3) That we must view unity as an invincible weapon in the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it does not drop from the sky or 'naturally' exist. We must carry out a merciless struggle to obtain it.

Fight for the right of self-determination for the Black nation  
Fight the revisionists tooth and nail!

Fight for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!

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The American working class has a long history of struggle towards the development of a correct Leninist position on the Black national question. The following section discusses both the position formulated by the Comintern in 1928 and 1930 and the revisionist position of the 1950 liquidators. It is divided into two parts. The first one describes the Comintern Resolutions and the affect they had on the CP's practice; the second brings forward the glaring similarities between RU line and the revisionist CP line of the 1950's.

In 1928 and 1930 the 6th Congress of the Communist International under the leadership of Stalin adopted 2 resolutions on the Negro Question in the United States. In the following 7-10 years, the US Party, using that line and under the guidance of the Comintern led massive struggles in the Black liberation movement—the Scottsboro campaign, the anti-lynching struggles, the Sharecroppers Union, the unemployment and anti-eviction struggles, etc. Black toilers took up as never before their historical dual task—to lead the national liberation struggle and to play a crucial part in the struggle of the whole US proletariat. The hegemony of the proletariat and its Communist Party was established among the Black masses, and bourgeois reformists were thoroughly exposed as important agents of imperialism. Great gains in Black-white unity were achieved; there were marches of 100,000's of Black and white workers against unemployment, to free the Scottsboro boys, etc. These are struggles the American working class and the Black people can be proud of—and which hold great lessons.

Yet there is no discussion in Red Papers 5 of the theory

and practice of the Communist Party during this period in regards to the national question. When RP5 first came out, some of us naively thought this might be because the authors did not know the history; if only we could lay it out they would surely rethink the position. We soon came to realize that RU national leadership certainly did know the history. In RP5 and at every subsequent opportunity they have refused to discuss CP line and practice precisely because the line of the Comintern directly opposes RP5 and sharply exposes its revisionism. RP5 is put forward as a historic, new contribution, but in fact it is an updated version of an old, dog-eared position that Leninists have fought consistently.

We are going to briefly run down the 1928 and 1930 Resolutions of the Comintern and some of the history and practice of the CPUSA in that period.

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The crisis of 1930 meant a great intensification of the yoke of imperialist oppression on the Black people. In the South the sharecroppers and farm laborers were driven into deep bondage. Lynchings and the activities of terrorist organizations like the KKK took a sharp upswing; chain gangs lengthened; starvation and disease haunted the Black communities. In the cities Black workers lived in wretched and congested ghettos and paid exorbitant rents. Black workers were the first and hardest hit victims of the capitalist offensive of unemployment, wage cuts, and speed-up.

These rapidly worsening conditions taking place alongside the developing revolutionary labor movement created the basis for a great rise in the Black liberation movement.

#### The 1928 and 1930 Resolutions of the Comintern

The objective conditions for revolution were ripening all over the world in the late 1920's. The Comintern at its 6th Congress in 1928 launched a thorough going 'left-turn' in response to the changing objective conditions and to prepare Communists to lead the certain tremendous increase in mass struggles. This precipitated a strong world wide class struggle among Communists. Opposing the new line were the right wing forces led in the Comintern by Bukharin and in the US by Lovestone. They did not believe that imperialist crisis was at hand; on the contrary, they felt capitalism was quite able to sustain the period of relative prosperity it had enjoyed since World War I. Lovestone felt that although the crisis might develop in other countries it certainly wouldn't in the US, hence, American exceptionalism.

The Comintern thoroughly studied the peculiarities, historical development, and the economic and living conditions of the Black people, and on that basis the 1928 Resolution established that Blacks constituted an oppressed nation in which there existed all the requirements for a national revolutionary movement against American imperialism.

This was a sharp attack on the right opportunist, American exceptionalism line embraced by the Party and its leader Lovestone. In 1927 Lovestone and Co. stated: 'The migration of hundreds of thousands of Negroes from the South into the industrial centers of the North is rapidly changing the Negro masses from a reserve of capitalists reaction into a reserve of the proletarian revolution.' In other words, they completely rejected the role of the Black peas-

antry as an ally of the proletarian revolution, and as an essential driving force, under the leadership of the Black proletariat, in the Black liberation movement.

This theory, which justified all the dangerous shortcomings of the Party in its work among Black people, was developed further in Lovestone's formulation of an 'industrial revolution in the South.' This industrial revolution would sweep away the remnants of slavery in Southern agriculture and proletarianize the Negro peasantry. Thus, there would be no special, national question for Black people. These theories laid the groundwork for considering the Negro question as primarily one of racial distinctions and reduced the Negro question as primarily one of racial distinctions and reduced the movement of Blacks to a feeble bourgeois-liberal opposition to race prejudice and inequality, divorced from economic and social roots.

The '28 Resolution begins: 'The industrialization of the South and the concentration of a new Negro working class population in the big cities of the North...create the possibility for Negro workers under the leadership of the Communist Party to assume hegemony of all Negro liberation movements and to increase their importance and role in the revolutionary struggle of the American proletariat.' The Resolution goes on to describe the ruthless exploitation and persecution of the Negro agrarian population which is 'based on slave remnants (peonage, sharecropping, etc.,) and surrounded by a superstructure of social and political inequality (lynching, Jim Crowism, etc.)' It concluded that 'these various forms of oppression of the Negro masses, who are concentrated mainly in the so-called 'Black Belt' provide the necessary conditions of a national revolutionary movement among the Negroes.'

The Resolution outlines specific urgent tasks: to play an active part and lead the work of organizing the Negro workers and agricultural laborers in trade unions and to begin a courageous campaign of self-criticism concerning the work among Negroes. 'All forms of white chauvinism must be fought with the utmost energy and accompanied by a widespread and thorough educational campaign in the spirit of internationalism.'

Following the Sixth Congress a Negro Commission was set up in the Comintern to oversee the development of Negro work, to make certain the new line was applied vigorously, and that the old opportunist line was rooted out. Negro work had definitely improved, but there was still widespread lack of clarity on the new position from bottom to top in the American Party. Thus, the greatest weapon in the fight for liberation—the new Leninist line—remained unsharpened. The Comintern was convinced that only on the basis of the sharpest struggle against the anti-Leninist theories would the Party be able to win the masses of Black people. This was critical in view of the sharp worsening of the imperialist crisis and the ripening revolutionary situation. A year and a half later this Commission wrote the '1930 Resolution.'

The '30 Resolution distinguished carefully between the oppressed Negro nation in the South and the national minority in the North. The struggle for equal rights applies both North and South, but in the South where three quarters of all Blacks lived in a state of semi-serfdom 'the main Communist slogan must be the Right of Self-Determination of

the Negroes in the Black Belt.'

The resolution struck out at the tendency to counterpose the 2 demands, for equality and for the right of self-determination. They are intimately linked. In the South, the attainment of full equality involves the question of political power needed for its enforcement (right of self-determination). And, since the vicious oppression of the Negro nation follows Blacks resulting in lower wages, worse living conditions, and discrimination even in the 'liberal North,' the winning of self-determination in the South was the prerequisite for full equality in the North.

The basis of the demand for equal rights of the Negroes is the special yoke to which they are subjected by the ruling classes. 'It is only a Yankee bourgeois lie to say that the yoke of Negro slavery has been lifted in the US,' the resolution states, describing the brutal conditions North and South. Black and white workers must wage a constant and on-going struggle for full equality.

This must be accompanied by a relentless struggle in practice against all manifestations of white superiority on the part of the American bourgeoisie. This is a critical part of the class struggle and one which the white workers must lead. It will be a crucial test of international solidarity. This is particularly important, for the bourgeoisie, in the face of increasing unity, will constantly attempt to pit one group against the other.

On the other hand, the Resolution states: 'It is the special duty of the revolutionary Negro workers to carry on tireless activity among the Negro working masses to free them of distrust of the white proletariat and draw them into the common front of the revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie.'

The Comintern clearly foresaw the industrialization and rapid growth of the Black proletariat. The 1930 Resolution predicted not a dying away of the national revolutionary Negro movement in the South because of industrialization but on the contrary, a great advance of this movement and the 'rapid approach of a revolutionary crisis' in the Black Belt.' For one thing, industrialization of the Black Belt, in contrast to most colonies was not in conflict with the interests of the ruling US imperialists. Therefore, expansion of industry in the Black Belt would 'in no way bring a solution to the question of living conditions of the oppressed Negro majority, nor to the agrarian question, which lies at the basis of the national question.' Industrialization in the area would only sharpen the contradictions in that it would bring forth 'the most important driving force of the national revolution. the Black working class.' 'The right of self-determination as the main slogan of the CP in the Black Belt is appropriate,' the document states. Three demands must be kept in mind in this regard: a) the confiscation of the landed property of the white landowners and capitalists for the benefit of the Negro farmers. Without this agrarian revolution the material basis for the entire system of national oppression remains, and the right of self-determination should be at best a paper promise; b) establishment of the state unity of the Black Belt. This would include a sizeable white minority. c) the right of self-determination. This means complete and unlimited right of the Black majority to exercise governmental authority in the entire territory of the Black Belt. Now all this power is con-

centrated in the hands of the white bourgeoisie and landlords. Therefore, the overthrow of this class rule is unconditionally necessary in the struggle for self-determination.

The 1930 Resolution also attempted to clear up misunderstanding around the distinction between the demands, right of self-determination on the one hand and for governmental separation on the other. Right of self-determination includes right to separation, but does not necessarily imply that the Black population should make use of this right; there may be separation or federation. The resolution quotes Lenin: 'We demand freedom of separation, real right of self-determination, certainly not in order to recommend separation, but on the contrary, in order to facilitate the democratic rapprochement and unification of nations.' Concerning separation, that is a demand on which the stand of Communists must vary. If the proletariat has come to power, Black Communists will come out against separation, although the right will be unconditionally realized. 'But as long as capitalism rules, Communists cannot come out against governmental separation because separation would be preferable to their present oppressed state.' The resolution noted, however, that separatist trends in the Black movement should not be supported 'indiscriminately and without criticism.' There were reactionary separatist trends, such as Garvey's 'Back to Africa,' which were diversions from the struggle against US imperialism, as well as national revolutionary trends.

The slogan for the right of self-determination presupposes a very energetic fight and mass mobilizations for concrete partial demands. Even if the situation 'does not yet warrant the raising of the question of uprising, one should not limit oneself at present to propaganda for the demand 'right of self-determination,' but should organize mass actions such as demonstrations, strikes, tax boycott movements, etc.'

It is the particular job of Black Communists to struggle against petty bourgeois reformism and nationalist moods directed indiscriminately against all whites, the Resolution continues. Their call must be, 'Revolutionary struggle against the ruling white bourgeoisie through a fighting alliance with the revolutionary white proletariat.'

Finally, 'It is clear that only a victorious proletarian revolution will finally decide the agrarian question and the national question in the South in the interests of the predominating mass of the Negro population of the country.'

The resolution concludes:

*Enslavement of the Negroes is one of the most important foundations of the imperialist dictatorship of US capitalism. The more American imperialism fastens its yoke on the millions strong Negro masses, the more must the Communist Party develop the mass struggle for Negro emancipation, and the better use it must make of all conflicts which arise out of the national difference, as an incentive for revolutionary mass actions against the bourgeoisie. Whether the rebellion of the Negroes is to be the outcome of a general revolutionary situation in the United States, whether it is to originate in the whirlpool of decisive fights for power by the working class for proletarian dictatorship, or whether on the contrary the Negro rebellion will be the prelude of gigantic struggles for power by the American proletariat, cannot be foretold now. But in either contingency it is es-*

sential for the Communist Party to make an energetic beginning now with the organization of joint mass struggles of white and black workers against Negro oppression.

## Results

The winning of the Party to this Leninist position on the Negro question meant a great improvement in the work of the Party. Previously the work had been haphazard at best, and the Party could only report 50 Black cadre out of a membership of 7000 in 1926.

But by 1931 there were already 3 or 4 high points of mass work flowing from the new position.

First, the war against white chauvinism in the Party was dramatized by the Yokinen trial. The Party seized on an incident of white chauvinism (August Yokinen, a Finnish-American comrade, who worked at a left-wing Finnish club in Harlem, refused admittance to several Black comrades), held a public mass trial, and expelled Yokinen from the Party. One-thousand people attended the trial in Harlem. This was the first time Communists clearly and unequivocally declared that chauvinism would not be tolerated. The trial was sensational news and was reported at length by every important newspaper in America. This public challenge to bourgeois social relationships brought a big wave of sympathy and approval, first among the Black masses, but also among the white workers. In the Party's thinking, white chauvinism, the chauvinism of the oppressor nation, is the main danger. A thorough struggle to root it out of the Party was a key component in fighting the secondary danger, bourgeois nationalism.

Soon after the Yokinen trial followed the mass struggle to save the Scottsboro boys. If the Party had not previously had the experience of the Yokinen trial, probably the Scottsboro boys would have become merely another of the legal lynchings which disgraced America daily. This campaign was the first mobilization of the masses by the Party for a concrete struggle against a cornerstone of Negro oppression—lynching. The Party was able to bring its program before side numbers of people, breaking down barriers of chauvinism and distrust between Negro and white workers, thoroughly exposing the Negro bourgeois reformists and separating the interests of the Black proletarians and peasants from the general interests of 'race solidarity,' as propagated by Negro bourgeois nationalists. Black toilers began to understand class divisions and to find out who were their friends and who their enemies.

The Scottsboro struggle challenged and actually broke the leadership of the Black bourgeoisie. The stage was well set for this. The Black bourgeoisie had been deaf and impotent in the face of the clamoring of Black people for relief. In Scottsboro, the NAACP hesitated in taking up the struggle for fear of getting 'too involved in a rape case' and dragged their feet the whole way, attacking the 'reds.' any mass action, and infuriated the boys and their parents by their condescending attitude to 'uneducated Negroes.' Their attempts to direct the case through the courts and legislatures was doomed to fail.

The Communist Party in its propaganda continually—and successfully—exposed the Black bourgeoisie. By 1932 the NAACP leadership was in crisis, and the hegemony of the proletariat under the leadership of the Communist Party

was established. A Black Detroit Communist who organized in the massive unemployment struggles in Harlem during this time said, 'You couldn't say anything bad about Communists on the streets.'

In the midst of the Scottsboro campaign, the heroic resistance of the sharecroppers to the landlords and sheriffs in Camp Hill and Tallapoosa, Alabama, was launched. In this struggle, the revolutionary ferment of the poor Black farmers and sharecroppers received its first expression, resulting in the establishment of the first genuine revolutionary organization among Negro poor farmers—the militant Sharecroppers Union.

The great success of the Unemployed Councils also flowed directly from the taking up of the new Leninist position. The unemployed councils were mass organizations in the Black communities and white communities and the huge demonstrations led by the Party were concrete expressions of the high development of unity of white and Black workers. They were in sharpest contrast to the race riots of 1919 which were also occasioned by mass unemployment.

The history clearly reveals that the bold undertaking of mass struggles for equal rights and for the right of self-determination was dependent on the adoption of a correct and Leninist position on the Negro question. The new line was one of the cornerstones of 'the Bolshevization of the US Party, preparing it to lead the overall class struggle. The ideological struggle for its acceptance sharpened the rank and file's understanding and ability to carry out work in the Black nation. On the other hand, the fact that this line was never thoroughly understood throughout the rank and file had much to do with the growth of Browder revisionism. This of course finally resulted in the formal dropping of the slogan right of self-determination in 1957—precisely on the eve of the great rise of the Black liberation movement.

## RU Joins Hands with Revisionists of 1950's

During the 1950's, the CP was engaged in a struggle over the Party's position on the national question that ended in the eventual decision to reject the Party's Leninist position based on the 1928 and 1930 resolutions. The struggle culminated in the spring of 1958. Harry Haywood, a leading Black communist, who helped formulate the original position, wrote a polemic entitled *For a Revolutionary Position on the National Question*, refuting the Party's revisionist position. Most of the following information is taken from this document, and we urge everyone to read the entire paper.

James Allen, J. Jackson, and D. Wilkerson, leading spokesmen for the revisionists, maintained that Blacks would eventually be integrated because of the 'long range economic trends, with the forces of capitalist expansion industrializing and bringing progress to the South, eliminating the semi-feudal plantation system (the historic source of Negro oppression) and, along with it, the Negro population concentration in the South's Black Belt.' (HH, p. 3)

Wilkerson based his arguments for the possibility of full integration on the 'changing pattern of Negro population distribution from predominately Southern rural farms to increasingly nationwide and urban,' the impact of which has been 'progressively to shrink and dissipate the Black

Belt area of Negro majority population.' (HH, p. 4)

Even a liberal Southern democrat could agree with this line. Harry Ashmore, then editor of the Arkansas Gazette, claimed that 'industrialization and farm mechanization in the South are automatically solving the major problems of that region and wiping out the effects of the 'peculiar institution' (slavery). These trends he contends, are eliminating the plantation system, wiping out the effects of peonage, reducing the margin of Negro majority on the Black Belt, and thereby achieving eventual integration.' (HH, p. 10)

James Jackson continued the chorus of 'direct integration.' He said, 'The sharecropping system, which was the distinguishing feature of the '30's, is no longer a major characteristic of production relations in agriculture in the South today.' (HH, p. 11) And that because of 'the rapid tempo of urbanization and industrial growth...the economic essence of oppression of the Negro people in the country as a whole and in the Southern states (is now) manifested in the discrimination against, and economic exploitation of Negro working men and women by industrial capital and monopoly.' (HH, p. 10)

The RU revisionists have joined these scoundrels of the fifties, going even one step further by saying that the agrarian question HAS been solved. Haywood's arguments against the liquidators of the Black national question then ring just as true today.

First, in general, the revisionists 'have been all too eager to seize upon the 'facts' and 'irreversible long range trends' to prove that the Negro question is being automatically solved within the framework of imperialism—without revolutionary change.' (HH, p. 6)

In response to Jackson, Haywood wrote that 'by a stroke of the pen Jackson downgrades the struggle of the Negro population for national liberation in the South to a mere labor question, reducing the national element in this struggle to the fight against discrimination, which he evidently considers a superstructural hangover from a nearly extinct system, whose economic base is being rapidly and automatically destroyed by the 'rapid tempo of urbanization and industrial growth.' (H.H., p. 11)

Haywood continues by saying the 'historical condition of the development of Deep South agriculture, in which the plantation has been and remains a key form, has been the super-exploitation of Negro labor. The consequences of racist, national oppression fall upon the Negro, whatever his social status in town or country. A change in the number of sharecroppers cannot change this fact of Negro life.' (HH, p. 13)

And against Allen he wrote, 'Comrade Allen speaks about 'basic social changes in the South' which will lead to the completion of the agrarian democratic revolution and of the 'elimination of plantation-cropping as a semi-feudal leftover from slavery' which is the 'basis for planter Dixiecrat power'...Is it not clear that these radical changes cannot be carried out except on the basis of revolutionary transfer of state power? The only solution to the Negro question lies in a fundamental, revolutionary change, which in this case means breaking the usurped political power of the Wall-Street Bourbon rulers and supplanting it by the political power of the Negro masses and their democratic

white allies AS A PRECONDITION for destroying the semi-feudal plantation system.' (HH, p. 22)

And finally:

*In sum the current upswing of industrialization in the South has in no way involved such basic reshaping of the area as to exclude the semi-feudal relations and slave survivals characteristic of the agriculture in the Deep South. It cannot involve any such change because US economy, North and South, is dominated by monopoly capitalism, and monopoly capitalism is not pursuing nor can it pursue, a policy of social and political progress in the South. Any fundamental change in social relations in the South can come about only as a result of revolutionary struggle of the Negro and white toilers of that region.'* (HH, p 16)

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*Once Again on the National Question* is taken from the *Collected Works of Stalin, Vol. 7.*

Harry Haywood's paper is contained in this booklet.

'The Communist Position on the Negro Question' was a pamphlet published in 1931 by the CPUSA. Some libraries have it.

The text of the 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions can also be found in the above pamphlet, at some libraries and in the back of CL's pamphlet on the national question.