
The Negro Liberation Movement

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That the Negro people are at last waking to a realization of their rights and, accordingly, to participation in the universal liberation struggle of the exploited masses of the world, must be, of necessity a source of constant and intense gratification to all workers who are genuinely class-conscious.

The efforts of the Negroes to throw off the yoke of the white capitalist-imperialists cannot fail to react favorably on our fight against the same enemy. In spite of the folly and blindness of most of their present leaders, the Negroes, to attain any measure of success in their struggle against the imperialist governments of Europe and North America, must come eventually to a full realization of the identity of their interests with those of other oppressed people and of the class-conscious white workers. They are beginning to realize that not all white people are their enemies, and that the same group which oppresses and exploits them also exploits and oppresses the working masses of the white race.

Every blow struck for Negro liberation will be a blow struck for the world Proletariat, since whether the Negroes consciously will it or not the effects will be the weakening of the capitalist foe of both the "subject peoples" and the exploited white workers. In like manner, every blow struck for the liberation of the Proletariat will be a blow struck for the Negroes, both as Negroes and as workers. The difficulties which will face the proletarian struggle in Europe and America will be increased so long as the enemy is able to draw on the colonies for material resources and fighting men with which to war upon the workers in the homelands. This is a truth that, while fully recognized by the Communist International and its millions of followers in all countries, is generally blinked at by the

leaders of the British Labour Party and other traitors to the Workers' Cause. It is largely on account of these traitors that the Negroes have not yet been brought to the realization of the primacy of their workers' interests over their merely racial interests. For this reason a short survey has to be made from a racial angle.

At present there are two great outstanding sections or phases of the Negro Liberation Movement with headquarters in the United States. These are the Universal Negro Improvement Association, better known as the Garvey Movement, and the African Blood Brotherhood. There are minor phases which, however, either are not of an international character, or do not subscribe to the doctrine of full Negro liberation. Some of these phases, as we may call them, are represented by the Equal Rights League of Boston and the Pan-African Congress, the first a purely political and American organization, the second merely an aggregation of the Negro petty bourgeois officeholders and other beneficiaries of the imperialist system who, in the early part of September, strutted around 3 or 4 European capitals pleading for an amelioration of the condition of the natives in the colonies, but otherwise endorsed the partition and exploitation of Africa by European capitalists. Then there are the two great native African movements: the Mohammedan Movement, which seeks to drive out "the infidels and aliens" and win Africa for Islam; and the Ethiopian Movement in South Africa, whence first came the cry of "Africa for the Africans and an end to native despoliation and exploitation."

Of the two great sections of the Liberation Movement emanating in the United States and now encircling the globe and demanding full Negro liberation, the African Blood Brotherhood, or ABB, headed by

Cyril Briggs, appears to have the better tactical direction which, together with a clear realization of the underlying causes and intensity of the struggle, makes it the most effective Negro organization in the field. It is the only Negro organization that the capitalists view with any degree of alarm. This may be because of the historic reputation of the organization, dating from the Tulsa race riots, or because the ABB recognizes the capitalist-imperialist system as the cause of the economic slavery of the Negro people and loses no opportunity to drive home to the Negro masses this most important point. Moreover, ABB tactics are based upon the idea expressed by the Indian proverb that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” and the organization openly seeks the cooperation of all other forces genuinely opposed to the capitalist-imperialist system.

While placing a free Africa as the chief of its ultimate aims, the ABB has no intention of surrendering any rights that the Negro has won in any parts of the world, or of letting up on the fight for liberty — “political, economic, social” — in the United States. It is at present carrying on a most uncompromising fight for the rights of the Negro workers in this country to organize for the betterment of their condition, the raising of their standard of living, and for shorter hours and higher wages. At the same time it seeks to imbue the Negro workers with a sense of the necessity of working class solidarity to the success of the struggle against the capitalist-imperialist system, which it asks Negroes to wage both as Negroes and as workers. The ABB is a genuine working class organization, composed of Negro workers, and with Negro workers at the helm.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association, or UNIA, is headed by Marcus Garvey, and may be described as an organization of Negro workers headed by a Negro bourgeois and pursuing bourgeois policies. It represents a prostitution of the Liberation philosophy to business ends, such as the “Black Star Line, Inc.,” “The Negro Factories Corporation,” etc., etc., and is a fair sample of a tendency among the Negro petty bourgeoisie to graft capitalist enterprises upon mass movements; for the “Black Star Line, Inc.” and “allied corporations” are not cooperative enterprises which would give equal benefits to the members of the UNIA, but corporative affairs which are supported by the many for the benefit of the few.

While there is more noise in the Garvey Movement than in the ABB this is no sign that that movement is the more effective. Rather the contrary, it would appear, for much of the time and energy of the UNIA is expended in the giving and receiving of empty titles and meaningless decorations. Garvey himself bears the grandiloquent self-bestowed title of “His Excellency, the Provisional President of Africa,” while Mayor Johnson of Monrovia, Liberia, who is merely an African appanage of the organization, bears the even grander title of “The Potentate” and occupies in theory the position that Garvey occupies in reality. Then there are the knights and nobles — a set of parasites specially created to take the place in a free Africa that the European parasites now occupy — whose titles belie Garvey’s more democratic, if high-sounding, title and give credence to the conclusions which his opponents draw from the existence of a Potentate as theoretical head.

Big noise and big salaries are two of the outstanding features of the UNIA. Salaries range from \$3,000 to \$12,000 per year. Garvey gets \$12,000 a year as President-General of the UNIA, and \$10,000 more as President of the Black Star Line, Inc. He is also President of the Negro Factories Corporation, but no one seems to know whether he draws a salary for that position. Mayor Johnson of Monrovia also receives a big salary for the privilege of his connection to the organization — a connection which helps to confuse the masses as to Garvey’s real strength and standing in Liberia. While Garvey continuously calls upon the race-patriotism and loyalty of the Negroes to support the various capitalistic enterprises which he has launched under the auspices of the UNIA, it is apparent that he proposes no reciprocity in race-patriotism and loyalty on the part of himself and other officials of the organization and its corporations, whose big salaries plainly represent “all that the traffic will bear” and are said to be a source of constant irritation to the more intelligent membership of the UNIA, as well as an effective bar to the further growth of the organization.

The Garvey association in concentrating its attention upon a free Africa to the neglect of the race and labor rights of Negroes in other parts of the world has done much to confuse the Negro masses and distract the American Negro workers from their urgent

problems in this country. There are signs, however, of a reversal of this policy, due, no doubt, to the stream of criticism which has been leveled at Garvey as a result of said policy. The ABB, in particular, has attacked Garvey on this and other points in order to show to the masses of the Negro workers exactly what the Garvey movement stands for. The African Blood Brotherhood is practically supported by the rank and file of both organizations. In fact, several thousand members have left the UNIA, and that organization now faces a severe international crisis as a result of the brilliant tactical victories which the ABB leaders have won over Garvey and his staff.

It is clearly seen, then, that the two great sections of the Negro Liberation Movement are almost diametrically opposed in policies and in aims, for while the goal of the Garvey organization is evidently the liberation of Africa from the white imperialist powers for the purpose of creating the entire vast continent of nearly 12 million square miles into an empire for the imperial dynasty of Marcus Garvey... *<line of type missing>* ...Workers' Republic. The ABB is fighting the battles of the Negro workers in the political, economic, and social field; educating and organizing them to take their place in the class struggle as workers as well as oppressed peoples. So that the Negroes will not rid Africa or any country from white exploiters in order to turn it over to imperialists of their own race but that a Workers' Republic may be established, since only under a Workers' Republic can the oppressed masses of any race hope to throw off the chains of economic slavery.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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