

# The Black National Question

For the last half century or so there has been a dispute as to whether blacks in the United States constitute a nation. This dispute is assuming more importance in left wing circles in recent times. Those who claim that blacks constitute a separate nation from whites generally rest their case on the authority of V.I. Lenin and the Comintern, citing quotes from these authorities that support the idea. Those who disagree with the Black Nation thesis contend that Lenin and the Comintern based their opinion on incorrect information, or on information that was correct then, but is not correct now.

Is there no way this dispute can be resolved? Fortunately, there is. Both Lenin and Stalin (the Bolshevik's authority on the national question) wrote extensively on the principles determining whether a group constituted a nation or not. Over the years they stated and restated these principles with a wealth of illustrative material. Thus, the interpretation of these principles has been set forth in an unequivocal fashion. We do not have to rely on opinions in this important matter.

In this article, we review the principles and criteria put forward by Stalin and Lenin for nationhood, and examine the condition of blacks in the U.S. in light of these principles. Lenin's position on the Jewish Nation in Russia is presented since the situation of the Jews in Russia was very similar to the blacks in the U.S. The position taken by the Communist International (Comintern) on the Black Nation question in 1928 and 1930 is evaluated.

# The Bolshevik Principles of Nationhood

In 1913, Joseph Stalin published his pamphlet, "Marxism and the National Question". In this pamphlet he summarized the theoretical basis for the Bolshevik's position (including Lenin's) on the national question. This position can be most conveniently summarized by quotations from this work.

What is a nation? A nation is primarily a community, a definite community of people. This community is not racial, nor is it tribal....

A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture [Stalin's emphasis].

It goes without saying that a nation, like every other historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics is by itself sufficient to define a nation. On the other hand, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation. [our emphasis, M-L L].

It is possible to conceive of people possessing a common 'national character', but they cannot be said to constitute a single nation if they are economically disunited, inhabit different territories, speak different languages, and so forth.

(Joseph Stalin, "Marxism and the Nation Question", Selected Writings and Speeches, pp. 9, 12-13).

Note in particular the statement "it is sufficient for a single one of these [four] characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation". In other

words, for a group of people to comprise a nation, it must possess all four of these characteristics. This being the case, let us examine each of these characteristics in turn and see whether or not blacks in the U.S. possess any or all of them.

The first requirement mentioned by Stalin was that for a people to be a nation they must have a common language. Blacks in the U.S. do have a common language--English. Thus they possess this requirement. But at the same time they do not possess a different language from non-blacks in the U.S., who Black nationalists like to think of as comprising a different nation. In other words, having the common language of English meets one of the requirements for blacks being a member of a nation, the United States, as well as a Black Nation. Thus the possession of a common language can be used as part of the proof of what Black nationalists want as well as what they do not want (viz.: a nation that is not based on race).

The second characteristic considered necessary to a group wanting to be a nation is the possession of a territory of their own. Blacks do not and did not have a territory in the sense meant by the Bolsheviks. They had in mind primarily the situation that applied in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Tsarist Russian regime. These empires were put together by dominating and absorbing previously existing independent peoples. These governments expanded by including the peoples along with their territories of areas that were contiguous to them. These territories continued to be mostly inhabited by their original occupants. Thus the Russian state absorbed Ukrainia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, etc.

This was not the situation of blacks in the British colonies and later in the U.S. They were not a conquered nation left on their old territory and exploited and administered by a group of foreigners. In North America the English moved the Indians out, took over their territory, and planted what was in effect a variation of English society. Blacks were brought into this society as slaves. Consequently, like subsequent immigrants from Europe, blacks were brought into and absorbed by an alien society made up mostly of whites. The social minorities, after they have been in the U.S. for a gen-

eration or two, have no independent culture. They have only slight variations of the dominant U.S. culture.

Nevertheless, if blacks came to dominate in terms of population over an extensive enough territory for national purposes, they certainly can have a legitimate claim to meet this requirement. Is there a "black belt" in the U.S. where blacks dominate in terms of population? The facts do not support such a contention. What are the facts?

The usual area indicated for such a "black belt" is in the South, running from Delaware to Eastern Texas. In only one of these states did blacks exceed one-third of the population in 1975 (Mississippi, 36%). For the South as a whole, blacks represent only 19% of the population, and this percentage continues to fall from census to census. It will undoubtedly be lower for 1980.\*

The percentage of the black population located in the South also continues to fall from census to census. By 1975 only about half of the black population (52%) was in the South. The only part of the country in which blacks are continuing (after 1970) to grow as a percentage of the total population is the West.

The historic basis for this black belt was the old plantation system. Blacks were brought in as slaves to do most of the labor on these plantations. Therefore in the heart of the plantation areas of these Southern states blacks tended to outnumber non-blacks before the Civil War. But after the Civil War the proportion of blacks to the total population began its rapid decline which is still going on. For the Southern states as a whole, the decline for the 100 years between 1870 and 1970 was from 36% to 19%. What applied to the states as a whole applied to an even greater extent to the black belt.

There are scattered counties in which blacks represent a majority of the population in the so-called black belt. In the bulk of the counties where blacks are the majority, the counties are very small in population.

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\*Unless otherwise specified the data in this article is drawn from Bureau of the Census, "The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the U.S.", 1979.

In order for blacks to predominate in a solid block of contiguous counties requires that blacks predominate over whites in the rural areas. That is, there must be a substantial number of black farmers. As the Communist International had said, "the agrarian problem lies at the root of the Negro national movement." Let us review the statistics to see whether there is a strip of contiguous land in which black farmers are a majority.

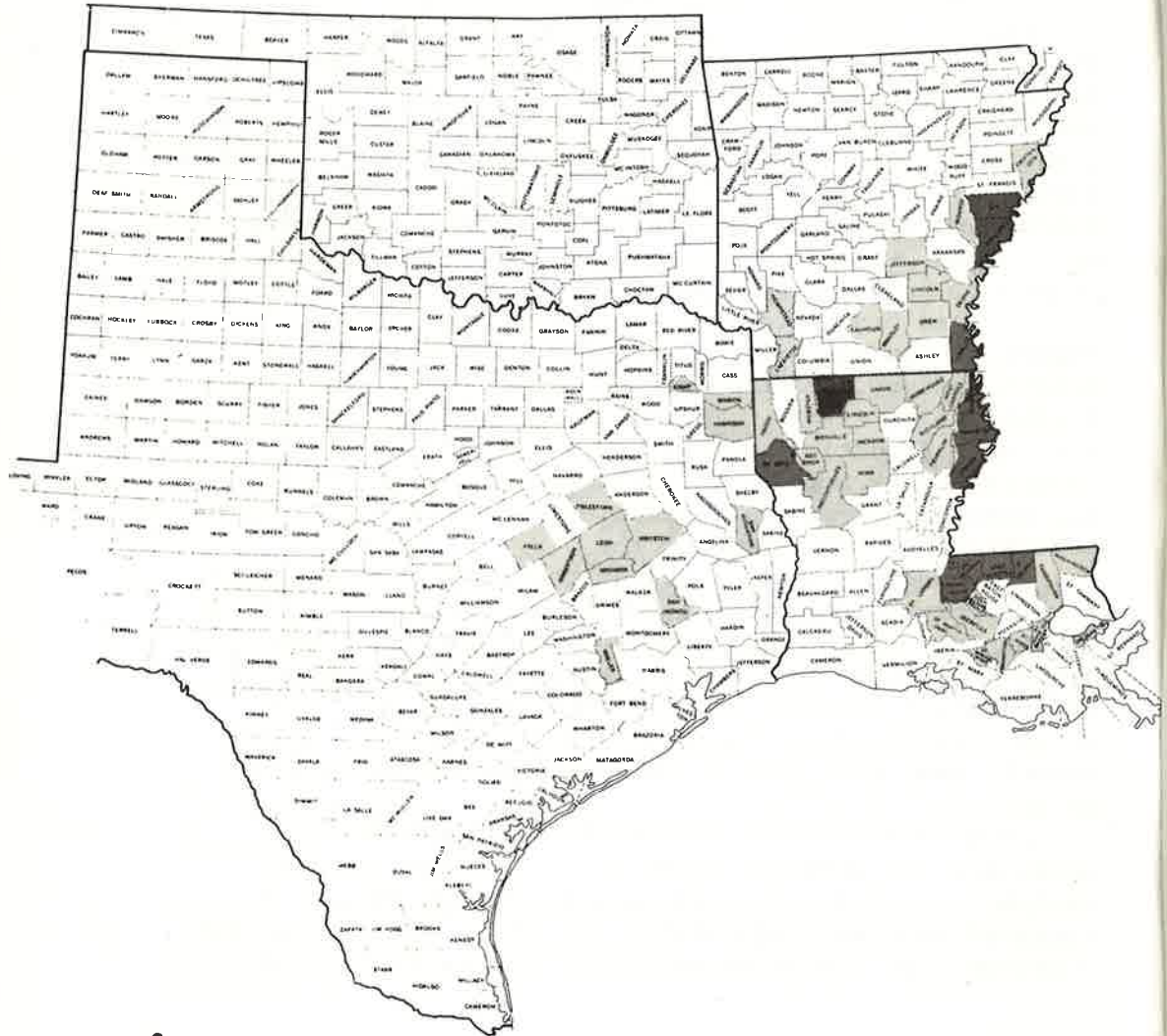
The class of black farmers has mostly disappeared from the South. In 1870 a higher proportion of blacks worked in agriculture (over 90%) than did the population as a whole. By 1970 the percentage of blacks working in agriculture had fallen to 3% for the U.S. as a whole, while in the South they fell to only 5% of the Southern black population. (Census, pp. 74-75). Also in the South, blacks had fallen to only 23% of the total farm population, a decline from 33% in 1940. That is, 77% of the farm population in the South is now white. Thus the black farm population in the South has been declining faster than the white farm population. This rapid decline in the black farm population in the twentieth century has destroyed any population domination, in a number of contiguous counties that existed in the nineteenth century, which might have served as the basis for a claim of territory. The accompanying map indicates the lack of contiguity of the counties that have a majority black population. And the black population of all these black-majority counties represent only a small percentage of the blacks in the U.S.

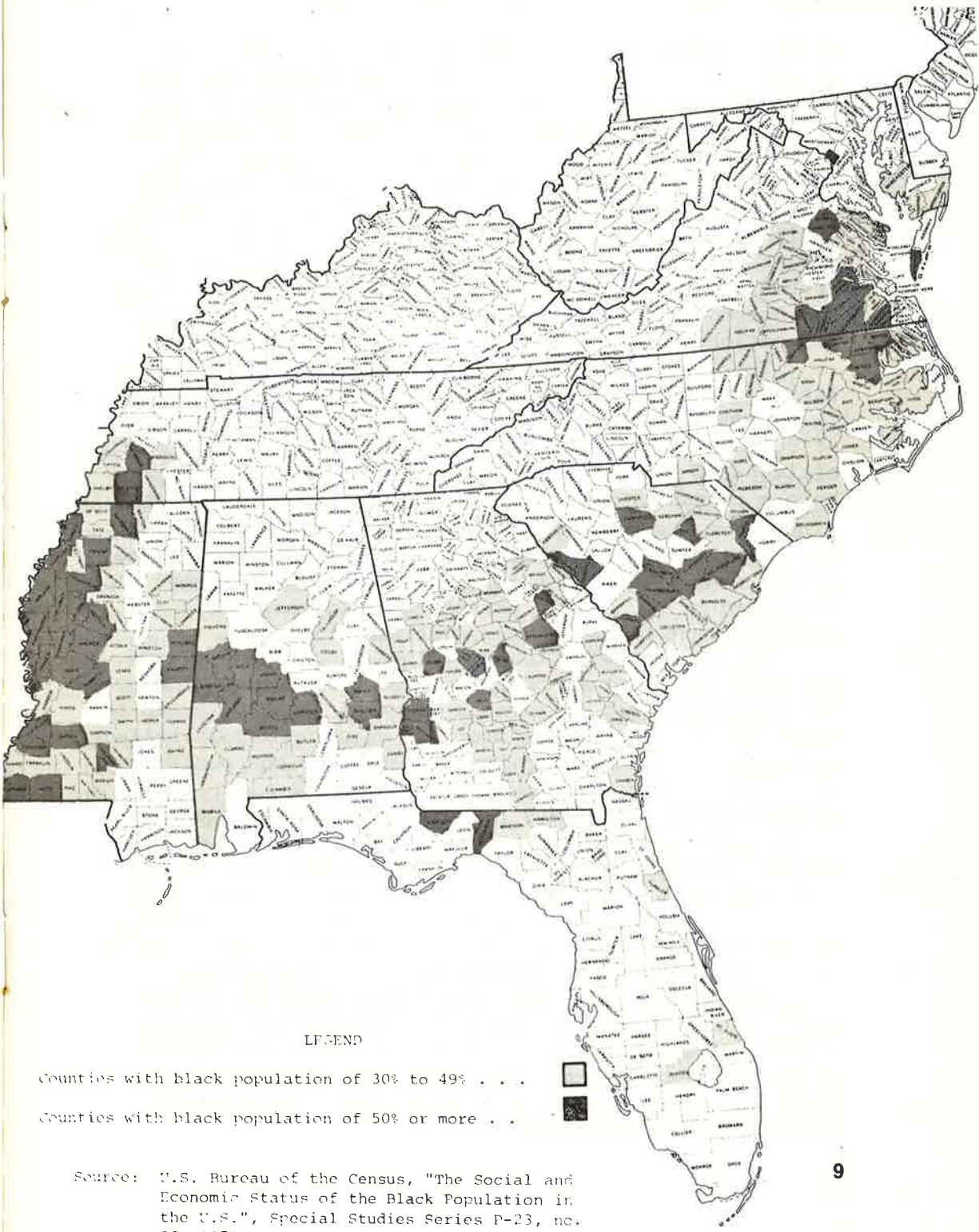
In conclusion, it is clear that blacks do not have a territory, whether the issue is approached by state or by county. And as Stalin has pointed out, if a group fails on any one of the four characteristics, they are not a nation from the Marxist-Leninist point of view. Blacks fail to meet this requirement and, as we shall shortly see, they fail on the next two characteristics as well.

The third characteristic that Stalin lists as necessary for a nation to exist is a common economic system. In this case, blacks must already have an integrated economic organization of their own to constitute a nation. As Stalin expressed it "thus community of

Number of Counties in the U.S. with Blacks as the Majority

year	number of counties
1900	286
1910	264
1920	221
1930	191
1940	180
1950	169
1970	87





economic life, economic cohesion, is one of the characteristic features of a nation." Of course, to have an economic system of one's own (even though dominated by outside forces) necessitates having a territory on which and in which this "community of economic life" can exist. Blacks have neither. They are overwhelmingly wage and salary earners (probably 95%) working for U.S. businessmen who are mostly white. They are just as much a part of the economic community, the economic system of the capitalist United States as whites are. This is the second characteristic on which blacks fail to qualify for nationhood.

The fourth necessary characteristic of a nation listed by Stalin is a "psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture". Do blacks have a community of culture that is different from that of the rest of the citizens of the U.S.? It just isn't a matter of do they have a community of culture. They obviously do. But since some groups want to establish that blacks have a different nation from the rest of the population, these groups must establish that blacks do, now. Do they? In our opinion, no. There is not the slightest basis for thinking that blacks have a distinct culture.

Groups, who wish to prove that blacks have a separate culture, point to the predominant influence of blacks in the development of various forms of jazz music, to the basis of the Uncle Remus stories, to various folk ballads and stories (e.g., John Henry), etc. No one would or could deny these contributions of black people. But it doesn't prove that black people have a separate culture. These contributions are now the common heritage of all of us. Jazz is a part of the cultural heritage of all U.S. citizens, black and white, as are the Uncle Remus stories. For that matter, so are classical symphonic music, opera, Shakespeare and Lewis Carroll, parts of the heritage of all whites and blacks in this country.

That blacks have made major contributions to our culture does not form a basis for saying that blacks have a separate and distinctive culture. It is the basis of pride and the sure knowledge that they have as great a right as any to inherit and share in the culture they helped so much to create.



This brings us to another class of cultural attributes that are sometimes brought forward to demonstrate cultural distinctiveness. The consumption of "soul food", such as turnip greens, yams, black-eyed peas, chitterlings, pigs feet, etc., is regarded as evidence of a distinct culture. So are peculiarities in the use of the English language, as often leaving out verbs, etc. These are just evidences of deprivations caused by poverty. Both Southern whites and blacks, who are poor, have this type of culture. The poor do not constitute a separate nation. Marxists do not want to preserve cultural forms that are the result of exploitation, discrimination, and oppression, as a basis for a national culture. Marxists want to eliminate poverty, not institutionize it.

So it can be seen that blacks do not have a distinct and separate culture of their own, but share (though somewhat unequally) the same cultural heritage as whites in the U.S. This is the third of the four prerequisites for a nation that blacks, as a group do not have. As a matter of fact, even the one characteristic (a common language) that they might technically qualify as having, they do not really have. A common language is necessary for a nation so that its distinct and common culture can be shared and to facilitate the operation of their economic organism. But since blacks have neither of these, the common language does not perform this national function. Instead it does the opposite. The language which blacks have in common with the rest of the citizens of the U.S., actually integrates them culturally and economically into the U.S. nation. Instead of blacks' common language being one of the bases for a Black Nation, it is a basis and one of the manifestations that blacks are a part of the nation of the United States. Thus, blacks do not qualify on any of the four prerequisites for being a nation listed by Stalin.

# Lenin on the Jewish National Question

The situation of Jews in Tsarist Russia was very similar to the position of blacks in the United States. Like blacks, the Jewish population did not have a territory in which it was preponderant, though the majority of Jews had been limited to a section of the country (the Pale of Settlement). The Jewish population was subject to exceptional oppression (like blacks in the U.S.). They were outside the law when the government decided it was convenient to institute a reign of terror (pogrom) against it in order to distract the attention of the rest of the population from the real source of problems of Tsarist society. Anti-Semitism was a major weapon (of divide and rule) in the hands of the Tsarist government. It was not as effective as racism is in the U.S., but the Tsarist government worked it for all it was worth all the same. For historical reasons, racism was not a significant ideological factor in Tsarist Russia, and hence racism was not used to any significant extent by the government.

Tsarist Russia was known as a "prison house of nations". These nations became prisoners of the Russian state by its steady expansion through the conquest of successive areas of contiguous nations. Even after conquest, the former independent areas retained their territory, economic organization, distinctive culture, and language. The national problem there was relatively simple and clear-cut. The only complication came when some Jewish groups wanted Jews to be considered a nation. The Jews had never been a nation in Russia, only a persecuted religious group.

Lenin found himself having to address this problem, not only because Jewish businessmen (Zionists) were pushing it, but because a socialist group (the Bundists) were also supporting it. Because the situation of blacks in the U.S. and the Jews in Tsarist Russia are so similar, a short review of the reasons why Lenin rejected Jewish nationality should help us in our understanding of the

merits (from a Leninist perspective) of black nationality in the U.S. A series of quotes from Lenin illustrate why he rejected the idea of creating a Jewish Nation.

Hence, neither the "logical analysis" of autonomy nor the appeals to history can provide even the shadow of a "principle" justifying the isolation of the Bund. But the Bund's third argument, which invokes the idea of a Jewish nation, is undoubtedly of the nature of a principle. Unfortunately, however, this Zionist idea is absolutely false and essentially reactionary. "The Jews have ceased to be a nation, for a nation without a territory is unthinkable," says one of the most prominent of Marxist theoreticians, Karl Kautsky (see No. 42 of Iskra and the separate reprint from it The Kishinev Massacre and the Jewish Question, p. 3). And quite recently, examining the problem of nationalities in Austria, the same writer endeavoured to give a scientific definition of the concept nationality and established two principal criteria of nationality: language and territory (Neue Zeit, 1903, No. 2) A French Jew, the radical Alfred Naquet says practically the same thing, word for word, in his controversy with the anti-Semites and the Zionists. "If it pleased Bernard Lazare," he writes of the well-known Zionist, "to consider himself a citizen of a separate nation, that is his affair; but I declare that, although I was born a Jew... I do not recognize Jewish nationality....I belong to no other nation but the French.... Are the Jews a nation? Although they were one in the remote past, my reply is a categorical negative. The concept nation implies certain conditions which do not exist in this case. A nation must have a territory on which to develop, and, in our time at least, until a world confederation has extended this basis,

a nation must have a common language. And the Jews no longer have either a territory or a common language....

All that remains for the Bundists is to develop the theory of a separate Russian-Jewish nation, whose language is Yiddish and their territory the Pale of Settlement.

Absolutely untenable scientifically, the idea that the Jews form a separate nation is reactionary politically. Irrefutable practical proof of that is furnished by generally known facts of recent history and of present-day political realities. All over Europe, the decline of medievalism and the development of political liberty went hand in hand with the political emancipation of Jews, their abandonment of Yiddish for the language of the people among whom they lived, and, in general, their undeniable progressive assimilation with the surrounding population. Are we again to revert to the exceptionalist theories and proclaim that Russia will be the one exception, although the Jewish emancipation movement is far broader and deeper-rooted here, thanks to the awakening of a heroic class-consciousness among the Jewish proletariat? Can we possibly attribute to chance the fact that *[sic]* it is the reactionary forces all over Europe, and especially in Russia, who oppose the assimilation of the Jews and try to perpetuate their isolation?

That is precisely what the Jewish problem amounts to: assimilation or isolation?--and the idea of a Jewish "nationality" is definitely reactionary not only when expounded by its consistent advocates (the Zionists), but likewise on the lips of those who try to combine it with the ideas of Social-Democracy (the Bundists). The idea of a Jewish nationality runs counter to the interests of the Jewish proletariat, for it fosters among them,

directly or indirectly, a spirit hostile to assimilation, the spirit of the "ghetto."

Yet the Bund is resisting this only possible solution, for it is helping, not to end but to increase and legitimize Jewish isolation, by propagating the idea of a Jewish "nation" and a plan of federating Jewish and non-Jewish proletarians. That is the basic mistake of "Bundism," which consistent Jewish Social-Democrats must and will correct. This mistake drives the Bundists to actions unheard-of in the international Social-Democratic movement, such as stirring up distrust among Jewish towards non-Jewish proletarians.

"He who says A must say B"; one who has adopted the standpoint of nationalism naturally arrives at the desire to erect a Chinese Wall around his nationality, his national working-class movement; he is unembarrassed even by the fact that it would mean building separate walls in each city, in each little town and village, unembarrassed even by the fact that by his tactics of division and dismemberment he is reducing to nil the great call for the rallying and unity of the proletarians of all nations, all races and all languages.

(emphasis in original; Lenin, Lenin on the Jewish Question, pp. 47-50, 33).

Lenin rejects the idea of Jewish nationality because the Jews do not have two of the basic requirements of a nation: a territory and a culture (represented by a distinct language) distinct from the people they live among. He also rejects the idea of Jewish nationality, because without a legitimate basis, it is politically reactionary. It is a form of "divide-and-rule" ideology. Groups that push nationalism, when there is no legitimate basis for it, objectively speaking, are agents of the minority ruling class among the working class.

# The Comintern's Position, 1928- 1930

Having gone over the Bolshevik requirements for the existence of a nation, its application by Lenin to the Jews in Russia, and with this in mind, let us take a look at the position taken by the Communist International on the Black Nation question in 1928 and 1930. The position taken by the International will be given in quotations from their resolutions of 1928 and 1930.

The bulk of the Negro population (86 percent) live in the southern states: of this number 74 percent live in the rural districts and are dependent almost exclusively upon agriculture for a livelihood. Approximately one-half of these rural dwellers live in the so-called "Black Belt", in which area they constitute more than 50 percent of the entire population....[probably from 1920 census, M-L L]

The various forms of oppression of the Negro masses, who are concentrated mainly in the so-called "Black Belt", provide the necessary conditions for a national revolutionary movement among the negroes. The Negro agricultural laborers and the tenant farmers feel the pressure of white\* persecution and exploitation. Thus, the agrarian problem lies at the root of the Negro national movement. The great majority of Negroes in the rural districts of the South are not "reserves of capitalist reaction", but potential allies of the revolutionary proletariat....

The party must come out openly and unreservedly for the right of Negroes to national self-determination in the southern states, where the Negroes form a majority of the population.  
[1928]

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\*See footnote on page 17.

(our emphasis, M-L L; "The C.I. Resolution on the Negro Question in the U.S.", The Communist, vol. 9, no. 1, Jan. 1930, pp. 48-49).

The International's position was that blacks in the "Black Belt" qualified to be a nation because: (1) they had a territory in which they were a majority, and (2) they suffered from above average oppression, on the basis of race, just as the Jews did because of their religion. Apparently, the other necessary conditions of "a historically evolved, stable community of language, ... economic life, and ... culture" had been forgotten. It is clear, that on this issue, the International abandoned accepted Marxist-Leninist principles. (In the case of the Jews, whose situation in Tsarist Russia was in many respects similar to blacks in the U.S., the C.P.S.U. also abandoned these principles when they granted the Jews in the Soviet Union national status. The Jews were denied national status on principle by both Lenin and Stalin. They did not meet any of the qualifications.)

The next point that will be noted about the position taken by the International, is that it believed that "the agrarian problem lies at the root of the Negro national movement". That is, it believed that a substantial part of the black population must remain farmers in order for blacks to remain dominant in a contiguous territory, that is large enough in size to form the basis for a nation. Using the figures quoted by the International, 64% of blacks in the U.S. lived in the rural regions of the South, while 32% of blacks in the U.S. at the time lived in the rural regions of the "Black Belt" (about 1920).

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\*This is a racist position. Since racism was not significant in the Soviet Union or even in Tsarist Russia, this racist attitude and interpretation was probably brought to the International by representatives from the U.S. Whites do not exploit blacks, the ruling class does. In the same way, Christians did not exploit the Jews in Tsarist Russia, the Russian ruling class did.

The assumption that blacks have to be primarily farmers (whether as owners or as tenants) is necessary so that blacks can form the majority of the population in a sufficient number of contiguous economic and political units (counties, parishes, cities) to meet one of the Bolshevik requirements of nationhood, i.e., having a territory of its own. If blacks stop being substantially agriculturalists then their predominance over a contiguous land area, the "Black Belt", disappears. This "Black Belt" has disappeared and has been gone for some time. As was pointed out earlier, in 1975 blacks only had 5% of their Southern population on farms in the South, as opposed to 74% (in 1920) when the International took their position on the Black Nation question. The black peasantry has disappeared. And with its disappearance has gone the principal basis for the International supporting the Black Nation thesis--the existence of a territory dominated by blacks.

In case there is doubt that the International believed that the existence of a substantial black peasantry was necessary for the existence of a Black Nation, another quote, this time from their 1930 Resolution should lay all such doubts to rest. In this quote the International makes it quite clear that national status can only be attained by the black population of the "Black Belt". Blacks in other areas of the country, including the South, would be fighting for equal rights not nationhood.

The struggle of the Communists for the equal rights of the Negroes applies to all Negroes, in the North as well as in the South. The struggle for this slogan embraces all or almost all of the important special interests of the Negroes in the North, but not in the South, where the main Communist slogan must be: The Right of Self-Determination of the Negroes in the Black Belt. These two slogans, however are most closely connected. The Negroes in the North are very much interested in winning the right of self-determination of the Negro population of the Black Belt and can



thereby hope for strong support for the establishment of true equality of the Negroes in the North....

Owing to the peculiar situation in the Black Belt (the fact that the majority of the resident Negro population are farmers and agricultural laborers and that the capitalist economic system as well as political class rule there is not only of a special kind, but to a great extent still has pre-capitalist and semi-colonial features), the right of self-determination of the Negroes as the main slogan of the Communist Party in the Black Belt is appropriate.

(emphasis in original, "Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States", The Communist, vol. 10, no. 2, Feb. 1931, pp. 154, 159).

The principal basis (a territory) for the support of the Black Nation thesis by the Communist International no longer exists. Since the situation that caused the International to support Black nationalism in the U.S. no longer exists, then the legitimacy of using the International as a support for Black nationalism no longer exists. Thus, the position of those leftist groups who rely on the stand taken by the International, has been undermined.

It should be noted that the International came out in support of the Black Nation only for those blacks living in the "Black Belt", not for those living in other parts of the country. There the program was a fight for equal rights and assimilation within the proletariat. Since almost all the black population in the U.S. falls into this latter category, the real Communist International position today obviously would be to support the program of equal rights and assimilation for blacks and to oppose the divisive tactics of illegitimate nationalism.

# Black Nation Question Among the Left

Thus we have disposed of the proposition that blacks in the U.S. can be considered a nation from the Marxist-Leninist perspective. They meet none of the formal requirements listed by Stalin. Very few people on the left will be surprised by this. Many already knew it, and most of the rest suspected that blacks would not meet one or two of the four requirements.

But despite this, many groups that consider themselves leftist continue to support the Black Nation thesis. Why is this thesis, which is known to conflict with Marxist-Leninist principles and theory, held by groups which consider themselves Marxist-Leninist? For most of these groups, there is apparently two basic reasons.

The first reason is an attitude of contempt for theory, which is a product of a lack of understanding of theory. This shortcoming is reinforced by the "pragmatic" attitude that is so ubiquitous in capitalist, and particularly in United States culture.

The second reason for this unreasonable stance, is most probably a liberal capitulation to any theory or platform that groups think will get them new members easily. Undoubtedly there is also a liberal desire to have militant Black nationalists "like" them. Thus they would not like to antagonize them by opposing their nationalist program.

The increased popularity of this nationalist doctrine in the past ten or fifteen years on the left is a product of its increased popularity among black activists and the groups they belong to. And where did the Black activists get their increased interest in black nationalism? From the big business community in the U.S. In the latter part of the 1960's when the civil rights movement had phased into the anti-Indochina war movement, the most prominent active black groups were not nationalist, e.g., the Black Student Union (B.S.U.). These groups tended to be very active, militant, anti-imperialist, and pro-working class. The big business

community, through their government and their foundations, began to do their best to build up Black nationalist groups, such as, the Pan African Student Union (P.A.S.U.), because at the time, these groups tended to be separatist, relatively passive, inclined to work through the system, and not pro-working class. Since both groups were active at the time, there was a selective process in operation which caused most pro-working class activists to go one way and the pro-capitalist, relatively passive activists to go into nationalist groups.

The big business community used their influence to build up the nationalist groups and to diminish the influence of the militant pro-working class groups. For example, the government and private foundations (e.g., Ford) began making substantial grants to nationalist groups. When ethnic studies programs were established on college and university campuses, care was taken to give preference in selection of faculty and administration to persons having nationalist connections. This development was common knowledge to those who were active in the late sixties and early seventies. In general, this move was successful. The consequences were many; some were long-run, others were obvious immediately. For example, black activist groups, such as B.S.U., which were so prominent and important on campuses in the 60s, gradually dispersed. Consequently, blacks' influence largely disappeared on campuses except for what could be interpreted as narrowly nationalist issues.

Why was the big business community so interested in propagating nationalist sentiments in the black community? The answer is that they believe that nationalist sentiment, based on race, benefits them as a class. Of course, the business class has always known that racism, in its various forms is beneficial. Black nationalism is one of its most important forms in the U.S. at the present time. The question naturally arises, why should racism (including Black nationalism) be of benefit to the class of big businessmen? Is racism always of benefit for the maintenance of capitalism, or is it just special circumstances that make it so?

# Racism and Black Nationalism

Racism is and has been one of the most effective techniques for splitting people in the United States. The fact that racism had been a principal weapon of the ruling classes in this country from an early period is evidenced by the fact that the U.S. is considered one of the most racist countries in the world. Virulent racism is a fact of life and an institutional heritage in this country. And racism did not grow like Topsy, but was planted, nursed, and nourished with great care by the upper classes. But why is racism so beneficial to the upper classes? To understand this, all we have to do is see how it is and was used in this country.

Racism is the newest of "divide-and-rule" ideologies. It was originated about the beginning of the 16th century to rationalize first the extraordinarily savage treatment and exploitation of the American Indians, and later, the equally inhuman treatment of the enslaved Africans brought here to labor on the plantations. Much later when slaves and ex-slaves began to unite with poor whites in the Southern states, racist propaganda, along with a campaign of terror was used to break up this dangerous alliance. Ever since the Reconstruction Era, racist propaganda, discrimination, and legislation has been used to keep the races separated and fighting among themselves. It is obvious that the slave masters and plantation owners, and later, the big businessmen, have always thought that racism was of great benefit to them. It is time to look into the details as to why it is so beneficial to big businessmen.

The primary function of racism is to keep wage and salary earners split, economically and politically. If their ability to join together in unions is cut down, then their ability to raise their wages or prevent reductions will be impaired. Thus their wage and working conditions will be worse than if they worked together. Racism benefits the businessmen and hurts the wage and salary earners of all races.

Businessmen are in business to make a profit. The lower their costs, other things remaining the same, the higher their profits. In general, labor cost is one of

the principal costs. Therefore the lower the wage the higher the profit.

By the same token, when wage and salary earners are split on the basis of race, they are less effective politically. Not only are the wage and salary earner political organizations weaker and less effective in fighting the businessman but they often end up fighting each other instead. Racism helps the businessmen keep from being identified as "the enemy".

There are two principal varieties of racism that masquerade as anti-racism. They are (a) "liberal racism" and (b) "black nationalism".

"Liberal racism" is the theory that only the racial minorities ( blacks, Chicanos, etc.) suffer from racism. Not only does the white worker not suffer from racism, but he actually benefits from it (White skin privilege). Thus, the only reason a white worker would oppose racism would be for ethical or moral reasons, not for economic or political ones.

"Liberal racism's" manifestations are familiar to all of us. Here are a few typical expressions that reflect this version of racism in one way or another: (1) "the theories of Shockley and Jensen are insulting to the black community"; (2) "Racism is a moral problem. It is a problem in the heart of the White American."; (3) "The main obstacle to fighting racism is the racism in all of us [whites]." The "White Chauvinism" and "White Blind-spot" theories are variations of this. "The principal bulwark of racism and its principal beneficiary is the white worker (particularly the blue-collar)."

This form of racism is becoming more popular among some of the more militant groups in the working class, as well as among academics and students. All the media, including the movie and T.V. industry, push this form of racism. "All in the Family" immediately comes to mind.

Of course the businessman is the one who benefits from people believing the "liberal racist's" pitch. Consequently he supports it and propagates it. (He happens to own almost all the communications media). He wants white workers to believe that they (the workers) profit from racism and racial discrimination, that they have a privileged position, being hired first and fired last,

getting the better job and education, and getting higher pay. The businessman wants white wage and salary earners to think that their economic interests are different and opposed to that of the blacks, Chicanos, etc. He wants white workers to think that the only basis for a fight against racism is for ethical and moral reasons, and that only non-whites have an economic reason for opposing racism.

The businessman says that white workers profit by racism. This is false, of course. Superficially, it appears to have some truth to it. This is the material basis for the "divide-and-rule" tactic. Non-whites do make out less well than whites. That is, the non-white is kept in a significantly lower position, economically, socially, and politically, than is the white. But the truth is that both white and non-white workers make out worse than if they were united (namely, wages are lower, unemployment higher, and political consciousness and power lower). To verify this, one need only look at the South--where supposedly white wage and salary earners are more highly privileged vis-a-vis black workers than in any other region of the country. The white section of the working class in the South has the lowest wages and least political power of white workers in any part of this country. This degraded position is due mostly to the success of racist propaganda. Thus, it can be seen that racist propaganda (Shockley, Jensen, KKK, et al.) is an insult to white wage and salary earners as well as non-white, since it works against the economic and political interests of all workers.

The businessman's message to black workers is that white workers are their main enemy. He or she is the one with whom you have to compete for jobs; he or she is the one you most often hear give expression to racist remarks; and he or she is the one hired first and fired last. This distortion, which amounts to falsehood, is pushed at all non-whites, particularly by the liberals ("All in the Family"). On the other hand, who is the black's truest friend? You guessed it. The well-educated white businessman, and those well-educated groups which hope to rise high in management or the professional hierarchy. You seldom hear members of these groups

uttering racist remarks in public. Instead, they sponsor brotherhood weeks, and they are always happy to hire racial minorities in case of strikes. All this talk addressed to black workers is the other side of the "divide-and-rule" coin.

Thus, we see that the examples quoted above of apparently anti-racist sentiments are really pro-racist. This is so since they reflect the assumptions (1) that only non-whites suffer from racism; (2) that the interests of whites and non-whites are opposed; (3) that whites profit from racism; and (4) that racism is a moral problem, not an economic and political phenomenon.

Another major form of racism masquerading as anti-racism is black nationalism. Two groups of this nature are the Black Muslims and the Republic of New Africa Group.

Most of these groups believe that they are culturally distinct from the prevailing U.S. culture. They believe that the only salvation from racism in the U.S. is the formation of a new nation on the basis of race.

What is the theoretical base for black nationalism (besides the ones already discussed)? Basically it is the belief on the part of the racial nationalists that whites (all whites) will always attempt to dominate and exploit non-whites. Whites will continue to do this because they profit, economically and politically from it. Many nationalist (though not all) believe that whites are inherently viscious and would continue to discriminate and exploit non-whites whether they profited economically from the practice or not. Most nationalists are not very clear on this last point but in most cases they seem to believe it. This is pure racism of course, and what you would expect in a racist society. Therefore the only way non-whites can keep from being exploited by whites is to remove themselves entirely from their reach and form a separate nation.

One of the reasons given by black nationalists for separation is the falsehood circulated by the "liberal racists"--namely, that white workers (who represent 80-90% of all whites) profit from racism. It has already been pointed out that this is false. The white worker loses through racism, though not as much as the non-white worker who sees only that the white is better off.

Superficially it looks as if the white worker profits from the system. And this is what the businessman's propagandists tell non-white and white workers. Perhaps an example would make the true situation clear.

One of the arguments that will help to demonstrate the falsity of this "liberal racist" propaganda is one that is often given by businessmen to develop support for the exploitation of colonies. This argument goes as follows: The population in general and the working class (both black and white) in particular should support the subjection and exploitation of colonies by the U.S. businessmen. They should support colonialism because they benefit from it. The cheaper and greater quantities of raw materials leads to cheaper and greater quantities of goods at home. Hence everyone benefits. Also because the standard of living is so much lower in the colony than in the imperialist country, labor is much cheaper there. Raw materials which are cheaper to begin with are made even cheaper by being produced by this cheap labor. Also this cheap labor can be used to perform the labor-intensive phases of some manufactured goods that are light in weight and high in value (e.g., electronics, clothes, etc.). Hence all workers (of all races) in the U.S. benefit from exploiting the resources and labor of the colonies.

In order to administer and hold on to these colonies a large bureaucracy and military are needed. Thus many extra well-paying and interesting jobs are created for people of all races. There is the Army, Navy, Air Force, the Green Berets, A.I.D., the Peace Corps, the C.I.A., etc. Whites may make out better than blacks in the U.S. but both blacks and whites in the U.S. make out considerably better than the citizens of the colonies. Hence, not only the U.S. white but the U.S. black profits from the exploitation of the colonies. This is more or less the argument of the businessman's propagandists. And, of course, it is false. Just as false as the "liberal racist's" contention that white workers profit from racial discrimination against non-whites. Why is this so?

(1) The profits from colonial exploitation all go into the hands of the businessmen. The lower costs



merely result in higher profits. The wages in the U.S. are determined by the strength and organization of the labor movement in the U.S., not by the cost of raw materials in the colonies.

(2) The cheap labor of the colonies does not benefit the laboring class in the U.S. On the contrary, it hurts it. The use of the cheaper colonial labor to produce the labor-intensive stages of a commodity increases unemployment and undercuts the wage rate in the U.S. How does this result come about?

Colonial hiring is the hiring of foreign laborers instead of hiring U.S. laborers. Hiring the South Korean instead of a U.S. laborer has just the same effect as hiring immigrants from Mexico or the bringing over of the Italians and Polish immigrants in the late 19th century. And for the same reason--lower wages. Not only does it increase unemployment among the workers who are already in the U.S. but it undercuts the wage rate. The lowest wage rate sets the floor for the entire wage structure. Further, the higher the unemployment the more people there are fighting for the same job. This also drives the wage rate down. And what about the extra jobs overseas? They are mostly in the military and this involves a great risk of getting killed or mutilated trying to keep people who are poorer than U.S. workers in subjection.

So it turns out that neither white nor black workers make out from colonial exploitation. Rather they lose from it. And this is so even though superficially it looks as if even the black U.S. workers profited from it. Isn't the black U.S. worker's standard of living, education, etc., much higher than those of the colonial people? Yes, certainly. Then it follows that he or she must profit from the exploitation of the colonial peoples. So says the businessman's propagandists. But we know the reason for the U.S. black's higher standard of living is that he or she is oppressed to a lesser extent by the businessman than the colonial people are, rather than that the black is oppressing and exploiting the colonial people. The relation between the black U.S. worker and the people in the colonies is exactly the same as the relation between the white U.S. worker and the black

U.S. worker.

To summarize, black nationalism is a form of racism. It is a movement by a group to separate people on the basis of race. It therefore serves the function desired by businessmen, that is to divide wage and salary earners on whatever basis. It is part of the old ruling class tactic of "divide-and-rule". Consequently, when a black nationalist propagandizes in favor of separation, it is the voice and thought of the businessman and old plantation master infiltrated into the community.

In a racist society nationalism is not unexpected. Non-whites are educated to be racists and to think in racist terms just as whites are. Thus early forms of resistance against exploitation and oppression would often be organized on a racist or semi-racist basis. In so far as this early or semi-nationalism on the part of non-whites leads to building self-confidence in themselves and their ability to organize and resist, it is progressive. But this is true only at this preliminary stage. If nationalism persists past this stage, and they continue to organize on a racial basis instead of a class one then they become racists pure and simple. They become the spokesmen for the businessmen among their own race and in the population as a whole.

Businessmen are aware of the value of nationalist movements to them. This is demonstrated by the fact that the big business foundations (Ford, Rockefeller, etc.) pump money into nationalist as well as pacifist movements. This is particularly the case when militancy among racial minorities, workers, and students is high.

There are many groups that consider themselves to be leftist or Marxist and that advocate support of nationalist or semi-nationalist programs for blacks. In so far as they do this they are not leftist or Marxist, but rightist and capitalist (i.e., pro-businessmen). They are counter-revolutionary because they put race ahead of class, that is, they are racists rather than class-conscious revolutionaries. There is no more diplomatic way of saying it. And advocating and supporting racist programs for blacks inevitably follows from the "liberal racist" position that whites

don't suffer from but actually profit by racism. Like the black nationalist, the "liberal racism" propagandist advocates and spreads racism among white wage and salary earners. All such theories about "White Blindspots", white chauvinism, or white skin privilege are examples of "liberal racism." Not unexpectedly, if you are a racist among whites, you will be a racist among non-whites.

## Conclusion

Blacks in the U.S. do not meet even one of the four Bolshevik requirements deemed necessary to be a nation by Lenin and Stalin. In order to be considered a nation, a people must have all four characteristics. Blacks have none of the four. The Communist International's support of the Black Nation thesis was based on the existence of a substantial black peasantry located in the "Black Belt" region of the South. This peasantry passed out of existence long ago (between 1920 and 1960). Therefore, the basis for the support of the Communist International's position no longer exists. In fact, under present conditions, the International's stated position supports unequivocally the policy of equal rights and assimilation blacks in the U.S. Thus, the advocates of Black Nationalism support this position in opposition to the Bolshevik principles of Lenin and Stalin, the position taken by the Communist International, as well as common sense. Why do they behave in such an irrational way?

Well, leaving out the conscious misleaders and agents of the capitalist class in left organizations, there is one basic reason. The advocates of black nationalism are victims of capitalist theories and principles. They think they have thrown off capitalist ideology and embraced Marxism-Leninism instead. But this is easier said than done. This is a country in which the ruling class had sedulously spread the petty-bourgeois mentality in all its various guises. Besides this, for historical reasons, racism is one of the principal bulwarks of the U.S. ruling class' system of fraud. So it is not surprising to find that petty-bourgeois liberalism combined with racism is strongly

represented among those who consider themselves leftists.

Make no mistake about it, black nationalism is a form of racism. When you deal with a Black nationalist you are looking into the face of the representative of the old slave master as well as the modern big businessman. They are the only ones who have or will profit from racism whether in its black nationalism or other forms.

The Black nationalist (i.e., racist) makes race the basic division in society rather than class. Just as the feminists (i.e., sexists) make sex the basis, or nationalists make nationality, so the racist pushes race as the most significant factor. They are one and all, pet systems of fraud of minority ruling classes.

As all Marxist-Leninists know, the basis of modern capitalist society is class. All analyses and all Marxist movements must be based on class analysis. Race is a secondary phenomenon, it is a part or aspect of labor-capital class conflict. Working-class organizations should devote most of their time to making wage and salary earners class conscious. The businessman would like to substitute, and has put in the primary position, race-consciousness, sex-consciousness, individualism, etc., or anything to distract attention from themselves and to get the workers to fight each other.

There are only two positions. You either work for the working class or for the business class. If you advocate black nationalism (racism), regardless of your subjective intentions, then you are in effect working for the business class. You are a misleader. You are a Trojan horse among the working class, put there by the businessman.

A working-class movement must be based on a working-class theory, Marxism-Leninism. If it is based instead on petty-bourgeois and racist theories, it will only result in the perpetuation of capitalism and the defeat of the working-class movement. That is the purpose of racism, including its black nationalistic variant.

It is the duty of Marxist-Leninists to expose petty-bourgeois and racist theories for what they are. With the aid of Marxist-Leninist (i.e., scientific) theory, this duty can be fulfilled. The working-class movement

cannot allow itself to be split by racism. As Lenin wrote, it cannot allow "tactics of division and dismemberment" to reduce "to nil the great call for the rallying and unity of the proletarians of all nations, all races and all languages."■

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