

AMILCAR CABRAL/PAUL ROBESON COLLECTIVE STUDY GUIDE ON THE AFRO-AMERICAN NATIONAL QUESTION, 1982-1983

I. Was Slavery a Capitalist Mode of Production?

Questions

1. What is the nature of labor and labor power?
2. Is the ability of workers to sell their labor power the decisive difference between capitalism and other modes of production?
3. Does commodity production presuppose capitalist production relations?
4. Does participation in the international capitalist economy require that each member have a capitalist economy?
5. Why do many people say that two separate economies operated in the U.S. prior to the Civil War?
6. Is it possible for more than one mode of production to exist at the same time in the same country? Did the South develop in the same way as the North? Did slaves become a part of a young capitalist economy or a separate but related economy?
7. Can there be features of one type of economy that are tied to the essentials of another type? That is, slavery in essence, capitalist in appearance.
8. What role did the African slave trade and U.S. slavery play in the development of world capitalism?

Readings

Nelson Peery, *The Negro-National Colonial Question*, Chpt. 1

Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pg. 759-760 (Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation), pg. 767-769 (The Modern Theory of Colonisation); Vol. 3, pg. 804 (Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent; Vol.1, pg. 266 (The Working Day), pg. 301; 0g. 235-236

The Poverty of Philosophy, pg. 104-106

Wage Labor and Capital, pgs. 1-12, 17-19

A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pgs. 9-14, pg. 27-28

Marx and Engels, *The Civil War in the U.S.*, pg. 72-73

Paul Costello, "Racism and Black Oppression in the United States: A Beginning Analysis," *Theoretical Review*, Sept.-Oct. 1981, pg. 2-4

II. Reconstruction

Questions

1. What were some of the gains of the Reconstruction period? (i.e., political power for Blacks, economic changes and land distribution)
2. Why was the Northern bourgeoisie incapable of carrying out all the democratic tasks of the Reconstruction, i.e., land distribution and suppression of the old Southern leadership?
3. What were the class forces in the North and South that combined to defeat the Reconstruction governments and programs – who supported the programs?
4. Explain the process of the counter-revolution and defeat of the Reconstruction.
5. Why did Blacks respond in the way they did to Southern reaction and monopoly capitalist collusion?

Readings

James Allen, *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy, 1865-1876*, Chpt. II (Fighting for Land); Chpt. III (Victory of the Left); Chpt. IV (Fighting for Democracy); Chpt. V (The Peoples' Assemblies)

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, Chpt. X (The Black Proletariat in South Carolina); Chpt. XI (The Black Proletariat in Mississippi and Louisiana)

William Z. Foster, *The Negro People in American History*, Chpts. on Reconstruction (26, 27, 28, 29, 30)

Nelson Peery, *The Negro National-Colonial Question*, Chpt. 3

Handouts: A Sketchy Timetable of Some U.S. Political History; Allen/Foster's Errors on Reconstruction

Eugene Genovese, "Re-examining Reconstruction," *The New York Times Book Review*, May 4, 1980.

III. The Bourgeois Democratic Revolution

Questions

1. What are the goals of the bourgeois democratic revolution (BDR)?

2. Are there any benefits for the proletariat in the BDR?
3. What are some of the features of the bourgeois revolution that can be found in most countries?
4. Compare the French, U.S., and Russian bourgeois revolutions.
5. Why was the Civil War in the U.S. part of the BDR?
6. Why is the liberation of the Afro-American people part of the era of the proletarian revolution and the bourgeois democratic revolution?

Readings

Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*

“Bourgeois and Proletarian Democracy,” in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade*

Kautsky

The State and Revolution

Stalin, *Concerning Questions of Leninism*

Susan Peery, *Outline for the Study of Marxism-Leninism*, pg. 53-60

IV. The Working Class: Origins, Slavery, Reconstruction, and White Supremacy

Questions

1. What are some of the characteristics of the working class that have roots in the specific historical development of the U.S.?
2. To what extent has the U.S. working class ever been class conscious?
3. What is white supremacy? When did it emerge and for what purpose?
4. When did the color line begin in the U.S.? What was the relationship of black and white workers before it?
5. What was the attitude of organized labor to slavery, Reconstruction, and racial discrimination? What was the stand of the left (Debs, De Leon) on the same issues?
6. Do white workers receive privileges relative to black workers? What is the effect? How can it be struggled against?
7. What is the basis of racism and chauvinism in the working class?

Readings

Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*, Chapt. 1 (From Slavery to Freedom), Chapt. 2 (Reconstruction)

James Allen, *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy, 1865-1876*, Chapt. VI (The Labor Movement)

Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pg. 767-769

Handouts: "A Response to MLOC"?

Educational Series on White Supremacist National Oppression in U.S. History: Strategy and Tactics (Forerunner to next reading)

Roxanne Mitchell and Frank Weiss, *A House Divided: White Supremacy in the Labor Movement*, pg. 1-23, pg. 25-47, pg. 51-63

John McDermott, [*A Crisis in the Working Class and Some Arguments for A New Labor Movement*](#), pg. 49-51

Phil Thompson, "Line of March's White Chauvinist, Anti-Worker Line on the Afro-American National Question, *The 80's*, Vol. II, Sept.-Oct. 1981, pg. 30

Paul Costello, "[Racism and Black Oppression in the United States: A Beginning Analysis](#)," *Theoretical Review*, Sept.-Oct. 1981, pg. 20-22

William Z. Foster, [*Negro People in American History*](#), Chapt. 32, 34, 37

Lerone Bennett, [*The Shaping of Black America*](#), Chapt. 3

VI. Southern Agriculture

Questions

1. Describe the Post-Reconstruction plantation system (sharecropping, tenancy, etc.).
2. What were the changes in southern agriculture relative to mechanization in cotton, tobacco, and sugarcane?
3. What was the connection between the introduction of new farm technology and the Civil Rights Movement?
4. How has corporate farming affected the South? How much southern acreage is under corporate cultivation? What is the ratio to small farms?
5. How much farm labor is done by wage laborers: migrants, seasonal and others?

6. What is the rate of Black Land loss in the South and what factors contribute to it (banks, government and speculation)?
7. How many Blacks own and operate their farms? What are the total number of acreages and total production?
8. What is the status of farmers in feudal type relationships? How many are still involved in this type of farming? What are some of the changes in these relationships (e.g., wage worker/tenant)?

Readings

Ray Marshall and Allen Thompson, *Status and Prospects of Small Farms in the South*

Frank Adams and Don Saunders, "[How Can a Farmer Survive Without Any Land?](#)," *N.C. Insight*, Spring 1980, pg. 3-9

Jay Mandle, *Roots of Black Poverty*

Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, Chpt. II and Chpt. III

"Black Oppression/Black Liberation," *Line of March*, July/Aug. 1981, pg. 58-67

Lenin, "Statistics and Sociology," *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 275

"Capitalism and Agriculture in the U.S.," *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 24

Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Section on various relations of production

Unpublished Master's Thesis on Southern Agriculture

VII. Black Liberation Movement

Questions

1. What was the character of Black Nationalism before the Civil War? What were its goals and what was its composition?
2. Discuss the Black Liberation Movement during the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's. Look at composition, strategy, and tactics. Use Haywood's analysis in *Negro Liberation* as a guideline.
3. What are the trends in today's Black Liberation Movement? Are there distinct trends or wings? What is the composition and outlook of each? Include nationalist groups and others (APSP, APP, AAPRP, RNA, BLA, Cultural Nationalism, etc.). (*) (**)

4. What class among the Afro-American people should lead the national movement and why? What is the history of class leadership within the Afro-American movement?
5. How specifically should the Afro-American working class build their class leadership in the movement? (From time of Comintern resolutions until now) Give attention to building strength of the class itself as well as the national movement. Speak to trade unions and rural community organizations.
6. What is the theoretical and practical role of the Afro-American bourgeoisie in the national movement? What about the dual role of the bourgeoisie?
7. Are the NBUP and the NBPP united fronts, mass organizations, or national liberation fronts? What should their roles be in the current period relative to organizing advanced forces, the masses, reforms struggles, and revolutionary struggles?
8. What are the short term goals of the Afro-American national movement? How should they be linked to the revolutionary goals in slogans, programs, and organization? What are the common deviations on this problem?

Readings

- 1 *Pre-Civil War Black Nationalism*, Bill McAdoo
- 2 *Black Bolshevik*, Harry Haywood (Chapter 16)
- 2 *The Negro People in American History*, William Z. Foster
Chapters 38, 39, 41
- 2, 6 *Negro Liberation*, Harry Haywood, Chpt. VIII
- 4, 5 “Resolution of the Communist International on the Negro Question”, 1928, 1930
- 4, 5 “Black Workers and the Black United Front,” AC/PRC

With Stalin, Enver Hoxha, Pages 99-102

NBUP Constitution and Bylaws

NBPP Charter and Program
- 4, 5 *For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question*, Harry Haywood, Pages 28-37
- 4, 5, 6 “Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies”
Pages 81-96, Comintern – Sixth Congress

Gen. "Crisis in the Black Liberation Movement," *Workers' Tribune* Jan-Feb 1982

6 *Build the Black Liberation Movement*, RWH, p. 36-58.

6 *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement*,
P. 15-17

6 *The Negro National-Colonial Question*, p. 43-57, p. 70-75

The Communist Position on the Negro National Question, James Jackson, p. 29-30

* Speak *briefly* to the trends of the Sixties: SNCC, CORE, SCLC, Black Panther Party, Robert Williams – Monroe, N.C. NAACP, RAM, and Malcolm X

** Is nationalism among the Afro-American masses progressive? Does it represent a formal ideology/system of thought or is it spontaneous? What is evolutionary nationalism? Can it be distinguished from Black Nationalism, cultural nationalism, narrow nationalism, and bourgeois nationalism?

VIII. Marxist-Leninist Theory on the National Question

Questions

1. Define nation, tribe, state (differences; multi-national state; nationalism; and internationalism.
2. Define self determination, right to political secession, independence, and regional autonomy.
3. Contrast the bourgeois and Marxist understanding of self determination. Give examples, historical and current, if possible, of arguments opposing freedom of self determination, and explain how they aid in great nation chauvinism.
4. Describe the development of nations under conditions of rising capitalism, imperialism, and socialism. Trace the development of communist theory and practice through each of these stages.
5. When and why did the national question cease to be a part of the bourgeois democratic revolution and become part of the worldwide proletarian revolution?
6. What is the difference between "cultural-national autonomy" and the right of nations to self determination? Are the polemics between the Bolsheviks and the Austrian Social-Democrats relevant today?
7. Should communists support every national movement? Why or why not? What position should communists take toward the national bourgeoisies of oppressed nations and colonies? Give examples.

8. What are the tasks of communists in an oppressed nation in regard to the national questions? What are the tasks of communists in the oppressed nations? What is the only road to the unity of nations?

9. What are national exclusiveness, oppressed nation chauvinism, great nation chauvinism, and national nihilism?

Readings

Stalin, *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*

Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," *Collected Works*, Vol. 20

PWOC, *Black Liberation Today*, Section on Marxist-Leninist theory on the national question

Lenin, "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," *CW*, Vol. 19

Lenin, "The Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions," *CW*, Vol. 19

Stalin, "The National Question," *Foundations of Leninism*

Stalin, "The October Revolution and the National Question," *Marxism and the National Question*

Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self Determination," *CW*, Vol. 20, especially sections 1-5, 8, 10

Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self Determination," *Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions* (pamphlet)

Lenin, "The Discussion on Self Determination Summed Up," *CW*, Vol. 22, especially sections 1-7,
9-11

Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, last section on regional autonomy

Lenin, "Cultural-National Autonomy," *CW*, Vol. 19, p. 503

Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self Determination," *CW*, Vol. 21, p. 407

Lenin, "Report of Commission on the National and Colonial Questions," *CW*, Vol. 31, p. 240

Harrison George, "Lenin's Contribution to the National and Colonial Oppressed," *The Communist*
(reprint – no date available)

IX. The Afro-American People and Stalin's Criteria

Questions

1. In what context did Stalin put forward his definition of the nation? How did he see the struggle of the oppressed nations in relation to socialist revolution?
2. What were Stalin's four criteria for a nation? From Stalin's writings, can we tell if these things must be fully developed or on the rise to meet national criteria? Would Stalin's views accommodate contemporary situations that do not conform perfectly with his formulation, e.g. South Africa Palestine, Afro America?
3. How do Stalin's criteria apply to Blacks in terms of common economic life, territory, language, and culture and psychological make-up? Review views of other groups on these criteria.
4. If Stalin's criteria do apply, when did the nation begin to evolve, when did it actually manifest itself?
5. Are Afro Americans consciously working for nationhood? Is there a national consciousness?

Readings

Stalin, *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*

Stalinist Workers Group

Haywood, *Negro Liberation*

Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*

Max Weiss, *The Communist Position on the Negro Question*, 1947, p. 48

James E. Jackson, *The Communist Position on the Negro Question*, 1947, p. 30

Haywood, "The Theoretical Defenders of White Chauvinism in the Labor Movement," *The Communist Position on the Negro Question*. 1941, p. 30

Marxist-Leninist League, *Science, Class, & Politics*

Line of March

Communist Workers Group, *Our Task on the National Question: Against Nationalist Deviations in the Movement*

Theoretical Review

RWH, *Build the Black Liberation Movement*

Foster, *The Communist Position on the Negro Question*, 1947, pg. 15, 16.

Patterson – in above publication, pg. 58

Dennis, *Ibid.*, p. 25

B.D. Amis, "For a Strict Leninist Analysis on the Negro Question," *The Communist*, 1932, pp. 946-949

James Forman, *Self Determination and the African-American People*, Ch. 1

Addendum

6. If Blacks are a nation, what does the right of self determination mean for them? How should it be applied? What about the white people within the Black Belt territory?

X. Racism or National Oppression

Questions

1. What is racism in general and what is it relative to the U.S.? What is the historical connection between racism and white supremacy?
2. Is race a valid scientific category? What role does it play in societal relations? What are some of the "biological" race theories?
3. What are the fundamental arguments of the the proponents of "racial oppression" in the U.S.?
4. What effect do these arguments have on the liberation struggle of the Afro-American people in the U.S.? How are these theories similar to those of the social democrats and Trotskyists who reduce Black oppression to simply a part of the class question in the U.S. (pure proletarian revolution)?
5. How do we deal with the fact that racism is a more acceptable and popular term among the Afro-American people and the white masses as opposed to national oppression?

Readings

"Towards a Communist Analysis of Black oppression and Black Liberation," *Line of March*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pg. 26-27, p. 41-43

Paul Costello, "Racism and Black Oppression in the United States: A Beginning Analysis," *Theoretical Review*, p. 11-17

Jon Henrik Clarke, "Race: Historical Development of a Myth," *Strategies and Tactics for Confronting Mounting Racism*

Phil Thompson, "Line of March's White Chauvinist, Anti-Worker Line on the Afro-American National Question," *The 80's*, Vol. II, No. 2

Communist Workers Group, *Our Tasks on the National Question: Against Nationalist Deviations in Our Movement*, p. 92-130

Racism Research Project, *Critique of the Black Nation Thesis*, p. 26-32

B.D. Amis, "For a Strict Leninist Analysis on the Negro Question," *The Communist*, 1932, p. 946-947

Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, p. 234, 323

Negro Liberation, p. 139

"Against Liberal Distortions of Leninism on the Negro Question in the United States," *The Communist* (no date)

XI. The CPUSA and Comintern on the National Question

Questions

1. Briefly describe the evolution and discussion of the Black National Question in the Communist Party (USA) (including its predecessors) and in the Communist International.
2. Identify different periods in CPUSA history and the relationship to the Afro-American national question at the time. How firmly was the line grasped? What were the weaknesses? Were there other deviations present in the Party's outlook that had an effect on how they saw the question and actually took it up?
3. Were there forces in the CPUSA pushing for implementation of immediate practical programs beyond the projection of the slogan "self-determination?"
4. Discuss actual work in the South connected to the line of self-determination in the Black Belt South.

Readings

James Forman, *Self-Determination and the African-American People*, Chpt. 3, 4

Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, p. 222-234, 235-280

On the Roots of Revisionism: A Political Analysis of the International Communist Movement and the CPUSA, 1919-1945, p. 321-351

B.D. Amis, "For a Strict Leninist Analysis on the Negro Question," *The Communist*, 1932

CPUSA, *The Communist Position on the Negro Question*, 1947, articles by Foster, Ben Davis, et al

National Negro Congress Documents, 1936, articles by Ford, Berry, et al

The Communist Position on the Negro Question, 1934 (3rd printing), articles by Browder, Hathaway, Haywood

Race Hatred on Trial, 1931 – Proceedings of the Yokinen Trial

Haywood, "The Scottsboro Decision: Victory of Revolutionary Struggle over Reformist Betrayal," *The Communist*, Dec. 1932

Nat Ross, "The Communist Party in the Birmingham Strikes," *The Communist*, 1934

"Some Problems of the Class Struggle in the South," *The Communist*, 1935

"The Next Steps in Alabama and the Lower South," *The Communist*, 1935

B.D. Amis, "How We Carried out the Decision of the 1930 C.I. Resolution on the Negro Question

in the U.S.," *The Communist International* (no date)

XII. Brief Critique of Positions of Other "Left" Organizations

Highlight the aspect(s) of the positions of the various groups that are glaring or have a particular effect on the movement for Afro-American liberation.

Organizations: Progressive Labor Party

Communist Labor Party

Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee

Marxist-Leninist League (California)

Revolutionary Communist Party

Communist Workers Party

Black Workers Congress

Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)

League of Revolutionary Struggle

African Peoples Party

Readings

Revolutionary Union, *Red Papers #5* and *National Bulletin 13*

Progressive Labor Party, *Black Liberation*

Black Workers Congress, *The Black Liberation Struggle, The Black Workers Congress, and Proletarian Revolution*

Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee, *Black Liberation Today: Against Dogmatism on the National Question*

Marxist-Leninist League, *Science, Class, and Politics*, "The Black National Question," Spring 1980, #9

Communist Workers Party, *On the Origin of the Afro-American Nation The Current Movement and Our Tasks*
"Polemic Against Line of March's Liquidation of the Afro-American National Question, *The 80's* Vol. II, #2, Sep-Oct. 1981

Revolutionary Communist Party, "Living Socialism and Dead Dogmatism," *The Communist* Vol. 1, #2, May 1, 1977

Nelson Peery, *The Negro National-Colonial Question*

Haywood, "Black Power and the Fight for Socialism," *Class Struggle*, Winter 1979, #11

Afrikan Peoples Party, *War in Amerikkka*

XIII. The Road Ahead

Questions

1. What is the path for Afro-American liberation? What are the strategies and tactics?
2. What are the organizational forms necessary to pursue this path? Is a national liberation front necessary? What type of mass organizations must be built? How do the current formations relate to this?
3. What role should communists play in these organizations? How should they relate to other revolutionary forces?
4. Why and how should the reformist leaders of the Afro-American people be exposed?
5. What is the basic programs for addressing the immediate needs of the Black masses and linking it to the strategic goals of emancipation?
6. Is the Black liberation movement an independent movement? Who are its allies? What relationships does it have to the proletarian revolution in the U.S. and the international movement for socialism and national liberation?

7. How is the oppression of the Afro-American people related to the fight against fascism in the U.S.?

8. Can Afro-American liberation be achieved without the defeat of U.S. imperialism?