

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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### THE NEGRO STRUGGLE AND THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

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## INTRODUCTION

I have been invited by the PC to present the first discussion items on the Negro question. They consist of two lectures given in the Los Angeles Friday Night forum in the fall of 1953, plus this introduction in which I will attempt to outline what in my opinion are the critical aspects of the Negro question which must be clarified, the form this clarification should take, and a few other aspects of the discussion.

It is my opinion that the party has been operating upon the basis of ambiguous and even incorrect theoretical formulations regarding the nature and direction of the Negro struggle. Further, that these errors find expression in the 1948 Resolution adopted by a plenum of the National Committee in 1950 which is the only official theoretical and programmatic document we possess that is devoted to the Negro question. It is the primary task of this discussion to clear up these specific questions.

One of the most striking features of the resolution is the fact that it makes no mention of the Stalinists. I don't know of any other document in the history of our movement which resolves the political line of the party without even implied reference to one of our most important opponents in the labor movement. In the field of the Negro struggle in particular the Communist Party is our most direct competitor.

The failure to mention the Stalinist theory and program of Negro nationalism and for self-determination indicates a more important shortcoming of the resolution. This is the failure to deal directly with any of the questions which have been most controversial in the radical movement for several decades: the questions of self-determination, nationalism, the relation of the Negro struggle in the U.S. to the colonial struggle, the fundamental nature of the Negro problem.

Such errors of omission would, in themselves, be sufficient justification for a clarifying discussion. However, the resolution, while it does not touch on these questions in a straightforward manner, does imply a definite attitude toward Negro nationalism and the question of self-determination, and what it implies is theoretically and politically false.

There are two episodes of prior discussion of the Negro question which shed some light on the 1950 resolution and show the only valid interpretations of its ambiguities. These are the discussions between Trotsky and Swabek in 1933 and with George in 1938. In the earlier discussion, Swabek expresses, in behalf of the leadership of the Communist League of America, a healthy distrust of the Stalinist evaluation of the Negro question as a national one and of the slogan of self-determination which flows from this evaluation.

But Swabek admittedly doesn't have a counter-position clearly elaborated and complete. Trotsky is suspicious of Swabek's point of view on the general ground that it sounds too much like the social-democratic argument against self-determination for the European national minorities. He inclines to defend the Stalinist view on the historical basis that the Russian revolution showed the revolutionary content of the demand of the European minorities for self-determination and the reformist character of the demand for their assimilation into the dominant nations.

Trotsky takes this attitude admittedly without any knowledge of the Negro question in the U.S. proper, but from general theoretical considerations. He favored the admittance of Weisbord into the CLA precisely because he held views similar to the Stalinists on the advocacy of self-determination for the Negroes.

He proposed a thorough discussion of the Negro question in the League. This discussion never took place due to the great historical turn which the Trotskyist movement began about that time to build a new International and new revolutionary parties in all countries. But without a discussion, the question appears to have been left pretty much in the air and Trotsky's opinions gained many adherents.

The discussion of 1938 reveals Trotsky with the same general persuasion, though a little modified by the obvious crystallization of the real Negro movement around the demand for equality.

I shall not attempt to argue the question here. The material which follows is basically devoted to it in its entirety. It is sufficient here to state my belief that in this historical epoch it is the demand for direct assimilation around which the Negro movement will continue to move, that this is its fundamental historical direction, that it is precisely this demand which has great revolutionary significance, and that the propagation of the idea of self-determination and Negro nationalism is a concession to the capitalist practice of Negro segregation.

Consequently I regard the following passage of the resolution dealing with "Fighting Capitalist Pressure" not only as politically and theoretically wrong, but also as racially obnoxious: "On the other hand, Negro workers...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...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..."

There is in my opinion only one series of legitimate interpretations of this passage, and only one way that it has been interpreted by the party.

First, what is "the Leninist analysis of the racial and national aspects of the Negro movement" to which "Negro workers...observing the practices of equality...sometimes react with hostility"? Neither Lenin nor Trotsky ever made an analysis of the Negro question.

However, there was a long discussion with Trotsky in which he stated clearly what, in his opinion, a Leninist analysis would probably reveal: that the Negroes were an oppressed race evolving toward national consciousness, and that therefore the slogan of self-determination as opposed to the slogan of immediate equality would prove to hold revolutionary content. It is true that toward the end of this discussion he modified his conviction somewhat. But still the overall effect of his contribution was undeniably to create an extreme inclination in favor of the idea that the revolutionary road

of the Negro struggle was toward nationalism and the creation of a separate State as a necessary pre-condition of any assimilation.

Taken in the context of the historical discussion this section of the resolution is a declaration by implication that we look forward to the revolutionary aspect of the Negro movement to take on a nationalist character. Furthermore, that Negro workers who react with hostility to this concept are to be regarded as expressing "political weakness before the bourgeois pressure."

It has been my experience that about 99 and 44/100% of all Negro workers react with hostility to this idea because they regard it as a theoretical justification for the idea of segregation, separate but equal, and the whole rationalization of the racial system of social organization in the U.S. It is not very surprising, then that we never have recruited or integrated a Negro worker into the party on the basis of this resolution or on the basis of its line on this fundamental question.

On the contrary, the party cannot hope to integrate Negro workers if it views their most progressive instincts -- in this case the desire to concentrate upon the struggle against segregation -- with mistrust and regards their manifestations of a desire to struggle along that line as signs of weakness. Yet this has been the case insofar as the party resolution has been a guide to organizational conclusions.

It may be, and in fact has been argued, that this passage of the resolution refers to a Leninist analysis contained in earlier sections of the resolution itself, and furthermore that this analysis indicated that the direction of motion of the Negro struggle is toward integration and not toward separation.

The previous section of the resolution which is supposed to contain this analysis is entitled "Negro National Consciousness." In it there are the following pertinent passages: "...there is growing up an embryo 'Nation within a Nation'...But contrary to similar manifestations in Europe and Asia the feeling of racial and national solidarity among Negro people thus far aims solely at acquiring enough force and momentum to break down the barriers which exclude Negroes from American society showing few signs of aiming at National separatism...It would be a grave error to underestimate the social and political significance of this maturing Negro racial and National consciousness." (My emphasis.)

It would indeed be a grave error to think that a more confusing analysis could be concocted of the problem of race consciousness which is in the first place wrongly equated with "National Consciousness."

But, is it true that this is a vindication of the historical struggle of the Negroes for the right to assimilation? Actually, the passage quite obviously attempts to straddle this vital and fundamental question, giving a little here and a little there. But it does not quite succeed in maintaining neutrality.

First because it subordinates the Negro question to the National question in general with its "embryo nation within a nation...maturing

Negro national consciousness." This is the foundation of the Stalinist conception of the Negro question and upon which its whole structure rests.

Second, it recognizes that the present mood and consciousness of the Negroes shows "few signs" of aiming at separatism. But this is no concession at all. What is required is not a statement of present and conjunctural trends but of the historical direction. What is clearly implied here, however, is that the present mood may be in contradiction to the fundamental historical trend which is probably toward separatism.

If this were not the case, what conceivable meaning could be attached to the later passage of the resolution? What is it about the "Leninist" analysis of the "national and racial" aspects of the Negro question that would cause a Negro worker who has observed "practices of equality" to react with hostility? It is quite clear to me that the resolution as a whole and in its parts, while attempting to compromise the fundamental questions, actually defends the prognosis of Negro separatism, and this is what Negro workers react to with hostility.

The second major objectionable feature of the section "Fighting Capitalist Pressure" is that it puts a spot-light on certain "petty-bourgeois Negroes" who find in the party a relief from the "strains and humiliations of Negro life."

We have had considerable experience with petty-bourgeois tendencies. Most important of all, our own petty-bourgeois opposition of 1940. An imposing segment of the fundamental Trotskyist cadre was accumulated from the (white) petty-bourgeois intellectuals. But it was only during the later stages of long and bitter faction fight, and after the crystallization of a political faction with a definite class base that Trotsky made his reluctant characterization of the Burnham-Shachtman faction as a petty-bourgeois opposition and defined the problems of the party in terms of the pressure exerted upon it through the agency of its non-proletarian segments.

However, we never had any exhaustive experience with the Negro petty-bourgeoisie. Certainly nothing to justify this kind of treatment in a resolution. Our most important experience in this field was with Jackson in Detroit. But whatever we might have learned from this experience is certainly not remotely connected with this passage in the resolution.

I do not know what purpose was intended by including this reference in the resolution. Without a specific history in which political lessons are learned, this kind of treatment tends to degrade theory of Negro struggle and the organizational conclusions which flow from it to a mere matter of class-race instincts. The objective effect of this particular passage is to justify many very backward notions about race relations.

It is fortunately true that whatever the resolution says or implies, the paper does not follow a policy even vaguely intimating support of the idea of self-determination. Nor do our party spokesmen express ideas contradictory to the demand for assimilation. And furthermore the party has an unblemished record in its championing

of the Negro struggle for equality. Practical necessity forces us to ignore the resolution in this aspect of the question, as is also the case with the Stalinists.

But the fact remains that a political resolution in our party has a fundamental effect on the life of the party, and the Resolution on the Negro question is no exception. There never was a political party which held to a closer relation between theory and practice than ours. And although it is possible for practical wisdom and political sensitivity in the central leadership to counteract an incorrect theoretical formulation to the extent that we commit no important public errors, it is quite wrong to assume that the resolution has exerted no important effect on the party.

Most of us go to the resolution for guidance when we encounter problems in relation to the work of the party among Negroes, recruitment, integration into the party, etc. And in this way the incorrect ideas of the resolution exert a constant pressure on the party until they are definitely rejected.

How should we overcome this defect? I think that the broad responsibility of the party was posed by Trotsky in 1933. He said in effect that if we deny the basically nationalist character of the Negro struggle we must make a fundamental analysis of what its character is, for the experience of the Russian revolution had established self-determination as the normal revolutionary slogan for oppressed minorities.

The main lines of this analysis I have proposed in the material which follows, pursues somewhat the following logic: If we claim that racial discrimination is the axis of the Negro question, our first duty is an analysis of the nature of race and of race relations. I know of no Marxist authority for this. The race question as referred to by the early Comintern was completely subordinated to the colonial question. To be sure, race relations play a role in colonial exploitation but their independent character is revealed only in the United States.

In the examination of race relations as a social problem we inevitably encounter the question of race as a supposedly scientific biological category in which physical differences between people are defined. I have been forced to the conclusion that the connection between the spurious claims of physical anthropology and the question of racial discrimination is intimate enough and important enough to require exposure. So I have indicated what I think we should have to say on the subject of the race concept in general.

The lectures are obviously without the intention of exhausting any of the questions raised. My object has been to provide a basis for discussion within the framework of a unified conception.

Although I have rejected the "nationalist" interpretation of the nature of the Negro question I have not thereby come to regard the Negro struggle as having no legitimate independent existence. But it is my contention that the Negro movement as such derives its motive force and receives its validity as an independent struggle from its character as a racial question rather than from its nationalistic content. Furthermore, that its direction of motion is determined by this unique character.

I believe that what the party requires as the focal point of discussion on this question is a Thesis in which all the main conclusions are drawn. But for purposes of opening the discussion, the present material should be adequate.

There are some unavoidable omissions in my treatment of the question of race relations as a whole: such as the question of the racial aspect of the persecution of Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, etc., in the U.S. Also, the relation between the Negro question and the question of Mexicans in the U.S. There will be adequate opportunity for elaborating these as the discussion proceeds. The Jewish question, so many times referred to in connection with the Negro question, will undoubtedly require attention as well.

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It was unfortunate that we could not have had this discussion while the Cochranites were still in the party, for among their leaders were some who had a most hide-bound and uncompromising attitude in favor of Negro Nationalism. Particularly Adler and Kennedy. It would have been interesting to find out what an open discussion of the Negro question would have done to their faction organization in Michigan. But they left too hurriedly.

It would also have been satisfying to have discussed certain aspects of Negro history with Clarke, whose ignorance of the subject was exceeded only by the audacity with which he proclaimed his views. He undertook a campaign during his 1952 tour to expound a conviction that the Negroes played only a passive role in their own emancipation, before, during and after the Civil War.

I believe that his aim was to show that revolution does not require the intervention of the masses of people, nor specifically of those whose emancipation is at stake. In this way Stalinism and the Buffer Zone question intruded themselves into his ideology. He strove to compare the Soviet bureaucracy with the American capitalist class of the 1860's and thereby, by analogy, to give Stalinism considerable historical justification.

Whatever was in the back of his mind, he never put anything on paper and the opportunity never presented itself to confront him with the matter in open discussion, and he didn't stick around long enough to be plagued with it. But questions of this kind will find their place in the discussion.

Before leaving the subject of the Cochranites there is one more thing which should be said. That is about the misconceptions expressed in their document "The Roots of the Party Crisis." They claimed there that our task in relation to the Negro struggle was to intervene in the ideological life of the Negro community. They even wanted to have something to say about the question of self-determination.

I favor intervention into the ideological life of the Negro community. But I want to know first what line we are going to intervene with. I am quite sure that if we would have intervened with the line held by Clarke, Adler and Kennedy, it would have been disastrous.

They further stated that there is no room for us to contend for leadership in the Negro community as it has leaders who adequately express the requirements of the Negro struggle.

This is not true. As a matter of fact just about the opposite is the case. The Negroes are the only important section of the population in the U.S. who really want a fundamental social change at the present time. However, their leadership expresses this only in the very elementary form of complaining. These leaders don't do very much about it except to protest acts of injustice against individuals and to engage in legal battles. In the South they have led a movement for the right to vote.

But politically they are tied to the parties of the master class and are at the same time prisoners of the labor bureaucracy. And for the Negroes, co-existence in the Democratic Party with both the bosses and the Southern Bourbons is more obnoxious and contradictory by far than for the general working class.

For these reasons our party has been able to achieve a considerable influence in the Negro community. As a matter of fact, it is precisely here that we most closely approach the reality of being a genuine party in the full sense. Here for example, we can initiate mass actions, such as the protest against the murder of Harry T. Moore initiated in Los Angeles, and a dozen more nationally of recent years.

Another thing we encounter is a mass response to our propaganda. That is, a mass kind of response. We achieve a qualitatively higher and generally consistent electoral support in the Negro community even with white candidates. In the sale of the paper and popular pamphlets it is not necessary to seek out radical individuals and personal contacts in order to get good sales. You can always depend upon support in any Negro community on a door-to-door basis. This has been the backbone of the circulation of the paper for years.

When we will be able to create a bridge between this mass base and the party organization in the form of a strong Negro cadre, the party will be an imposing power in the Negro community which will give a realistic challenge to the petty-bourgeois leadership which seems so firmly entrenched today.

It is sometimes frustrating to comrades that this advanced character of the Negro struggle does not find its expression in a large and powerful Negro cadre in the party at the present time. And this has been the subject of considerable discussion in the party.

It is not my intention either to re-open the question or explain why we haven't built such a cadre so far. There are a number of objective difficulties to recruiting and holding a large mass of Negroes. These difficulties in the objective situation should be given full consideration. But this doesn't answer the specific problem of building the cadre. I do contend that a cadre can be built under present day conditions if the problem is approached with the proper theoretical and programmatic equipment.

First, the question of theory. Armed with a crystal clear theory of the Negro struggle which distinguishes our party from all others we will be able to open the door of Marxism and Trotskyism to



the advanced Negroes, whether among the workers or students. But we must show with scientific precision the specific relation between the race question, capitalism, socialism and the party.

I disagree with the notion that we can't recruit and assimilate Negroes because we can't solve their problems in an immediate and practical way and because we are an unpopular party which will only add political persecution to the racial discrimination which they already suffer in addition to the normal exploitation of all workers.

On the contrary, I believe that it is precisely because there is no solution to the Negro question under capitalism that thinking Negroes should be attracted to our party which is the only party dedicated to its abolition. Comrade Cannon answered the question quite simply during the discussion which followed one of his lectures on "America's Road to Socialism" when he said that the double exploitation of the Negroes was a double reason for them to join the SWP.

But in order for Negroes to embrace our party as their own they have to be completely convinced that the only real solution to their problems lies along the line of the proletarian revolution.

I do not believe that the mass of Negroes can be recruited and assimilated into the party on this basis. But there is a tremendous stratum of Negroes who think seriously about the future, possess great foresight and capacities for leadership, devotion and sacrifice. For them it is not a practical or personal solution which is required but a theoretical and political solution. This will open up the way to their becoming the real leaders in the Negro community, the union movement, and in the party itself.

Then the question of assimilation into the party. The first condition that of theoretical clarity being met, the second will not prove too difficult. Of course during times like these it is somewhat difficult to assimilate anyone into the party and I don't think that Negroes present a much different problem from others.

It is necessary, of course that they assimilate Marxism. But in order that this may be possible it is necessary to give a great deal of close personal attention to the development of every individual. This is a maxim of recruiting in general, of course. In the process of learning and working together with the party members in the performance of party tasks a strong tie develops, which helps to integrate new members.

This is the narrower or more elementary form of integration. But nevertheless the starting point. Naturally the integration of any recruit comes generally when the program of the party finds expression in mass actions and a member participates in such actions as a disciplined revolutionist.

However it is not necessary to make this the first step in integration into the party. In many other fields of recruiting we sometimes consciously hold off the mass movement experience at least for a time so that the new member may absorb our teachings and organizational training as the foundation of his or her work in the mass movement.

This may seem to be a trivial point, but I believe that mistakes have been made in the past in demanding too soon that Negro recruits dig into the community and produce something, before they have been sufficiently bound to the party by Marxism. And I believe that both the source and the justification for such mistakes is to be found in the Resolution.

Next, the problem of the youth. I believe that we can expect to make great gains among the Negro youth. We have never generally been an attractive pole for this rebellious stratum of society and it is time that we made a conscious turn toward it. The clarification of our theory will be an important step toward creating an attractive power for young Negroes. There is fruitful work to be done on the campus which will be well rewarded.

When we recall how much of our present cadre was recruited among the youth we should not deny the Negro youth of today as important a role in the party of the future.

In the following presentation of the essentials of the Negro question I have felt that it is the kind of approach that the party wants and needs. It seems to me, further, because of the historical discussions with Trotsky and the controversy with the Stalinists on this question, that we have an important international obligation to clear up the question. Trotsky's implied injunction was this: the Russian Revolution and the early Comintern established self-determination as the general formula for the unleashing of the revolutionary struggle of oppressed minorities. If you are going to buck this theory in the field of the Negro struggle in the U.S. you have got to present a full and complete analysis in order to justify such a deviation. It has been my object to lay the basis for such an analysis.

I have leaned heavily upon Dr. Oliver Cromwell Cox, W.E.B. Du Bois, Franklin Frazier and other scholars of the Negro question. I have heard that Daniel Guerin, in his study of the United States, has some very interesting observations to make on the Negro question, but I have been unable to take advantage of his work. On the race question proper, the works of geneticists such as William C. Boyd, and particularly M.F. Ashley Montagu have been indispensable.

## I. RACE AND CAPITALISM

Not long ago a friend of mine with his family made an automobile trip to his ancestral home in the South. In a discussion of his trip I asked him how he got along on the road. He is a former official of the NAACP, a militant fighter against segregation and discrimination and knows the score just about any way he may be required to add it up. I knew that any incident which the Southern Jim Crow system insisted upon bothering him with would be amply repaid.

No, he hadn't any trouble to speak of. Only one small incident occurred at a gas station in the beautiful state of Arkansas. They drove into this gas station, asked the attendant to fill the tank and prepared to go to the rest rooms. The attendant told them gently but firmly that the colored rest rooms were around at the back. My friend put on his best dead-pan expression and in his most casual conversational tone replied: "That's interesting. What color are they?"

And while the attendant was gasping for breath and trying to keep from fainting, the family made its unhurried way to the regular rest rooms.

This episode, small and personal though it may be, reveals two important truths which I will try to illustrate tonight and next Friday when I complete this discussion of the race question. First, it illustrates the complete irrationality of the division of society into groups according to skin color. What my friend was saying to the gas station attendant was that to any rational human being there should be no more significance to differences in the color of people than to differences in the color of rest rooms, and that the fact that the attendant was the proprietor of rest rooms of different color was mildly interesting, but no more. But that contrary to all reason and logic, all of American society is disfigured by this artificial and fantastic division into races.

Secondly, the episode brings to mind what the reaction of an ordinary European, unfamiliar with the American social structure, might be to such a situation. A naive Englishman or Frenchman might honestly reply to such a situation: "You have rest rooms of different color? Very interesting, I am sure. What color are they?"

When placed in this context, the racial division of society shows up primarily as an American disease of the social structure. For in the social structure of none of the advanced industrial countries is it possible to find anything approaching the American system of race relations, with the single exception of Germany under the Nazis.

These are two important themes in the analysis of the Negro question and you will find them apparent in each of the following subjects with which we shall deal tonight:

1. The Transformation of the Negro question from the days of Booker T. Washington to the present day.
2. The exploitation of skin color.
3. What is Race and what are Race Relations?

4. The origin of the Race Concept.
5. The form of race relations.
6. International aspects of the race question.
7. The Negro question and the oppression of national minorities in the U.S.

#### 1. The Transformation of the Negro Question.

No inhabitant of our planet is permitted to ignore the power of American capitalism today. Its military might, its financial rulership, its monopolistic national power and apparent political equilibrium are everyday facts of life for all the oppressed peoples of the world. This strength of American capitalism was born in the Civil War, the Reconstruction and the consolidation of power following it.

In 1860 the capitalist class had shared the power with the dominant slaveowners for sixty years. Throughout this period the capitalists were thwarted economically and humiliated politically. Economically they were injured by the constant reduction of tariffs which brought cheap British goods onto the domestic market. Their need for westward expansion was thwarted because the slave owners would permit westward development only on terms favorable to their interests.

The capitalists were humiliated politically by a series of congressional compromises. In these compromises the slaveowners invariably came off the victors, even when the Whig party of the capitalists held congressional majorities and controlled the executive as well.

Through the Civil War the capitalist class overthrew the slave owners and took the whole national power for itself.

During the ensuing Reconstruction in the South, the capitalists permitted a short and inconclusive struggle of the Negroes for equality. These were the glorious days when a white and black peasantry ruled the South. It was then that the Negroes achieved the social, political and economic destruction of the old enemy class. But as soon as this destruction had been accomplished, the capitalists turned against the Negroes. Together with a new capitalist plantation aristocracy, the capitalists drove the Negro people back into the social conditions that accompanied slavery.

This defeat of the Negroes formed the basis for the modern political system in the United States. The stability of the so-called two-party system, where the capitalists rule unquestioned through either one of two similar political cliques, was based upon the disfranchisement of the southern workers.

This political system enabled the capitalist class to exploit mercilessly the western farmers, amass tremendous aggregations of capital through this exploitation and through the looting of the public domain and the public treasury.

Capitalist economic dominance and political equilibrium made it possible for United States to expand into the world market, to engage in two world wars of imperialist expansion, and to rise from

an insignificant power at the beginning of this century to its present exalted position as leader of the entire capitalist world. All this was done without serious political interference by any other class in American society.

In part, therefore, the economic well-being and the political stability of the capitalist class rests upon the renewed degradation of the Negro people after the Civil War.

It was this degradation that brought forth Booker T. Washington. He was the instrument by which the Negroes acceded to the terms of defeat. In his famous Atlanta speech in 1893, Washington formally renounced the struggle for equality.

But since this defeat in the last quarter of the 19th century there has been a fundamental change in the material conditions surrounding the Negro struggle. The defeat of the Negroes was the defeat of an almost exclusively agrarian people in a backward agrarian society. Today the Negroes are largely city dwellers, and even in the South, industrial capitalism has been forced to break up the old agrarian pattern.

The victory of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1890's was made possible because the Klan was able to isolate the Negroes and to separate them from all their allies among the other working masses of the country. Today, the Negro movement emerges as a movement of national scope with powerful contingents in every city in the country. The growth of the CIO has reflected the reestablishment of the alliance of black and white in the industrial working class.

The program of Booker T. Washington was one of humility and acceptance of second-class citizenship. Today the Negro community is alive with a great movement which has as its fundamental aim the achievement of full economic, political and social equality. Substantial gains have been made. There has been, in fact, a complete transformation of the movement of the Negro people during the past twenty-five years.

This occurred at a time when the whole American working class stood on the threshold of growth into political consciousness. In the great awakening struggles of the 1930's the working class gained the elementary class solidarity of unionism. Today the conditions are maturing under which it will move forward towards full class consciousness and a struggle for political power.

The rejection of race prejudice in favor of class solidarity has been a consistent phenomenon ever since the beginnings of the CIO. Its fulfillment will be the mark of the full maturity of the American working class movement.

The struggle of the Negro people for equality is one of the great dynamic forces of the labor struggle itself. The purpose of these lectures is to analyze this struggle and to show how it will find its completion in the Socialist society of the future.

## 2. Exploitation of Skin Color

We will now consider the fact that the fundamental element in discrimination against Negroes in the United States is special exploitation through stigmatization of skin color. Never in history until the rise of capitalism, had the world witnessed the division of society by color.

The special exploitation of Negroes bears some similarity to the exploitation of the colonial world by the imperialist nations, and also to the domination of the small and weak nations of Europe by the rich and powerful empires. The similarity exists in this one fact: that the Negroes as a social group are subject to discrimination and super-exploitation above and beyond the elementary exploitation of wage labor by capital, or the oppression of the small capitalists by the large ones. The Negro people as a whole including all classes are subject to this discriminatory oppression.

This is the similarity of the exploitation of Negroes in the United States to that of colonial peoples and other oppressed nations. But there are also important differences, and these differences are more striking than the similarities.

Czarist Russia conquered Poland and subjected it to a classical national domination. Great Britain's subjugation of India was equally representative of colonial oppression. Here we have the oppression of whole nations. But the Negroes are not a nation. Imperialist exploitation subordinated the national economy of the weaker and more backward countries of the earth to that of the dominant nations. This exploitation is made possible through the vast differences in historical development of different areas of the world.

Neither cultural difference nor national peculiarity sets the Negroes apart in American society. American capitalist society is a composite of immigrant groups of diversified national origin. The emergence of the American nationality as one of the distinct peoples of the world is made possible by the subordination of these immigrant groups to the dominant Anglo-American culture and their assimilation into it. Of all the immigrant groups, the Negroes were historically the best prepared to assimilate.

Europeans, coming to North America, whether voluntarily as colonies or as temporary indentured servants, had a natural protective tendency to group themselves together into closed communities in which they could perpetuate the national peculiarities of language and custom characteristic of their homeland. The existence of large foreign-speaking groups, even entire cities and towns having newspapers, foods, and other customs of their European background, runs as a persistent theme throughout the history of the United States.

The voyage of the Negroes to North America was not a migration, however, but the process of the slave trade. The slave traders, in their devastation of African life, did not bring to America a homogeneous population but representatives of a thousand different tribes.

The transition from African tribal life to exploitation on American plantations was sufficiently abrupt, terrifying and protracted to break virtually every important bond which held the slave to

his former life and cultural background. The rupturing of the cultural chain which might have held the Negroes together in some African cultural homogeneity was further helped by the slave owners, who would generally refuse to buy more than one slave from the same tribe or nation.

Thus living as slaves, who came to know no other homeland than the United States, knew no other language than English, held no foreign allegiance, the Negro people are among the oldest of all the immigrant groups. They are essentially American.

For two and a half centuries, the Negroes were the only stable labor force in that portion of the North American continent which became the United States. All other sections of the population were drawn into the fluidity of classes which characterized the period of westward expansion of the capitalist economy. The slaves remained enslaved from generation to generation.

In this position, the Negroes developed a powerful folk-culture. But this culture did not take the road of an independent national development. Because it was virtually the only real American folk-culture, the slaves' music, "accent," folk-lore and religion filled a cultural need for the American people as a whole. First the slave culture inundated the original Anglo-Saxon culture of the South, virtually destroying it. From there it went on to fuse with the whole national culture until today those aspects of the national culture which are considered to be "typically" American are largely the result of Negro influence.

This is true in song and dance, in folk-tales, the romantic crooner, blues singer, jazz man and hep-cat; in all popular art, in fact, and in nearly every other field in which the needs, aspirations and frustrations of people are expressed through a social medium.

Cultural differences are one of the important symptoms of traditional national and colonial oppression. However, it should be obvious that cultural difference can have no bearing upon the special kind of exploitation to which the Negro people are subjected. On the contrary, Negroes, have been a constant instrument of modification of the basic Anglo-American culture. This attests to a process of mutual assimilation with the dominant cultural group.

In spite of the stigma of the black skin, therefore, the mutual assimilation of Negro and Anglo-American appears as an over-riding law of American historical development which defies the laws of segregation, the prejudice of skin color, and the customs and social relations of the Jim Crow system.

### 3. Race and Race Relations

The historical peculiarity of such a system of special exploitation based upon skin color requires a fundamental analysis of the race system of social organization. The first question which arises is: what is race and what are race relations?

Until a few years ago it was universally agreed among scientists and laymen alike that race was a legitimate biological category. That is, that the visible physical differences of skin color, hair

texture, etc., which are apparent among people formed an adequate scientific basis for the biological division of the human species into sub-categories generally called "races." Indeed for the past century all of physical anthropology, which is supposedly a branch of science, has been devoted exclusively to the demonstration of the race concept.

No two schools of this so-called science were ever able to agree upon what the fundamental yard-stick was for determining race. None agreed precisely as to whether race was really a designation of subspecies. None agreed as to how many "races" exist. Some said one hundred, others said three. Fundamental to all of them until recent times was the idea of superiority and inferiority. They all agreed that these obvious physical characteristics were somehow related to fundamental biological characteristics which expressed themselves in different capacities and functions of the human mind.

A more recent school of liberal anthropologists overthrew the concept of biological superiority and inferiority. They retained however the basic concept of racial division. This was the theory of the biological equality of separate races.

But once the idea of superiority and inferiority was stripped from the race concept, it could not stand, for this idea was fundamental to the very idea of racial division. Within the last few years in a series of brilliant studies a small group of scientists has destroyed the basic theory and method of physical anthropology. That is to say, they have made it quite clear that there is no scientific basis for the contention that society can be divided into races upon the basis of visible physical characteristics.

Even while destroying the foundation of the race myth, however, most of these scientists are still in its power and continue the search for some means to justify racism. But the objective result of their destruction of the old race concept has been to make any race theory scientifically untenable today.

What they have proven in reality is that there is no justifiable biological category such as "race" into which to divide humanity.

Nevertheless, in defiance of this advance in science, skin color and Jim Crow laws continue to go hand in hand. Color supremacy and color exploitation continue to persist, not only in the United States but throughout that part of the colonial world dominated by Anglo-American imperialism. And the recent discovery that there is no such thing as "race" seems not to have affected the existence of exploitative relations between people which are in fact organized around skin color or "race."

"Race" is therefore a reality in spite of the fact that science reveals that it does not exist. In order to discover the relation between "race" as a concept of physical anthropology and "race" as a fact of social existence, it is necessary to enquire into the origin of both.

#### 4. The Origin of the Race Concept

How did the idea of race come into being? There was no conception of race before capitalism. Of all the antagonisms between peoples



of the ancient and medieval world not a single one had as its focal point the different appearance of peoples. On the contrary, older civilizations were struck with the basic identity of people as human beings independent of the differences in skin color, hair texture, etc.

To be sure, ever since the division of society into classes, the owning classes have held those that they exploited in contempt. But in ancient times the claims of superiority of ruling classes never took on a racial character.

The first time in the known history of human society that difference in skin color was the subject of fierce antagonism between people was the direct product of colonial and United States chattel slavery created under the impulse of the development of European capitalism.

It was a peculiar combination of historical accident and necessity by which the Negroes became the slave class of this modern slave system.

The climate, soil and location of the southern United States, the West Indies and Central America was suitable for the production of certain crops. These crops could only be produced in marketable proportions by the use of large scale cultivation methods. With a wide abundance of free land, however, available to all, free labor could not be held on the land of others. It was therefore necessary to create a system of compulsory labor. The system of chattel slavery is quite inefficient and wasteful. But in this part of the western hemisphere the low cost of maintenance of labor made it possible to utilize slavery profitably in spite of its wastefulness.

The native labor supply of the American, Carribean and other West Indian tribes was neither extensive enough nor so easily adaptable to agriculture as to provide an adequate working force of plantation labor. European peasant labor was inefficient in the sub-tropical zone and expensive to maintain and replace. Labor from Africa, on the other hand, was plentiful, accustomed to agriculture and efficient in the heat of the sub-tropical zone.

Furthermore a slave trade had been going on in Africa for years, organized by the Arabs. It was by no means an extensive trade but it could serve as a starting point.

Another advantage of African labor was that as a chattel slave -- i.e., a piece of property -- a Negro could be identified by his skin.

Chattel slavery was a system of production which had been outgrown by European society because it was a system of low productivity and wastefulness. Therefore, the very existence of a mode of production based upon the absolute ownership of one human being by another after it had been so long outgrown, was repulsive to progressive people. Particularly when the world was bursting with revolutions proclaiming the equality of all men. This slave system became so repulsive in fact that only weird and perverse social relations could contain it. To despise the black skin as the mark of the slave was the principal and focal point of these social relations.

Thus, around the question of skin color, society in the West Indies and North America proper began to divide itself, as social relations degenerated under the slave system. First the black skin was despised because it was the mark of a despised mode of production. But this despised mode of production was the creator of untold wealth and prosperity, and capitalist society cannot despise riches for long. So they turned the whole matter on its head.

The slaves were in an inferior position economically. Gradually, white slaveowning society constructed a wall of color: that it was not the mode of slave production which was to be despised, but the slave: that the reason the black skin was the mark of the slave was that it was first the mark of human inferiority.

In this manner the class problem of slavery became complicated and confused by the color question. The slaves, besides being an exploited social class, became, in the perverted thinking of the dominant society an inferior race as well.

It was upon this foundation that the "science" of physical anthropology built its structure. In service to the American planters, the international slave traders and colonial exploiters, fake scientists and politicians took a set of perverted social relations based upon a discarded social system and made them into the foundation stones of a science. They justified slavery as natural and completely desirable for those with a colored skin.

And they had great need for such a justification. At the beginning of the slave trade the idea of spreading Christianity to the heathen was sufficient justification for Negro slavery. Slave-traders were the missionaries and the slaveowners the priests of a crusade to bring the word of God to heathen "savages" who would otherwise be doomed to eternal torment in their awful ignorance.

But the revolutions in Britain, America and France stripped away the veil of religion from knowledge and initiated the age of science and rationalism. Social relations could no longer be explained by reference to God. So a fake "scientific" explanation of the social relations of slavery grew up to justify them. This is the actual foundation of the science of physical anthropology.

Slavery itself was overthrown in the Civil War and Reconstruction. But the needs of the American capitalists for compulsory agricultural labor in the south remained. A new semi-capitalistic mode of agriculture grew up in which the semi-slave condition of the freed Negroes was made permanent by the re-establishment of the social relations of slavery: color discrimination buttressed by segregation and race prejudice.

Race thus became a fetish of American capitalism, a system of special exploitation based upon the social relations and customs of a previous mode of production, which had itself been an abomination to society. Stripped of scientific justification, what then remains of race? Race is a relation between people based upon the needs of capitalist exploitation. The race concept in anthropology grew out of the social relations of slavery. It was congealed by the adaptation of these obsolete social relations to the needs of capitalist production.

The concept of race has now been overthrown in biological science. But race as the keystone of exploitation remains. Race is a social relation and has only a social reality.

### 5. The Form of Race Relations

The basic form of race relations is segregation. In the colonial countries it is expressed by the voluntary self-segregation of the white agents of empire. But it would be an error to judge race relations as a whole by their expressions in colonial exploitation. Race relations in the colonies are derived primarily from the existence of the race question in America and particularly in the United States.

In the colonies the question of race is dependent upon the specific needs of colonial exploitation. In the United States special exploitation is dependent upon race relations. In the colonies race is dependent upon exploitation, but here the exploitation is dependent upon race.

In this country race relations take the form of the compulsory segregation of Negroes. The intensity of segregation and of all the secondary race relations which flow from it, determine the extent of the special exploitation. By and large, in the north and west where segregation is less intensive than in the South, the degree of special exploitation of Negroes is far lower. Without segregation, discrimination and race relations would soon disappear.

It is different in the colonies. Here, the special colonial exploitation to which the masses of Asia, Africa, and South America are subjected is dependent primarily upon the financial, military and political control which the imperialists are able to maintain. The establishment of race relations reflecting the concept of white superiority is an important instrument of this domination, but not fundamental.

With or without segregation the special exploitation of colonies would continue upon the basis of the economic military and political power which the U.S., Great Britain, France, etc., wield over the colonial world.

The completeness and rigidity of segregation in the United States is demonstrated principally at the points where it tends to break down. The most ticklish problem of such a system as the American race system is inevitably -- what to do with the children of mixed marriages; or, more precisely, how to determine racially people of mixed parentage. Marriage between Negro and white is illegal in the majority of states. But the offspring of illegal marriage is nevertheless taken care of by far-seeing lawmakers. In some cases, any one with so much as one-sixty-fourth Negro ancestry is a Negro.

This illustrates the completeness of the segregation system in the U.S. It demonstrates in the first place one of the important differences between race relations and other social relations under capitalism.

In no other system of social relations is segregation the principal form. There are relations between nations of many different varieties based upon the international rivalry for markets, and upon other points of international conflict. However, throughout history it has only been necessary for an individual or group to adopt the language and customs of another nation in order to become a part of it.

Among classes it is only necessary to change economic status to pass over class lines. The worker can accumulate money, invest it in a capitalist enterprise and find the road to the capitalist class. The capitalist who loses his capital and must work for another to support himself descends to the working class.

While in the present stage of monopoly capital there is greater class rigidity than in the early days, and it is now virtually impossible for a worker to become a capitalist, still it is fundamental to capitalist society that it provide means for the passing over from one class to another as economic development requires. In the United States the worship of this machinery is a national creed with the constant reiteration that anyone can become a capitalist, anyone can become president.

The caste system of India represents a decayed stratification of occupational groups within classes. Yet it provides the machinery both for individuals to change their caste station either upward or downward in the social scale and for whole castes to change their social standing. It is only race relations which are formally immutable and absolute. A Negro cannot become white.

In this comparison it is obvious that race relations are in a separate category from the other basic social relations of society.

The caste system was the necessary product of the stagnation and decay of Indian feudalism. National relations are the inevitable product of the development of commodity production. Class relations are the inevitable result of the break-up of primitive communism and the establishment of private property. All of these have the historical justification of economic necessity, are firmly intertwined with great historical epochs, and are inseparable from them.

But race relations have no such firm foundation. The racial structure of American society is a disease of the social system and has neither historical justification nor economic necessity, in the sense that capitalism has existed for centuries in other countries without the disfiguration of race antagonisms.

Any attempt to classify the Negro question as a caste, or national question serves only to confuse it. For such a classification lends to race relations some of the stability and historical justification of the centuries upon centuries of Indian civilization, or the world-wide development of nations. Race relations are products only of capitalism, and specifically of American capitalism, and will disappear entirely without leaving much of a trace, with the disappearance of the capitalist mode of production.

The absurd stringency of laws which state that a person six generations removed from Negro ancestry is a Negro, when in actuality a Negro is only a person with a dark skin, signifies the instability

and artificiality of the system and the extent to which fantastic and artificial measures are required to maintain its form -- segregation.

For it is not the purpose of the law to keep a visibly white person of one sixty-fourth Negro ancestry in the ghetto in segregation with dark people, but to prevent social contact between white and black in the beginning of such a family descent by stigmatizing the offspring of mixed marriages as black. It is in the United States that the form of race relations reveals its basic content and absurdity: this is the naked or pure form of the race question.

#### 6. International Aspects of the Race Question

The system and ideology of white supremacy is an important weapon of western imperialist domination of the colonial countries of Asia, Africa, Asia Minor and South America. Specifically, it is those areas dominated by either Britain or the United States where race is a most prominent feature of colonial exploitation. It is important to note also that it was Britain in the 19th and the U.S. in the 20th century which represented the most effective and ruthless system of oppression of the darker peoples of the colonial world.

There is no international rigidity in the application of the international system of white supremacy, as there is in the United States. It may take the violent form of terrible oppression of the Bantu in South Africa, or the comparatively benevolent form of white domination through ostensible equality as in Hawaii. But in all circumstances it retains fundamental features in common which reveal its role.

The idea of white superiority in China of a few years ago or in India is certainly believed to impress the "natives" with a sense of their own inferiority, and therefore a willingness to accept exploitation and humiliation by the white oppressor as a law of nature. There is, however, no evidence of great success in this field.

On the other hand it is quite evident that the main value of the ideology of white supremacy is in a situation where a thin stratum of white agents is required to maintain social homogeneity while administering the affairs of the imperialist rulers. It is necessary to foster among them a racial contempt, even hatred, for the subject populations. Without color prejudice, the inevitable tendency of such colonial agencies is to become absorbed into the population and to develop sympathies and allegiances in contradiction to their function as agents of empire: they would tend to sympathize with the oppressed.

Today in the twilight of imperialism the ideology of racial hatred assumes even greater importance than during the heyday of the "white man's burden." Today questions are being settled not by administrators supported by a police with a small military force held in reserve, but by large armies of occupation and subjection whose morale and social homogeneity must be maintained whether in actual warfare as in Korea, or in preventive occupation as in Japan. The problem in the U.S. Army is considerably complicated by the presence of Negro soldiers who do not accept the specific doctrine of

white supremacy. Nevertheless, race prejudice remains an important condition of the stability of imperialist rule by the United States throughout the world. This condition indicates the delicate equilibrium upon which all imperialist stability rests.

Throughout the colonial world we see expressions of racism. However, in every case they are derivative phenomena dependent upon the American system of race relations.

It is only in the United States that race relations assume a pure form. That is, it is only here that skin color alone, independent of cultural difference, geographical remoteness, or national identity forms the basis for discrimination and special exploitation.

In the Union of South Africa race relations assume the most violent and brutal form. A white European minority of two million exercises domination over eight million Africans. However, the racial structure of this society is considerably newer than its American counterpart, and its builders have always looked to the United States for guidance and inspiration.

As late as 1877 only one-tenth of the continent of Africa was under imperialist domination. It is mainly from this date forward that white supremacy has asserted itself. For all the violence of race relations there, it is only recently that the rulers of South Africa have made the final attempt to "purify" the race question along American lines by the exclusion of mulattoes from the electorate along with the blacks.

The main concern, however, of the Bantu, as of the mulattoes, is not one of color but of their colonial-national status. The struggle of the native inhabitants of Africa for emancipation will on the other hand probably take the form of a color struggle, as did the 18th century revolution in Santo Domingo which established the Republic of Haiti. But its essence will be that of a national struggle against colonial oppression.

In the African colonies, as in all colonial countries the race question, however severe, is subordinated to the needs of these peoples for national emancipation and the end of all colonialism. The cultural differences between the European and African population, when expressing the relation between oppressor and oppressed, take on an economic and socially antagonistic character which is only reinforced and stabilized by the doctrine of white supremacy.

Thus in the Union of South Africa, where race relations occupy only a secondary and supporting position in special exploitation and are subordinated to the national oppression of the native Africans, these race relations have a firmer foundation than in the United States.

During the days of chattel slavery where race relations were the expression of a special mode of production, they enjoyed such a greater stability. The slave was the object of special exploitation primarily because he was a slave, secondarily because he was a Negro. Today, it is not because he is a worker that a Negro is Jim-Crowed but because he is black.

Thus in the economic aspects of exploitation, the race question in the United States demonstrates its fundamental character. In every other instance racial exploitation merely serves as an auxiliary weapon to fortify national or colonial exploitation or some combination of the two. Elsewhere it is accompanied by wide differences in economic and cultural development.

That the Negro question in the United States stands out nakedly as a simple matter of skin color indicates in the first place the extremely unstable foundation upon which it rests. But race antagonism is fundamental to the United States social structure under capitalism. The unstable foundation of the Jim Crow system thus reveals one of the weaknesses of the whole social structure.

In the second place, as derivative forms of racial discrimination, white supremacy in other parts of the world is dependent upon the American pattern. And just as when American imperialism is overthrown and replaced by a workers state it will remove the last props from the collapsing capitalist structure throughout the world, so will the end of the Jim Crow system in the United States cut away the groundwork from white supremacy and race relations in the colonial world.

### 7. The U.S. as the "Melting Pot"

It is finally necessary to consider the problem of Negro equality and assimilation into American society in relation to the United States in its function as a "melting pot" of nationalities.

The original strength and vitality of American capitalism from its inception in the Eighteenth century was founded upon two pillars. First, the capitalist nature of the impulse of the British colonization of the Eastern seaboard. This established capitalist and semi-capitalist enterprise as the basic and original mode of production, unfettered by feudal restrictions. Second, the uniting of the colonies by a single language and a single Anglo-Saxon culture.

Scores of European nationality groups have been more or less successfully assimilated into the American nation. The difference in the problems of these nationalities and those of the Negroes is easily discernible upon examination.

From the very beginning other nationality groups attempted to retain their national identity, as I have mentioned before. But the American ruling class ruthlessly thwarted them all. First, by cutting away the economic groundwork upon which a national minority might stand and develop an independent national system of commodity production and distribution. Second, by forced assimilation or "Americanization."

Anglo-American domination received a great impetus by the victory of the first American revolution. As the capitalist class came into undisputed control of the national state power in the 1860 elections and the Civil War which followed, it developed the doctrine of "Americanize the aliens."

As the United States entered upon the imperialist epoch in World War I, forced assimilation of alien groups began to be trans-

formed into their exclusion. United States imperialism could no longer afford the time required for Americanization. It always required at least from one to two generations to complete the process of assimilation. And during these two generations the foreign groups were subject to great disaffection from the capitalist class, either in the direction of embracing the working class movement, or in lack of enthusiasm for the national chauvinism and bigotry required to whip up the war spirit against a rival empire.

The latest manifestation of this transformation in national policy from forced assimilation to exclusion is the McCarran Act.

Forced assimilation arose out of the national needs of capitalist production and distribution which requires a nation, with a common culture and language and a political unity, as the framework of its development.

The more modern hysteria over "aliens" dating from World War I results from the imperialist epoch in which the United States ruling class begins to confront enemies: the working class organized in opposition to it at home, and on the other hand its international imperialist rivals. The aliens are a danger in both cases. The American capitalist class wants to be prepared to go to war against any country in the world without concern for the national origins and therefore susceptibilities of important sections of its population.

Some of the conditions imposed by the ruling class upon immigrant groups seem calculated to have the opposite effect of assimilation. They are herded into more or less isolated and segregated slums and subjected to discriminatory conditions of exploitation. Undeniably, this process in part encourages tendencies toward the retention of national homogeneity of the immigrant group. However, this is only the method by which the ruling class sets down its terms of assimilation: that the foreigners are welcome, that they may and must become Americans, but only in the position of highly exploited laborers in the great industrial establishments of American capitalism.

Discrimination against these nationality groups prevails in different sections of the country for different periods of time. It is accompanied by "native" contempt, bigotry, intolerance and prejudice. The fundamental source of this intolerance is in the capitalist intolerance of any alien culture which threatens to break up the orderly pattern of commodity production and distribution, and the political unity of the state. It is directed against the language and customs of the foreign group with the object of eliminating them.

This national intolerance is part of the process of the assimilation of the national minorities. It is, in effect the demand by American capitalism upon the Germans, for instance, to cease being Germans and become Americans. "Speak English! Talk American!" are the slogans of this intolerance.

While the demand upon the foreign nationalities to assimilate is at the root of this national intolerance, the direct opposite is the case when we deal with racial discrimination. The object to be gained in the case of the Negroes is precisely to prevent their assimilation.



The race concept itself arose out of the need to demarcate the Negroes as slaves and to build upon that difference in skin color a wall separating them from the rest of society. Without racial separation in the United States, there would be no possibility of maintaining the discriminatory social and economic practices which are fundamental to the economic and social well being of American capitalism, and its role in the world today.

As we have seen, in many fundamental aspects of United States culture: language, folk-lore, etc., there is a constant mutual assimilation of the various characteristics of the Anglo-American with those of the Negro. But this process of assimilation is halted by economic and social relations adapted from slavery whenever it touches the possibility of economic, political or social equality.

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So far we have considered the race question in its most general aspects. The nature of the concept of race, its history and development, and its relation to other social phenomena under capitalism. Next Friday night we will consider it in its actual existence: the Jim Crow system in the United States, its roots and branches, and how to eliminate it. We will show the only possible way in which the goal of equality can be achieved.

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## II. THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

Last week we discussed the nature of race, and the nature of race relations, their origin, history and significance. We concluded that there is no scientific basis for the subdivision of humanity into races. Secondly, we noted that American society is, nevertheless, divided into races, and is disfigured and distorted by this division.

Dr. DuBois has stated that the problem of the twentieth century is the color problem. It is quite obvious that he was referring to the division of the world, between the white exploiting nations of the West and the colonial countries, inhabited by people of darker skin color.

Dr. DuBois was only partially right. It is true that imperialism is the most significant politico-economic development of this century. It is equally true that imperialist exploitation largely takes the form of domination by the so-called white world over colored peoples. This exploitation, however, is not based upon color but upon the superior military, economic and political power which one part of the world wields over the other. The skin color of the enslavers, whether they are British, Spanish or Japanese, makes no difference so long as it is backed up by military and economic might. The imperialist exploiters maintain their rule over the colonial peoples not on the basis of color, but by their power. They do, of course try to reinforce their rule by imbuing their colonial subjects with a sense of inferiority. They are aided in this by the fact that the imperialist overlords, with the sole exception of the Japanese, are of the white-skinned race, while those they rule over are all peoples with black,

brown or yellow skins. However, it is only in the United States that color, by itself, plays a real and dominant role in social relations. Here, the Negro people, a group of darker skin than the average, are subjected to special exploitation, discrimination, and segregation, merely because of their skin pigmentation, which assigns them to a subordinate racial position in American society.

Although we cannot recognize the existence of races as a biological fact, still we must recognize the existence of races as social groups, so organized by the ruling class for the purpose of capitalist exploitation.

We will now discuss the actual political, social and economic roots of the American system of race relations under the following specific headings:

1. The southern social system.
2. The industrialization of the South.
3. The Negro struggle and the demand for equality.
4. Race consciousness.
5. Stalinism and the question of self-determination.
6. The nature of prejudice.
7. The Negroes and the labor movement.
8. Capitalist politics.
9. The final solution of the problems of discrimination.

### 1. The Southern Social System

We have demonstrated previously how the United States is the world-wide center of the system of racial discrimination. It is necessary now to investigate the specific source of the racial system in the United States. In other words, what are the social and economic forces which prevent the assimilation of Negroes into American society?

The practice of discrimination in the United States has its focal point in the southern social structure. At the end of the Civil War, having neither land nor political rights, the Negro agricultural population was forced into the peonage of sharecropping. A social system was built around this arrangement.

The capitalist class has had a four-fold motive for perpetuating this system. First, sharecropping made it possible to maintain the plantation system in southern agriculture, even after the destruction of chattel slavery which was its fundamental basis. If the Civil War and Reconstruction had succeeded in breaking up the large plantations the creation of an independent small farmer class would very probably have produced diversified farming.

By means of the southern Jim Crow system, the capitalist class was able to prevent the development of free farming and retain the plantation.

Second, the degradation of the Negro, his loss of political rights and all means of economic defense, has made it possible for the capitalist class, in conjunction with the plantation owners, to extract tremendous super profits from underpaid Negro labor, not only on the plantations but in the many industries of the South.

Third, the Negro has always been the symbol of southern labor as a whole. Hence the greater degradation of all labor there and the consequent lower standard of living for all workers.

This degradation of labor has enabled the capitalist class to extract extra profits through the ruthless super-exploitation of a whole geographical segment of its working class.

The fourth stake which American capitalism has in the perpetuation of the southern Jim Crow system is that it is fundamental to the political stability of the nation under capitalism.

The South is the only area where politics is in no degree dependent upon the people, where the minority of wealthy bourbons and capitalists rule directly and nakedly. Through the Southern Democratic Party the capitalist class is at all times able to carry out its basic interests. Every social crisis has revealed this political dependence of the capitalist class upon the Southern Democratic Party which doesn't have to answer to labor for its actions.

The Taft-Hartley Act and the McCarran Act, two of the most vicious pieces of pro-capitalist, anti-labor legislation in the history of Congress, were not the result of a Republican majority, but of a balance of power achieved by the Southern Democrats.

These are the main features of the southern system and make it necessary to conclude that Jim Crow is a fundamental and integral part of American capitalism.

The wealthy white classes could not attain such total power as they wield in the South by their own forces alone.

The Bourbon rule of the South today is founded upon the destruction of the glorious revolutionary movement of the Reconstruction and the subsequent failure of the Populist revolt. The wealthy whites could not possibly have subdued these movements with their own small numbers. A mass support in a significant segment of the population was necessary to organize the Ku Klux Klan and to elevate the ruling classes to their present position. This mass base of support was to be found primarily in the white middle classes of the southern cities and towns, and the better-off section of the small farmers.

One striking feature of the South under slavery was the absence of the commercial and industrial towns which were so characteristic of the North. This was quite normal in an agrarian society dominated by huge plantations, which provided no basis for a rich internal market. Without towns it follows that there was no sizable urban middle class.

Commercial towns arose during the Reconstruction under the impulse of capitalist economy in agriculture. The development of these towns produced a middle class.

Everybody knows something of the fierce competition which goes on among the middle classes all the time. They must compete not only against each other, but also against big business which has more efficient and cheaper ways of doing things.

But the middle class of shopkeepers, farmers, independent artisans, doctors, and lawyers -- small businessmen of all kinds -- furnishes the only avenue of escape from wage slavery into the ranks of the capitalist class. Consequently, the lower the middle class the more intense and feverish is the competition for survival.

It is not hard to see that a tremendous advantage would be gained by a section of the actual or potential middle class if it could arbitrarily exclude half of the population from the right to compete with them for these occupations.

Immediately after the Civil War privileged poor whites established themselves in middle class occupations. They made of these positions a white monopoly by the organized terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan. One of the most important achievements of terrorism during the later days of the Reconstruction was the complete exclusion of the Negroes from the general middle class.

It was principally this movement of the middle class organized into the Klan, channelized and controlled by the capitalists and landowners, which gave to these new rulers complete political control over the South.

The white monopoly of privileged middle class positions tended to extend down into the higher skilled sections of the working class itself, gaining additional points of support for the rule of the new Bourbons.

A further expression of the privileges held by the white middle class of the South is to be found in their traditional exploitation of domestic servants.

It has been usual in the South that for a couple of dollars a week, carfare and old clothes a white family can have a maid. And for slightly more, a gardener or a cook.

In this way, due to the extreme degradation of labor, it has been possible for the southern middle class to live in a condition of luxury and freedom from all domestic labor which is found only among the ruling classes of other social systems and the colonial agents of imperialism.

Thus, the mass base of the naked rule of the capitalists and landowners is revealed as a privileged middle class and labor aristocracy which owes its special position to the racial division of American society.

Herein is revealed the sociological and historical antecedent of German fascism. The Nazi Party and the Storm Troopers are almost

the exact prototype of the Bourbon Party and the Ku Klux Klan. The Nazis, like the Klan, were essentially of the middle class. They served the basic interests of the large capitalists while defeating and demoralizing the working class and creating the basis for the totalitarian dictatorship, just as the Klan operated against the Negroes and the white Populists. The principal ideological weapon of both was racism and their principal organizational weapon, terrorism.

It is well known that the Nazis sent official and unofficial observers to the United States to study and learn American methods of racial discrimination and segregation to be applied to persecution of the Jews.

But the comparison of the South with Nazi Germany must take account of two important differences. First, the white middle class had a genuine advantage to exploit in the southern states in maintaining a racial monopoly of its privileges. In Germany, the "Aryan" middle class found only complete destruction and humiliation by the capitalists after the destruction of the labor movement and the Jewish people was completed.

The second difference is that Negroes are a fundamental part of the southern working force. The object of terrorism is to make them more profitable workers. In the case of the Jews the object of the Nazis was not to put the Jews "in their place" but to exterminate them.

## 2. The Industrialization of the South

We said at the beginning of last week's lecture that the material conditions surrounding the Negro struggle have undergone a fundamental transformation since the days of Booker T. Washington's Atlanta speech.

The change is to be seen not only in the great migration of the Negroes northward and westward which has created a new environment in the basic industrial sectors of the nation's economy. Principally, the change has occurred in the South itself.

The most notable facet of the present economic picture in the South is the entry of monopoly capital into all phases of economic life and the industrialization which has taken place in this once exclusively agricultural area.

In search for cheaper labor markets, and to accommodate the needs of the war economy, American capitalism has been forced to abandon its earlier conception of the agrarian South as mainly a source of raw materials and very limited industrial development. Modern industry has pushed some of its most advanced developments into the very heart of the cotton belt.

In building its new industrial empires in the South, however, big capital goes all the way. The new developments tend to become large mass production units, organized around monopolistic company-dominated industrial towns. In these towns the worker is born in a company shack, buys his groceries at the company store, works in the company sweatshop, and is buried in the company graveyard.

In all fields of the modern South monopoly takes over. The recent hearings during the half-hearted anti-trust action against the A. & P. monopoly revealed the process by which the free farmers are being exterminated. In merchandising, as in everything else, it is the same story: big business invades the South. And there is no room for a white privileged middle class in this scheme of things.

Furthermore, the development of modern industry has destroyed the role of the artisan and skilled worker.

The mass base of the southern capitalist dictatorship has thus been undermined by the very process of capitalist production.

The next remarkable feature of the present-day South is the tendency for the functions of the lynch mob to be taken over by the police, the military and individual terrorists. This is interpreted by many people to be a sign of the strength of the southern social system; that now at last the lynchings can be done "legally" and the State takes official responsibility for them.

But in reality, this condition reflects the weakened power and reduced social weight of the white middle class. It is no longer able to maintain its traditional function of mass terrorism against the Negroes. The increased capacity of the Negroes for resistance by their concentration in industrial centers has come hand in hand with this weakening of the white middle classes.

Thus capitalism, by the logic of its own development, has undermined the very social foundation upon which it depends for support and at the same time increased the ability of the oppressed to defend themselves.

Both German and Italian fascism were raised to power and stabilized by the terrorism of the middle class against the working class. But after achieving power, the fascist leaders, as representatives of monopoly capital, could give nothing to the middle class. The mass base was dissipated by the disillusionment of the middle class, and the rulers maintained their positions with only the support of the police and the military force. This was characterized by Trotsky as a Bonapartist military-police dictatorship.

While the economic situation remains relatively quiet this type of rule gives the illusion of great strength. But it is really a regime of extremely unstable equilibrium, as was shown in both Italy and Germany where under conditions created by World War II these military dictatorships fell easily. In Italy, under the pressure of the first revolutionary waves of the revival of the workers' movement. In Germany, by the military pressure of the allied armies.

So, also, the South today is revealed as a semi-military police dictatorship, its mass base undermined and dissipated by the very logic of capitalist development. It too, will fall under the first serious blows as the southern workers mass movements will arise in the period ahead.

Other far-reaching effects of the industrialization of the South undermine the rule of capitalism. The proletarianization of poor agrarian and middle class whites by modern industry has created a

clear identity of interest between white and black as exploited industrial workers. Capitalism has thus itself created in the South all of the conditions for the emergence of the class struggle and the revival of the age-long struggle of the Negroes for equality, spelling the doom of capitalism.

### 3. The Struggle for Equality

So far we have been concerned mainly with the objective nature and history of the race question. It is now time to consider the direction of the actual struggle of the Negro people against discrimination.

The Negro struggle has been historically conditioned by two main factors. First, the basic social and economic need of the U.S. ruling class to prevent the development of any cultural or economic base upon which independent nations might arise. Second, by the very nature of segregation. This is the means by which the assimilation of Negroes is prevented and their special racial exploitation maintained.

The interaction of these two factors has created the two poles of the Negro struggle: separatism and assimilation.

The European emigrant groups were required only to assimilate and to become "Americanized." But the Negroes, the most completely "Americanized" section of the population, have been prevented from exercising American citizenship, and thus are deprived of the right of assimilation. On the other hand the economic development of the country has prevented such a segregated group from developing any economic and social base by which they could take advantage of their segregation to develop the foundation for an independent national economy.

At every point, the ruling class has calculated to maintain this factor of racial separation. And conversely, the basic advances which the Negroes have made through the entire historical period from the founding of Abolitionism in the 1830's until the present day have been achieved in the struggle against separation, and essentially for the right of assimilation into American society.

I want to trace briefly the historical development of the relation between separatism and assimilationism as the two main poles of the Negro struggle.

During the first decades of the last century there was one and only one organized movement in the United States concerning itself with the Negro question: the American Colonization Society. This was an organization founded by slave-owners and basically expressing their interests.

Though this society was international its most important base was among the middle class humanitarians of the northern cities of the United States. The whole first half of the 19th century was an era of insecurity and unrest for the urban middle classes. The long depressions brought about by the fundamental cycles of capitalist production, partially by the constant reduction in tariffs by the slave power, kept the middle classes in a state of constant crisis which resulted in a hysteria for reform.

It is characteristic of the middle class, however, that because they have no independent class position in society they cannot find the solution to their problems in terms of their own class interests. Today middle class hysteria borne of economic insecurity finds its expression all the way from religious revival to support of fascist-type movements.

During the first half of the 19th century, the middle class attached itself to a number of panaceas, which it felt might solve its problems. They became preoccupied with temperance, with money and land reform, with utopian socialist movements, some attached themselves to nature, others to the uplift of women and factory workers; but the most powerful magnet of attraction for this middle class was the Negro question.

They felt, and quite correctly, that somehow the Negro question concerned their own insecurity. The truth was that the source of the terrible crisis of the middle class of this period was in the fact that the slave power, representing class interests hostile to capitalist development, was the dominant force in the nation, and inasmuch as the future of the middle class was tied up with the future of capitalism in general, the slave owners were their enemies and the slaves were the only group in society with the power and position to overthrow this hostile class.

But the slaveowners were able at first to control and channelize this middle class discontent through the agency of the American Colonization Society. The program of this organization was to solve the Negro question by the colonization of all free Negroes in Africa.

Among the achievements of this society was the founding of the colony of Liberia. Some 25,000 Negroes at one time or another were deported there, mostly against their will, and formed a ruling and privileged group in the colony. For more than a century they have ruled and exploited the African native population there in the interest of American industrial enterprises. This colony, nominally an independent republic, is today owned for all practical purposes by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company.

Neither the slaves nor the free Negroes would have anything to do with this plan for deporting them to Africa. They contended that they were Americans as much as any and more so than most and demanded the rights accorded to all other Americans. To the slaveowners' demand for the deportation of Negroes, the slaves counterposed the demand for immediate and unconditional emancipation. This was the genesis of the Abolitionist movement and the program which the slaves and free Negroes fought on throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction.

This early conflict between colonization and Abolition expresses the conflict between separatism and assimilation which have been the basic problems of the Negro struggle ever since 1830. This conflict appears today between those who struggle for immediate and unconditional economic, political and social equality, and those who will make some concession or adaptation to the demand of the ruling class for segregation.

In most instances the Negroes have found their most bitter foes ranged on the side of separatism, and have achieved their advances



along the opposite line. In this historical context the Garvey movement appears in its true light as the abortive result of the decades of horrible reaction and the complete isolation of the Negro people which followed the Reconstruction. Separatism in the Negro movement is an adaptation to the segregation imposed by the ruling class. In the case of the Garvey movement it was the only channel through which the mass discontent of the Negro people could express itself.

The Stalinists thus find in their advocacy of separatism an embarrassing contradiction to their support of struggles against segregation.

The ruling class now proposes the spurious solution of "separate but equal." But the Negroes are quite aware that separation is the condition of discrimination, not of equality. They counterpose the demand for unconditional and immediate equality to all the doctrines of separation.

#### 4. Race Consciousness

Now we come to the question of race consciousness. Many people wrongly assume that race consciousness among Negroes is a sign of their desire to create a society and state of their own, or, as the Communist Party puts it: for National Self-Determination.

Race relations are the artificial products of capitalist exploitation in the United States. They do not flow from the basic economic relations of production but are superimposed upon the class structure. In the disfiguration of American society by the scar of race antagonism we see that it fortifies and tends to stabilize the structure of American capitalism by dividing the population into hostile racial groups, who find it difficult to get together in defense of their common interests against the master class.

Race consciousness is one of the products of this arbitrary division of society into races. It bears some similarity to other forms of social consciousness, and yet it is different.

Class consciousness, for instance, has a thoroughly material foundation whether it be of the capitalist class or among the workers. For either workers or capitalists, class consciousness is the recognition that because of economic position in society a person has certain basic problems which are common to all those of the same economic group.

In this case, the mode of production divides society into economic classes, and class consciousness is the inevitable product of this division. Class consciousness corresponds to the real relations of production.

But there is nothing in the mode of production itself which divides society into races. This division is the result of the disfiguration of the capitalist mode of production in the South by the influences of chattel slavery. It is maintained only by force and violence and is accompanied by prejudice, special exploitation, extreme ignorance and cultural barrenness. Race consciousness reflects in one way or another the distortion of the mode of production and the violence and prejudice of the race system.

In the southern system and the race relations which derive from it, all Negroes are the victims of discrimination. But except for a minority of capitalists and privileged middle class people, the white population as such does not derive benefit from it. On the contrary, the white worker and farmer are as much the objects of class exploitation as are the Negroes. A majority of the workers and farmers in the South are white. But their standard of living and general social condition is directly determined by that of the Negroes.

Therefore, while the dark race is the direct victim of discrimination, the group which gains from it is not the lighter skinned race but a class: the ruling capitalist class of the United States. To be sure, this class is lily white, but it is not their color which distinguishes them from the rest of society, rather their great wealth, and the control which they exert over all finance and industry. It is not the race consciousness of capitalists which comes to the fore in their relation with Negroes, but their class consciousness: they are able to take advantage of the racial structure of American society to extract super-profits from Negroes through capitalist production.

It is principally among the white workers and farmers of the South that white race consciousness asserts itself. But I believe I have shown that the great majority of these white workers and farmers are victimized by the racial division in society nearly as much as are the Negroes. Race prejudice, which is the form of white race consciousness, is one of the means by which the extreme exploitation of white workers themselves is maintained. It is in direct opposition to their material interests. We are therefore justified in maintaining that there is no material foundation for race consciousness among the white working class: it is just a matter of prejudice, which goes against their material interests.

But it is different with Negroes. The racial structure of the United States produces a race consciousness among Negroes which corresponds directly to the special exploitation and discrimination against them. It does not derive from their African cultural heritage or from an independent cultural development in this hemisphere, but simply from their position in American society as the immediate and principal victims of the American system of race relations.

Nor is race consciousness in the United States the same as race consciousness in Africa, or among the Chinese. In these cases race exploitation is the by-product of colonial oppression and is controlled by the national aspirations of these colonial peoples, though these may take the form of racial aspirations. It is related that the slaves of San Domingo, in their secret religious rites chanted this song: "We swear to destroy the whites and all that they possess; let us die rather than fail to keep this vow." This is the voice of the slave aspiring to emancipation -- a class struggle which took the form of a race war. Finally, in San Domingo the whole revolution for the independence of Haiti took the form of a racial conflict.

Race consciousness among Negroes in the United States is primarily their consciousness of the desire for equality, and the universal expression of it is apparent in the militant struggle to achieve this equality. This is at the root of every important movement either of the masses or of the Negro intelligentsia which has arisen during

the past twenty-five years. It is different from the manifestations of race consciousness in the colonial world, as for instance the anti-white struggle in Kenya unfolding before us.

The demand for immediate equality has been the cornerstone of the NAACP, was the premise of the March-On-Washington Movement, of the movement against discrimination in industry, on the job and in the labor unions. Above all, it is the basis of the Negroes recognition and support of the CIO.

Thus in contrast to the Africans, where race consciousness inevitably expresses nationalism, the primary expression of race consciousness by Negroes in the U.S. is the demand for the right of assimilation into American society.

Race consciousness may take the form of race pride. In the white population this is a vicious tool of reaction, for race pride among whites is primarily the prejudice and chauvinism of white supremacy. But among Negroes, race pride may and usually does take an extremely progressive course. For race pride is the Negroes' consciousness of equality, and expresses itself in struggle against the capitalist system of inequality, and may express itself in the demand for the right to struggle jointly with white workers against the bosses; thus giving unionism an additional racial point of support.

Or this race consciousness may take the form of a sympathy with the colonial peoples who are also the victims of white supremacy, though in a different form. This instinctive racial sympathy with the darker peoples of the colonial world by which American Negroes strike back against their own racial oppression is in reality a great demonstration of internationalism, and a forerunner of the mutual sympathy and understanding which will characterize the relations of different peoples after capitalism has been destroyed. This internationalism is a great thorn in the side of imperialism.

Again, race consciousness may take the form of the vindication of the history of the darker peoples. Under the stimulus of Negro historians, African society, for so long expurgated from the official history of the world, is revealed as an important source of all modern civilization. All society advances scientifically and culturally by these discoveries and studies.

However, race pride among Negroes does not at all mean that they want either to return to Africa or to found an independent nation here in the U.S. It is rather another means by which Negroes justify their demand for full equality in the United States.

##### 5. The Question of Self-Determination

There are expressions of race consciousness other than in the various phases of the struggle for equality. There is an expression of Negro race consciousness, which has a purely capitalist foundation, in a small section of Negro businessmen who hold economic advantage by maintaining a racial monopoly of certain commercial enterprises. It is to the advantage of this small group to maintain the basic features of segregation.

Booker T. Washington expressed the needs of this social group in his doctrine of acceptance of the Jim Crow system. However, for the mass of Negroes this doctrine has a different significance. It provides a means by which individuals or groups may express a willingness to cease the struggle for equality and accommodate themselves to the requirements of the white ruling class.

Booker T. Washington appeared on the scene at the termination of the Reconstruction, when the Negroes, having engaged in revolutionary struggle for thirty years, had met final defeat at the hands of the Klan. His exhortation to the Negroes to humbly submit was inspired by the master class. The Negroes accepted it, not because it expressed in any way their immediate desires or interests, but because in defeat and isolation they had no alternative.

Out of this isolation and defeat there finally emerged, after thirty years, a militant movement of struggle against suppression: the Universal Negro Improvement Association, led by Washington's disciple, Marcus Garvey.

Garvey's was the only major movement in the whole history of the Negro struggle since the Civil War which led a militant struggle while accepting segregation. This organization disappeared as rapidly as it arose. It disappeared because of the sharp contradiction between a militant struggle and the acceptance of segregation. Garvey's program of "Back to Africa," for the promotion of Negro commercial enterprise, his acceptance of the Washington creed, were inadequate for the forces which his movement unleashed.

In this respect the Garvey movement was a transition from the abject acceptance of segregation to the modern struggle for equality which was made possible by the emergence of the CIO. As a transitional movement it was transitory in its existence. The CIO, expressing the interests of the most exploited industrial workers, inevitably expressed the fundamental truth of the race question, that the interests of the working class and of the Negro people are identical, not antagonistic.

The fundamental content of the demand for full equality is the right of assimilation into American society. The idea that this primary expression of race consciousness will probably express itself in the form of nationalism as the struggle unfolds is false. It is based upon the mechanical identification of the Negro question in the United States with the national question in Europe and the colonial world.

The Communist Party has been the agent of more confusion on this question than any other group in the country outside the outright partisans of the southern system.

After belaboring the Negroes unsuccessfully for eighteen years with the proposal that they organize an independent nation in the Cotton Belt, the Stalinists came to the conclusion in 1946 that the Negroes weren't smart enough to see how wonderful this kind of segregation would be. So, say the Stalinists, when the Negroes get smartened up they will realize that they are really an independent nation and demand self-determination and the Communist Party will be vindicated.

This is a complete fantasy. This nation which the Stalinists have dreamed up for the Negroes reminds me very much of the White Man's Heaven: a story taken from the folklore of the slaves which features Jack, the immortal hero of this mythology.

The story says that one morning the Master related to Jack that he had dreamed about the Negro's heaven. It was a miserable place, dirty, sloppy, uncared for, and generally run down. Jack made little comment about this dream, but the next morning informed the master that he, too had had a dream. He dreamed of the White Man's heaven. It was a marvelous place to behold. Green grass, great buildings, marble statues, fountains and pools and gardens. Everything spotless. The only peculiar thing was that there was nobody there.

That is the condition of the Stalinists' dream of a Negro nation. It is equipped with boundary lines, an independent culture, a state power, and all the attributes of nationalism. But there just isn't anybody there. The Negroes will have nothing to do with it.

In the comparison of the Negro movement with the nationalist movements of Europe, their differences are clearly revealed. In every important case of national oppression in Europe in modern times, assimilationism on the part of sections of the oppressed nation, usually its upper classes, was the sign of accommodation to oppression. Conversely, nationalism and the demand for self-determination was the expression of the struggle against oppression.

With the Negro movement it is the precise opposite. Historically, since the foundation of Abolitionism, every militant struggle against oppression, with the single exception of the Garvey movement, has demanded the right of assimilation. The acceptance of separatism has been characteristic of accommodation to oppression and renunciation of struggle. The adoption of the separatist doctrine is the means by which Negro leaders seek peace with the enemy.

The Negro struggle arises from the position of Negroes in America, not from that of the Poles in Czarist Russia. Polish nationalism was the means by which the workers and peasants of Poland had to begin the solution to their problems. But the various theories of Negro nationalism and the idea of self-determination for Negroes have the effect of justifying the system of racial segregation, without which discrimination could not exist.

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The Negro question is revealed as historically unique. This flows from the unique "purity" of the race question in the United States. Militant assimilationism under the slogan of Full Equality is the driving force of a movement which can be fulfilled only in the struggle against capitalism and for socialism.

There are hypothetical historical circumstances under which, however, the Negro movement might become transformed into a national struggle, or a struggle for racial independence along national lines. As a matter of fact the separatism of both Washington and Garvey had an embryonic nationalism which, if the isolation of the Negroes from the working class as a whole had been maintained in the form which it existed in the 1920's, might have developed much further.

Leon Trotsky enumerated two such historical possibilities. First: "Under 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 awakened may say 'we have nothing to do with either of you. We will have our own state.'"

Trotsky said this in the period immediately preceding World War II. It revealed his concern over the Negro question in the United States, and his insistence upon considering all variants of the historical process. But this is now an historical impossibility.

Secondly, he said "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. A 'privileged' condition will be created for the American white workers on the backs of the Negroes."

But Trotsky did not grant the defeat of the American workers by Fascism, and neither do we. On the contrary, the American working class in alliance with the Negroes has the power to overthrow the rule of Wall Street and set up a workers government which will completely fulfill the needs of the Negro people for full equality.

As an oppressed racial minority having no homeland other than the United States, the Negroes find driving force in their struggle for emancipation in the demand for full equality: the right to complete integration and assimilation into American life.

Revolutionary socialists stand squarely upon this program: for immediate and unconditional economic, political and social equality. An important part of this stand is to reject and condemn every proposal for the solution of the Negro question through racial separation, whether it be the vicious segregationism of the bosses' doctrine of "separate but equal" or the more subtle program of the Communist Party for "self-determination" for the Negro people. Both of these can only buttress the basic social system of Jim Crow whose main pillar of support is segregation.

We declare, however, with Trotsky that in the unlikely event that history should take a different course than the victory of the revolution in this epoch, and in consequence, the Negro movement might be pushed back into isolation again, bringing forth the movement for emancipation along different lines, we will help the Negro people to achieve this emancipation by whatever road they choose without giving up our own basic program for immediate full equality.

## 6. The Question of Prejudice

Now we must go over to the question of the nature of race prejudice and its role in the American system of race relations. The American philosopher and pragmatist John Dewey has stated that "anything that obscures the fundamentally moral nature of the social problem is harmful..." Gunnar Myrdal, who edited an enormous book on the Negro question for the Carnegie Foundation, is a devout follower of John Dewey. In this book "An American Dilemma" he uses

this idea as his guiding principle: that social problems are fundamentally moral in nature.

We are familiar with the application of this theory to other fields. In the case of the exploitative evils of capitalism, it is claimed that the exploitation of wage labor by capital results from the greed of the capitalist. The inference is clear, therefore, that as long as people are greedy, and they have always been so, exploitation of man by man will continue.

Karl Marx proved conclusively, however, that it was not greed but property relations which make it possible for exploitation to exist.

When applied to the Negro question, the theory of morality means that the root of the problem of discrimination and white supremacy is prejudice. This is the reigning theory of American liberalism and is the means by which the capitalists throw the responsibility for the Jim Crow system upon the population as a whole. If people weren't prejudiced there would be no Negro problem. This contention is fundamentally false.

The position in which the Negro people are placed in U.S. society is the direct result of the system of color slavery. Color prejudice under slavery resulted from the degraded position of the Negro. The Negro was virtually the entire southern working force and color prejudice reflected the degraded position of labor as a whole in society. The greatest humiliation that white men in the old South could undergo was being forced to do productive labor.

In this society before the Civil War, discrimination thus had the advantage of being appended to a peculiar and special mode of production in which servile labor appears natural, and is in fact the basic labor of society.

The Garrisonians claimed that slavery was only a moral question. And while their militant actions were in violation of this concept, they maintained that all that was necessary was to show that it was morally wrong and slavery would cease to exist. But the Garrisonians were wrong. Because slavery was a matter of a social system, a mode of production, tremendous wealth amassed by its ruling class, and state power to protect it. They were also proven wrong by history, where war and revolution, not moral suasion, were necessary to end slavery.

Now, we know from a study of the history of capitalist development throughout the world that one of the important aspects of the emergence of capitalism is the creation of the free labor market, where the laborer has nothing but his labor power to sell, and may go and come through the country in search of a buyer for this commodity.

However, the triumph of capitalism in the South brought not the free labor market, but the adaptation of the plantation system of color discrimination and compulsory labor to capitalist property relations. In this contradiction between the tendency of capitalism to operate with a free labor market and the reality of semi-slave labor, all the weird social relations and prejudices which originated under slavery were intensified by the victory of capitalism.



Prejudice is not the cause of discrimination, as the liberals claim, but is the product of the reciprocal relation between discrimination and segregation. At the foundation of the southern system are the great economic, political and social advantages which capitalism derives from color exploitation, and the advantages accruing to a small white middle class. The principal prop of this system of discrimination is segregation. Without segregation the racial division of American society is meaningless and withers away. Segregation is maintained basically not by prejudice but by force and violence and the legal structure of the South.

Prejudice is the product of this complex social relation. But although it is directed immediately against the Negro, its object is the working class as a whole. Through discrimination and segregation, Negro labor is degraded and its wage falls to the bare subsistence level. But this sets the pattern and controls the conditions of labor as a whole.

Color prejudice thus reflects both prejudice against labor as a whole and the degradation of the southern worker. In the South white labor is disfranchised along with Negro labor and the standard of living of the white sharecropper or factory hand is little better than that of the Negro.

Discrimination and prejudice in the rest of the United States derives directly from the southern system, feeds upon it, and like racial discrimination throughout the world is completely dependent upon it. The capitalist class adapts to its needs the fundamental features of the southern system. In every possible way it perpetuates the division of the working class by establishing throughout the entire nation the basic reciprocal relations between discrimination, segregation and prejudice which are so successful in the South.

Discrimination within the working class itself is due to the adaptation of the labor aristocracy to the southern system as a means of preserving craft and bureaucratic privileges in industry and in the union movement. But in the North and West the basic social system of the South and its heritage from the past are missing. Therefore in these regions the Jim Crow system tends to break down under the forces generating working class solidarity.

The basic identity of interest of the industrial working class and the Negro people is revealed in the alliance between the Negroes and the white workers in the CIO. Craft unionism with few exceptions was lily white during the 1920's. The emergence of the CIO was testimony that unionism in the mass production industries cannot exist upon either a craft or racial foundation.

But since discrimination in the North and West derive from the southern system, it will never be eliminated until the southern system is uprooted and destroyed. Similarly with prejudice. Education against prejudice has its importance in the Negro struggle. But only the destruction of the economic and social foundation upon which prejudice is built will eliminate it. This will be accomplished only by the Socialist revolution.



## 7. The Negro Struggle, Capitalist Politics and the Labor Movement

I believe that I have already demonstrated how completely integrated the Jim Crow system is with American capitalist production and its political superstructure. Nevertheless even after agreeing with many or even most or all of these facts there are still some who cling tenaciously to the false idea that in some way or another there is room for considerable progress towards the solution of the problem of racial discrimination within the framework of the capitalist parties.

The police state of the South is administered by the Bourbons through the Democratic Party machinery under the protection of the national government. But it must be remembered that if it was the Democratic Party which created the semi-fascist southern system, it was the Republican Party which voluntarily turned the South over to the Klan.

The Democrats, it is true, are the main upholders of white supremacy. But it was the Republican Party which, during its purge of the Black Republicans during the 1890's caused the coining of the epithet "lily white."

The so-called struggle between the Republicans and Democrats in the South is essentially a struggle between two capitalist political cliques for the allegiance of the most reactionary section of southern political society, the Dixiecrats. Whatever the ups and downs of this struggle, the basic political structure will remain intact until the working class, jointly with the Negro people, vanquishes and destroys the Republican-Democratic dictatorship.

One of the main struggles of the Negro movement in the South since World War II has been directed toward achieving the right to vote. This has had some success. However, it would be a mistake to assume that the mere addition of an increasingly larger number of Negroes to the voters list will materially change social conditions in the South. Votes don't determine or control anything of great importance in the South.

The battle for the vote is an absolutely necessary part of the Negro struggle in the South. But as long as it finds expression merely in the right to support one or another wing of the ruling Bourbon dictatorship, its scope is extremely limited, and it will change nothing essential.

There is no progressive tendency in the reactionary southern dictatorship. The Bourbons enjoy sending their "liberals" to Congress as a malicious joke on the nation. But at home they are united on the fundamental questions. To the Negroes' demand for equality they unanimously reply with the doctrine of "separate but equal," for they well know that there is no equality with segregation.

The effectiveness of the struggle for the right to vote in the South will remain limited until it is coupled with the struggle for the right of the southern workers to establish their own independent party of labor with no compromise on the basic question of civil rights.

However, equality is not enough, either in the North or South. The Negro has the right to ask: "What is it to be equal to the undernourished white sharecropper in South Carolina? What is it to be equal in the disease-infested slums of Detroit?"

Southern workers are the victims not only of the racial division of society which intensifies capitalist exploitation. They are also oppressed by an historically outmoded system of land tenure. Southern agriculture is still suffering from the inability of the Civil War and Reconstruction to break up the landed estates of the slave-owners. Along with the demand for full civil rights must come the demand to destroy the plantation system, and an end to tenancy and sharecropping through the nationalization of the land. The nationalized land must be divided among those who work it and operated either as independent diversified farms or as state-operated industrial farms controlled by the workers. In this respect the problems of plantation labor in the United States are hardly less severe than they are in India.

In the North and West, equality of Negroes as wage workers can never become a reality under capitalism. For capitalism is a system of scarcity, and the Negroes, the last to be hired by modern industry, will continue to be the first victims of the periodic spasms of unemployment which characterize capitalist production.

What would equality bring to the Negro middle class at a time monopoly capital is squeezing out the white middle class? A hundred years ago it would have had meaning. But today equality, even if possible under capitalism, which it is not, would be only the equality of destitution which is the future of the middle class of the United States.

Each of these examples demonstrates that discrimination against Negroes in the United States is so ingrained in the social structure that only complete destruction of capitalism can lay the foundation for the solution of the Negro question.

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A hundred years ago Karl Marx, in urging the American workers to support the struggle of the slaves for emancipation, and to support the Northern cause in the civil war, proclaimed the following truth: "Labor with a white skin cannot be free so long as labor with a black skin is branded." This is just as true today in the modern context of racial discrimination as it was during the struggle against slavery.

At each point, the fundamental interests of the industrial working class and of the Negro people are tied together. At no point is this revealed more strongly than in the problems of unionism.

Working class solidarity is a mighty antidote to race prejudice. Without the overthrow of prejudice unionism itself is always in danger. This is demonstrated in the great struggles against the giant corporations of auto, rubber, steel. Here the working class was forced, in spite of prejudice, to present a united front to the employers or meet sure defeat. This action was the beginning of the

overthrow of race prejudice, just as it was the beginning of industrial unionism.

But this is also demonstrated in the heart of the South where unionism in Birmingham, through the agency of the coal miners and steelworkers, has thrust an imposing salient into the semi-fascist Bourbon empire.

The street-car conductors of Birmingham are one of the groups whose function it is to maintain the traditions of segregation. In the turbulence of Birmingham, which is just an overgrown U.S. steel "company town" in many respects, the street-car conductors are armed, or at least they used to be. It was common to shoot scores of Negroes every year to maintain segregation on the cars.

But during the period of the organization of the utilities, one day six Negro powerhouse workers struck against injustice, and within two hours every single street car was idle due to the action of solidarity of the white street-car crews with the six Negroes. This action illustrates the way that capitalist exploitation levels out the working class until finally the workers begin to shed even their race prejudice in the interest of class solidarity.

If industrial unionism could not exist upon a racial basis, neither can it be maintained on a regional basis. The low wages of the South are a constant pressure upon all unions throughout the country. Furthermore, the Bourbon dictatorship is the most consistent and steadfast of all the sources of anti-labor reaction in the country.

The central role of the southern Democrats in all the anti-labor legislation in Congress through the years is too well known to require comment.

During times of economic stability the pressure of the southern reaction may take only the form of undermining and limiting the labor movement. But in times of social crisis it can become the backbone of a great reactionary movement.

The open-shop Jim Crow South is therefore lifted as a Sword of Damocles over the head of the labor movement. But the example of the city of Birmingham proves that it is by no means impossible to organize in the South.

Nevertheless, the CIO has failed in all its major attempts. This can only be explained by the limitations of the program of the union bureaucracy.

The organization of a labor movement in the South among the basic industrial and agricultural workers there must take its point of departure from a break with capitalist politics and capitalist parties. It must recognize that a whole social system must be overthrown before democracy and unionism will be possible. A social system involving a privileged middle class which, though weakened by capitalist development, is still the dominant social force, involving an archaic land tenure, and a semi-fascist police state.

As adherents of the Democratic Party and partners of American big business the union bureaucrats operate as partisans of the Bourbon party of the South regardless of their wishes in the matter.

### 8. Socialism and the End of the Race System

In concluding, I want to summarize my thesis on the question of racial discrimination in the struggle for equality.

The racial division of society was born with capitalism and will die only with the death of this last system of exploitation. Before capitalism there was no race concept. There was no skin color exploitation, there was no race prejudice, there was no idea of superiority and inferiority based upon physical characteristics.

It was the advent of Negro chattel slavery in the Western hemisphere which first divided society into races. In a measure the whole supremacy of western capitalism is founded upon this modern chattel slavery. The primary accumulation of capital which was the foundation of the industrial revolution was accrued largely from the slave trade.

The products of the slave system in the early colonies formed the backbone of European mercantilism and the raw materials for industrial capitalism. The three-cornered trade by pious New England merchants, consisting of rum, slaves, and sugar cane was the foundation of American commerce. Thus Negro slavery was the pivotal point upon which the foundations of the U.S. national economy were hinged.

As the last surviving slave system in the modern world, U.S. Negro slavery in the first half of the 19th century was a world-wide center of reaction. The myth of racial superiority based upon skin color was adopted by the western imperialists as a means of stabilized colonial rule. They have never failed to justify their practices in the colonies by reference to the American system. The American plantation system was transported to India and was introduced by American slave drivers. Attempts of the British to introduce the color concept into the castes of India made constant reference to the American system of white superiority.

Having become the imperialist leader of the capitalist world, the U.S. exports race prejudice as naturally as it does death and destruction to the colonial world. Europe was virtually free of color prejudice until the white American army began its indoctrination of the "American Way."

There is hardly a soldier, sailor or seaman who went through the campaign for the Solomon Islands who will ever forget his first entrance into the harbor at Tulagi after it was established as the principal P. T. base in the islands. As the ship slowly winds its way through the inlets and channels leading to Tulagi, surrounded by a beautiful and idyllic jungle, all at once a gigantic and shocking sign looms into sight. A sign twice or even three times the size of an ordinary roadside billboard, as I remember it.

A black background with enormous white letters. The sign screamed the jingoism of World War II: "Admiral Halsey says: 'Kill Japs! Kill Japs! Kill more Japs! If you do your work well you will

help to kill more of the little yellow bastards!"

And in this way a little spot of the U.S.A. was carved out of the jungle, and the GIs knew they were at home; with the Ku Klux Klan and the fiery cross and the black and white symbols. And this is only one of the many ways that they were never permitted to forget that they were fighting for the restoration of white supremacy in Asia, regardless of the humanitarian talk from the White House.

In the Korean war the wholesale destruction and massacre of civilians gave the world a foretaste of the ruthless contempt that the American rulers hold for the darker people of the colonial world. The introduction of "Luke the Gook's Castle" into official military and journalistic geography attests to the persistence with which the U.S. military spreads "the miasma of race prejudice," as Trotsky called it.

But if the United States spreads race prejudice it also provokes a reaction against it. Throughout Europe the U.S. holds capitalism together in defiance of the wishes of the overwhelming majority of its people. The European peoples have no intention of becoming the battle ground for World War III. Their justified suspicion of Yankee imperialism is expressed, in part, by their refusal to accept the doctrine of white supremacy and their demonstrative acceptance of American Negroes on the basis of equality.

In Asia, if the doctrine of race is necessary to maintain a large military force intact, it also stimulates and fortifies the determination of all Asian peoples to struggle against imperialist domination. The great Chinese revolution emerges in this respect as a body blow to the whole system of white supremacy.

The "Negro Question" in the United States exists because of the failure of the capitalist class to solve the most elementary problems of the democratic revolution in the South: the problems of land tenure and democratic rights. Thereby it has left the social heritage of color slavery intact as a malignant feature of social life.

But capitalism, even in the southern United States, has created the conditions necessary for its own destruction. It has disrupted the old agrarian pattern, undermined the privileged white middle class, thus weakening the whole fabric of social repression. It has created great industries, proletarianizing white, urbanizing black. This process has centralized the Negro community in positions of great strategic advantage in large city communities, whereas before they were dispersed over the country side. Capitalism has likewise created the conditions for the overthrow of race prejudice by working class solidarity.

It falls upon the shoulders of the proletarian revolution, in which the American workers will join together with the Negro people in the abolition of capitalism, to uproot the Jim Crow system. It is our task to build the party to lead that revolution: the Socialist Workers Party.