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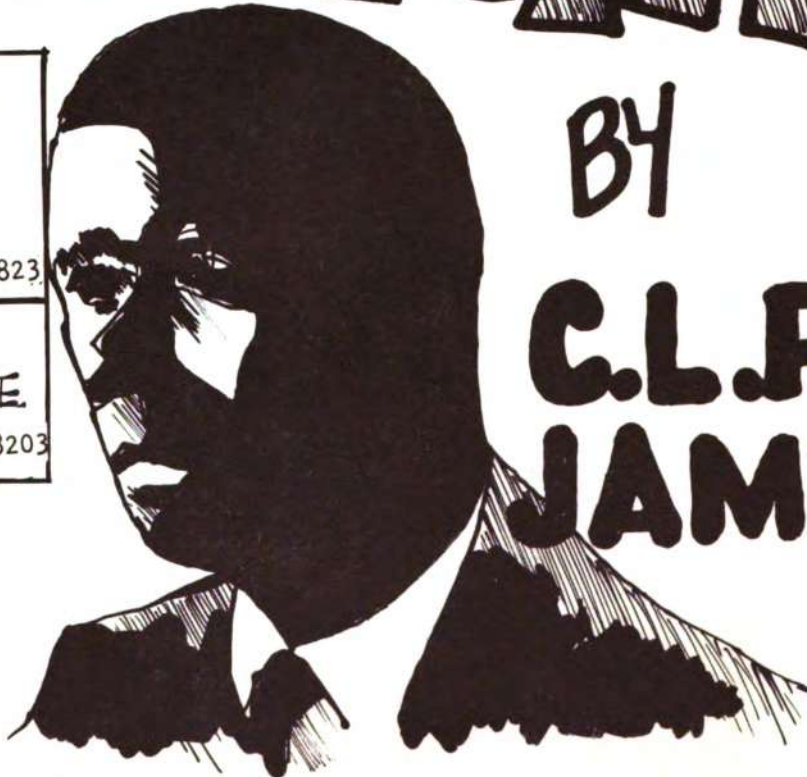
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THREE DISCUSSIONS IN 1939

SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE AMERICAN NEGROES

In April 1939 three discussions were held on the Negro question between Leon Trotsky and various comrades, on the basis of a document "Preliminary Notes on the Negro Question" submitted by Comrade George. The document and the discussion were published in an

internal bulletin of the Socialist Workers Party. We reproduce here the text of the April 4, 1939 discussion with a few minor omissions.

(Stenographer's note: Rough draft uncorrected by participants.)

Trotsky: Comrade George proposes that we discuss the Negro question in three parts, the first to be devoted to the programmatic question of self-determination for the Negroes.

George: (There was introduced some statistical material which was not in-

cluded in the report.) The basic proposals for the Negro question have already been distributed and here it is only necessary to deal with the question of self-determination. No one denies the Negroes' right to self-determination. It is a question of whether we should advocate it. In Africa and in the West Indies we advocate self-determination because a large majority of the people want it. In Africa the great masses of the people look upon self-determination as a restoration of their independence. In the West Indies, where we have a population similar in origin to the Negroes in America, there has been developing a national sentiment. The Negroes are a majority. Already we hear ideas, among the more advanced, of a West Indian nation and it is highly probable that, even let us suppose that the Negroes were offered full and free rights as citizens of the British Empire, they would probably oppose it and wish to be absolutely free and independent. . . It is progressive. It is a step in the right direction. We weaken the enemy. It puts the workers in a position to make great progress toward Socialism.

In America the situation is different. The Negro desperately wants to be an American citizen. He says, "I have been here from the beginning; I did all the work here in the early days. Jews, Poles, Italians, Swedes and others come here and have all the privileges. You say that some of the Germans are spies. I will never spy. I have nobody for whom to spy. And yet you exclude me from the army and from the rights of citizenship."

In Poland and Catalonia there is a tradition of language, literature and history to add to the economic and political oppression and to help weld the population in its progressive demand for self-determination. In America it is not so. Let us look at certain historic events in the development of the Negro in America.

Garvey raised the slogan "Back to Africa," but the Negroes who followed him did not believe for the most part that they were really going back to Africa. We know that those in the West Indies who were following him had not the slightest intention of going back to Africa, but they were glad to follow a militant leadership. And there is the case of the black woman who was pushed by a white woman in a street car and said to her, "You wait until Marcus gets

into power and all you people will be treated in the way you deserve." Obviously she was not thinking of Africa.

There was however this concentration on the Negroes' problems simply because the white workers in 1919 were not developed. There was no political organization of any power calling upon the blacks and the whites to unite. The Negroes were just back from the war—militant and having no offer of assistance, naturally concentrated on their own particular affairs.

In addition, however, we should note that in Chicago, where a race riot took place, the riot was deliberately provoked by the employers. Some time before it actually broke out, the black and white meatpackers had come and had paraded through the Negro quarter in Chicago with the black population cheering the whites in the same way that they cheered the black. For the capitalists this was a very dangerous thing and they set themselves to creating race friction. At one stage, motor cars, with white people in them, sped through the Negro quarter shooting at all whom they saw. The capitalist press played up the differences and thus set the stage and initiated the riots that took place for dividing the population and driving the Negro back upon himself.

During the period of the crisis there was a rebirth of these nationalist movements. There was a movement toward the 49th state and the movement concentrated around Liberia was developing. These movements assumed fairly large proportions up to at least 1934.

Then in 1936 came the organization of the CIO. John L. Lewis appointed a special Negro department. The New Deal made gestures to the Negroes. Blacks and whites fought together in various struggles. These nationalist movements have tended to disappear as the Negro saw the opportunity to fight with the organized workers and to gain something.

The danger of our advocating and injecting a policy of self-determination is that it is the surest way to divide and confuse the workers in the South. The white workers have centuries of prejudices to overcome, but at the present time many of them are working with the Negroes in the Southern Sharecroppers' Union and with the rise of the struggle there is every possibility that they will be able to overcome their age-long prejudices. But for us to propose

that the Negro have this black state for himself is asking too much from the white workers, especially when the Negro himself is not making the same demand. The slogans of "abolition of debts," "confiscation of large properties," etc., are quite sufficient to lead them both to fight together and on the basis of economic struggle to make a united fight for the abolition of social discrimination.

I therefore propose concretely: (1) That we are for the right of self-determination. (2) If some demand should arise among the Negroes for the right of self-determination we should support it. (3) We do not go out of our way to raise this slogan and place an unnecessary barrier between ourselves and socialism. (4) An investigation should be made into these movements; the one led by Garvey, the movement for the 49th state, the movement centering around Liberia. Find out what groups of the population supported them and on this basis come to some opinion as to how far there is any demand among the Negroes for self-determination.

Carlos: It seems to me that the problem can be divided into a number of different phases:

On the question of self-determination, I think it is clear that while we are for self-determination, even to the point of independence, it does not necessarily mean that we favor independence. What we are in favor of is that in a certain case, in a certain locality, they have the right to decide for themselves whether or not they should be independent or what particular governmental arrangements they should have with the majority of the country.

On the question of self-determination being necessarily reactionary — I believe that is a little far-fetched. Self-determination for various nations and groups is not opposed to a future socialist world. I think the question was handled in a polemic between Lenin and Piatakov from the point of view of Russia — of self-determination for the various peoples of Russia while still building a united country. There is not necessarily a contradiction between the two. The socialist society will not be built upon subjugated people, but from a free people. The reactionary or progressive character of self-determination is determined by whether or not it will advance the social revolution. That is the criterion.

As to the point which was made, that

we should not advocate a thing if the masses do not want it, that is not correct. We do not advocate things just because the masses want them. The basic question of socialism would come under that category. In the United States only a small percentage of the people want socialism, but still we advocate it. They may want war, but we oppose it. The questions we have to solve are as follows: Will it help in the destruction of American imperialism? If such a movement arises, will the people want it as the situation develops?

I take it that these nationalist movements of which you speak were carried on for years and the struggle was carried on by a handful of people in each case, but in the moment of social crisis the masses rallied to such movements. The same can possibly happen in connection with self-determination of the Negroes.

It seems to me that the so-called "black belt" is a super-exploited section of the American economy. It has all the characteristics of a subjugated section of an empire. It has all the extreme poverty and political inequality. It has the same financial structure — Wall Street exploits the petty-bourgeois elements and in turn the poor workers. It represents simply a field for investment and a source of profits. It has the characteristics of part of a colonial empire. It is also essentially a regional matter, for the whites have also been forced to feel a reaction against finance capital.

It would also be interesting to study the possible future development of the Negro question. We saw that when the Negroes were brought to the South they stayed there for many decades. When the war came, many emigrated to the North and there formed a part of the proletariat. That tendency can no longer operate. Capitalism is no longer expanding as it was before. As a matter of fact, during the depression many of them went back to the farms. It is possible that instead of a tendency to emigrate, there will now be a tendency for the Negro to stay in the South.

And there are other factors: The question of the cotton-picking machine which means that the workers will be thrown out of work by the thousands.

To get back to the question of self-determination. There is the possibility that in the midst of the social crisis the manifestation of radicalism takes a double phase: Along with the struggle for economic and social equality, there

may be found the demand for the control of their own state. Even in Russia, when the Bolsheviks came to power, the Polish people were not satisfied that this would mean the end of oppression for them. They demanded the right to control their own destiny in their own way. Such a development is possible in the South.

The other questions are important, but I do not think they are basic — that a nation must have its own language, culture and tradition. To a certain extent they have been developing a culture of their own. In any public library can be found books — fiction, anthologies, etc. — expressing a new racial feeling.

Now from the point of view of the United States, the withdrawal of the "black belt" means the weakening of American imperialism by the withdrawal of a big field of investment. That is a blow in favor of the American working class.

It seems to me that self-determination is not opposed to the struggle for social and political and economic equality. In the North such a struggle is immediate and the need is acute. In the North the slogan for economic and political equality is an agitational slogan — an immediate question. From the practical angle, no one suggests that we raise the slogan of self-determination as an agitational one, but as a programmatic one which may become agitational in the future.

There is another factor which might be called the psychological one. If the Negroes think that this is an attempt to segregate them, then it would be best to withhold the slogan until they are convinced that this is not the case.

Trotsky: I do not quite understand whether Comrade George proposes to eliminate the slogan of self-determination for the Negroes from our program, or is it that we do not say that we are ready to do everything possible for the self-determination of the Negroes if they want it themselves. It is a question for the party as a whole, if we eliminate it or not. We are ready to help them if they want it. As a party we can remain absolutely neutral on this. We cannot say it will be reactionary. It is not reactionary. We cannot tell them to set up a state because that will weaken imperialism and so will be good for us, the white workers. That would be against internationalism itself. We cannot say to them, "Stay here, even at the price of economic progress." We can say, "It

is for you to decide. If you wish to take a part of the country, it is all right, but we do not wish to make the decision for you."

I believe that the differences between the West Indies, Catalonia, Poland and the situation of the Negroes in the States are not so decisive. Rosa Luxemburg was against self-determination for Poland. She felt that it was reactionary and fantastic, as fantastic as demanding the right to fly. It shows that she did not possess the necessary historic imagination in this case. The landings and representatives of the Polish ruling class were also opposed to self-determination, for their own reasons.

Comrade George used three verbs: "support," "advocate," and "inject" the idea of self-determination. I do not propose for the party to advocate. I do not propose to inject, but only to proclaim our obligation to support the struggle for self-determination if the Negroes themselves want it. It is not a question of our Negro comrades. It is a question of 13 or 14 million Negroes. The majority of them are very backward. They are not very clear as to what they wish now and we must give them a credit for the future. They will decide then.

What you said about the Garvey movement is interesting — but it proves that we must be cautious and broad and not base ourselves upon the *status quo*. The black woman who said to the white woman, "Wait until Marcus is in power. We will know how to treat you then," was simply expressing her desire for her own state. The American Negroes gathered under the banner of the "Back to Africa" movement because it seemed a possible fulfillment of their wish for their own home. They did not want actually to go to Africa. It was the expression of a mystic desire for a home in which they would be free of the domination of the whites, in which they themselves could control their own fate. That also was a wish for self-determination. It was once expressed by some in a religious form and now it takes the form of a dream of an independent state. Here in the United States the whites are so powerful, so cruel and so rich that the poor Negro sharecropper does not dare to say, even to himself, that he will take a part of this country for himself. Garvey spoke in glowing terms, that it was beautiful and that here all would be wonderful. Any psychoanalyst will say that the real content of this dream was to have their own

home. It is not an argument in favor of injecting the idea. It is only an argument by which we can foresee the possibility of their giving their dream a more realistic form.

Under the condition that Japan invades the United States and the Negroes are called upon to fight — they may come to feel themselves threatened first from one side and then from the other, and finally ~~at~~ ^{at} last, may say, "We have nothing to do with either of you. We will have our own state."

But the black state could enter into a federation. If the American Negroes succeeded in creating their own state, I am sure that after a few years of the satisfaction and pride of independence, they would feel the need of entering into a federation. Even if Catalonia, which is a very industrialized and highly developed province, had realized its independence, it would have been just a step to federation.

The Jews in Germany and Austria wanted nothing more than to be the best German chauvinists. The most miserable of all was the Social Democrat, Austerlitz, the editor of the *Arbeiterzeitung*. But now, with the turn of events, Hitler does not permit them to be German chauvinists. Now many of them have become Zionists and are Palestinian nationalists and anti-German. I saw a disgusting picture recently of a Jewish actor, arriving in America, bending down to kiss the soil of the United States. Then they will get a few blows from the fascist fists in the United States and they will go to kiss the soil of Palestine.

There is another alternative to the successful revolutionary one. It is possible that fascism will come to power with its racial delirium and oppression and the reaction of the Negro will be toward racial independence. Fascism in the United States will be directed against the Jews and the Negroes, but against the Negroes particularly, and in a most terrible manner. A "privileged" condition will be created for the American white workers on the backs of the Negroes. The Negroes have done everything possible to become an integral part of the United States, in a psychological as well as a political sense. We must foresee that their reaction will show its power during the revolution. They will enter with a great distrust of the whites. We must remain neutral in the matter and hold the door open for both possibilities and promise our full sup-

port if they wish to create their own independent state.

So far as I am informed, it seems to me that the CP's attitude of making an imperative slogan of it was false. It was a case of the whites saying to the Negroes, "You must create a ghetto for yourselves." It is tactless and false and can only serve to repulse the Negroes. Their only interpretation can be that the whites want to be separated from them. Our Negro comrades of course have the right to participate more intimately in such developments. Our Negro comrades can say, "The Fourth International says that if it is our wish to be independent, it will help us in every way possible, but that the choice is ours. However, I, as a Negro member of the Fourth, hold a view that we must remain in the same state as the whites," and so on. He can participate in the formation of the political and racial ideology of the Negroes.

George: I am very glad that we have had this discussion, because I agree with you entirely. It seems to be the idea in America that we should advocate it as the CP has done. You seem to think that there is a greater possibility of the Negroes' wanting self-determination than I think is probable. But we have a hundred percent agreement on the idea which you have put forward that we should be neutral in the development.

Trotsky: It is the word "reactionary" that bothered me.

George: Let me quote from the document: "If he wanted self-determination, then however reactionary it might be in every other respect, it would be the business of the revolutionary party to raise that slogan." I consider the idea of separating as a step backward so far as a socialist society is concerned. If the white workers extend a hand to the Negro, he will not want self-determination.

Trotsky: It is too abstract, because the realization of this slogan can be reached only as the 13 or 14 million Negroes feel that the domination by the whites is terminated. To fight for the possibility of realizing an independent state is a sign of great moral and political awakening. It would be a tremendous revolutionary step. This ascendancy would immediately have the best economic consequences.

Carlos: I think that an analogy could be made in connection with the collectives and the distribution of large estates. One might consider the breaking up of

large estates into small plots as reactionary, but it is not necessarily so. But this question is up to the peasants whether they want to operate the estates collectively or individually. We advise the peasants, but we do not force them — it is up to them. Some would say that the breaking up of the large estates into small plots would be economically reactionary, but that is not so.

Trotsky: This was also the position of Rosa Luxemburg. She maintained that self-determination would be as reactionary as the breaking up of the large estates.

Carlos: The question of self-determination is also tied up with the question of land and must be looked upon not only in its political, but also in its economic manifestations.

SECOND DISCUSSION

A Negro Organization

April 5, 1939

Comrade George's manuscript read by the comrades prior to the meeting.

Trotsky: It is very important whether it is advisable and whether it is possible to create such an organization on our own initiative. Our movement is familiar with such forms as the party, the trade union, the educational organization, the cooperative; but this is a new type of organization which does not coincide with the traditional forms. We must consider the question from all sides as to whether it is advisable or not and what the form of our participation in this organization should be.

If another party had organized such a mass movement, we would surely participate as a fraction, providing that it included workers, poor petty bourgeois, poor farmers, and so on. We would enter to work for our party. But this is another thing. What is proposed here is that we take the initiative. Even without knowing the concrete situation in Negro circles in the United States, I believe we can admit that no one but our party is capable of forming such a movement on a realistic basis. Of course, the movements guided by the improvisatorial Negro leaders, as we saw them in the past, more or less expressed the unwillingness or the incapacity, the perfidy of all the existing parties.

None of the parties can assume such a task, because they are either pro-

Roosevelt imperialists or anti-Roosevelt imperialists. Such an organization of the oppressed Negroes signifies to them the weakening of "democracy" and of Big Business. This is also true of the Stalinists. Thus, the only party capable of beginning such an action is our own party.

But the question remains as to whether we can take upon ourselves the initiative of forming such an organization of Negroes as Negroes—not for the purpose of winning some elements to our party, but for the purpose of doing systematic educational work in order to elevate them politically. What should be the form—what the correct line of our policy? That is our question.

Carlos: As I have already said to Comrade George, the Communist Party organized the American Negro Labor Congress and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. Neither one had great success. Each were very poorly organized. I personally think that such an organization should be organized, but I think it should be done carefully and only after a study of all the factors involved and also of the causes of the breakdown of the two organizations mentioned. We must be sure of a mass base. To create a shadow of ourselves would serve only to discredit the idea and would benefit no one.

Trotsky: Who were the leaders of these organizations?

Carlos: Fort-Whiteman, Owen, Hayward, Ford, Patterson; Bob Minor was the leader of the CP's Negro work.

Trotsky: Who are the leaders now?

Curtiss: Most of them are in the CP, so far as I know. Some have dropped out of the movement.

Owen: Comrade George seems to have the idea that there is a good chance of building such an organization in the immediate future. I would like to have him elaborate.

George: I think that it should be a success because I met great numbers of Negroes and spoke to many Negro organizations. I brought forward the point of view of the Fourth International particularly on the war question and in every case there was great applause and a very enthusiastic reception of the ideas. Great numbers of these Negroes hated the Communist Party. . . . Up to the last convention, 79% of the Negro membership of the CP in New York State, 1,579 people, had left the CP.

I met many of the representative ones and they were now willing to form a Negro organization but did not wish to join the Fourth International. I had come to the conclusion that there was this possibility of a Negro organization before I left New York, but waited until I had gone through various towns in the States and got into contact with the Negro population there. And I found that the impressions that I had gathered in New York corresponded to those that I found on the tour. . . .

Trotsky: I have not formed an opinion about the question because I do not have enough information. What Comrade George tells us now is very important. It shows that we can have some elements for cooperation in this field, but at the same time, this information limits the immediate perspective of the organization. Who are those elements? The majority are Negro intellectuals, former Stalinist functionaries and sympathizers. We know that now large strata of intellectuals are turning back to the Stalinists in every country. We have observed such people who were very sympathetic to us: Eastman, Solow, Hook, and others. They were very sympathetic to us insofar as they considered us an object for their protection. They abandoned the Stalinists and looked for a new field of action, especially during the Moscow Trials, and so for the period, they were our friends. Now, since we have begun a vigorous campaign, they are hostile to us.

Many of them are returning to all sorts of vague things—humanism, etc. In France, Plisnier, the famous author, went back to God as well as to democracy. But when the white intellectuals went back to Roosevelt and democracy, the disappointed Negro intellectuals looked for a new field on the basis of the Negro question. Of course we must utilize them, but they are not a basis for a large mass movement. They can be used only when there is a clear program and good slogans.

The real question is whether or not it is possible to organize a mass movement. You know for such disappointed elements we created FIARI. It is not only for artists; anyone may enter. It is something of a moral or political "resort" for the disappointed intellectuals. . . . That is one thing; but you consider these Negro intellectuals for the directing of a mass movement.

Your project would create something

like a pre-political school. What determines the necessity? Two fundamental facts: that the large masses of the Negroes are backward and oppressed and this oppression is so strong that they must feel it every moment; that they feel it as Negroes. We must find the possibility of giving this feeling a political organizational expression. You may say that in Germany or in England we do not organize such semi-political, semi-trade-union, or semi-cultural organizations; we reply that we must adapt ourselves to the genuine Negro masses in the United States.

I will give you another example. We are terribly against the French turn. We abandoned our independence in order to penetrate into a centrist organization. You see that this Negro woman writes that they will not adhere to a Trotskyist organization. It is the result of the disappointments that they have had from the Stalinist organizations and also the propaganda of the Stalinists against us. They say, "We are already persecuted, just because we are Negroes. Now if we adhere to the Trotskyists, we will be even more oppressed."

Why did we penetrate into the Socialist Party and into the PSOP? If we were not the left wing, subject to the most severe blows, our powers of attraction would be ten or a hundred times greater; the people would come to us. But now we must penetrate into other organizations, keeping our heads on our shoulders and telling them that we are not as bad as they say.

There is a certain analogy with the Negroes. They were enslaved by the whites. They were liberated by the whites (so-called liberation). They were led and misled by the whites and they did not have their own political independence. They were in need of a pre-political activity as Negroes. Theoretically it seems to me absolutely clear that a special organization should be created for a special situation. The danger is only that it will become a game for the intellectuals. This organization can justify itself only by winning workers, share-croppers, and so on. If it does not succeed, we will have to confess that it was a failure. If it does succeed, we will be very happy because we will have a mass organization of Negroes. In that case I fully agree with Comrade George, except of course with some reservations on the question of self-deter-

mination, as was stated in our other discussion.

The task is not one of simply passing through the organization for a few weeks. It is a question of awakening the Negro masses. It does not exclude recruitment. I believe that success is quite possible; I am not sure. But it is clear for us all that our comrades in such an organization should be organized into a group. We should take the initiative. I believe it is necessary. This supposes the adaptation of our Transitional Program to the Negro problems in the States—a very carefully elaborated program with genuine civil rights, political rights, cultural interests, economic interests, and so on. It should be done.

I believe that there are two strata: the intellectuals and the masses. I believe that it is among the intellectuals that you find this opposition to self-determination. Why? Because they keep themselves separated from the masses, always with the desire to take on the Anglo-Saxon culture and of becoming an integral part of the Anglo-Saxon life. The majority are opportunists and reformists. Many of them continue to imagine that by the improvement of the mentality, and so on, the discrimination will disappear. That is why they are against any kind of sharp slogan.

George: They will maintain an intellectual interest because the Marxist analysis of Negro history and the problems of the day will give them an insight into the development of the Negroes which nothing else can. Also they are very much isolated from the white bourgeoisie and the social discrimination makes them therefore less easily corrupted, as, for example, the Negro intellectuals in the West Indies. Furthermore, they are a very small section of the Negro population and on the whole are far less dangerous than the corresponding section of the petty bourgeoisie in any other group or community. Also what has happened to the Jews in Germany has made the Negro intellectuals think twice. They will raise enough money to start the thing off. After that we do not have to bother in particular. Some, however, would maintain an intellectual interest and continue to give money.

THIRD DISCUSSION

Plans for the Negro Organization

George: The suggestions for the party work are in the documents and there is no need to go over them. I propose that they should be considered by the Political Committee immediately, together with Comrade Trotsky's idea for a special number of the monthly magazine on the Negro question. Urgently needed is a pamphlet written by someone familiar with the dealings of the CP on the Negro question and relating these to the Communist International and its degeneration. This would be an indispensable theoretical preliminary to the organization of the Negro movement and the party's own work among the Negroes. What is not needed is a general pamphlet dealing in a general way with the difficulties of the Negro and stating that in general black and white must unite. It would be another of a long list.

The Negro Organization:
Theoretical:

1. The study of Negro history and historic propaganda should be:

(a) Emancipation of the Negroes in San Domingo linked with the French Revolution.

(b) Emancipation of the slaves in the British Empire linked with the British Reform Bill of 1832.

(c) Emancipation of the Negroes in the United States linked with the Civil War in America.

This leads easily up to the conclusion that the emancipation of the Negro in the United States and abroad is linked with the emancipation of the white working class.

(d) The economic roots of racial discrimination.

(e) Fascism.

(f) The necessity for self-determination for Negro peoples in Africa and a similar policy in China, India, etc.

NB: The party should produce a theoretical study of the permanent revolution and the Negro peoples. This should be very different in style from the pamphlet previously suggested. It should not be a controversy with the CP, but a positive economic and political analysis showing that socialism is the only way out and definitely treating the theory on a high level. This however should come from the party.

2. A scrupulous analysis and exposure of the economic situation of the poorest Negroes and the way this retards not only the Negroes themselves, but the whole community. This, the bringing to the Negroes themselves a formulated account of their own conditions by means of simple diagrams, illustrations, charts, etc., is of the utmost importance. . . .

Carlos: About opening the discussion of socialism in the Bulletin, but excluding it, at least for a time, from the weekly paper: it seems to me that this is dangerous. This is falling into the idea that socialism is for intellectuals and the elite, but that the people on the bottom should be interested only in the common, day-to-day things. The method should be different in both places, but I think that there should at least be a drive in the direction of socialism in the weekly paper; not only from the point of view of daily matters, but also in what we call abstract discussion. It is a contradiction—the mass paper would have to take a clear position on the war question, but not on socialism. It is impossible to do the first without the second. It is a form of "economism." The workers should interest themselves in the everyday affairs, but not in the "theories" of socialism.

George: I see the difficulties and the contradiction, but there is something else that I cannot quite see—if we want to build a mass movement we cannot plunge into a discussion of socialism, because I think that it would cause more confusion than it would gain support. The Negro is not interested in socialism. He can be brought to socialism on the basis of his concrete experiences. Otherwise we would have to form a Negro socialist organization. I think we must put forth a minimal, concrete program. I agree that we should not put socialism too far in the future, but I am trying to avoid lengthy discussions on Marxism, the Second International, the Third International, etc.

Larkin: Would this organization throw its doors open to all classes of Negroes?

George: Yes, on the basis of its program. The bourgeois Negro can come in to help, but only on the basis of the organization's program.

Larkin: I cannot see how the Negro bourgeoisie can help the Negro proletariat fight for its economic advancement?

George: In our movement some of us are petty bourgeois. If a bourgeois

Negro is excluded from a university because of his color, this organization will probably mobilize the masses to fight for the rights of the bourgeois Negro student. Help for the organization will be mobilized on the basis of its program and we will not be able to exclude any Negro from it if he is willing to fight for that program.

Trotsky: I believe that the first question is the attitude of the Socialist Workers Party toward the Negroes. It is very disquieting to find that until now the party has done almost nothing in this field. It has not published a book, a pamphlet, leaflets, nor even any articles in the *New International*. Two comrades who compiled a book on the question, a serious work, remained isolated. That book is not published, nor are even quotations from it published. It is not a good sign. It is a bad sign. The characteristic thing about the American workers' parties, trade-union organizations, and so on, was their aristocratic character. It is the basis of opportunism. The skilled workers who feel set in the capitalist society help the bourgeois class to hold the Negroes and the unskilled workers down to a very low scale. Our party is not safe from degeneration if it remains a place for intellectuals, semi-intellectuals, skilled workers and Jewish workers who build a very close milieu which is almost isolated from the genuine masses. Under these conditions our party cannot develop—it will degenerate.

We must have this great danger before our eyes. Many times I have proposed that every member of the party, especially the intellectuals and semi-intellectuals, who, during a period of say six months, cannot each win a worker-member for the party, should be demoted to the position of sympathizer. We can say the same in the Negro question. The old organizations, beginning with the AFL, are the organizations of the workers' aristocracy. Our party is a part of the same milieu, not of the basic exploited masses of whom the Negroes are the most exploited. The fact that our party until now has not turned to the Negro question is a very disquieting symptom. If the workers' aristocracy is the basis of opportunism, one of the sources of adaptation to capitalist society, then the most oppressed and discriminated are the most dynamic milieu of the working class.

We must say to the conscious elements of the Negroes that they are

convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class. What serves as the brake on the higher strata? It is the privileges, the comforts that hinder them from becoming revolutionists. It does not exist for the Negroes. What can transform a certain stratum, make it more capable of courage and sacrifice? It is concentrated in the Negroes. If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this stratum, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie.

In the States we now have various contests. Competition to see who will sell the most papers, and so on. That is very good. But we must also establish a more serious competition—the recruiting of workers and especially of Negro workers. To a certain degree that is independent of the creation of the special Negro organization. . . .

I believe the party should undertake for the next six months organizational and political work. A six months' program can be elaborated for the Negro question. . . . After a half year's work we have a base for the Negro movement and we have a serious nucleus of Negroes and whites working together on this plan. It is a question of the vitality of the party. It is an important question. It is a question of whether the party is to be transformed into a sect or if it is capable of finding its way to the most oppressed part of the working class.

Proposals taken up point by point:

1. Pamphlet on the Negro question and the Negroes in the CP, relating it to the degeneration of the Kremlin. . .

Trotsky: Good. And also would it not be well perhaps to mimeograph this book,* or parts of it, and send it together with other material on the question to the various sections of the party for discussion?

2. A Negro number of the magazine.

Trotsky: I believe that it is absolutely necessary.

Owen: It seems to me that there is a danger of getting out the Negro number before we have a sufficient Negro organization to assure its distribution.

George: It is not intended primarily for the Negroes. It is intended for the party itself and for the other readers

* A historical and statistical study privately prepared and sent to Comrade Trotsky for his views.

of the theoretical magazine.

3. The use of the history of the Negroes themselves in educating them.

General agreement.

4. A study of the permanent revolution and the Negro question.

General agreement.

5. The question of socialism—whether to bring it in through the paper or through the Bulletin.

Trotsky: I do not believe that we can begin with the exclusion of socialism from the organization. You propose a very large, somewhat heterogeneous organization, which will also accept religious people. That would signify that if a Negro worker, or farmer, or merchant, makes a speech in the organization to the effect that the only salvation for the Negroes is in the church, we will be too tolerant to expel him and at the same time so wise that we will not let him speak in favor of religion, but we will not speak in favor of socialism. If we understand the character of this milieu, we will adapt the presentation of our ideas to it. We will be cautious; but to tie our hands in advance—to say that we will not introduce the question of socialism because it is an abstract matter—that is not possible. It is one thing to be very attentive to the concrete questions of Negro life and to oppose socialism to capitalism in these questions. It is one thing to accept a heterogeneous group and to work in it, and another to be absorbed by it.

George: I quite agree with what you say. What I am afraid of is the putting forth of an abstract socialism. You will recall that I said that the leading group must clearly understand what it is doing and where it is going. But the socialist education of the masses should arise from the day-to-day questions. I am only anxious to prevent the thing's developing into an endless discussion. The discussion should be free and thorough in the theoretical organ.

In regard to the question of socialism in the agitational organ, it is my view that the organization should definitely establish itself as doing the day-to-day work of the Negroes in such a way that the masses of Negroes can take part in it before involving itself in discussions about socialism. While it is clear that an individual can raise whatever points he wishes and point out his solution of the Negro problems, yet the question is whether those who are guiding the organization as a whole should begin by speaking in the name of socialism. I think not. It is important to remember that those who take the

initiative should have some common agreement as to the fundamentals of politics today, otherwise there will be great trouble as the organization develops. But although these, as individuals, are entitled to put forward their particular point of view in the general discussion, yet the issue is whether they should speak as a body as socialists from the very beginning, and my personal view is no.

Trotsky: In the theoretical organ you can have the retical discussion, and in the mass organ you can have a mass political discussion. You say that they are contaminated by the capitalist propaganda. Say to them: "You don't believe in socialism. But you will see that in the fighting, the member of the Fourth International will not only be with you, but possibly the most militant." I would even go so far as to have every one of our speakers end his speech by saying, "My name is the Fourth International!" They will come to see that we are the fighters, while the person who preaches religion in the hall, in the critical moment will go to the church instead of to the battlefield.

6. The organizing groups and individuals of the new organization must be in complete agreement on the war question.

Trotsky: Yes, it is the most important and the most difficult question. The program must be very modest, but at the same time it must leave to everyone his freedom of expression in his speeches, and so on; the program must not be the condition of our activity, but only our common obligation. Everyone must have the right to go further, but everyone is obliged to defend the minimum. We will see how this minimum will be crystallized as we go along in the opening steps.

7. A campaign in some industry in behalf of the Negroes.

Trotsky: That is important. It will bring a conflict with some white workers who will not want it. It is a shift from the most aristocratic workers' elements to the lowest elements. We attracted to ourselves some of the higher strata of the intellectuals when they felt that we needed protection: Dewey, LaFollette, etc. Now that we are undertaking serious work, they are leaving us. I believe that we will lose two or three more strata and go more deeply into the masses. This will be the touchstone.

8. Housing and rent campaign.

Trotsky: It is absolutely necessary.

Carson: It also works in very well with our traditional demands.

9. The demonstration in the restaurant.

Trotsky: Yes, and give it an even more militant character. There could be a picket line outside to attract attention and explain something of what is going on.

Owen: That is a point that I wished to present. Some years ago I was living in Los Angeles near a Negro section—one set aside from the others. The Negroes there were more prosperous. I inquired as to their work and was told by the Negroes themselves that they were better off because they were servants—many of them in the houses of the movie colony. I was surprised to find the servants in the higher strata. This colony of Negroes was not small—it consisted of several thousand people.

Trotsky: Yes, I believe it is very important; but I believe that there is the first a priori consideration that many of these Negroes are servants for rich people and are demoralized and have been transformed into moral lackeys. But there are others, a larger stratum, and the question is to win those who are not so privileged.

George: That is true. But if you are serious, it is not difficult to get to the Negro masses. They live together and they feel together. This stratum of privileged Negroes is smaller than any other privileged stratum. The whites treat them with such contempt that in spite of themselves they are closer to the other Negroes than you would think.

11. Mobilize the Negroes against fascism.

General agreement.

12. The relationship of the Negroes to the Republican and Democratic parties.

Trotsky: How many Negroes are there in Congress? One. There are 440 members in the House of Representatives and 96 in the Senate. Then if the Negroes have almost 10% of the population, they are entitled to 50 members, but they have only one. It is a clear picture of political inequality. We can often oppose a Negro candidate to a white candidate. This Negro organization can always say, "We want a Negro who knows our problems." It can have important consequences.

Owen: It seems to me that Comrade George has ignored a very important part of our program—the labor party.

George: The Negro section wants to put up a Negro candidate. We tell them they must not stand just as Negroes, but they must have a program suitable

to the masses of poor Negroes. They are not stupid and they can understand that and it is to be encouraged. The white workers put up a labor candidate in another section. Then we say to the Negroes in the white section, "Support that candidate, because his demands are good workers' demands." And we say to the white workers in the Negro area, "You should support the Negro candidate, because although he is a Negro you will notice that his demands are good for the whole working class." This means that the Negroes have the satisfaction of having their own candidates in areas where they predominate and at the same time we build labor solidarity. It fits into the labor party program.

Carson: Isn't that coming close to the People's Front, to vote for a Negro just because he is a Negro?

George: This organization has a program. When the Democrats put up a Negro candidate, we say, "Not at all. It must be a candidate with a program we can support."

Trotsky: It is a question of another organization for which we are not responsible, just as they are not responsible for us. If this organization puts up a certain candidate, and we find as a party that we must put up our own candidate in opposition, we have the full right to do so. If we are weak and cannot get the organization to choose a revolutionist, and they choose a Negro Democrat, we might even withdraw our candidate with a concrete declaration that we abstain from fighting, not the Democrat, but the Negro. We consider that the Negro's candidacy as opposed to the white's candidacy, even if both are of the same party, is an important factor in the struggle of the Negroes for their equality; and in this case we can critically support them. I believe that it can be done in certain instances.

13. A Negro from South or West Africa to tour the States.

Trotsky: What will he teach?

George: I have in mind several young Negroes, any one of whom can give a clear anti-imperialist, anti-war picture. I think it would be very important in building up an understanding of internationalism.

14. Submit documents and plans to the Political Committee.

General agreement.

George: I agree with your attitude on the party work in connection with the Negroes. They are a tremendous force and they will dominate the whole of the Southern states. If the party gets a hold here, the revolution is won in America. Nothing can stop it.

The Revolutionary Answer To the Negro Problem in U. S.

By J. Meyer

The report published below was delivered by Comrade Meyer in presenting the draft resolution on the Negro Question to the Thirteenth Convention of the Socialist Workers Party, July 1-5, 1943. — Ed.

* * *

Comrades, our party, with this Resolution, is preparing to make a powerful entry into a section of the class struggle that is now raging in the United States. The decay of capitalism on a world scale, the rise of the CIO in the United States, and the struggle of the Negro people, have precipitated a tremendous battle for the minds of the Negro people and for the minds of the population in the U. S. as a whole over the Negro question. During the last few years certain sections of the bourgeoisie, recognizing the importance of this question, have made a powerful

theoretical demonstration of their position, which has appeared in *The American Dilemma* by Gunnar Myrdal, a publication that took a quarter of a million dollars to produce. Certain sections of the sentimental petty bourgeoisie have produced their spokesmen, one of whom is Lillian Smith. That has produced some very strange fruit, which however has resulted in a book which has sold some half a million copies over the last year or two. The Negro petty bourgeoisie, radical and concerned with communism, has also made its bid in the person of Richard Wright, whose books have sold over a million copies. When books on such a controversial question as the Negro question reach the stage of selling half a million copies it means that they have left the sphere of literature and have now reached the sphere of politics.

President Truman has made his literary and theoretical declaration in the report of the Civil Rights Committee, and he has also made his political declaration in his recommendations to Congress to accept the proposals of that committee. The Communist Party is doing its hardest in the same field and has declared at one of its recent plenums that the test and touchstone of the work of the party, of its maturity in the United States, is the work it has done and does on the Negro question.

It is into this battle that we now propose to enter, in a more rounded, more consistent, and more militant form than we have entered in the past. That is the first significance of this Resolution. It is not only a guide to the actions of the party; its mere presentation to the public will mean that the policies of genuine Bolshevism are now ready to compete fully armed in the tremendous battle that is raging over the Negro question in the United States.

Now what is it that we have to say that is new? In one sense—and I quote—"nothing is new." What we say in this Resolution has been "implicit," it has been an "underlying conception" of our activity in the past. It has appeared in many discussions by Trotsky and in various articles and speeches. But nevertheless it has not appeared in such consistent and rounded and finished form as we propose to do in this Resolution.

We can compare what we have to say that is new, in that sense, by comparing it to previous positions on the Negro question in the socialist movement. The proletariat, as we know, must lead the struggles of all the oppressed and all those who are persecuted by capitalism. But this has been interpreted in the past—and by some very good socialists too—in the following sense: The independent struggles of the Negro people have not got much more than an episodic value, and as a matter of fact, can constitute a great danger not only to the Negroes themselves, but to the organized labor movement. The real leadership of the Negro struggle must rest in the hands of organized labor and of the Marxist party. Without that the Negro struggle is not only weak, but is likely to cause difficulties for the Negroes and dangers to organized labor. This, as I say, is the position held by many socialists in the past. Some great socialists in the United States have been associated with this attitude.

Our Standpoint

We, on the other hand, say something entirely different.

We say, number 1, that the Negro struggle, the independent Negro struggle, has a vitality and a validity of its own; that it has deep historic roots in the past of America and in present struggles; it has an organic political perspective, along which it is traveling, to one degree or another, and everything shows that at the present time it is traveling with great speed and vigor.

We say, number 2, that this independent Negro movement is able to intervene with terrific force upon the general social and political life of the nation, despite the fact that it is waged under the banner of democratic rights,

and is not led necessarily either by the organized labor movement or the Marxist party.

We say, number 3, and this is the most important, that it is able to exercise a powerful influence upon the revolutionary proletariat, that it has got a great contribution to make to the development of the proletariat in the United States, and that it is in itself a constituent part of the struggle for socialism.

In this way we challenge directly any attempt to subordinate or to push to the rear the social and political significance of the independent Negro struggle for democratic rights. That is our position. It was the position of Lenin thirty years ago. It was the position of Trotsky which he fought for during many years. It has been concretized by the general class struggle in the United States, and the tremendous struggles of the Negro people. It has been sharpened and refined by political controversy in our movement and, best of all, it has had the benefit of three or four years of practical application in the Negro struggle and in the class struggle by the Socialist Workers Party during the past few years.

Now if this position has reached the stage where we can put it forward in the shape that we propose, that means that to understand it, should be by now simpler than before; and by merely observing the Negro question, the Negro people rather, the struggles they have carried on, their ideas, we are able to see the roots of this position in a way that was difficult to see ten or even fifteen years ago. The Negro people, we say, on the basis of their own experiences, approach the conclusions of Marxism. And I will have briefly to illustrate this as has been shown in the Resolution.

First of all, on the question of imperialist war. The Negro people do not believe that the last two wars and the one that may overtake us, are a result of the need to struggle for democracy, for freedom of the persecuted peoples by the American bourgeoisie. They cannot believe that.

On the question of the state, what Negro, particularly below the Mason-Dixon line, believes that the bourgeois state is a state above all classes, serving the needs of all the people? They may not formulate their belief in Marxist terms, but their experience drives them to reject this shibboleth of bourgeois democracy.

On the question of what is called the democratic process, the Negroes do not believe that grievances, difficulties of sections of the population, are solved by discussions, by voting, by telegrams to Congress, by what is known as the "American way."

Finally, on the question of political action. The American bourgeoisie preaches that Providence in its divine wisdom has decreed that there should be two political parties in the United States, not one, not three, not four, just two; and also in its kindness, Providence has shown that these two parties should be one, the Democratic Party and the other, the Republican, to last from now until the end of time.

That is being challenged by increasing numbers of people in the United States. But the Negroes more than

ever have shown — and any knowledge of their press and their activities tells us — that they are willing to make the break completely with that conception.

Recent Negro Struggles

Such are the ideas that are moving among the Negro people. And it is not only a question of approaching the conclusions of Marxism, in their own instinctive way, under the banner of democratic rights. We have seen during the last ten or fifteen years that the Negro people have carried on tremendous struggles, significant in themselves but still more significant as a portent of the possibilities of things to come. We saw them riot and break out in Harlem in 1935. We saw it again in 1940 when the "March On Washington" exploded and shook the American bourgeoisie, particularly the Roosevelt administration. We saw it again in Detroit and in various other towns in 1943 and later. We have seen it explode recently in the tremendous challenge and defiance of the Randolph-Reynolds movement. And, finally and most important, at the time when the American bourgeoisie presented its most powerful organization and clamped its strength upon the American people during the war by means of the American bourgeois military machine, we saw individual Negroes, groups of Negroes, masses of Negroes, hurl themselves at that machine with a reckless disregard for their personal safety and their personal situation that shows the tremendous revolutionary potentialities that are simmering among the Negro people.

So that our theoretical position, our analysis of the situation among the Negro people — what they are *thinking* — has got evidence in what the Negro people have been *doing*.

Now we can draw from this one of the first of the important conclusions. The Randolph-Reynolds movement, the mere declaration by Reynolds and Randolph, caused a tremendous confusion in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. It disrupted the propaganda for mobilizing the nation to go into the war. You have seen also that it has seriously disrupted the passage of the important draft bill in Congress. And if not what Randolph *says* and what Randolph *proposes* but if what Randolph *expresses* can find the organizational expression which we hope it will find, then it is certain that under the banner of Negro democratic rights, asking only for an army that will not practice segregation, the Negro people will have a terrific impact, national and international, upon the preparations of the American bourgeoisie for the war. It is impossible to deny this.

Secondly. If we look at what took place after the "March on Washington" and if we look again at what took place in Harlem after the 1943 outbreak, we shall see the Negro people, by their independent mass activity and by their determination to gain their rights, have been striking terrific blows at one particular point in the Democratic Party, the link between the organized labor movement and the Southern reactionaries.

When the history of the Democratic Party comes to be written, and particularly the history of the *break-up*

of the Democratic Party, it will be seen that the independent Negro struggle, the vigor with which the Negroes are protesting, their determination to gain their rights under American bourgeois democracy, has been one of the most powerful means of breaking that unnatural alliance between the most advanced section of the population — the organized labor movement — and the Southern reactionaries.

Already a Powerful Factor

Under the banner of Negro democratic rights, struggling purely for what seem to be limited objectives, the independent Negro movement is contributing to the release of the proletariat from the stranglehold of the Democratic Party and giving it an opportunity and a possibility to emerge as an independent political force.

This is our basic position. It can be concretized and will have to be developed. But it is clear that we cannot look upon the independent Negro movement as episodic or of little importance. It is a part of the political life of the country and, more important, of fundamental importance for the political development of the proletariat.

But when that is said—we have little doubt that it will be accepted — there arises for us a very important problem.

As Bolsheviks we are jealous, not only theoretically but practically, of the primary role of the organized labor movement in all fundamental struggles against capitalism. That is why for many years in the past this position on the Negro question has had some difficulty in finding itself thoroughly accepted, particularly in the revolutionary movement, because there is this difficulty—what is the relation between this movement and the primary role of the proletariat — particularly because so many Negroes, and the most disciplined, hardened, trained, highly developed sections of the Negroes, are today in the organized labor movement.

Fundamental Propositions

Now let us note first that the resolution does not falter in one single degree on fundamental propositions. It states, for instance, that the Negro struggles in the South are not merely a question of struggles of Negroes, important as those are. It is a question of the reorganization of the whole agricultural system in the United States, and therefore a matter for the proletarian revolution and the reorganization of society on socialist foundations.

Secondly, we say in the South that, although the embryonic unity of whites and Negroes in the labor movement may seem small and there are difficulties in the unions, yet such is the decay of Southern society and such the fundamental significance of the proletariat, particularly when organized in labor unions, that this small movement is bound to play the decisive part in the revolutionary struggles that are inevitable.

Thirdly, the Resolution pays great care and attention to the fact that there are one and a quarter million Negroes, at least, in the organized labor movement.

On these fundamental positions we do not move one inch. Not only do we not move, we strengthen them.

But there still remains the question: what is the relationship of the independent Negro mass movement to the organized labor movement? And here we come immediately to what has been and will be a very puzzling feature unless we have our basic position clear.

Those who believe that the Negro question is in reality, purely and simply, or to a decisive extent, merely a class question, these pointed with glee to the tremendous growth of the Negro personnel in the organized labor movement. It grew in a few years from three hundred thousand to one million; it is now one and a half million. But to their surprise, instead of this lessening and weakening the struggle of the independent Negro movement, *the more the Negroes went into the labor movement, the more capitalism incorporated them into industry, the more they were accepted in the union movement, it is during that period, since 1940, that the independent mass movement has broken out with a force greater than it has ever shown before*

That is the problem that we have to face, that we have to grasp. We cannot move forward and we cannot explain ourselves unless we have it clearly. And I know there is difficulty with it. I intend to spend some time on it, because if that is settled, all is settled. The other difficulties are incidental. If, however, this one is not clear, then we shall continually be facing difficulties which we shall doubtless solve in time, but which it must be the function of *this* Convention to try to get rid of at once.

Now Lenin has handled this problem and in the Resolution we have quoted him. He says that the dialectic of history is such that small independent nations, small nationalities, which are powerless—get the word, please—*powerless*, in the struggle against imperialism, *nevertheless* can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which can bring on to the scene the real power against imperialism—the socialist proletariat.

Let me repeat it please. Small groups, nations, nationalities themselves powerless against imperialism, nevertheless can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which will bring on to the scene the real fundamental force against capitalism—the socialist proletariat.

In other words, as so often happens from the Marxist point of view, from the point of view of the dialectic, this question of the *leadership* is very complicated.

What Lenin is saying is that although the fundamental force is the proletariat, although these groups are powerless, although the proletariat has got to lead them, it does not by any means follow that they cannot do anything until the proletariat actually comes forward to lead them. *He says exactly the opposite is the case.*

They, by their agitation, resistance and the political developments that they can initiate, can be the means whereby the proletariat is brought on to the scene.

Not always, and every time not the sole means, but one of the means. That is what we have to get clear.

Our Task

Now it is very well to see it from the point of view of Marxism which developed these ideas upon the basis

of European and Oriental experiences. Lenin and Trotsky applied this principle to the Negro question in the United States. What we have to do is to make it concrete, and one of the best means of doing so is to dig into the history of the Negro people in the United States, and to see the relationship that has developed between them and revolutionary elements in past revolutionary struggles.

For us the center must be the Civil War in the United States and I intend briefly now to make some sharp conclusions and see if they can help us arrive at a clearer perspective. Not for historical knowledge, but to watch the movement as it develops before us, helping us to arrive at a clearer perspective as to this difficult relationship between the independent Negro movement and the revolutionary proletariat. The Civil War was a conflict between the revolutionary bourgeoisie and the Southern plantocracy. That we know. That conflict was inevitable.

But for twenty to twenty-five years before the Civil War actually broke out, the masses of the Negroes in the South, through the underground railroad, through revolts, as Aptheker has told us, and by the tremendous support and impetus that they gave to the revolutionary elements among the Abolitionists, absolutely prevented the reactionary bourgeoisie — (revolutionary later) — absolutely prevented the bourgeoisie and the plantocracy from coming to terms as they wanted to do.

In 1850 these two made a great attempt at a compromise. What broke that compromise? It was the Fugitive Slave Act. They could prevent everything else for the time being, but they could not prevent the slaves from coming, and the revolutionaries in the North from assisting them. So that we find that here in the history of the United States such is the situation of the masses of the Negro people and their readiness to revolt at the slightest opportunity, that as far back as the Civil War, in relation to the American bourgeoisie, they formed a force which *initiated and stimulated and acted as a ferment.*

That is point number one.

Point number two. The Civil War takes its course as it is bound to do. Many Negroes and their leaders make an attempt to get incorporated into the Republican Party and to get their cause embraced by the bourgeoisie. And what happens? The bourgeoisie refuses. It doesn't want to have Negroes emancipated.

Point number three. As the struggle develops, such is the situation of the Negroes in the United States, that the emancipation of the slaves becomes an *absolute necessity*, politically, organizationally and from a military point of view.

The Negroes are incorporated into the battle against the South: Not only are they incorporated here, but later they are incorporated also into the military government which smashes down the remnants of resistance in the Southern states.

But, when this is done, the Negroes are deserted by the bourgeoisie, and there falls upon them a very terrible repression.

That is the course of development in the central episode of American history.

Historical Anticipations

Now if it is so in the Civil War, we have the right to look to see what happened in the War of Independence. It is likely—it is not always certain—but it is *likely* that we shall see there some *anticipations* of the logical development which appeared in the Civil War. They are there.

The Negroes begin by demanding their rights. They say if you are asking that the British free you, then we should have our rights and, furthermore, slavery should be abolished. The American bourgeoisie didn't react very well to that. The Negroes insisted—those Negroes who were in the North—insisted that they should be allowed to join the Army of Independence. They were refused.

But later Washington found that it was imperative to have them, and four thousand of them fought among the thirty thousand soldiers of Washington. They gained certain rights after independence was achieved. Then sections of the bourgeoisie who were with them deserted them. And the Negro movement collapsed.

We see exactly the same thing but more intensified in the Populist movement. There is a powerful movement of one and one quarter of a million Negroes in the South (the Southern Tenant Farmers Association). They joined the Populist movement and were in the extreme left wing of this movement, when Populism was discussing whether it should go on with the Democratic Party or make the campaign as a third party. The Negroes voted for the third party and for all the most radical planks in the platform.

They fought with the Populist movement. But when Populism was defeated, there fell upon the Negroes between 1896 and about 1910 the desperate, legalized repression and persecution of the Southern states.

Some of us think it is fairly clear that the Garvey movement came and looked to Africa because there was no proletarian movement in the United States to give it a lead, to do for this great eruption of the Negroes what the Civil War and the Populist movement had done for the insurgent Negroes of those days.

And now what can we see today? Today the Negroes in the United States are organized as never before. There are more than half a million in the NAACP and, in addition to that, there are all sorts of Negro groups and organizations — the churches in particular — *every single one of which is dominated by the idea that each organization must in some manner or another contribute to the emancipation of the Negroes from capitalist humiliation and from capitalist oppression.* So that the independent Negro movement that we see today and which we see growing before our eyes—is nothing strange. It is nothing new. *It is something that has always appeared in the American movement at the first serious sign of social crisis.*

A Sign of the Times

It represents a climax to the Negro movements that we have seen in the past. From what we have seen in the past, we would expect it to have its face turned towards the labor movement. And not only from a historical point

of view but today concrete experience tells us that the masses of the Negro people today look upon the CIO with a respect and consideration that they give to no other social or political force in the country. To anyone who knows the Negro people, who reads their press—and I am not speaking here specially of the Negro workers—it you watch the Negro petty bourgeoisie — reactionary, reformist types as some of them are, in all their propaganda, in all their agitation — whenever they are in any difficulties, you can see them leaning toward the labor movement. As for the masses of Negroes, they are increasingly pro-labor every day. So that it is not only Marxist ideas; it is not only a question of Bolshevik-Marxist analysis. It is not only a question of the history of Negroes in the U. S.

The actual concrete facts before us show us, and anyone who wants to see, this important conclusion, that the Negro movement logically and historically and concretely is headed for the proletariat. That is the road it has always taken in the past, the road to the revolutionary forces. Today the proletariat is that force. And if these ideas that we have traced in American revolutionary crises have shown some power in the past, such is the state of the class struggle today, such the antagonisms between bourgeoisie and proletariat, such, too, the impetus of the Negro movements toward the proletariat, that it is clear that the Negro movement toward the revolutionary forces, which we have traced in the past is *stronger today than ever before.* So that we can look upon this Negro movement not only for what it has been and what it has been able to do — we are able to know as Marxists by our own theory and our examination of American history that it is headed for the proletarian movement, that it must go there. There is nowhere else for it to go.

And further we can see that if it doesn't go there, the difficulties that the Negroes have suffered in the past when they were deserted by the revolutionary forces, those will be ten, one hundred, ten thousand times as great as in the past. The independent Negro movement, which is boiling and moving, must find its way to the proletariat. If the proletariat is not able to support it, the repression of past times when the revolutionary forces failed the Negroes will be infinitely, I repeat, infinitely, more terrible today.

Therefore our consideration of the independent Negro movement does not lessen the significance of the proletarian—the essentially proletarian—leadership. Not at all. It includes it. We are able to see that the mere existence of the CIO, its mere existence, despite the fakery of the labor leadership on the Negro question, as on all other questions, is a protection and a stimulus to the Negroes.

Penalty of Defeat

We are able to see and I will show in a minute that the Negroes are able by their activity to draw the revolutionary elements and more powerful elements in the proletariat to their side. We are coming to that. But we have to draw and emphasize again and again this important conclusion. It—and we have to take these theoretical

questions into consideration—if the proletariat is defeated, if the CIO is destroyed, then there will fall upon the Negro people in the U. S. such a repression, such a persecution, comparable to nothing that they have seen in the past. We have seen in Germany and elsewhere the barbarism that capitalism is capable of in its death agony. The Negro people in the U.S. offer a similar opportunity to the American bourgeoisie. The American bourgeoisie have shown their understanding of the opportunity the Negro question gives them to disrupt and to attempt to corrupt and destroy the labor movement.

But the development of capitalism itself has not only given the independent Negro movement this fundamental and sharp relation with the proletariat. It has created Negro proletarians and placed them as proletarians in what were once the most oppressed and exploited masses. But in auto, steel, and coal, for example, these proletarians have now become the vanguard of the workers' struggle and have brought a substantial number of Negroes to a position of primacy in the struggle against capitalism. The backwardness and humiliation of the Negroes that shoved them into these industries, is the very thing which today is bringing them forward, and they are in the very vanguard of the proletarian movement from the very nature of the proletarian struggle itself. Now, how does this complicated interrelationship, this "Leninist" interrelationship express itself? Henry Ford could write a very good thesis on that if he were so inclined.

The Ford Experience

The Negroes in the Ford plant were incorporated by Ford: first of all he wanted them for the hard, rough work. I am also informed by the comrades from Detroit he was very anxious to play a paternalistic role with the Negro petty bourgeoisie. He wanted to show them that he was not the person that these people said he was—look! he was giving Negroes opportunities in his plant.

Number 3, he was able thus to create divisions between whites and Negroes that allowed him to pursue his anti-union, reactionary way.

What has happened within the last few years that is changed? The mass of the Negroes in the River Rouge plant, I am told, are one of the most powerful sections of the *Detroit proletariat*. They are leaders in the proletarian struggle, not the stooges Ford intended them to be.

Not only that, they act as leaders not only in the labor movement as a whole but in the Negro community. It is what they say that is decisive there. Which is very sad for Henry. And the Negro petty bourgeois have *followed the proletariat*. They are now going along with the labor movement; they have left Ford too. It is said that he has recognized it at last and that he is not going to employ any more Negroes. He thinks he will do better with women. But they will disappoint him too.

The Case of Negro Women

Now there we have a movement, essentially proletarian, proletarianized Negroes, Negroes who are part of the organized labor movement and who dominate the Negro community.

Here it would *seem* is a place where the independent Negro movement should play a strictly subordinate role. But history takes its own course.

Let us look at what happened in Detroit in 1943

The struggle *began over the Sojourner Truth housing development* for Negroes. Isn't that so? It continued by the activity and hostility of the Negro people to being pushed around, and finally the general dissatisfaction burst out in the rioting.

At this stage the organized labor movement had to intervene; absolutely had to intervene. In other words, owing to the activity and conflict of the Negro people, the proletariat begins to get some education in its responsibilities not only for the demands and needs of labor, but for other sections of the population. But it didn't stay there, it didn't stay there.

When the municipal election came up, the Negroes wanted to run a candidate. They put up a Negro clergyman (one of those petty bourgeois whom Ford thought he had won over).

Now the revolution sometimes needs the whip of the counter-revolution. Frankenstein, then a CIO leader, was running for Mayor. Mayor Jeffreys and the rest thought they saw an opportunity to discredit Frankenstein's campaign by calling him a Negro lover and flooding Detroit with information that the victory of Frankenstein would mean that whites and Negroes would have to live in the same houses, and so on.

Naturally Frankenstein, (in great difficulty, and sweating no doubt), had to play a peculiar course. He had to remember that the Negroes played a certain role in the labor movement, that he couldn't afford to antagonize them, that on the whole he had to be careful not to antagonize Negroes in general, and had to preserve the honor of the labor movement; and yet he did not want to give the impression that he was a Negro lover. It was difficult but that is his difficulty; not ours.

What we have to look at is what happened. *In spite of themselves* the Negro masses found themselves pushed up against the organized labor movement, and though with a lot of confusion, the organized labor movement found itself *compelled to take over, so to speak, the leadership of the Negro community*. It was very confused and hesitant; but the general line was clear.

Most remarkable of all, *this Negro clergyman in the Negro community ran on the CIO ticket*. This made Jeffreys say that the Negroes and the labor unions were planning to run Detroit. He was a little bit premature but nevertheless it showed that *he* could recognize these possibilities.

Beginnings of a Great Alliance

The movement has fallen off since, but we have seen enough to know this: *That the struggle which began by Negro militants in the Negro community fighting purely for Negro rights—a simple matter of housing, and resisting people who pushed them around, resulted ultimately in:—let us put it mildly—the beginnings of an alliance, a*

political alliance between the Negro community and the organized labor movement in Detroit.

I give you this as an example of how complicated the relationships can be between the Negro community and the organized labor movement even in a city where the Negro community is dominated by proletarians of a very high quality who have their *first* allegiance to the organized labor movement.

If we can reflect on that, if we can constantly be on the alert to see these possibilities, the leadership, the fundamental leadership that organized labor can give to the Negro movement, the basic dependence of the Negro movement upon organized labor; but we can at the same time see the kind of leadership, the kind of stimulus, the kind of impetus, the kind of anticipation that *the Negro movement can give* to organized labor, then we shall be able to deal with all problems, not only the general problems outside, but the specific problems that the party will have to face.

Now if all this is true from a theoretical point of view, and if it is true also from a historical point of view, and if we are able to see the signs of it — not too clearly but nevertheless sufficiently for us to draw some tentative conclusions in Detroit — then we, as a party, having participated in Negro work, having taken part in it for the last three or four years, should be able to see this general movement reflected in party life and in the activity of the party. We have been able to see it.

What fundamentally has been the history of the party as I have seen it, as it has been explained, as we have heard it in discussion? The party in 1946 embarked on the task, consciously and deliberately to transform itself from a propaganda group (that is to say, a group that more or less puts over the whole program) into a mass party, in other words, a party which would draw workers not on the basis of general socialist conceptions, but on the basis of concrete activity and readiness to help them on basic problems that were immediately troubling them and which, as far as they could see, required, if not an immediate solution, at least immediate activity. It was the Negroes in the crisis of '43, '44, and '45, who came first to the party and *offered the party for the first time the opportunity to draw masses on the basis of agitation and with the perspective of concrete activity.* Our general analysis shows that this experience of the party was no accident. It took place this way because of this peculiar relationship of the Negro mass movement to the general struggle. Our first opportunity, our first experience, really to become a mass party was given to us by the Negroes.

Recent Party Experiences

Now the fact remains that a great number of Negroes who came into the party left. First of all, the most fundamental reason which has been given to me and which I see no reason to disagree with, is that the party was not quite ready to handle these tremendous problems. It could handle a specific case like the Fontana case. It could handle a case like the Hickman case and carry it

through to a brilliant conclusion. But the actual day-to-day struggles against the bourgeoisie, and the Negro organizations, and the inertia of the labor movement, we simply were not powerful enough to handle.

And we come to another very important conclusion here for our practical activity. If the vitality of the independent Negro movement depends in the last analysis upon the power and response of the proletariat, then life and activity, the strength of the party's Negro work must depend also — American society being what it is — upon the strength the party has in the organized labor movement and as a Marxist organization.

You see the pattern continues. It is impossible to be able to do Negro work in the sense that the party at this stage wants to do it, in mass activity, meeting the demands of the Negroes, transformation from a propaganda organization to a mass party, without great strength and power in the organized labor movement. That the convention has dealt with. It is to be remembered that this is a report on the Negro Resolution, but we must never lose sight of that; that was our experience. And in fact, I have been told that the best work has been done and the best Negro cadres have remained where our party was *strongest in the labor movement.* That must guide us in the coming period.

In addition to these there were certain subordinate reasons for our difficulties. The Negro militants who came to us came in revolt from the NAACP and these other organizations which were, as usual, like the labor bureaucracy, talking but doing little or nothing. When they came to us, we were not able, under our own banner, as I have said, to carry on a sustained *mass* activity on these questions.

The correct road for these Negro militants was back into the Negro mass organizations and there to do solid, patient fraction work as we do in the union movement. But they had just come from there. It was very difficult, it was very difficult for them to understand that they had come from there to us only to learn that they had to go back there again.

And, not at all to be forgotten, I am informed that the party didn't have trained, experienced personnel to be able to lead this work in the way that it should be done. So that we have been more successful with the Negro comrades in the unions, who could work in one of our fractions in the labor movement. That is good, but it is not sufficient.

Now, we hope, upon the basis of the experience that we have had, upon the fact that certain solid Negro cadres remain, upon the basis of the work that we intend to do with this Resolution, upon the basis of the impetus to thinking, study, penetration in the Negro movement, and observation of the Negroes in the trade union movement, which we hope will come from this Convention and the six months' discussion, we hope that those opportunities which were presented to us, from which we have gained some capital, we hope that we can begin again, we hope that when opportunities will be presented—we are absolutely

sure they will be—then the party will be able to undertake that task and lay a solid foundation in its Negro work.

A Permanent Feature of Activity

And therefore our policy is that a clear consideration of all theoretical issues involved in what is a very difficult, very complicated and at times can be a very exasperating question, our party proposes to you that we make a permanent, fundamental feature of our work, the work in the Negro organizations. (Applause)

We say that whatever these Negro organizations are today, they represent the channel whereby the Negro people today or tomorrow will express themselves in the way we have outlined. We make our main orientation the NAACP. That is the most powerful Negro organization. Today it may look to be petty bourgeois, reformist or whatever you think; that is not the issue.

Behind this organization, or liable to flow into it, or to create an organization which can destroy it at a future date, is the tremendous revolutionary potentiality of the Negro people that we have outlined.

We have to be there, we have to devote ourselves to this work and in much the same way that for us the trade union is the basic place where we can work, whatever may be the position of the labor bureaucracy. We concentrate on the Negro organizations and for the time being as a general rule, the NAACP is the place where we are going to work, because we are confident that the Negro movement has these great potentialities both for itself and in regard to revolutionary developments.

But as the Resolution states clearly, we go into those movements, into that movement, as we go into all others, as revolutionists.

I have been talking to one or two Negro comrades, not as many as possible but I have been talking to some and one of them says that he gets an impression that this insistence upon the significance of the Negro struggle for democratic rights gives him the feeling that when we go into the Negro movement, we may go there concerned only with a democratic program, when in reality, he says, there are many Negro militants who want Marxism. We can assure you that in saying many Negro militants want Marxism he is absolutely correct. We go there as revolutionists seeking to make those organizations into class organizations, seeking to inculcate proletarian methods of struggle, seeking to clear out the petty-bourgeois reformist leadership and substitute the leadership of organized labor or of revolutionary militants. But we do more than that.

If our analysis of the Negro people is correct, if what they think about fundamental questions approaches empirically the conclusions of Marxism, if we believe that the Negro movement is heading toward the proletarian revolution led by the proletariat, then it is absolutely imperative that we carry into those Negro organizations the fundamental doctrines of Marxism not only on the Negro question but on all the political questions of the day. We are not going into those movements to limit ourselves to the Negro struggle for democratic rights and

the particular methods which may appear to be used by the majority of the Negroes in those organizations at that time. Not at all. If our analysis is sound and if we grasp its significance, we gain two things. We gain, one, the conviction to be able to stay in these movements and to work patiently under the most difficult conditions, but we gain something else. We gain a conviction of the necessity that our Marxist ideas, Marxist propaganda, our struggle for the labor party and our struggle for the proletarian revolution *must* meet some important response from the Negro militants in those organizations, and with the necessary discretion we have a fruitful field for party recruitment and the development of the general Marxist movement.

Racial Prejudices

Now there are only one or two things more that I would like to say. There is the question — and I hope you will allow me a minute or two extra — there is the question of racial prejudice. I am not talking here about going out to dinner with Negroes or having Negroes at your house or any of those things. When the party gets larger and rank-and-file Negro and white workers and others come into it, rank-and-file white workers will bring their prejudices. Negroes will bring their suspicions, and in my opinion, absolutely justified suspicions, and there will be difficulties created of a certain kind. But the party is a Bolshevik organization and on the basis of a fundamental political line and its general socialist aspirations, will be able to settle the crudest forms of those to the extent that they appear. The cadre by and large today is sound on these matters. But bourgeois race prejudice against the Negroes in the United States is something extraordinarily powerful and of a range and subtlety that it takes years to understand and only the proletarian revolution and the break-up of the bourgeoisie will make the proletariat fully understand. Such is the tremendous power which racial prejudice exercises in the United States, at every stage, wherever the races meet. In the Resolution we select *one* series of examples.

Undoubtedly this Resolution is breaking a new stage in the organized form in which we are bringing forward Negro work and our conception of the Negro contribution, bringing it forward before the country and before the organized labor movement. We can accept it. We can feel that we shall do everything we can to carry it through. But bourgeois race prejudice isn't going to let it pass so easily. No. We have pointed out (and this has been the experience of many and particularly in the old Communist Party), that you will find many high-class unionists who accept a sound policy on the Negro question, genuinely mean to carry it out. Then they find themselves in a certain situation in the union, maybe a union of predominantly white workers, and the constant hammering home by the party of the importance of the Negro question and the significance of the Negro question in the party press and in the party propaganda and agitation begins to affect the work. There are problems created.

A problem arises and these unionists ask, couldn't we in

this particular situation, not on the whole but in this crisis, couldn't we play down the Negro angle a bit. Sometimes, in fact, we have to. But you can find, and it is possible that as we expand you will find this tendency to push the Negro question back a bit. Not for any reactionary reasons but with the genuine intention to advance what looms as more important, the role of the party in the organized labor movement at large. If we have time, maybe tonight, I will tell you many instances that have been given to me. This is not an individual aberration, it is not a personal weakness of a comrade. If it were, it wouldn't find a place in the Resolution. It is the pressure of bourgeois race prejudice that will penetrate into the party and impede the development of Negro work to the stage that we want to place it.

Problems Facing Negro Militants

There are other examples. You find a Negro unionist who for thirty years of his life has been bothered with chauvinism and the problem of where the Negro people are going to find some salvation. And at last he gets into the union movement, a progressive union. He meets other unionists, he sees what the union signifies, he grasps the question of the class struggle. Good. Now he has a perspective. He comes to the revolutionary party, and there he sees in embryo, despite certain difficulties, he catches a glimpse of the perspectives of a new society, and he is reinforced in his fundamental conceptions. When we now begin, when the party now begins to insist upon the significance and vitality of the independent Negro movement, this a shock to him.

He doesn't understand it too well. He thinks that we may be taking a step back. He doesn't quite see it. And you will find that he may align himself with those (I have seen this) who are finding some sort of objection to the projection forward of the Negro work. That is only another aspect of bourgeois race prejudice. It isn't that the Negro unionist is prejudiced. Don't misunderstand it. It is the impact of prejudice, that affects us at every turn.

There are others, there are plenty of others besides those that are mentioned here. There are petty-bourgeois Negroes who more than most Negro groups suffer terribly in a personal way from the persecutions and humiliations of bourgeois society. When they come into a fairly large party, there they are able to work genuinely for the revolution and at the same time find a social milieu in which they can be comfortable and are saved from the merciless repression and savage attacks that bourgeois society subjects them to. I have seen, I have been told, and we shall undoubtedly see, you will find, if not today, tomorrow, some of these who, also using as argument the basis of "the class struggle" tend to push the Negro question back, so to speak, into a sort of obscurity. It seems to be forcing forward what they have gotten away from. This again, is the influence of the prejudice of bourgeois society.

Thus, *inside the party*, you get certain tendencies

which are likely to stand in the way of our work. Nothing can check this but a clear fundamental theoretical line and the education of the party not abstractly, not "black and white unite and fight" (that is a very crude example) and not "the Negroes must follow the whites and the proletariat must lead them" — not at all. No. We need a careful systematic building up of historical, economic, political, literary ideas, knowledge and information, on the Negro question inside the party. Because it is only where you have Bolshevik ideas, Marxist ideas, Marxist knowledge, Marxist history, Marxist perspectives, that you are certain to drive out bourgeois ideas, bourgeois history, bourgeois perspectives which are so powerful on the question of the races in the United States. That is what we must do. (Applause)

Inescapable Difficulties

We will have, we have had difficulties in the party. We cannot escape them. I have been hearing of some. I hope the Negro comrades in the party will express themselves freely and fully. But all these difficulties assume importance and in the last analysis can be traced directly to, both on the part (and I am speaking now of the party), both on the part of the white comrades and on the part of the Negro comrades, can be traced to the fact that we have not thoroughly grasped to the fullest extent the difficulties that the party faced when it was placed before masses of Negroes coming into the party and having to deal with them as a mass party when it was still a propaganda group.

It is the settled opinion of the most experienced comrades and certainly it is mine—I have a wide experience on the Negro question — that a basic fundamental understanding, a clear understanding (within the limitations of the party and the objective situation), a clear historical and theoretical grasp of perspectives is the only cure for those difficulties that are bound to arise, and if they don't turn up today, they are bound to turn up tomorrow. Because we are not creating them. It is the tremendous power of bourgeois society which tries to stop and tries to prevent a complete coordination and pushes itself into the party at all times. That is what is taking place. It is an aspect of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletarian movement. And we have to learn to meet it in a proletarian way.

Comrades, in bringing forward this Resolution, the Political Committee is telling the party now, in a manner more serious, more concentrated, more organized than ever before, not to consider ourselves merely as the champions of Negro rights, but to make it our special business to advocate to the Negroes, to the organized labor movement and to the country at large the role which these persecuted, humiliated, despised people are going to play in the destruction of bourgeois society. The moment you say that in this American bourgeois structure, ridden with race prejudice, hatred and contempt of the Negroes, the moment we push forward what the Negroes can and will do, we shall find ourselves represented not merely as the champions of Negro rights, *but as mortal enemies of the whole bourgeois structure.*

The Revolutionary Potential

Let us not forget that in the Negro people, there sleep and are now awakening, passions of a violence exceeding perhaps, as far as these things can be compared, anything among the tremendous forces that capitalism has created. Anyone who knows them, who knows their history, is able to talk to them intimately; watches them at their own theatres, watches them at their dances, watches them in their churches, reads their press with a discerning eye, must recognize that although their social force may not be able to compare with the social force of a corresponding number of organized workers, the hatred of bourgeois society and the readiness to destroy it when the opportunity should present itself, rests among them to a degree greater than in any other section of the population in the United States. That we must know, and must know that in this Resolution here, behind its sober, disciplined words, there is contained a clear recognition of this immense revolutionary potentiality.

When we go to the Negro movement we are preparing one of the important channels of the proletarian rev-

olution. And we must do this not with the idea that it is for some distant future and we have a long period for theoretical preparation. No. In 1943 the miners revolted in their own way against the domination of the American bourgeoisie. The Negroes in Harlem did the same. Today the American bourgeoisie prepares for war. Once more the miners, that oppressed section, express their defiance. Randolph and Reynolds open up for the Negroes. It is a repetition on a higher scale of what took place in the midst of the war. In the period that is facing us, these two currents are bound to join. It is our task to effect that unification. Nobody else can do that but ourselves. When that unification is effected, the floodgates will be opened but we are not afraid. 'We shall rule the wind and the whirlwind too. We will be able to deal with any passions, forces, that are developed once we can direct them plainly and simply to the overthrow of bourgeois society. But to do this requires sober, patient, painstaking work and preparation. This is what the Resolution attempts to prepare us for. And that is why we recommend it to you for your careful study and acceptance.

Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism

Next to the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, the liberation of the Negro people from their degradation is the paramount problem of American society. These two social problems are integrally united. The only road to freedom for the workers, and to equality for the Negroes, is through their common struggle for the abolition of capitalism.

The Negro people in all aspects of their social and cultural life are a part of the American people. At the same time it must be recognized that the Negro struggle is not identical with the proletarian movement toward socialism. It exists as a distinct movement of an oppressed minority within the country, possessing its own historical origins, special characteristics, forms of development and methods of action. The economic, political, social and cultural degradation of the Negro people below the levels of even the most exploited layers of the working class places them in an exceptional position and impels them to play an exceptional role within the social structure of American capitalism.

The Negro question in the United States represents a unique combination of the struggle for democracy by an oppressed minority with the working class struggle for socialism. The revolutionary party must take this dual nature of the Negro movement as the starting point for its theoretical and practical conclusions on this problem.

Role of Negro Movement

Marxism teaches us that under imperialism, the proletariat is destined to be the leader of all oppressed classes and groups. Petty-bourgeois revisionists of Marxism pervert this conception into the thesis that the Negro movement is in essence helpless and useless unless directly led by the organized labor movement or the Marxist party. This conception is merely a transference into the labor movement of the bourgeois doctrine that the Negroes are so backward that they are incapable of independent action and must therefore at all times be led, if not by the bourgeoisie, then by the proletariat. However radically phrased, this doctrine represents a capitulation to Jim Crow prejudices, leads to an underestimation of the revolutionary tendencies of the Negro movement, and must be relentlessly opposed by the Marxist party.

At critical periods in this country's history, the Negroes have allied them-

selves with the revolutionary forces. The latter, as they approached decisive action, repeatedly found it necessary to reverse their previous opposition to the participation of Negroes.

To illustrate: The Army of Independence at the beginning rejected Negroes, but was compelled to change its stand. The Republican Party, which began by a readiness to confine slavery to the Southern states and was hostile to the Abolitionists, came to an alliance with the Negroes against the counter-revolutionary South. After a generation of slave revolts, often directly stimulated by the international struggle against slavery (Britain, France, Haiti), the Negroes organized the Underground Railroad which rescued tens of thousands of slaves from the South and established communications between the insurgent elements in the South and North. In addition, as propagandists and organizers, Negroes were the basis of the Abolition movement. The struggles centering around the Abolition agitation and especially the Fugitive Slave Law when the South attempted to restrict the democratic and civil liberties of the North, were the immediate causes which precipitated the Civil War. Once the revolutionary North directly sponsored the cause of the slaves, the Negroes threw full support behind the Republican Party.

During the Populist agitation of the 80's and 90's, the Negro farmers and agricultural workers organized the Southern Tenant Farmers Association, with a membership of a million and a quarter. When the Populist movement assumed national importance, the Negroes appended their organization to the Populist Party. At the height of the Populist struggle, Southern white Populists were constantly engaged in defending Populist Negroes against lynching and vigilante attacks by their political enemies.

The commercial bourgeoisie of the 18th century and the industrial bourgeoisie of the 19th century, after they had risen to power, betrayed the Negroes. The Negroes also found themselves deserted by the farmers of the Populist movement who, after they suffered defeat because of their inherent inability to carry through an independent struggle, made their peace with the capitalists.

Gravitation to Revolution

The gravitation of the Negroes toward the camp of revolution has assumed varied forms in recent times. The leaders of the Garvey movement after World War I referred to themselves as the Negro part of the world-wide revolutionary movement led by Lenin and Trotsky. After the depression of 1929-1933 the Negroes broke with the Republicans and became ardent followers of the New Deal, but with loss of illusions about the New Deal they have repeatedly given demonstrations that they are ready to follow the lead of the CIO. The slavish political subordination of the CIO to the Roosevelt and Truman administrations has resulted in the formation of militant organizations like the March-on-Washington Movement, and the tendency to revolutionary protests.

By their entire history the Negro people have been prepared for participating side by side with the proletariat in the struggle to reconstruct society on revolutionary socialist foundations. On the other hand, the proletariat, which by the very nature of its position in capitalist society must abolish all classes and all forms of oppression, is alone able to guarantee the Negro people against a repetition of past betrayals.

Of the 14-15 million Negroes in the United States, the great majority, close to 10 million, live in the South. They are the crux of the Negro problem in the United States.

A large number live in the agricultural areas as tenant-farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural laborers. The most

backward elements in the country's rural economy are in the South and the millions of Negroes there constitute the most poverty-stricken workers in agriculture. The remains of the cotton slave plantation system, adapted to the needs of modern capitalism, keep millions of Negroes (and whites) in a state of bondage through sharecropping. Thus obsolete forms and methods of land cultivation are maintained. This system hampers the technical progress and development of the masses of Negroes, their initiative and education, which are essential for the fully productive utilization of the land.

This system is maintained and perpetuated by huge levies upon the national income which find their way chiefly into the pockets of the landlords, merchants and others who profit by the system.

The vestiges of the old plantation servitude and the predominance of sharecropping and tenant-farming on the lowest level have given rise to a corresponding social and political structure—the domination by landlords through terror and political disfranchisement of the masses, together with the maintenance and perpetuation of a political oligarchy—the Southern Bourbons. This oligarchy constitutes a nest of political reaction, inside and out of Congress. It is always in the forefront of the enemies of civil liberties. The political representatives of the Southern system have acquired enormous power in initiating, supplementing and sharpening the attacks of capital upon wages, working conditions and democratic rights.

Thus the Negro problem is not to be considered simply as the problem of the South, or worse still, restricted to the fight for Negro rights and equality. Only the destruction of the Southern system can free the Negroes but the destruction of the Southern system is an indispensable precondition for the economic and political advancement of the whole country. This cannot be accomplished by capitalism.

While insisting that the Negro problem is exclusively a Southern problem, the masters of the South have consistently acted in the knowledge that it is a problem of the whole country. Before the Civil War and afterwards, to maintain their privileged position, they have systematically propagated and injected racial discrimination, segregation, super-exploitation and prejudice into this country's life. In this they have been aided and abetted by Northern industrial capitalists. In 1876, after establishing its political domination over the defeated

slave-owners, Northern capital cemented a new alliance with Southern propertied interests for the maintenance of white supremacy. Since then Northern capital has steadily extended its financial control until today the South is entirely in its grip. Thus today it is the interests of capitalism which demand the maintenance and perpetuation of the Southern system.

The Southern brutality, its terror, its social discrimination, its robbery in appropriations for education, its lynchings reported and unreported, and its legalized oppression, persecution and humiliation of the Negro people, are not in any sense the product of any inherent racial antagonisms. Racial antagonism is the barbarous rationalization of an outmoded system of production, taken over and so intensified and developed by American capitalism that today it forms one of the most cruel and shameful features of its civilization.

White supremacy, racial discrimination and Jim Crow have now become part of American capitalist tradition and have poisoned the minds of many millions. But that does not in any way alter the real origins of Negro persecution nor the fundamental reasons why it is maintained. The root of the division lies not in psychology but in such material facts as the preference given to even the poorest whites in the competition for better-paid jobs in agriculture, industry, government employment, social services, education, hospitalization, relief, etc.

Capitalism and the Negro

When capitalism needed the Negroes in the struggle against the slaveholders during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period the capitalist class did not hesitate to carry out by armed force large-scale actions to crush and discipline the Southern plantocracy and compel it to recognize Negro rights. This was when the Negroes still bore on their bodies and minds the marks of slavery. While it would be a serious error to ignore the reality of racial hatreds which have been injected into the historical development of the American people, not the slightest concession must be made to any ideas which do not place upon capitalism the complete responsibility, deliberate and conscious, for the existing situation of Negroes, the spread of racial prejudices in all areas of the United States today, and the example and encouragement given by American "democracy" to race-haters and race-baiters all over the world.

But if, after conquering the slaveholders, capitalism has taken over and intensified the exploitation and sufferings of the Negro people, it has, in its later development, also created the promises of their emancipation. Capitalist production has penetrated, at first slowly but recently with greater speed, into the formerly solid agricultural South. The Negro agricultural population is now exceeded by the Negro urban population in the South. This industrial transformation has tended to draw whites and Negroes together, creating an element of growing unification against the social divisions of the South.

Heroic attempts have been made by the sharecroppers, white and black, to create union organizations. World War II saw many war industries established in the South and unification of white and Negro workers both in industry and in unions. Capitalism, to avoid higher labor costs and unionization in the North, took the textile industry to the South, maintained Southern racial discrimination, and relegated Negroes to the lowest-paid and most menial tasks. But they are admitted to the textile industrial union. If not in job classification then at least in unionization, the Jim Crow pattern in the South is being steadily undermined. Within recent years the CIO and AFL have instituted campaigns for unionizing the workers. Precisely because of the economic and cultural backwardness of the South, the organized proletariat will carry a weight there far exceeding its mere numerical strength.

To contend that bourgeois democracy is capable of regenerating and reforming the South for the benefit of the Negro is to whitewash and embellish the present promoters and beneficiaries of Negro persecution. Only the proletarian revolution can free the Negroes, cleanse the social sewer of the South, and reorganize its economy.

It is in the North and West that the needs of capitalist production have given the Negroes a role of singular importance in the economy. Conditions in the South drove an increasing stream of Negroes to seek relief by flight to the less brutally discriminating areas. In World War I and especially World War II capitalist production itself brought millions of Negroes out of the South and incorporated them into the basic industries: coal, steel, auto, etc.

Within the last generation the workers in these industries have transformed themselves, chiefly through the organization and example of the CIO, into the

potentially most powerful social force in the country. Precisely because the Negroes, owing to racial discrimination, could find a place primarily in these industries as unskilled, unprotected workers, they find themselves, with the rise of the CIO, an integral part of the most advanced sections of the proletariat. This transition from the rural misery of the South into the mass industrial unions of the CIO simultaneously marks the transformation of the Negroes from the most degraded rural section of the population into part of the spearhead for the abolition of capitalism and the construction of the socialist society.

Despite the trickery of the capitalists, despite the Jim-Crow prejudices of many white workers and their opposition to upgrading in industry, Negroes and whites in industry are being constantly disciplined, united and organized by the very mechanism of capitalist production, which tends, slowly but steadily, to grind down the traditional social obstacles and racial prejudices. It is this unity which in a revolutionary crisis will be decisive. The traditions of the struggle for the organization of the CIO will help unite Negroes and whites in those branches of industry where they are still disunited.

Over one and a half million Negroes are already part of the organized labor movement. It has within its ranks the most advanced, the most disciplined, trained and tempered elements of the Negro people. Nothing but the total destruction of organized labor can seriously check the steady development of this movement.

Negro National Consciousness

Capitalism confines most workers to slum-dwellings and miserable neighborhoods. This is itself a form of segregation, despite attempts to obscure this by fictitious democratic propaganda. This segregation of the proletariat as a whole assumes an exceptionally aggravated form in the case of the Negroes.

The system of plantation slavery dictated rigid social segregation of the slave. Driven by the needs of the Southern system and its own needs, capitalism, while integrating the Negroes into Northern industry, maintained and extended Jim Crow segregation. Everywhere the Negroes have been herded into ghettos. As a result, there have developed large Negro urban communities not only in the South but in most of the great industrial cities. The Negroes especially in the North, East and West today form compact communities, over-

whelmingly proletarian or semi-proletarian, with a large minority of organized proletarians while the majority form an immense mass of domestic servants, porters, and other menial laborers.

A Negro bourgeoisie, owning capital and exploiting labor in industry, is practically non-existent. The petty-bourgeois intermediary between the Negro masses and big capital is in the majority white and not Negro. The Negro petty bourgeoisie is composed predominantly of a thin layer of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, teachers, journalists, musicians, and so on. But race prejudice continues on the whole to exclude the Negro petty bourgeoisie from social contact with the ruling class as well as from those minor positions of authority which help cement substantial sections of the white petty bourgeois to bourgeois society.

Thus the integration of the Negroes into industry and the simultaneous rise of these Negro communities have stimulated the racial and political consciousness of the Negro people.

With a great number of organizations of all types, with a large and varied press, a growing body of distinguished writers and spokesmen who chronicle their wrongs and protests, a fanatical pride in the history of the Negro race and the achievements of remarkable Negroes in any sphere and in any country, these Negro communities are knit together by resentment against their exploitation and humiliation by white America. In recent years the sentiment of racial solidarity and organized protest has grown by great leaps. There is now growing up an embryo "nation within the nation."

But contrary to similar manifestations in Europe and Asia, this feeling of racial and national solidarity among the Negro people thus far aims solely at acquiring enough force and momentum to break down the barriers that exclude Negroes from American society, showing few signs of aiming at national separatism. These new moods coupled with constantly increasing activities have already had a powerful effect on the Negroes in the South who, even within the shackles of the Southern system, try to follow the Northern example as far as possible.

It would be a grave error to underestimate the social and political significance of this maturing Negro racial and national consciousness. It is rooted in the very conditions of American capitalism, has grown with them and will only disappear with them. It does not lessen but grows continuously. Every stage by which the Negroes have been

incorporated into industry and industrial unionism, every expansion of the Negro ghettos, every social advance of the Negro people, has meant a corresponding rise in the solidarity and temper of the Negro community and its protest against segregation.

Despite all appearances American capitalism constantly increases and intensifies its Jim Crow system. The greatest Jim Crow organization ever created was the Army for World War II. Protests resulted only in special Negro air squadrons, special Negro war correspondents, special groups of Negro entertainers, etc. Thus directly and indirectly the American Army carried with it the American Jim Crow system to every quarter of the globe. The more powerfully the Negroes organize and protest, the more capital is compelled to attempt to bribe them with special Negro schools, special Negro hospitals, special Negro colleges, special Negro playgrounds, special Negro news films, special Negro appointments—generally to government departments dealing with Negro affairs.

Spread of Insurgence

The Negroes have repeatedly exploded in revolutionary outbursts of the most varied types. As soon as they found themselves in sufficient numbers out of the South, the Garvey movement erupted. This extraordinary mass movement testified to the protest against Jim Crow which was and is restrained by terror in the South. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People attained a membership of more than half a million after World War II. But the petty-bourgeois dominated organizations are absolutely unable to discipline the insurgent Negro masses. In Harlem where the masses feel themselves strongest, the protests tend to express themselves most violently, as in 1935 and 1943. There the Negro masses expressed their pent-up resentment against Jim Crow by coming into the streets and wrecking shops owned by whites in the main centers of Harlem, while at the same time carefully refraining from violence against the whites who walked the streets unmolested.

Similar outbursts have taken place in cities like Detroit and are incipient in every Negro community. With extreme rapidity the Negroes in 1941 organized the March-on-Washington Movement on a nation-wide scale, creating consternation in the ranks of the federal government. In addition Negro soldiers fought bravely throughout World War II for equality and democratic rights within the army.

Marxists have repeatedly pointed out that in a revolutionary crisis the most oppressed social layers, who have hitherto remained outside of the class struggle, when awakened by the organized proletariat, constitute some of the most dynamic elements of the revolution. The hatred of bourgeois society and enduring capacity for revolutionary sacrifice which characterizes the deepest proletarian strata is combined in the urban Negroes with the organizational solidity imposed upon them by American segregation and the readiness to revolt which is the result of the universally recognized, intolerable, and indefensible injustice of their position.

The petty bourgeois leaders of Negro organizations strive in vain to instill into the masses the "principles" of American democracy. But the petty-bourgeois leadership has far less control of the Negro masses than the labor leadership has of the basic ranks of the proletariat. In the lives of the great masses of the Negroes and even in the petty-bourgeois Negro press there is a mounting tendency to reject not only in words but in action, the shibboleths of American democracy and thereby, through conclusions from their own experience, to approach the truths of Marxism.

Thus it is that the Negroes more than any other social grouping in the country:

(1) Have challenged the conception that the great wars of the United States in our generation were fought for democracy;

(2) Have repudiated the fetishism of American democracy as the quintessence of freedom and equality of rights and opportunity;

(3) Are skeptical of the belief that the future of American political life is unalterably confined to alternation between the Democratic and Republican Parties;

(4) Have challenged the conception that the state is above all classes.

(5) Have discarded the conception that rights are obtained purely by democratic discussions and parliamentary procedures.

It is not in the slightest degree accidental that during World War II, those sections of the population who reached the highest pitch of protest against the bourgeois state were the miners by a continuous series of strikes and the Negroes in Harlem. If the miners had the sympathy of the masses of the workers, the Harlem Negroes had still more the sympathy of the masses of Negroes all over the country. Miners and the

Negro masses in Harlem symbolized on a small but significant scale the unfolding pattern of revolt, of singular importance for the coming period—great mass strikes of the organized proletariat and rebellious outbursts among the Negroes.

The same pattern is already being repeated on a higher scale. In the apparently unchallenged march of the American bourgeoisie to internal enslavement of the masses in preparation for war, once more it is the miners who raised the first open challenge by action, and the Negroes, in the persons of Randolph and Reynolds, who hurled the first open challenge and defiance.

While this movement has nowhere found clear revolutionary socialist expression, its impact has already made itself felt.

Political and Social Impact

(1) The March-on-Washington Movement resulted in the establishment of the FEPC which has become in its own way a potent source of conflict within the Democratic Party.

(2) The Harlem action in 1943 not only went unpunished by the government but was the signal for all the labor leaderships and liberal groupings to rally hastily together for the purpose of pacifying the Negro masses by means of a state FEPC with punitive legislation for convicted offenders.

(3) Racial conflict in Detroit over housing and discrimination resulted in an anti-Negro pogrom, stoutly resisted by the Negro masses. The UAW was immediately involved and the climax of its intervention was of great significance for the future relations between the Negro mass movement and organized labor. The city election of 1944 was fought by a combination of the UAW and the Negro masses against the reactionary Mayor Jeffries, the race question playing a major part in the campaign.

(4) The power and solidarity of the Negro protest has compelled the leaders of the Democratic Party to weigh the nearly 300 electoral votes, in states where the Negro vote is decisive, against the less than half as many votes controlled by the South, and to propound a civil rights program which is helping to tear the Democratic Party apart.

(5) The Negroes themselves, both in the mass, as in Harlem in 1943, and as groups, as in the Randolph-Reynolds protest, though basing themselves on their racial problems, show a profound recognition of the unity of their struggle with that of other oppressed groups and constantly demand joint action with the

whites. Though racial hatreds in the South may well be the cause of bloody reprisals for centuries of repression, Negroes have repeatedly taken the lead in organizations among the most oppressed groups, the sharecroppers, comprising Negroes and whites.

(6) Hostile as the Negro petty-bourgeois leaders are to mass action by Negroes, they have repeatedly joined together and in the name of millions of Negroes, recited their grievances and pointed out the weaknesses and crimes of both parties in regard to Negroes. They have solidarized themselves against the reactionary politics of the Southern bloc and therefore implicitly—and often explicitly—with the labor movement; and declared themselves, on behalf of the Negro people, as supporting the struggles for independence of the colonial nations. They have taken the symbolical step of appealing to the United Nations against the American government. Under the pressure of mass sympathy for the proposals of Randolph and Reynolds, those Negro petty-bourgeois leaders who were carefully nurtured by the Roosevelt administration as spreaders of bourgeois ideas among the Negro masses, were forced to refuse to take any part in assisting the government to integrate Negroes into a segregated army. Despite the inevitable vacillations, compromises and capitulations of the Negro petty bourgeoisie, this sharp break at a time when they are badly needed indicates the dilemma of the government between its need to mobilize the nation and the rebelliousness of millions of Negroes.

Many of these actions have not been carried through to any decisive conclusion. But their increasing frequency and widening scope, the variety of forms in which they appear, their deep historical roots in the past of the country, illustrate with unusual richness and clarity the truth of one of the great contributions of Leninism to Marxist theory.

"The dialectics of history," says Lenin, "is such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli which help the real power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the Socialist Proletariat."

In analyzing the role of small nations Lenin cast light on the special contribution of the Negro struggle to the proletarian movement in the United States. Under the banner of Negro rights, the movement of the Negro people is rendered most sensitive and responsive to social tensions. It acts as a spur in precipitating struggles for elementary

democratic rights; it unmask the class nature of the capitalist state; it helps educate the working class to the reactionary role of bourgeois democracy and the need to wage merciless struggle against it; and propels into action the major political forces of the nation and the organized labor movement.

Important as these contributions are to the forces of social revolution, the Negro movement has invariably suffered heavy depression and demoralizing blows through the betrayal, defeat or lack of response of these forces. Deserted by the victorious bourgeoisie in 1876, the Negroes bore the full brunt of Southern reaction and revenge. After the defeat of the Populist Movement the South passed drastic anti-Negro legislation. Isolated from the revolutionary forces, the Garveyite outburst, though of great social and historical significance, became besmirched with grotesque follies and fantasies and rapidly disintegrated.

Policy of the SWP

Today the greater organized political power of the Negro struggle faces correspondingly greater dangers. The CIO has brought the Negro back into the mainstream of American social life. Defective as may be its positive contributions, the very existence of the CIO and its enunciation of equality for Negroes, combined with the relative freedom with which Negroes function within it, create the arena in which Negroes become increasingly bold in their struggles. It acts as a check upon the more flagrant aspects of Negro persecution. The defeat of the proletariat by American capitalism would inevitably result in unprecedented persecution for the Negro people. Already in 1943 when the Negro struggles were at their height, Roosevelt's Attorney-General Biddle proposed that Southern Negroes be prohibited from coming North. If the proletariat is defeated, the Southern system will be extended over the whole country, and wherever American imperialism holds sway.

That organized labor is the principal shield and ally of the Negroes is true not only in a broad historical but in an immediate sense as well. In Detroit during 1943 the influence of the organized labor movement saved the Negroes from horrible massacres and persecutions by anti-Negro elements and the police.

The Socialist Workers Party pays special attention to the Negro mass movement. Our members join those organizations which offer a fruitful field for promoting the welfare of the Negro peo-

ple. When necessary, we also assist in the creation of new organizations aiming at the struggle for democratic rights.

In our attitude to these organizations, we recognize the great difference between a periphery organization which is guided by party policy on a particular issue or consists of close sympathizers of the party, and an organization which rises up independently of the party to express the deep needs and aspirations of millions of oppressed people. In entering such organizations the party does not at all insist that they be Marxist in program as a condition for working in them any more than we impose such demands on the unions as a condition for working in them, with them and for them.

Neither do we judge these organizations by the character of their leadership at any given moment, as for instance the reformist, petty bourgeois, timid character of the NAACP leadership. At critical moments organizations of this type can become centers of genuine mass activity. On the other hand, as the March-on-Washington Movement proved, new organizations, expressing the aroused fighting spirit of the Negro people, can spring up overnight. In critical times, mass outbursts, as in Harlem in 1943, can become the starting point for the creation of new or the revitalization of old organizations. From all these points of view, participation by our members in the existing organizations of the Negroes according to the party's strength and aims, remains a permanent feature of party work.

Party members participate in these Negro organizations, as in all others, as revolutionists. Our main purpose in them is the mobilization of the Negro masses for revolutionary action. The party applies here, too, the principles of its program, which presented with patience and flexibility, will find a ready hearing among the proletarian and semi-proletarian Negroes. The party wages unceasing struggle against the Negro petty-bourgeois leadership, the same type of struggle that it carries on against the union bureaucracy. It strives for an unambiguous militant program based upon the needs and readiness for struggle of the broad masses. It seeks to replace the vacillating, reformist petty-bourgeois leadership with a militant leadership fighting on the principles of the class struggle and in the closest alliance with organized labor and the Marxist revolutionists.

The party raises the question of political affiliation, and on the basis of the widespread Negro disillusionment with

the two traditional parties, urges these organizations to go on record for a Labor Party, and to outline their program for such a party and not on the Negro question alone.

Finally, the party will find in the Negro organizations and in Negro life a fruitful field for the spread of the fundamental doctrines of Marxism. The situation of all Negro people offers exceptional opportunities for winning over the best elements in these organizations to Marxism on the basis of Negro needs and Negro experiences.

The Negro mass movement is a natural ally of the proletarian revolution. It will organize and reorganize itself many times in the course of its evolution to socialism. But the party governs itself by the fact that the high peaks of organized labor struggle, the CIO in 1935-1937, the miners' strike in 1943, the great strikes of 1945-1946 culminating in the widespread but bureaucratically suppressed desire for a general strike against the Taft-Hartley Bill, have been paralleled by the outburst of the Negro masses in Harlem in 1935, the March-on-Washington Movement in 1940, the outbursts in Harlem, Detroit and elsewhere in 1943, the growth of the NAACP to over half a million members. The government and the bourgeoisie have never underestimated the potential force of the Negro movement and its threat to the capitalist system.

The forms and rapidity of its progress will be determined to a large degree by the strength and resolute participation of the party in its struggles and experiences, and its concentration upon promoting the economic and social interests of the Negro masses. We must support this mass movement, develop it, and make it a politically conscious and definitely class movement. In marching hand in hand with it to the end we are marching far beyond its initial goal; we are marching to the very end of the division of society into classes.

Negro and Organized Labor

The primary and ultimate necessity of the Negro movement is its unification with the revolutionary forces under the leadership of the proletariat. The guiding force of this unification can only be the revolutionary party.

The most urgent task of the revolutionary party is the destruction of the strangling influence of the reformist union bureaucrats over the labor movement. Precisely because of its exceptional role in the country's economic and political life, the Negro question con-

fronts the labor bureaucracy with a series of acute problems. These have already drawn a widening line of demarcation between labor bureaucratism and revolutionary Marxism in the struggle for the leadership of the American proletariat.

The labor leadership itself has been compelled to assume a titular leadership of the struggle against discrimination and endorsement of Negro rights on the job and in the union. The imperative necessity of organizing the South has compelled the union leadership to grapple with the legalized and socially sanctified degradation and humiliation of the Negroes in the South. The formation of a Labor Party would immediately lead to a desperate struggle over the poll-tax, federal action against lynching and discrimination, and the whole system of oppression under the Southern oligarchy. Reformism can no more solve this burning problem than the reformist labor bureaucracies of Russia, Italy, or Spain could solve the peasant question.

The labor bureaucracy is becoming increasingly entangled with the government in the deprivation of the democratic rights of the workers. In the coming period, particularly if the war drive intensifies, a repetition of mass Negro upheavals, opposed directly to the federal government, can awaken warm response in the minds of workers, and become a powerful source of exposure of the hypocrisy of American imperialism. The endorsement by the union bureaucracy of the bi-partisan war program and their red-baiting campaign has given prominence and opportunity to some of the most reactionary and anti-Negro elements in the union movement.

In the critical days ahead, the Negro problem inside the union movement can become an extremely important issue. The whole past of the Negro movement shows that the Negroes in the unions, once assured of the support of a substantial number of white workers, will be in the forefront of any serious struggles against the labor bureaucracy as agents of governmental repression and reaction.

The American proletariat needs above all to be instilled with a consciousness of its historic mission as the fundamental force in the struggle against capitalism and leader of all oppressed groups and classes. The struggle for Negro rights and against the poll-tax, lynching, etc., have already made a strong impact upon the social education of the proletariat. This process will inevitably continue and develop. The mass struggles of the Negroes will increasingly pose the question of proletarian intervention and enable

the revolutionary forces to come to the fore with their revolutionary policy as opposed to the reformist.

By its leadership and championship of the Negro mass movement, the party takes one of the surest roads to gaining recognition as an organization that is determined, not merely to right Negro wrongs, but to abolish bourgeois society.

Struggle Against Prejudice

The party does not deny or minimize the existence of racial hatreds and the very real dangers they hold and will increasingly hold for the proletarian struggle as the foundations of bourgeois society continue to crumble and release the passions it has fostered for centuries. The history of Nazi Germany shows what brutality, terror and sadism capitalism in its last agonies can and will mobilize in its defense.

The party alone can carry on a fundamental propaganda and sustained and effective agitation against these dangers. Only the strenuous, patient, persistent and vigilant propagation of Marxist views on the Negro question, which are especially on guard against abstractions, can teach the workers to recognize and tear out by the root, the innumerable, often subtle and always constantly re-created forms in which bourgeois race prejudice infiltrates into the ranks of the organized labor movement and the revolutionary vanguard itself.

The party will increasingly be subjected to conflicts between different strata of the labor movement which will find their expression in racial form. Particularly the party's forceful struggle for influence in labor organizations of predominantly white workers will sometimes be impeded or placed in jeopardy by its championship of the Negro cause and Negro workers. Reactionary enemies of the revolutionary party will deliberately incite and magnify this issue to embarrass the party.

This poses and will increasingly pose difficult problems for the party. Even where, as in many AFL unions, the anti-Negro policy is flagrant, the concrete circumstances will often present serious problems for the party. Their successful handling, both for the education of the proletariat and the solidarity and growth of the party, must be based on the determination of the revolutionary party under all circumstances to maintain the principles for which it stands.

In the Negro movement in particular and often in the labor movement the party will meet Negro chauvinism. While making no principled concessions to it,

the party treats it with great caution and makes a sharp distinction between the chauvinism of the oppressor and the chauvinism of the oppressed, even when the latter is expressed within the ranks of the organized labor movement. This chauvinism of the Negroes contains possibilities of being exploited under certain circumstances by the capitalists and turned into a terrible danger to the organized labor movement. Precisely because of this, the party must take the lead in guiding it, explaining its progressive features, purging it of its dangerous traits, and both in theory and practice, impressing the organized labor movement with its potentiality as a force for the defense of all democratic rights and the struggle against capitalist reaction.

As the party grows and wins over groups of rank and file workers, white and Negro, the cruder forms of race prejudice will assume importance within the party. They must be mercilessly fought. It is only on the basis of a constantly widening recognition and exposition of the significance of the Negro struggle not merely for Negroes but for the social revolution, that the party will be able to carry out the necessary measures with firmness and yet without hysteria or foolhardiness. Both in the party and in the organized labor movement the party in opposing Jim Crow spares no pains to explain its reasons to the white workers, victims of a long historical development.

Fighting Capitalist Pressure

The pervading pressures of racial prejudice can take the most subtle forms. White workers and even union leaders in the party can find an easy escape from the hard task of combatting racial prejudices by counterposing the importance for the party of its influence on the organized labor movement, as against the Negro movement. On the other hand, Negro workers, on gaining class consciousness and observing the practices of equality in the revolutionary party and in certain of the industrial unions, sometimes react with hostility to the Leninist analysis of the racial and national aspects of the Negro movement and tend to reject it as a step backward and an unnecessary concession to Negro chauvinism. Petty-bourgeois Negroes who find in the party not only a means of revolutionary struggle but a relief from the strains and humiliations of Negro life will sometimes oppose bringing forward Negro work to its rightful place in party life. These are not individual

aberrations but reflect, each in its own way, political weakness before the bourgeois pressure to relegate the Negro question to a subordinate place. Only a sound policy, actively carried out, can correct and check these and similar manifestations.

The situation of the Negro movement in American society gives a special role to Negro leadership, not merely among Negroes but in the revolutionary forces of the country. All great revolutions have, of necessity, utilized in the leadership members of oppressed races and nationalities as the most opposed to the existing order.

That the American socialist revolution will prove no exception to this rule is shown by the role already played by Negro leaders in the CIO. In its activity in the Negro labor organizations the party must devote great efforts to the winning over, education and preparation for leadership of Negro workers and intellectuals. But here again only the clear grasp of the character of the Negro movement can create the basis for Negro revolutionists to take their rightful place in the revolutionary party and the revolutionary struggle of the organized labor movement.

The party will have to rely chiefly on Negroes in its activity among Negro organizations, even where whites are admitted as members, as a necessary concession to the historically justified suspicions and prejudices of the Negro masses. But if Negro leaders do not play a prominent role in the general activity of the party on a national scale, that would represent a concession to the terrible power of bourgeois race prejudice, and would, in effect, segregate the Negro even within the revolutionary movement itself. This danger must be vigorously and consciously fought.

The Negro leaders of the party in Negro work must be consciously and carefully trained as Marxists of the international revolution. Unless they are so trained they cannot be good examples of Bolsheviks in the union movement; lack of such training would tend to perpetuate inside the party itself the bourgeois division of white and Negro. The party teaches the conscious elements among the Negroes and builds its cadres, both white and black, according to the dictum of Trotsky that "the conscious elements of the Negroes . . . are convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class." Only a party educated in this spirit can create the surroundings to assist the Negro revolutionists in overcoming the influence of bourgeois race prejudice, express in-

side and outside the party the future historic role of the Negro people in the struggle for socialism, help to give confidence to the Negro masses that the past betrayals of the bourgeoisie are alien to the revolutionary proletariat, and demonstrate before the eyes of the masses the character of the new society.

At this stage of the party's development and at the present undeveloped level, in a strictly political sense, of both organized labor and the Negro movement, the party must view the incorporation of Negroes into the party and Negro work in party building as a test and touchstone of its general revolutionary strategy and tactics, illuminating both the strength and weakness of the American workers and oppressed classes as well as the strength and weakness of the party.

Premises for Fruitful Work

The penetration into the most dynamic strata of the American workers, winning them over to Marxism, lifting them above immediate preoccupations to the heights of Bolshevism, steeling them against prevailing prejudices, the consolidation of diverse elements of an exceptionally diverse population, the creation of a centralized powerful revolutionary organization united by an inner discipline—all this at the present time finds a graphic expression in the Negro work of the party. "If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this strata, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and the rest would be only a lie." These blunt words of Leon Trotsky underscore his recognition of the vital importance of the Negro movement in the United States as a constituent part of the struggle for socialism.

But just as the Negro movement for all its revolutionary character depends upon the revolutionary proletariat for its final success and even for safeguarding it from defeat and destruction, so, too, the party's Negro work, important as it is, depends upon the general progress of the party in securing and extending its influence in the organized labor movement. Experience has shown that where the party possesses real strength in the labor movement its activities among the Negro masses meet with the greatest response. Only to the extent that the party successfully carries out the Transitional Program and rises to the level of its general political tasks will it be able to take fullest advantage of the great contributions to the socialist struggle inherent in Negro work.