

In Memoriam
Richard S. Fraser

**An Appreciation and Selection
of His Work**



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This bulletin is dedicated to
Dave Dreiser,
good friend and long-time collaborator
of Dick Fraser

Richard S. Fraser

1913-1988

Richard S. Fraser, a veteran Trotskyist and tenacious fighter for black freedom, died in his sleep on November 27 at the age of 75. For the last several years Dick fought to overcome many painful and debilitating illnesses, mustering the courage to face endless operations, so that he could continue his research and literary work on the question of the revolutionary struggle for black liberation in America. Comrade Fraser was not only a cherished friend but a theoretical mentor of the Spartacist League. SL National Chairman Jim Robertson has acknowledged his considerable personal political debt to comrade Fraser.

Dick Fraser was a co-reporter on the black question at our founding conference in 1966. His work was published as part of our *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5, "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism," and he was a close collaborator in our work to establish organizations of labor/black defense. As the Labor Black League for Social Defense in the Bay Area wrote in memoriam: "Richard Fraser was our teacher, the author of 'For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question' that lights the road to black freedom through the program of revolutionary integration, the assimilation of black people into an egalitarian socialist society."

Fraser joined the Trotskyist movement in 1934, recruited on a cross-country Greyhound bus trip by a member of the newly formed Workers Party—the product of a fusion between the Trotskyist Communist League of America and A.J. Muste's American Workers Party. For close to 30 years he was an organizer of the Socialist Workers Party on the West Coast in Los Angeles and Seattle; for at least 20 years he was a

member of the SWP's National Committee. In the Pacific Northwest Fraser won several members of the Communist Party in Seattle to Trotskyism following the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Khrushchev revelations. That Seattle was the place where the SWP had its most significant success in cracking the Stalinists is a testament to the persistence and political capabilities of Richard Fraser.

Through his involvement in black freedom

struggles and experience in the recruitment and subsequent loss of hundreds of black workers from the SWP following World War II, Dick came to believe that the American communist movement had failed to come to grips with the question of black liberation in this country. Although lacking much formal education, he dedicated himself to the study of the black question. Criticizing the SWP for underestimating the revolutionary challenge to American capitalism posed by the integrationist struggles for black equality, in 1955 he submitted his document "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question." Here Fraser counterposed revolutionary integration to the SWP's turn to-



ward a separatist "self-determination" ideology (associated particularly with George Breitman), which would become a theoretical cover for its *abstention* from the mass civil rights movement in the early 1960s and subsequent full-blown capitulation to black nationalism.

Dick came into disfavor with the SWP leadership when he opposed the party's adoption of the call for federal troops to protect Southern blacks. In his "Resolution on the Little Rock Crisis" Fraser tore apart the SWP's support to Eisenhower's introduction of federal troops in Little

Rock in 1957, powerfully pointing out that the end result had been the crushing of local black self-defense efforts. In the 1960s Fraser along with other SWP spokesmen was propelled out of the party as it plunged from centrism to reformism. As he wrote in a letter to his son: "It was I who initiated the split from the SWP by publicly attacking its Personal Representative, my old friend Asher Harer, whom I had recruited in 1935, for the SWP stand on the Vietnam War, and proclaiming that the way to 'BRING THE TROOPS HOME' was for the Viet Cong to drive them into the South China Sea."

Fraser went on to found the Seattle-based Freedom Socialist Party. Cut off by a split in the FSP, Dick went into the New American Movement hoping that he could influence and educate some of these young New Leftists in the old Leninist school. With the fusion of NAM and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee Fraser was subsequently carried into the Democratic Socialists of America.

Over the years we had our disagreements with Dick. Neither of us tried to hide these, but we were always happy to bend the stick in favor of the areas of profound political agreement between us. In his later years Fraser was handicapped by the loss of his Marxist library, which the SL sought to replenish, and of his personal

working papers. In turn Dick's collaboration was invaluable in elaborating a perspective for rooting the SL among militant black workers and youth. Fraser's formal membership in other organizations obviously stood in contradiction to his fervent political beliefs, a contradiction which was resolved in his last years. Sharing our outrage over the U.S. bombing of Libya, he distanced himself from the DSA.

Addressing the SL/U.S. Seventh National Conference (1983) on the question of the organization of labor/black leagues, Dick spoke movingly:

"I've had some discussions with many comrades, which have been very gratifying, and I am humbled by the knowledge that things that I wrote 30 years ago, which were so scorned by the old party, have had some important impact, finally."

Dick's last political act before his death was his endorsement of the November 5 Mobilization that stopped the Klan in Philadelphia. That satisfying mobilization of the power of integrated labor was a testament to our comrade Richard Fraser who in endorsing identified himself as a "historic American Trotskyist." That he was, and his loss will be keenly felt.

*Adapted from Workers Vanguard
No. 466, 2 December 1988*

Memorial Meeting for Richard S. Fraser

On 8 January 1989 the Spartacist League held a memorial meeting in Los Angeles to honor the life and work of Richard S. Fraser. Some 85 people came out to pay tribute to Fraser, from old comrades and friends going back over 50 years when Dick joined the Trotskyist movement to a younger generation which included many members of the Spartacist League. Also present was his son Jonny, whom Dick cherished.

A beautiful display of photographs and other materials illustrating Dick's life was assembled by comrades from the West Coast, many of whom had worked with and cared for Dick during his last years as he courageously fought many painful and debilitating illnesses to carry on his life's work. The speeches and messages to the memorial meeting were as rich and diverse as the man they remembered.

The International Communist League is fortunate to be the heir to an unbroken revolutionary tradition which goes back to Lenin and Trotsky's Communist International. Dick Fraser was an important part of that continuity and it is in this spirit that we are reprinting in full the speeches and messages to his memorial meeting, originally serialized in Workers Vanguard Nos. 469-471 (20 January, 3 February and 17 February 1989).

Karen Wyatt

Los Angeles Spartacist League

We're here today to honor the life of Richard Fraser. Dick joined the Trotskyist movement at the age of 21 in 1934 and was an active participant in the socialist movement until his death on November 27, 1988. The attendance here today I think is a testimony to his deep and lasting friendships as well as the political impact he had on his own and on younger generations. We'll have seven speakers as well as twelve messages from comrades and friends who couldn't attend today. After that we will conclude with the singing of the *Internationale*. Now you're all welcome to stay following that. The bar will be open and you can look at all the displays that have been done. We'll also be playing music that Dick particularly liked. Included in this is some music that was written, orchestrated and played by Dick's son Jonny who is here today. Dick's love for his son was very great. Even after eleven hours of surgery the mention of Jonny's name would light up his eyes, and he was very proud of his music.

Don Andrews

reading statement of the Bay Area Labor Black League for Social Defense

We in the Labor Black League for Social Defense salute Richard S. Fraser, historic American

Trotskyist, who died today, 27 November 1988. Richard Fraser was our teacher, the author of "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question" that lights the road to black freedom through the program of revolutionary integration, the assimilation of black people into an egalitarian socialist society.

Richard Fraser, the theoretician, was above all an organizer and a tireless fighter for freedom for black Americans and all the working people. His courageous struggle in his later years to overcome his many painful illnesses in order to complete his historic work on the black question is only one recent example of his exemplary tenacity.

Comrade Fraser rejoiced in and endorsed our victorious labor/black mobilizations that stopped cold the Ku Klux Klan's intended provocations in Washington, D.C. on November 27, 1982 and our recent satisfying victory against these fascists on November 5, 1988 in Philadelphia. The labor/black mobilizations are in life the verification of Richard Fraser's historic contribution to history: for revolutionary integrationism as the road to the emancipation of the American proletariat—white and black—as opposed to the dead end of black nationalism. From its inception the Spartacist League's adaption of Richard Fraser's program of revolutionary integrationism has been the cornerstone of Spartacist's program of black

liberation through socialist revolution. Our organization, the Labor Black League for Social Defense, grew out of the SL's successful November 27, 1982 mobilization that stopped the KKK.

We honor our friend and teacher Richard Fraser most of all by continuing his fight. Forward to the Third American Revolution to Finish the Civil War! Hail Richard S. Fraser, fighter for black freedom!

Charles Curtiss

who knew Dick Fraser for 55 years and was Los Angeles organizer of the Communist League of America when Dick joined

I am here in two capacities. From the Los Angeles Socialist Party I bring condolences to the family, friends and comrades of Dick Fraser. But I'm also here in a personal capacity, for the ties that link Dick Fraser and me go back more than a half century. On counting back it was about 55 years ago that I first met Dick in San Diego. We were obviously considerably younger then. Together we studied the fundamentals of internationalist socialism, the class struggle and its final outcome in socialism. We pondered over the sources of surplus value, class exploitation and its termination in a socialist society of abundance for all with production for use not profit.

We analyzed the cruelty and the absurdity of unemployment, of want and suffering in the midst of plenty. This was in the very depths of the Depression. We probed the economic and political roots of war and imperialism, and how to eradicate them and establish an economic order internationally where the antagonism between classes vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

We learned and we were also active. We fought against fascism in demonstrations. We battled in discussion with individual members of the Communist Party and its supporters against Stalinism and for the internationalist essential of socialism as against the monstrosity of the theory of "socialism in one country." And he, we, responded "present" with enthusiasm on picket lines, as volunteers in supporting union efforts, in backing the movements of the unemployed and the oppressed segments of our society for human rights.

Dick had a constant and loved companion—his fiddle. He was a sensitive musician, a talented and devoted violinist. For it is well to remember that we, young people, many of us in our teens, brought into the socialist movement music and

literature. We had choral groups and we heard recitals at our socials. We formed drama groups and Dick among others gave much here.

There was a kindness and generosity in Dick that surmounted even the bitterness of the factionalism that marked the socialist movement and that asserted itself, despite the torturous pain he was suffering. And this kindness and generosity, as so often happens, called forth kindness and generosity in turn in those he touched, whether briefly or for long periods of time. There is guidance in this thought. Dick in his integrity, his giving of himself without stint in the daily work for socialism, his respect for clarity and knowledge in the realm of thought, his artistry, his magnanimity, was a forerunner of the person of the human future of associated labor in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of all.

As I visited him in the last months of his life, and these visits were harrowing for he was very sick, I bear witness that he remained true to the ideals and goals and values he consciously adopted 55 and more years ago. The thoughts of youth were for him long, long thoughts. With all the setbacks of the intervening years and with all the pain of his illnesses, Dick stood fast as an internationalist socialist to the very last day of his life. This memory he left us and it is precious.

Myra Tanner Weiss

former longtime member of the Socialist Workers Party sent the following greetings

Dick Fraser lived his whole life as a socialist. However important the differences we had between us, we shared the desire for a socialist society and Dick struggled always to organize the working class and to raise its political consciousness. My special sympathy for our loss goes to those of you who not only lost a comrade but a close political collaborator and friend as well. He can never be replaced in your hearts. Dick was always certain of the socialist victory for which he devoted his life. And so are we. In revolutionary solidarity.

Dave Cooper

member of Socialist Action who first met Dick Fraser in the SWP in Minneapolis in 1938

I was listening to a tape recording this morning of the history of the IWW. Now Dick was never a member of the IWW. But if you knew Dick Fraser you knew that his roots were in the IWW. What do I mean by that? I mean, Dick may

not have had a penny in his pocket, but he might have heard that there was a contact a hundred miles away. And Dick knew how to go the cheapest way—thumb or railroad.

One of the comrades I talked to, Asher Harer, who was recruited by Dick, said they had a peace demonstration where Asher went to school, and who showed up but Dick Fraser. And when he showed up, Asher said, “Do you have any money?” “Hmm, yes,” he said, “I have five dollars.” Now he had to go about 150 miles, but he heard that there was a peace demonstration and there might be a possibility of a recruit. So wherever there was a possibility of recruiting, wherever there was a possibility of participating in a strike, wherever there was a problem in the working class you could expect Dick to be there.

Now I lived in Minneapolis. I went to the university during the great strikes. And we were sitting around with Max Goldman—unfortunately this has been a period where we’ve lost a number of the comrades that have had 50 years in the movement or more. A good part of that generation—I’m glad I’m a lot younger—but a good part of that generation has left us. But we were sitting around the table, Max Goldman had just come from the convention in ’38, which was the founding of the Socialist Workers Party. He was much wealthier—he took a bus or a train, I don’t remember. And about three or four days later, in came Dick. A knock at the door and this man with a gentle face, as he’s been described by Charlie, 5’10” or 5’11”, I guess, came in. And I said, “Well, how did you get here?” He said, “a very cheap form of transportation.” I asked him what it was and he said, “Well, I found that the boxcar and the thumb were one way you can get almost anywhere in the country.” That was Dick Fraser.

I didn’t meet Dick again—although I heard that he had become a seaman, he was a seaman for about four years—until I came to Los Angeles. I had heard from Asher the story that Charlie told you, about the fact that Dick had been a violinist, that he was with the San Diego symphony orchestra for a period of time. People wanted him to go on to study with leading musicians. But once he had seen the vision, the socialist vision, once he had seen the idea of internationalism, of an independent working class, of a type of party that was necessary to make a revolution in this country, Dick put away his violin and joined the socialist movement.

And in Los Angeles, the thing that I remember about Dick is that there was no task that Dick

wouldn’t do. I was telling Karen when I talked to her that if the office had to be cleaned up, Dick would clean it up. If there was a strike to go to, Dick would go and provide whatever leadership. If there was a struggle, any type of struggle of the working class, you could depend on Dick to be there.

And that was one of the reasons that I wanted to speak. Because in this tradition of a number of comrades that have left us—I must tell you that I talked this morning to a woman who was one of the leading comrades on the East Coast and she said, “What have we achieved? We’ve had Dick and Max [Shachtman] and [James] Cannon and all these people. Where are we now?” And I smiled to myself as I said to her on the phone: Where was the working class in 1917? Where is the working class of the world today? Where is the capitalist class today? It’s in a blind alley. These comrades left us with a great and a historic tradition and we will link up with the revolutionaries of England, France, of Africa, Latin America.

Yes, great were the contributions that these comrades made and we will live to see younger comrades coming in, taking up the cudgels and becoming part of that fight. And you young comrades who are not part of the movement yet, you must take up where Dick and many of the others left off and carry this struggle on. Because there is no question, there is a socialist vision and there is a socialist movement. And if you believe in the socialist vision, you must become a part of that socialist movement. Thank you.

Dorothy Ray Healey

of the Democratic Socialists of America sent the following statement dated 28 December 1988

I don’t remember what year it was when I met Dick Fraser. I do remember, however, how it came about and what we discussed. He phoned, said he listened to my radio program on KPFK, was a former member of the S.W.P. and suggested we get together for a visit. Both of us were amazed at how much the S.W.P. and the C.P. resembled one another in their organizational methodology even as each was proclaiming the other as a chief opponent. When I told him how Les Evans, then a member of the S.W.P. had told me of his being present at Jim Cannon’s home watching the TV news report of the 1962 California elections and how Cannon exulted in Pat Brown’s defeat of Richard Nixon for governor, Dick commented that way down deep many Trot-

skyists did recognize that there was a difference between Republicans and Democrats. He said that in 1939 when Cannon and other leading Trotskyists visited Trotsky in Mexico, they discussed electoral policy with him and asked what the position should be if an Afro-American was running as a Democrat. According to Dick, Trotsky replied: "We support the men not the party."

Dick's pamphlet, "An Open Letter to American Trotskyists" is one of the few examples I know of where a critical and self-critical analysis of past policies was made public. It was no surprise to anyone who knew of Dick's focus on a proper policy for Marxists toward the "national question" for his pamphlet to attack the racism involved in the S.W.P.'s policy in the 1930's toward Harry Lundberg, head of the Sailors Union of the Pacific.

He joined the New American Movement and was active within it until his illness curtailed his mobility. But each time I visited him at the hospital or his home I was impressed by his willpower and his determination to overcome his physical ailments and the mental clarity with which he surveyed the world.

I am grateful to all of you for the solicitude and care you gave him until the day he died.

Cliff Carter

a longtime union activist in the Tidewater area of Virginia and a friend of Dick's sent the following message dated 28 December 1988

Today I went to the public library and looked in the *Books in Print* titled "Authors," and searched for Richard S. Fraser. Dick's name wasn't there and I felt a little bad about this; but then I had a very good feeling that in the near future his name will be listed with the "Authors" with the completion of his book titled, "The Struggle Against Slavery in the United States."

Some time ago, around the end of November I received a call from a friend that said Fraser passed away in his sleep 27 November 1988, the same day the Spartacist League and friends stopped the Klan in 1982.

I met Dick in 1985 and had a couple of talks with him concerning a book that he was in the process of writing. At the time, the title of the book was "The Rise and Fall of the Slave Power," but was changed in June 1986, because a Senator Wilson used the same name about a century ago.

In our conversation, Dick told me that I would be surprised how many black people do not know the complete truth about slavery in the

United States. Dick said, "My book will be written for scholars, teachers, students and for anybody who wants to read the book."

Fraser sent me to my history book when he said, "After the election of Thomas Jefferson as president and he (Jefferson) made the Louisiana Purchase, everything went along smooth for the slave holders." Jefferson's presidency (1801-1809) was the beginning of the now Democratic Party.

Thomas Jefferson being president of the United States (his occupation listed as a planter) and a big slaveholder was a founder of the now "friend of labor" Democratic Party. This is why the workforce, black and white, should break away from the Democrats, for a party started by wrong people cannot be changed. You destroy this wrong party and build a new party free of slaveholding policies.

Dick Fraser sent me a copy of his writings entitled, "Two Lectures on Black Liberation," which was delivered in 1953 at the Militant Labor Forum at Los Angeles. One of the subtitles is, "The Negro Struggle, Capitalist Politics and the Labor Movement." Enclosed are five sentences from the above:

1. "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."

Dick was talking about the Compromise of 1877, when arrangements were made between Southern Democrats and Republicans to give the 1876 presidential election to Republican Rutherford B. Hayes (loser in the popular vote), in exchange for withdrawal of federal troops from the South.

2. "The Democrats, it is true, are the main upholders of white supremacy."

With this coming from Dick over 30 years ago, why are labor and black leaders still today trying to tie the workforce with the Democratic Party? To preserve white supremacy and maintain segregation among the workforce.

3. "Votes don't determine or control anything of great importance in the South."

This is true because the working people have never obtained anything at the voting polls except another politician to mess up things some more.

4. "Without the overthrow of prejudice unionism itself is always in danger."

This reminds me of November 27, 1982 when the Spartacist League along with unionists from the East Coast stopped the Klan from marching in

Washington, D.C. The very first workday on the job, fake local union heads tried to bring the stoppers of the KKK up on charges of inciting a riot. A Klan sympathizer is the same as a Klansman.

5. "The low wages of the South are a constant pressure upon all unions throughout the country."

The capitalist uses the South to set the standards as far as prices are concerned. Cheap labor can always be found in the South for the Northern factories.

While looking through my files, I came across a note-type letter that was never mailed to Dick Fraser: To Dick Fraser: You said, "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." In another paragraph you said, "But since discrimination in the North and West derives from the southern system, it will never be eliminated until the southern system is uprooted and destroyed."

My comment to Dick: I like this, Dick. This is important to remember for everybody who is against discrimination and prejudice. If you want to destroy the two (discrimination and prejudice), you start at the source, the beginning. Go to the South Land, the origin of the hell fire.

Dick told me he joined the Socialist Workers Party in 1934. With the decay of the SWP, and the actions of Dick's last performances prove that he is the same Trotskyist in 1988 as 1934.

The worthwhile people die too quick.

Monica Hill

reading statement from the Freedom Socialist Party National Committee

The Freedom Socialist Party extends its sympathy to Jon Fraser and to the comrades and friends of Dick Fraser gathered here today.

Dick made a lasting contribution to our movement and to the Black liberation struggle through his collaboration with Dave Dreiser, Clara Fraser and others in originating and developing the Revolutionary Integration position. Dick spoke brilliantly on Revolutionary Integration, many times from the pulpits of Black churches. And his grasp of history, economics, and politics was widely admired. He is remembered for his scholarly talks on a host of issues, his energetic organizing, and his stinging barbs at the bourgeoisie.

Fraser's profound Marxist analysis in Revolu-

tionary Integration is destined to become one of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of U.S. radicals. It has already left an indelible mark on our organization, helping to shape it into a multi-racial party with deep respect for the materialist roots of the vanguard role of Blacks in the fight for socialism.

The FSP parted ways with Dick in a serious, bitter and well-known struggle over women's rights. Still, we pay respect to him today for his positive contributions to the movement as writer, speaker, teacher, historian and leader who never relinquished his socialist goal. His long life encompassed a host of jobs and talents. In the '30s he supported himself in Seattle by selling *The Militant* on Skid Road; he later became a merchant seaman, a carpenter, and a plastics technician. He was a violinist and a gourmet chef. And he devoted his life to Trotskyist politics. As the son of a railroad worker, he was always a highly class conscious worker and unionist. He never finished high school but became a consummate worker-intellectual; his agile mind soaked up ideology like a sponge.

He left us two chief legacies: theoretical work which guides our daily practice, and his jazz musician son Jon who is creating the music of a new and better society in the belly of the old one. And we salute this unique legacy, this incendiary mixture of jazz, Black history and revolutionary socialist theory!

Charles Du Bois

a friend and comrade of Dick's since 1974

This is very beautiful here. I find these things out about Dick that I never suspected. He was not a braggart, obviously. I first heard about Dick Fraser through reading "The Materialist Conception of the Negro Question." I was about 18 years old, this is back in '71. I was impressed with the document, and it had a profound impact on my development and understanding of American politics and especially the black question, since I had come from being a black nationalist, Maoist, kind of.

So I was in awe of his name, you know, Richard Kirk [Fraser]—well, who is this guy, he's pretty good. Of course, I didn't know that about a year and a half later we'd be sharing the same couch. I was on the couch first, I was staying at Ted and Gayle Fagin's house, and I was sleeping on the couch, and he needed a place. He had seniority, so he got the couch and I got the floor. So I finally said, this is Dick Fraser and, legends

don't quite fit the mental image or expectations—I came from this Maoist background and they have these bigger-than-life leaders, you know, Lenin's got bulging arms and stuff—this is Dick Fraser, wow. But he was “bad.” Size don't count.

When I met him, he was on some kind of rebound. He was not one to talk about a lot of his problems, and I wasn't the kind of person to get nosy with something somebody didn't want to talk about. But since I had met him, I guess sometime around '72 or '73, he was on some kind of rebound. I guess it was some years later where he actually ended up soliciting me for a place to stay, but it was a privilege that I was able to help him out. Myself and the Spartacist League and all people in the socialist movement are indebted to this man for his contribution.

What we were doing, while I was a member of the Spartacist League, was collaborating with him on doing archival research into the SWP work in the '40s. See, he never mentioned a lot of this stuff that he had written before—we were going into the '40s, so he pointed us in the right direction, but he didn't tell us. Of course, he had a hard time speaking, too, so I guess he had to save his words. But I was very surprised to see a lot of this stuff and hear all these stories. I mean, I never knew all this stuff about Dick.

But one thing I could not understand at the time was that he was giving us all this information and helping us out, pointing us in the right direction, and telling us stories, like how the SWP looked and what it was doing, or how it lost its members, how it gained them, what the organization in Detroit looked like as far as he could recall. But he was in NAM [New American Movement], and you know, this was a political opponent, an organizational opponent. See, I didn't have it then, you know—political opponents, organizational opponents, I didn't quite get the differentiation, you see. And it was painful for him to talk, but he was giving us all this stuff, and I couldn't figure it out. Well, I got it figured out now.

He really cared for revolutionists, and people that wanted clarity and respected history and wanted to study. And that above all was what the man was about. He wanted to teach. And your organizational affiliation wasn't necessarily the thing that was going to color what he did and how he did it. The man was very, very generous. I knew that, and hearing these people that knew the man, really knew the man, yes.

So we have a great loss here, a great loss

with Dick Fraser. But when I reread the “Materialist Conception” after I met him, I had read it before and I always read it again, but it's kind of funny reading it now, because you read his polemical barbs and I know how he looks, or how he looked, and could sort of see the twinkle in his eye like he's kind of saying this stuff. It's kind of fun to read, yeah, Dick.

I don't know what emotional cost he had to pay in terms of the constant rebounds he was having to make, politically, personally and then in terms of his health. But the man, he never quit. And I'm just very glad to say that he was able to witness the impact of what his contribution actually has meant, in terms of the mobilizations that have stopped the Klan. That he was able to witness that and see that what he stood for was not just a good idea and he's pretty sure he's right, but he knew he was right, and that the last act that he did do, the last political act [endorsing the November 5 Mobilization that stopped the KKK in Philadelphia], this is very gratifying that he was able to see that carried out.

And what I can say is that Dick Fraser did not surrender to the bourgeoisie or bourgeois ideology. People have said it, he died a communist. And we owe a lot to Dick Fraser, we're gonna miss him.

Larry Levinson

a Spartacist comrade who sent the following message, dated 30 November 1988

Dear Comrades and friends,

I am sending this letter to share a few thoughts on my impression of Richard Fraser. I was privileged to help take care of him while I was still living in Los Angeles. Looking back at this I can see that I was carrying out an important duty as a young communist in assisting Richard. For me being with Dick was my chance to have a real link with a socialist from the old revolutionary SWP. A generation of militants that I would only know through the program and the written word they left behind. Although most of the time I spent with Dick was involved with basic survival tasks for him, a few telling facets of this man stood out.

First and foremost Dick was a tenacious man. The medical battle he waged not only against his condition but also against the wretched world of doctors and hospitals would daunt anyone. Dick kept on fighting and at the same time kept an ironic slant on all this. Dick could tell you the

most horrible things that happened to him and have you laughing and crying at the same time. It was a bittersweet task to take care of Dick.

That Dick was able to continue contributing politically was a real testament to his history as an organizer and leader in the SWP. Where I mainly saw this was how he would continually overcome the latest adversity to strike him so as to be able to keep on following world events and most importantly write down his thoughts. The most important possessions he had were his books, his television and his typewriter.

The other thing that sticks in my mind is how Richard's eyes would light up when he mentioned two other things important to him. These were his son and music. Richard's voice would get that tone of pride when he mentioned his son. And one nice memory that will stay with me was when we were able to take Dick to a concert of the L.A. Philharmonic.

Dick was a charming man who had wards of nurses of numerous hospitals in the greater Los Angeles area caring for him as their favorite patient. The only patient I had ever seen who had a typewriter in his room.

I end this by saying that I will always be proud for having been a part of helping Dick in his later years and always a little sad that I didn't know and learn more from him.

Jim Stark

a Spartacist comrade, sent the following contribution

Dick, in spite of being in bad health during the last years, and when I helped care for him in Los Angeles, was always willing to draw on his own array of political experience to help us with our work. (In hindsight, he laughed at some of them.)

I remember in particular the good advice he gave me at the first national SL conference after he found out that I was doing work among black workers in the South. He told me that in addition to having a revolutionary program, because of the history of segregation, it would be necessary to find ways of achieving social interaction with my black coworkers. He suggested that if necessary, join clubs or associations where one could establish these kind of relationships, but that I would have to find out how to do it in my own way. It was good advice on his part, as we have learned from doing communist work among the black working class in the Deep South.

This example is probably a small thing by

itself, but the total of Dick's work, in particular his work on the black question, is a valuable contribution to Trotskyism.

*Message from the **Chicago Spartacist League**, Spartacus Youth Club and Chicago Labor Black Struggle League*

Long service and tenacity as a partisan of the working class and oppressed demand the greatest admiration and respect from we who come after. His contribution to be realized in the struggle for black liberation and proletarian power that will be the American socialist revolution.

Frank Krasnowsky

a longtime comrade of Dick's who collaborated with him for over 20 years in the Seattle branch of the Socialist Workers Party and the Freedom Socialist Party, and as editor of Revolutionary Age

We've got all these young people up here today. I'd like to thank you for the invitation to speak here, and particularly I want to thank those of you who took care of Dick in these last years, and made his last years so productive and as pleasant as possible.

When I was asked to speak, I was kind of pleased with the idea that I would finally get a chance to get even with all those people who ignored Dick over all the years, you know. And I worked out a wonderful talk that I was going to give down here. I was going to go through the whole history of his ideas and present them to you here. And talk a little about the way he worked with others and confronted with others, to talk a little bit about the way I and Clara Fraser and the Seattle branch worked together with him in developing his ideas. Then after all that I was told that I should try to keep it to ten minutes. So you don't know how lucky you all are here today.

No, I'm not really going to talk too much about the contents of his writings, because those are all available. We've printed them out, particularly in two publications which I edited, in the *Revolutionary Age*, in the work "Revolutionary Integration," and "Crisis and Leadership," which were the major works we published.

I'd rather talk a little bit on the way Dick worked, that is how he managed to enrich his own ideas and to test them in the class struggle, and to help others develop their own thinking and their own understanding. Dick, as you know, and as has been described here to you, was never what you'd call an ivory tower radical. He was a

constant activist. But he used all the material on hand, both in the form of data and the knowledge and experience of others in developing his own ideas. He was particularly astute in drawing people out and getting them to express their ideas and in trying to get his ideas over to them.

It wasn't mentioned here, but Dick for a couple of years worked as an engineer at Weyerhaeuser in Seattle. Now you know he didn't have a college degree or anything, but one of the people who worked with him, who was a doctor in physics at the University, said that he thought that Dick was the greatest engineer that he ever met. And I asked Dick, "How'd you get a reputation like that?"

Well, what happened is, if he ever had a problem or a puzzle, he would head straight for the University of Washington, talk to all the professors who were involved in that field, bring together all their knowledge, and then use it. This was a great talent. And he'd use that same talent, of course, as a Marxist thinker and a writer. In this respect he received, I would say, constant help from our Seattle branch and of many individual comrades in Los Angeles and throughout the country.

This may step on some people's toes, but I have to say it anyway—he got almost no help from the official party to which he had devoted his entire life. Neither in the form of support for his ideas on black liberation, nor what would have been important for him as well, in the form of an honest confrontation of ideas. In 1957 when the Southern movement was first beginning to break out, and when his ideas were getting their first real test in life, we went to the '57 convention of the Socialist Workers Party with a resolution and were answered, rather strangely, with a demand by the National Committee that we provide a vote of confidence in the National Committee in opposition to his resolution. I had never heard that before in the party.

Again in '63, where we put together all of the experiences of the Southern movement, we came in with the resolution and for the first time in the history of the party, equal time was not provided to the opposition. There was an hour and a half given to the majority, a half hour given to Dick's position and to our position, and the bulk of the discussion consisted of an organizational attack upon our branch. And finally in '65 when we presented the document, it was called "Crisis and Leadership." After it was all over we received instructions from the presidium not to discuss any

of the political material presented, and transforming the conference into an active workers conference. Now there was in that no confrontation of ideas, no way that he could draw from any of that.

Fortunately, there were better places for him to develop his ideas and his inspiration. Dick took every opportunity that was offered to him to talk and discuss with revolutionary black leaders his ideas on revolutionary integration. Anybody who came to the Northwest got stuck, that is about what it came down to. Maybe there was one or two of us who would talk to them in the afternoon, but by the time it was over they were over at Dick's for ten to twelve hours and all night long, discussing and talking. And I'm not talking just about this or this Joe, it didn't matter to Dick who he talked to, but among the people who he caught were William Worthy, James Farmer, Gibson, Victoria Gray of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, Robert Williams.

I can't recall all that were there, but we had a session with Dick Gregory in which together we organized a whole meeting in the black community, of a very conservative black community, in support of the Southern struggle. Dick could talk with him. And these weren't just little discussions, they were a complete confrontation of ideas, one to the other, in which he hoped to teach and he hoped to learn. And I don't remember any of them ever being angry about having participated in it.

But I'll tell you, visitors could escape with maybe ten or twelve hours of discussion. That wasn't true of the rest of us in the branch. In Seattle we had a man named Waymon Ware. He was a young man then, of course. Waymon Ware was probably the leading person in the black movement in Seattle. He was also a member of our group. And Dick was constantly in conversation with Skip Ware. And his wife, who was not in our organization but was a leading community activist, also suffered, enjoyably, constant probing and discussions of her ideas.

And not only, and this may strike people as some kind of a violation of some myths about democratic centralism, but not only did he confront them with his ideas, but our document that was in preparation, called "Revolutionary Integration," was carried by these people into the South for their discussion. The columns appeared in SNCC and in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. They were sent out so people could study them, to look at it, write back to him, so we

could build up our resolution with people who were serious about our ideas.

But ideas alone do not make a Marxist movement, or a Marxist theory. You have to take your ideas and put them into life, to test them, to reformulate, so that you know your ideas are rooted solidly in Marxism at the same time that they deal with all of the newest and most modern developments in society. The Seattle branch of the Socialist Workers Party took every opportunity it could to participate in the black liberation movement. I'm not going to go into now what had happened before Dick came, but we were very active when he arrived. But in the '60s we were already central to the whole organization of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. We were involved in the training of cadres, we helped send people down. In fact, one of the announcements we got from the South, from the people who were participating, was that the people from the Northwest were those best equipped mentally to participate in the struggle down there.

Incidentally, we also sent two people down from the Seattle branch, one our only Spartacist member, and I think you may know of that around here somewhere, who spent about six months at least in the South during that period. We didn't discriminate in the branch, if different political opinions, if they were helping to build the organization. So that even those in the end who weren't in the SWP and who went down to the South that were not in our organization came back with the experience that we provided them, with the knowledge we provided them, and added a new mass of experience for the development of our ideas for the next cadres that could go down and carry out the fight.

I'm going to tell you a little story. I don't think anybody knows this here. But in 1964 for the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, my former wife Ann Krasnowsky took a carload, actually it was a van, of black women and SNCC leaders to the convention, with a resolution for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which condemned the whole racist role of the Democratic Party in the South, and called for the unseating of the Mississippi Democratic white delegation and the Alabama delegation. And I want to tell you, we were a little surprised when we heard over the radio that almost precisely the wording of his resolution was presented by the black caucus at that convention.

Now, this is just an inkling, I'm not going to

go on too far, of the kinds of experience and work that went into the concepts that Dick presented and developed in our movement. The rejection of which I can say quite bluntly, since it involved the rejection really of the revolution in the United States, led very much to the degeneration of the organization that we built earlier, of the Socialist Workers Party.

And one last thing in conclusion. In the '60s, I had a little talk with Jim Cannon. I'm just dropping names now. Actually, I didn't know Jim that well, he was a different generation than mine. Actually it was something which I realize now was something that bothered me much more than it bothered him. But every time I came through Los Angeles, we'd have coffee, Ann and I, at his house, and have a little discussion for several hours with him and Rose [Karsner]. And this time he was sitting there and studying two books. One was a book by James Boggs, *The American Revolution*, and the other was Harrington's *The Other America*. And he commented to us, "Why is it that two non-Marxist writers can write a brilliant analysis of what is going on in the United States in the nature of class relations, and even propose a political program, and the pages of our magazine, the *Fourth International*, are completely sterile?"

Well, it was a rhetorical question, but I decided I'd try to answer it anyway. And I said, well, if you really want to get original thinking in the SWP, you're going to have to read the internal bulletins. And that was about the way it appeared to me. That many of the people who had been studying and thinking had been suppressed by what I considered a sort of a bureaucratic centralism, not democratic, in which people with all kinds of ideas found that they didn't have a way to express their opinions. And I really think that that's one of the great tragedies of the movement.

I have some optimism out of this whole meeting. I will say that I came down here a little depressed, and much of that is overcome already by the people here. But I think that the great tragedy really of the movement in the past is not just that we lost for a while, because we can win again. But the number of fine minds, fine thinking and the rest that have not found the way to express themselves, that got confined in this myth that everybody must hold the monolithic idea and not open criticism, and not think about things anymore. The party should be, an organization of the left should be an extra group that strengthens

your ideas, that builds you, that makes you better able to deal with the class struggle as you go on.

It's for that reason that I truly thank the people who organized this memorial, who are part of an organization with which I have had many differences, but then I can't think of one that I didn't have many differences with, if you want to get down to it. But at least for rescuing from extinction the work of one of the truly great Marxists and Trotskyists of our era, and for helping him to live and last as long as he was able, and to make new contributions in the struggle for which he lived. Thank you.

*Statement of the Central Committee of the **Spartacist League/Britain**, section of the international Spartacist tendency [after May 1989 called the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)]*

Comrades,

We would like to add our salute to the memory of comrade Dick Fraser. A number of us had the honour of meeting comrade Fraser, which serves to underline our deep sense of loss. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. As Marxists and internationalists we deeply appreciate the work he did, in particular "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question." This contribution is not narrowly confined to enunciating the crucial elements for black freedom in the United States through the programme of revolutionary integration. By clarifying a Marxist methodological approach, he aided us in building our international on a firm basis. Our capacity to address the national question and situations such as Ireland where the problem of interpenetrated peoples must be confronted owes a great deal to the Bolsheviks, but also to such contributions as comrade Dick's.

Comrade Fraser already has an epitaph in his contributions, and we are sure that he, like any revolutionary, would feel his memory can best be honoured by carrying the work forward for world revolution.

*Message of the **Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands** [now the Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands] and the **Ligue Trotskyste de France**, sections of the international Spartacist tendency*

We share with you the loss of anti-racist fighter and historic American Trotskyist Richard Fraser. In January we also honor the "Three L's,"

Lenin, and Liebknecht and Luxemburg who were murdered 70 years ago this year. In so doing we pay tribute to all those, like Comrade Fraser, who died at their posts, fighting for a socialist future.

Dave Dreiser

a friend and comrade of Dick's who knew him for many years

Before I make a few remarks about Dick, I feel deeply constrained to make some related comments. Several years ago, Dick became befriended, very deeply and very meaningfully, by the comrades of the Spartacist League and especially, although not exclusively, those in their Los Angeles group. Without this help that they gave him, Dick would not have been able to have maintained his life, more or less normal, within the constraints of his physical condition, living in his own apartment with his library, his correspondence, his telephone and his word processor. They took him to the hospital, they took him back from the hospital. They provided medical consultation. They helped him with his household arrangements.

Finally, four days before he died, when he made his last trip home from the hospital, they provided a 24-hour-a-day, three-shift guard at his house, helping him with his feeding apparatus, helping him with the difficult life that he was living then in his last hours and last days. They did this with no hope or any intent of any profit, or any political gain. They did it because it was the honorable thing to do. And they did it with considerable difficulty. I don't want to give away any trade secrets, but they're not a large group in this town. And these people have other lives to live, they have jobs, they have family, and they have other responsibilities. But with total loyalty and total devotion, they performed these duties. And I just felt I had to express this here.

Dick Fraser was a musician, a merchant seaman, an aircraft worker, a lumber worker, pattern maker, plastic mold maker, working-class. He never had a middle-class job in his whole life. He made his living as a worker and no other way. But more, Dick was a restless organizer, an inveterate propagandist, a "boss-hater" in the Wobbly tradition, and still more. He was a socialist and a worker-scholar in the finest tradition. You study, you learn, and you teach.

He studied the Reformation, gave a series of lectures in Los Angeles. He studied the colonial period of American history, and gave a series of

lectures, perceptive, revealing. How the Indians taught the colonists to survive, gave them not only the technology but the communal social organization which was necessary to the continuance of their existence. He went to Seattle, organized a branch. Went to the south side of Los Angeles, organized a branch.

He studied about the rise and fall of the slave power in the United States and about the Reconstruction period. And he asked the question, how did the race relations in the United States today originate? What was their connection with the slave system and its aftermath? The Old Man [Trotsky] said, if you don't want to regard the issue of black liberation as a national question, then determine what it is. Dick struggled with that question. As before, he studied, then gave a series of lectures, in Los Angeles in 1953. The elaboration of this question became his life's work. He codified his thoughts in the resolution "Revolutionary Integration" in 1963 in Seattle. His work on this question has been republished and forms the programmatic basis of the Spartacist League and other sections of the Trotskyist movement today.

In later years, Dick turned back to the history of the slave power and the struggle against slavery, and has authored a book, in the form of abstracts. He also authored his autobiography, mainly a study of his long struggle with cancer and the after effects of the debilitating surgery which he underwent. "How I Came to Love My Carcinoma" is a tale of dark humor, pathos and tragedy.

Dick was a speaker and an educator, first and foremost. And to have been handicapped in his speech was the cruelest of blows. But to the last day of his life Dick remained optimistic, fretting over his illness but planning the continuation of his work on slavery. As little as four days before he died, he was discussing these issues.

Well, there were other sides to Dick, personal sides, his undying love for his son Jonny, which he constantly expressed. The inventions, that by the patent laws of the United States were stolen by his employer, but were of considerable significance. His undying love of music and knowledge of it. You may not know it, he was even a little bit of a card player. We'll reserve those topics for informal discussion. We are left with the memory of a worker, a rebel, a restless organizer, speaker, worker-scholar. And we have to say good-bye to our old friend. The world's a poorer place without him.

Greetings to the memorial meeting from the Spartacist Group of Japan, dated 18 December 1988

We join you today in honoring the life of Richard S. Fraser, a "historic American Trotskyist" and a tenacious fighter for black liberation. Although few of us knew Comrade Fraser personally, we salute his years of struggle against the special oppression of blacks in North America and his unique contributions to a Marxist understanding of how to end it.

The black question is *the* question of the American revolution. Comrade Fraser's historic 1955 document, "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question," is a sharp refutation of black nationalism and all its variants in favor of revolutionary integrationism. This conception lives on today in our American comrades' work to build Labor Black Leagues in the major urban centers. Our most recent victory in stopping a fascist provocation in Philadelphia on 5 November 1988 was a powerful display of the black and red social components that will lead the third American revolution.

Richard Fraser's major work, centering on a Marxist perspective to end the vicious oppression of blacks in the U.S., has important ramifications internationally. Here in Japan, we seek to build a party that sees its workers revolution ending the centuries of women's oppression as well as the institutionalized discrimination against Koreans, Chinese, Japan's indigenous minorities, the Ainu and burakumin, and the Japanese bourgeoisie's newest victims, immigrant labor from the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

Dick Fraser's insistence that only a proletarian revolution can end the horrid plight of capitalism's oppressed minorities is an important component of the international Spartacist tendency's program today. From the other side of the Pacific we embrace our American comrades who have lost a "cherished friend and theoretical mentor."

Sam Hunt

a comrade of the international Spartacist tendency who sent the following letter

Dear comrades and friends,

Like all of you, I was saddened to hear about Dick Fraser's death. I am grateful that I knew

Dick pretty well during the last years of his life. I first met Dick in a hospital room in Long Beach in 1981, but also spent a good deal of time with him when he was home and lucid as hell. I would often stop at Dick's apartment on my way home from work when I lived in L.A. He lived near Hollywood Park and the horse races that he loved. It was here that I received an education on life in the SWP in the 1940s and '50s. Trotskyist leaders, especially black leaders like C.L.R. James and Edgar Keemer, became far more than historical names.

The height of black recruitment to the American Trotskyist movement came during WWII when the Stalinists and social democrats betrayed the fight against Jim Crow. The SWP's courageous stand for black civil rights during the war had a profound impact on Dick who lived through these events. When the SWP veered on a black nationalist course Dick fought hard against this anti-Marxist stance and this culminated in his historic 1955 document. Dick's interest in this question was no idle intellectual venture but a life-long commitment to black liberation.

The *Workers Vanguard* article about Richard's death importantly notes that his last political act was to endorse our Partisan Defense Committee rally to stop a KKK provocation in Philadelphia on November 5th. This is very special to me, as the day Dick endorsed our demonstration was also the last time I saw him alive. While weak and resting in bed, he was quite animated in his desire to get a full report on what was going on. He followed the events leading to the November 5th demonstration very carefully and in his last days the fire of class struggle still burned in his eyes. I had many disagreements with Dick over the years but our WV obituary underlined our bending the stick in the direction of our programmatic agreements. Dick's endorsement of our November 5th demonstration in Philadelphia epitomizes this agreement and I'm glad Dick died with his boots on.

In closing, I have to commend my comrades and friends in L.A. who worked tirelessly to prolong this valuable communist's life and I'm glad I could help this effort. I'm sorry I can't be with you today and must pay my respects from afar. Dick's exemplary struggle to overcome his debilitating physical ailments gives new meaning to the words courage and tenacity. Dick was a communist to the end and I'm going to miss his sense of humor and zest for life. He was my friend and I'll never forget him.

Jim Robertson

National Chairman of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

Like comrade Frank Krasnowsky, I, too, would be happy to take about 30 minutes on the technicalities of the decomposition of the SWP until it ends up as a Barnesite organization. But I, too, am bound by the ten-minute limit.

I first ran into Dick Fraser about 31 years ago, and he was my last personal teacher. Frank has mentioned what happened in Seattle when you got around Dick Fraser. Well, I stayed at his house, so I got it day and night!

But it came at just the right time, because our theoretical mentors, the both of us, he of an earlier generation than me, had been formed out of the arguments that C.L.R. James, Jimmy Johnson that is, and E.R. McKinney had been having in the SWP and in the Shachtman Workers Party then. I could not understand how black nationalism could be analogous with a European national oppressed minority. And having broken with the Shachtmanites, and even before that, I knew that there was something terribly wrong, simply looking at the history and reality of American social relations, with the idea that a kind of militant reformism was going to eliminate the race question in America.

So I was really quite ready to run into comrade Fraser's presentation and historical foundation, that one can achieve the abolition of racial division in this country *only* through a profound, pervasive, far-going social revolution in which the working class comes to power. So I walked away quite thoroughly recruited. And with some, I think, continuing personal affection throughout the rest of those years between us.

This led me to think in preparing to talk here today, why Fraser? I can offer some elements, but I also have a suggestion, because it's rather soon and we only have some of his papers available. Perhaps on the first anniversary of his death we could have a symposium on his central political thought, its development, in the context of his life and his work. I will offer a few ideas about how it is that this particular man in a given set of circumstances could make what I consider to be a fundamental contribution to the program of Marxism, growing out of the particularities of the American racial relations rather than national relations.

I don't think that comrade Fraser could have done this work if he hadn't been a Trotskyist.

Because if his head had been filled with ideas of “socialism in one country,” or support for bourgeois political formations, which were characteristic of the other socialist groups, it would not have been possible. In a striking way, C.L.R. James had a great influence when he arrived in the United States in 1939, evoking also a reaction and a certain paralysis, theoretically, on the part of the SWP.

Then Fraser spent four or five years in the National Maritime Union. The SWP’s cadres were concentrated in the Sailors Union of the Pacific [SUP], which was completely racially exclusionary, unlike the National Maritime Union. And yet Dick was very prominent in the NMU. This contrast in the work of the two fractions obviously had to be a source of stimulation and thought.

Finally, I believe that he was a genuine native genius. And I think that somewhere in this matrix you will find the start of the process that took several years to percolate and really only came into fully rounded form in the early ’50s. By the later ’50s, beginning with the Little Rock crisis, when Eisenhower sent the troops to the South and the SWP said, Hail the American troops to the South, they’re going to be the saviors—already a major political departure—I think that the first theoretical verification of Fraser’s views had been obtained.

A few other remarks. Dick Fraser is supposed to have said, “One of the best things I ever did in my life was sit Jim Robertson down at a kitchen table and pound at him for a few nights.” Well, it’s funny, because I’d just said, across the country at the same time, “The last guy that ever convinced me of anything in an argument was Dick Fraser.” That does not mean that program is finished. There’s an exchange between Cannon and Shachtman to that effect. Cannon is supposed to have said, “We have a finished program,” and Shachtman said, “Yeah, it’s finished.”

I believe that through time that program must change and develop, even though I believe that very little that is fundamental can change within the framework of capitalism since it took its essential shape in 1848. But I believe that comrade Fraser is one of those who found a particular set of conditions in the North American continent and made a Marxian, materialist analysis of it.

I would also like to note that comrade Fraser received, on arriving in L.A. after Seattle, in a pretty battle-fatigued condition, a great deal of fellowship from the NAM (New American Move-

ment), later the DSA, and especially from Dorothy Healey, who helped him a great deal. And I believe that this understandably slowed down his *approchement* with the SL, although we had been in loose association with many disagreements for a long time, comrade Fraser even having attended our founding conference in 1966. See, I could take off now about the SWP, Tom Kerry and those guys and what they did, but I really don’t have time for that.

Most of my other few remarks have already been picked up by others. I think that comrade Fraser found a great deal of satisfaction in offering guidance and advice, especially with the Labor Black Leagues sprouting around the country, and with our members and the younger comrades in general. All the rest of my notes are more of that polemical stuff that I think is historically important, but not now.

Finally, I would like to thank those who have prepared this memorial, who worked very hard and very well, and also the materials that have gone into the memorial display. A very good thing.

Ed Swabeck

a comrade of Dick’s who worked with him in the SWP and its maritime work and, later, on Revolutionary Age

The first time I met Dick Fraser was in 1941, when I got to the coast again to try to ship out. Later on, on the East Coast, we—that is, Dick, I and many other Trotskyists—participated in a great general strike in maritime of 1946.

The Seafarers International Union objected to the buck-passing of the ship owners and the War Shipping Administration. This time the former, that is the ship owners, wanted to give in to postwar contractual improvement demands, but the latter, the War Shipping Administration, played hard cop.

The Manhattan Center meeting hall of the general strike committee of all the unions involved was decorated with huge banners, spread right across the damn hall, to greet the sailors and others from up and down the coast participating in this meeting. The banners said, “An injury to one is an injury to all! United we stand, divided we fall!” And another one, “For collective bargaining and against government interference!”

The strike of AF of L unions was general, all right, pulling the pin with the seamen and their unions, the longies—the longshoremen—tugboat,

all maritime trades, and railroad men, and the Teamsters too. That coast was bottled up, particularly the island of Manhattan. At that time some of the sailors around said, boy, this is a revolutionary situation! Well, many of us thought, we don't know if we're going to take over the government like the days of the October Revolution and the Bolshevik October. But what we wanted to do, and what we did, and what was achieved, was to give the War Shipping Administration, the government's outfit, a swift kick in the ass.

The ILA [International Longshoremen's Association], Marine Firemen and SUP held the fort in the Pacific ports. The CIO unions, like the NMU, followed later, radical socialists of the rank and file, urging towards the Debs and Wobblyite ideal of revolution. And make no mistake, that was led by Trotskyists, such as Dick Fraser and like-minded rank-and-file Bolsheviks. And to carry—I think I got one in my pocket somewhere, that I dug up since I learned about this meeting—to carry that strike clearance card, the general strike clearance of 1946. I carried two of them, one from the CIO because we went, a lot of comrades went, after the AF of L was out on strike, went out to support in solidarity with the CIO unions. So Dick and I were a part of that scene, and I wanted to mention this as one of the big achievements of the Trotskyists' maritime fraction, comrades like Dick.

Later on, on the West Coast, Dick and Arne Swabeck, my father, collaborated in the struggle for a revolutionary workers party of the working class. We had our disagreements. I remember I had one with Dick about shipping, it was about how best to operate a ship, run an old liberty ship without popping the boilers and throwing the safety valves all over the place, while running the U-boat wolf packs down in the torpedo junction. Well, there were others. They were all settled through democratic centralism, as good comrades should. And I say this, that his passing therefore is to be deeply regretted.

I want to say one other thing. When Dick came around to the house a couple of times, I was playing music. And he says, "Damn it, have you got that stuff by that guy that plays 'The Lemon Tree'?" I say, "Oh, you mean Herb Alpert?" He says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, with that 'Tijuana Taxi' and so forth." And I said "Sure, I'll play it." And he liked that. I don't know if he liked the music that we were playing before, that Brahms thing or I don't know what, sort of sleepy funereal kind of stuff. I know *damn well* he liked a rousing singing of the *Internationale*! The red, Bolshevik *Internationale*!

* * *

The memorial meeting concluded with the singing of the Internationale.

Revolutionary Integration: Program for Black Liberation

Introductory Note by the Prometheus Research Library

When, as a young Trotskyist activist, Dick Fraser became convinced that American Marxism had not come to terms with the question of black liberation, he made a life-long commitment to study of the question. Although he was hampered by little formal scholarly training, his Marxist understanding and his broad experience in militant struggles with black workers sharpened his insight into the lessons of history. His dedicated study sprang from his conviction that in order to forge a program for black liberation, it is necessary to study the social forces that created the American institution of racial oppression. Fraser turned to the writings of the militant fighters for black equality during the Civil War and Reconstruction and to the pioneering studies by black academics such as E. Franklin Frazier and Oliver Cromwell Cox. To Fraser, understanding the roots of black oppression in the United States was no armchair activity; he carried his theory of Revolutionary Integration into struggle.

With the publication of this bulletin we are honoring Fraser's fighting scholarship. In the past few years Trotskyism has lost three scholar-militants from the generation brought to revolutionary consciousness by the combative class struggles of the 1930s. George Breitman, who died in April 1986, was as a proponent of black "self-determination" Fraser's main political opponent within the SWP on the black question. He was also the Pathfinder Press editor responsible for the publication of the works of Leon Trotsky and James P. Cannon. And in July 1990 the Trotsky scholar Louis Sinclair died. As the author of *Leon Trotsky: A Bibliography* (Hoover Institution Press, 1972), Sinclair performed an invaluable service to the revolutionary movement in documenting and collecting Trotsky's writings in many languages. Now the tradition of revolutionary scholarship so honorably exemplified by Richard Fraser, George Breitman and Louis Sinclair must be carried on by a new generation of Marxists.

The U.S. capitalist class and its minions would like to forget this country's modern origins in the Second American Revolution that was the

Civil War. To understand the Civil War is to understand the character of U.S. society and its fatal flaw of racism. As Dave Dreiser, Fraser's long-time collaborator and friend, writes in his 16 April 1990 letter to Jim Robertson (see below), for decades the academic racists of the William Dunning school of U.S. history legitimized the racist status quo. Their "interpretation" was popularized in the movies *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind*.

The outbreak of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and the struggle for black equality inspired a new generation of historians, who began to reexamine central issues of American history, in particular the Civil War and Reconstruction. The distinguished James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* and *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, is only one of the many scholars who have documented the heroic struggles of this revolutionary period. Eminent scholars who have studied southern slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction also include Eugene Genovese, Kenneth Stampp, C. Vann Woodward and Eric Foner.

Today the empiricist/racist brand of "scholarship" represented by Harvard historian Robert Fogel, author of *Time on the Cross*, is the academic reflection of the American ruling class's renewed war on the black population. In 1965 Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then an assistant secretary at the Department of Labor, wrote *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, in which he outrageously argued that the "fundamental problem...of family structure" was responsible for the intensification of poverty, joblessness, segregation in housing and lack of education suffered by the masses in the big city ghettos. Bourgeois-empirical sociology (accompanied by pages of charts and graphs) served to provide a pseudo-scientific cover for the old "blame the victim" lies. In 1970 Moynihan coined the term "benign neglect" to describe the federal policy signalling the rollback of the token gains of the

civil rights movement. Federal funding for poverty programs dried up; the government under Nixon, Carter and Reagan dismantled civil rights legislation and destroyed even the minimal plans for busing to achieve school integration.

Dick Fraser's Marxist scholarship utterly rejected the manipulation of history to justify the racist status quo. At the time of his death in 1988 Fraser, with Dave Dreiser, was actively working on notes and abstracts for a book, *The Rise of the Slave Power*, the result of over 40 years of study. The book was to be a Marxist analysis of the rise of the southern slavocracy, the class antagonisms which exploded in the 1861-1865 Civil War between the capitalist North and the slave South and the leading role of the militant abolitionists in the destruction of black chattel slavery.

While his primary area of study was the black question, Dick Fraser was active in many arenas of struggle. In selecting the documents for this bulletin we have sought to show the breadth of his work. Of documents omitted from this collection there are two worthy of special note: "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question" is not published here only because it is readily available in the Spartacist League's *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5R, "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism." The 1958 "Resolution on the Little Rock Crisis," in which Fraser sharply exposes the SWP policy of calling for federal troops to intervene in the

Little Rock, Arkansas school integration crisis, is also omitted. Fraser's position is well represented in two other, shorter documents which we have included, "Contribution to the Discussion on the Slogan 'Send Federal Troops to Mississippi'" and a letter, "On Federal Troops in Little Rock."

Those wishing to read further are directed to the bibliography of Fraser's writings included here as an appendix. All of these materials are available at the Prometheus Research Library.

Editorial Note: As a member of the Socialist Workers Party and the Freedom Socialist Party Dick Fraser often used the name Richard Kirk. The bibliography distinguishes all documents written under the name Kirk with an asterisk. Our introductions give the source and some background for the documents, which have been edited to correct minor errors and inconsistencies. Some purely personal material in the letters has been cut out. The PRL has added brief explanations to clarify references when necessary; these appear in brackets. Footnotes and parenthetical material are by Dick Fraser. The second printing restores the page from "To the Democratic Socialists of America" previously unavailable to us and corrects errors in the first printing.

Prometheus Research Library
July 1990
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Fraser and American Scholarship on the Black Question

Academic scholarship regarding U.S. history has gone through several phases. After the failure of Reconstruction, scholarship went through a very reactionary period. Beginning in the 1890's, William Dunning of Columbia and a host of his students spread the view that Reconstruction was the shame of U.S. history and represented military despotism, the evil of "Africanization," and unrestrained corruption against which a noble but defeated South tried to defend itself. Claude Bowers' *The Tragic Era* (1929) was the most influential work of this ilk.

Ulrich Phillips presented a view of slavery as relatively benign. Slaves were well treated and well fed, and the system was productive. Justin Smith presented a view of the Mexican War in which the arrogant Mexicans were totally to

blame. These reactionary and pro-Southern views of U.S. history dominated the academies and formed the basis for the teaching of U.S. history in high schools and universities for decades following.

The Civil War was regarded as some terrible mistake in which the issue of slavery was minor. Abolitionists had been self-seeking rabble-rousers whose comments on slavery and the politics of their day can be ignored. The defamation of the radical Republicans, Charles Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens, etc., as power mad psychotics became a cottage industry.

Even in those days there were other voices. In 1913 John R. Lynch, former slave and later congressman from Mississippi, wrote *The Facts of Reconstruction* in which he tried to tell some

truth, but his excellent work was lost in a sea of racist "scholarship." A few words from the introduction to a reprint of his book are instructive:

"These scholars contended that the Reconstruction governments in the South were controlled by base, power-hungry carpetbaggers and scalawags who cynically used the newly enfranchised blacks to gain power and to sustain their debauchery in office. Without the votes of naive and illiterate Negroes, who were easily led to the polls to vote the Radical ticket, these scoundrels would never have had an opportunity in any of the states to plunder the public treasuries and incite blacks against whites, according to the Dunning-school historians.

"Therefore the fundamental mistake in the Radical or congressional plan of Reconstruction was the enfranchisement of the freedmen. Happily, however, according to the established version of the story, during the mid-1870's decent whites in both sections of the nation rose in indignation over the spoliation of the Southern states, and through the heroic efforts of local Democrats the Radical Republican regimes were overthrown and good government restored."

After 1960 a new wind blew in the colleges and a number of honest scholars began to chip away at the mountain of pro-Southern reactionary propaganda that still dominated. C. Vann Woodward, Eugene D. Genovese and James M. McPherson are prominent. Other outstanding names are Kenneth Stampp, George Fredrickson and Herbert Gutman, not to mention John Hope Franklin, A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., Henrietta Buckmaster, and other black scholars.

So what is missing? Hasn't everything been straightened out? I don't believe so. Let's take the issue of the nature of slavery. In 1974 a Harvard scholar, Robert Fogel, wrote *Time On the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, a study of slavery based on "cliometrics" which is a computerized technique of examining statistical data. Fogel concluded that slave labor was more efficient than free labor and hence more productive. The slaves were well off and better fed than free workers in the North. Fogel has written a new work in 1989 expanding on this theme. C. Vann Woodward has reviewed Fogel's new book and seems at a loss to know how to criticize it even if he seems uncomfortable with Fogel's conclusions.

In the meantime, Fogel and his new toy, cliometrics, are the rage in academic circles and a new generation of scholars using the technique are collecting their PhDs at Harvard and are fanning out around the country. I asked a Har-

vard history student if the slaves' own view of slavery might not paint a different picture of how well off they were. Patiently he explained to me that the slaves' stories were largely taken down by abolitionists, and of course nothing they wrote can be believed! How, one might ask, could the words of slaves hold up to data manipulated by a computer? One might also ask in studying the Holocaust if it would be permissible to consider the recollections of the survivors, whose views would obviously be biased, or only the views of the guards and administrators who ran the camps?

Thirty years of new scholarship haven't had much effect on the views of history taught in our schools, although there has been some correction. For instance, students of Mexican history at Stanford U. are now taught that the Mexican War was started with an unprovoked attack by U.S. forces ordered by President Polk. Well, that's true, but it is not enough. What were the class forces that caused the Mexican War? The new scholars not only fail to answer such questions, but consider such a question improper.

The best academic scholars are committed to a view of history that regards any kind of economic determinism as quaint. History is regarded basically as narrative. There was no bourgeois revolution in England. The French Revolution had many causes, but it was not a clash between class forces. The view that struggles between classes is a determining factor in history is Marxist fantasy. In fact in the sense that Marx meant, there are no classes.

This crass empiricism did not always dominate U.S. scholarship. There used to be at least a counter-current of materialism that had legitimacy as in Charles Beard's day. But, if anything, methodology has deteriorated since then. For instance, Kenneth Stampp has written *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (1965) as a total revision of the Dunning school. His work is excellent in many ways, but he says, "DuBois's attempt at a full-scale revisionist study, *Black Reconstruction* (New York, 1935), is disappointing. Though rich in empirical detail, the book presents a Marxian interpretation of southern reconstruction as a proletarian movement that is at best naive. The Marxist historian James S. Allen in *Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy, 1865-1876* (New York, 1937) offers an interpretation that is more credible but equally schematic."

It is no longer necessary to refute Marxism which is simply dismissed as naive, quaint and

schematic. In spite of this I believe a thorough class analysis has been written regarding Reconstruction by Eric Foner. His *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (1988) is Marxist in content if not in name and meets the most strict demands of scholarship.

Who has spoken in like voice for the antebellum period? Dick felt no one has, that is no one lately. Charles Beard was accused of being a Marxist in his economic interpretation of the Constitution, but he replied that if so, then so was James Madison from whom he drew much of his "economic" view. In like manner Dick's and my view of the period between say 1776 and 1860 is drawn very largely from Horace Greeley, Charles Sumner, John A. Logan (*The Great Conspiracy: Its Origin and History* [1885]), Henry Wilson, Benjamin Lundy (*The War in Texas* [1836]) and other radical Republicans and abolitionists. I submit that their penetrating analyses of the events of their day have never been refuted, but have been dismissed and forgotten.

Even today the abolitionists are regarded in scholarly circles with great suspicion. People committed to a cause cannot be objective observers or commentators, it is said. Black scholars have largely tackled the issue of restoring the role of slaves and black leaders to proper perspective. A class analysis has largely been absent. In a sense Dick wanted to restore the views and scholarship of the radicals of those days. That is not an unworthy purpose.

A brief word about "revisionism" may be needed. Kenneth Stampp regards himself and other post-1960 liberal scholars as revisionists, that is compared with the Dunning school. But, Dunning a generation before had considered himself a revisionist of the views of the mid-19th century. Robert Fogel might be called a new revisionist of the revisionists of the revisionists. I think it is better not to use the term.

I know that a lot of "Marxists" in our movement have tended to take scholarship lightly. Substituting theory for research, they generalize at the drop of a hat. However, it is not always necessary for research to be original to be used in a valid general analysis. For instance Edward Diener is a U. of Illinois scholar who wrote a commentary on U.S. history (*Reinterpreting U.S. History* [1975]). The book is not annotated and makes no pretense of original scholarship. His book just expresses a *point of view* which is an

altogether legitimate practice. His view happens to be fairly conservative. Dick wanted to make reasonable use of available scholarship to express a point of view about U.S. history.

Briefly, Dick's view was that after the invention of the cotton gin the slave system took on new life and the compromise between the planters and the merchant capitalists in the North and expressed in the U.S. Constitution fell apart. The planters wanted state power for themselves, and effectively won it with the election of Andrew Jackson. In the main, they controlled the presidency and Congress from then until 1860. Their power was based on a class alliance between themselves and the free farmers of the North who had similar interests on some questions such as soft money and low tariffs.

This alliance operated to stunt the growth of capitalism. The power of the planters was expressed through their control of the Democratic Party. The Whig "opposition" was about as effective as the Democratic opposition to the Republicans today. The subservience of the Whigs gave the planters effective state power.

When the abolitionists spoke of the Slave Power they were not being inflammatory but analytical.

The Republican Party was a revolutionary party which led the nation through the Civil War to an overthrow of planter power and the ascendancy of the capitalist state. The failure of that social revolution to proceed through Reconstruction to a resolution of the land question in the South by giving land and the franchise to the freedmen set the stage for the racist nation we have inherited.

Dick would have wanted to cover a broad sweep going on to the aftermath of Reconstruction, but that is all over with his passing. But, certainly it is appropriate to finish his beginning treatment covering the ascendancy of the Slave Power.

I further believe that the best of current academic scholars have not told Dick's story. They have made a major effort to reduce the blatant racism that dominated the academies for 80 years, but in method, empiricism is today more dominant in the study of history than ever before.

David Dreiser
16 April 1990

San Diego Farm Strike Is Crushed

“Popular Front” Engineers Fatal Truce Which Smashes Celery Strike

From California Labor Action, 20 February 1937. Edited by James P. Cannon, Labor Action was an agitational organ of the Trotskyists in California during the 1936-37 entry into the Socialist Party. Dick Fraser was active in the Southern California Trotskyist movement from 1934 to 1938.

The pathetic end of the San Diego celery strike is another picture of betrayal and deception reminiscent of Orange County. It is a picture of a Mexican Consul, some local politicians and their stooges and a couple of incompetent labor leaders who helped these agents of the employers to maneuver the striking unions into calling a two day “truce” in picketing just as the Shipper-Growers were beginning to feel the pressure of the strike, thus breaking the backbone of the workers’ offensive.

The picture was painted by the Farmers’ Protective Association, framed by its agents within the unions, and nicely glassed in by a clique of Stalinites.

The unions of San Diego County up until a week ago were the pride of the state, the shining light of unionism in agriculture; today they are nothing but another menacing blot, marking the spot where another strike was broken, and this one without a struggle. Six months ago the San Diego unions boasted of good contractual relations with the growers; their leadership was clear and their perspectives sound; their ranks were filled with militant union men; they have given to the labor movement such men as Jose Espinoza.

But such events as the Orange County citrus strike, Los Angeles, Salinas, etc., had long ago planted a firm determination in the Shipper-Grower Associations to wipe out the existing unions in agriculture and the unions in San Diego in particular.

Attack Leaders

The first and most important line of strategy followed by the growers’ agents in the unions was to undermine the authentic leadership of the Mexican union with a vicious campaign of lies and slanders so that by the time of the strike all

of the stable and militant leaders of the union were either discredited or entirely out of the ranks of the union.

One principal reason for the former stability of the union was the fact that its leadership never permitted the Communist Party to get a foothold. This time the Stalinists took the cue from the employers’ attacks upon the union and started one of their famous “build-ups” around a second-rate demagogic politician. He turned out to be an ideal stooge for either the bosses or the Stalinists, being absolutely ignorant of the meaning of the labor movement in any of its forms except perhaps as a sublimation of religious experience.

At the same time a vile campaign against Jose Espinoza was initiated, and to make it sure, just before the strike was to begin Jose was thrown in jail in Orange County on his old vagrancy charge along with Velarde of the CUCOM. The united front of the bosses and the Commies (is this the People’s Front in action?) then forced out Lillian Monroe and Castillo, leaders of last year’s successful strike along with Espinoza.

Thus the unions entered the strike with the membership considerably demoralized by the recent turn-over of militants and little confidence in the leadership. Nevertheless, after a very fair walkout on January 27th a militant picket-line succeeded in tying up considerable of the celery crop.

The idea that under the best conditions these unions might have been able to deal with the Celery Growers’ Association as a whole (tributary to the Farmers’ Protective Association) is at best overly optimistic. A good chance for partial victory lay, however, in concentration of the workers’ forces in such a way as to enable the unions to break off one after another several Shipper-Growers from the Association.

The sixth day of the strike found the

Association in the agony of a sure split as a result of well concentrated workers' forces. The powerful apparatus of the bosses, both inside and outside the unions, sprang into immediate action. The County Supervisors threatened to pass an anti-picketing law effective in "all unincorporated districts" (the agricultural areas) of the county. Without consultation with the Central Strike Committee a meeting was hastily prepared where-in a supervisor was to present a "plan" for "settling" the strike.

So the puppet-stage was set and the puppets under the puppet mastership of Chet Moore jerked on their strings, and the strike was in the hands of the bosses.

The politician, Bellon, smiled and ogled and told how workers must use "strategy" in order to win. This strategy, said the politician, consists in removing your picket line for two days in order to save us poor politicians the embarrassment of passing an anti-picketing law at the insistence of the Farmers' Protective Association. No one was taken in at first, some of the workers actually laughed in his face, but the stage was well set. At Bellon's right sat our two-bit, build-up leader and his trusty Stalinite builder-upper, also two local nitwits, stooging for the politician, and a representative of the San Diego County Building Trades Council. They were all pleading for the agricultural workers to help them fight the anti-picketing law, directed at the celery strike—by removing the pickets from the celery fields. At Bellon's right sat the crafty Mexican Consul giving silent but effective support.

"Discussion" started and the Stalinists yelled "charge" while beating a hasty retreat to the protective shelter of impotence. Stalinite Roscoe (AIWUA) yelled that "we are not afraid to make a sacrifice." Delgado called upon his fellow workers to show that agricultural workers can "discipline" themselves, and urged them on to break their own strike!

The Mexican Consul (Castro) blandly said that he was glad that the workers were "doing the right thing." The politician and the boys had a few uncomfortable moments when the present writer spoke but the stage was too well set and the militants were caught unawares, going home heavy hearted and with a choking feeling in their throats, knowing that their strike had been sold out.

Three days later the men began to feel the fruits of militant struggle gradually melting away and the strike slipping through their fingers. In

a last great reflex the pickets attempted to return to life and sweep like a hurricane through the county, clearing fields from which the green gold was being taken. Disorganized and frantic the picketing finally petered out, its leaders were arrested and that was all. The fields filled up as quickly as they were cleared. Another flare-up occurred the next day but by this time the leadership had lost sight of everything but saving its own face. The picket lines dwindled away and died.

However, the overwhelming majority of the striking men stayed out of the fields faithfully awaiting the decision of the union although all realized that to carry on further would be folly.

The question then took perspective: here had been a good strike situation, a militant picket-line and a healthy spirit in the unions,—but the strike is lost. All at once it occurs to the leaders of the fiasco, to the politicians, to the Stalinites and stoolpigeons, to the Mexican Consul, to everyone who had a hand in the sell-out: where to dump the responsibility? So on the night when the strike was formally to be called off another frame-up was staged.

The Stalinite-boss combination went to elaborate pains in order to shift responsibility to one individual against whom all the anti-labor forces in and out of the unions could unite. They had a well-drilled cheering section supplemented by some misguided workers plied with liquor until they were rolling drunk and quite irresponsible. The best Stalinite provocateurs were available. One member of the cheering section was unfortunately placed near me and admitted that he did not know who, nor where the "traitor" was nor what he had done. After attacking him as a "microbe" with all weapons, doing everything in their power to create a good witch-burning spirit among the workers, those who originally sold out the strike were able to muster only 27 votes out of 300 strikers present for expulsion of the present writer from the meeting. This alone is a final condemnation of their entire course and an indication that the victory of the forces of reaction within the union will be short lived.

The path of the California agricultural workers in the state has constantly been beset by betrayals of this same character. The local American union is small and young and could not be expected to stand up alone under heavy pressure, but it will take more than the nonsensical yapping of the Stalinists to explain how

the proud Independent (Mexican) Union of Laborers and Field Workers of San Diego County could, with one small puff of a politician's sugary breath, fold up like a tent in a gale and permit itself completely and utterly to be seduced by its own leaders into selling its own strike.

In the first place it must be recognized that these unions were fighting a statewide organization, whereas every tendency to attempt to localize the problem was played up by the employers, the Stalinites and the politicians, so that the membership and the leadership of the unions was kept from a correct understanding of the nature of the enemy. The bosses had an intelligent machine working in and about the union that time after time succeeded in blocking a correct position. The Communist Party clique dovetailed exactly into the machine of the employers. This vicious combination succeeded in isolating

the workers from their legitimate leaders and projecting them into a strike helpless as a ship without a rudder.

These unions are isolated from the main body of organized labor in the state and must depend upon their own resources in any situation. These resources are very meager. Local politicians and labor fakers find in these independent unions easy prey, in that they stand and fall alone and cannot rally to their support their legitimate allies in the ranks of organized labor.

The salvation of these unions rests on a State organization for agriculture in the A.F. of L., and it is with hope that these workers receive from the State Federation of Labor a conference call sent to all agricultural unions for the purpose of beginning the unification of unionism in agriculture on a sound basis.

New NMU Hall—Facade to Hide Union Retreat

From the Socialist Workers Party's Militant, 8 July 1944. Dick Fraser sailed out of the port of New York as a member of the National Maritime Union from 1943 to 1948.

The new hall of the National Maritime Union in New York City is now open and in full operation after a big National Maritime Day dedication ceremony. This is reputed to be the most elaborate union hall that American seamen have ever owned. It has an illuminated dispatchers' board, recreational facilities including a bar with free beer on occasions, upholstered benches and, as President Curran promised, sweet music while the seamen wait for their next ship out. A good union hall is a good thing to have. All militants, of which the NMU has its share, are in favor of good and better things for the seamen; that is why they built the union in the first place.

After the government smashed the seamen's unions after the last war (in 1921) and herded the "heroes in dungarees" into government fink halls, crimp joints, and shipowner controlled employment offices, the seamen conducted an unrelenting struggle to establish their own hiring halls.

It was not until the great maritime strike of 1934, which culminated in the San Francisco general strike, that the seamen took the first step toward regaining union control of the hiring hall. In the strike of 1936-37, the 99-day strike on the Pacific Coast, the seamen were finally able to force the shipowners to sign written agreements embodying recognition of the union hiring hall.

For seamen, union control over the hiring hall meant an end to the vicious system of blacklisting by which the government and the shipowners victimized union militants; it meant an end to discrimination, favoritism, miserable working conditions, low wages, and a condition of sea-slavery. It meant, above all, the independence of the union, free from domination or control by the shipowners or their political agents in the government! The unions formulated their OWN shipping rules based on the principle of rotary shipping. Union members who violated the shipping rules, the union contract, union working

conditions, were disciplined by the democratic action of the union membership. The union hiring hall for seamen became the symbol of free, independent unionism in the maritime industry.

It is against this background that seamen must assess the value of either old or new hiring halls. What are the conditions that go with the new NMU hall? During the last two years the shipping rules have been "modified" until there is little left of the rights of members. For example, the "Wartime Shipping Rules" of the NMU for the port of New York contain the following provisions:

Wartime Regulations

1. "All men between the years of 18 and 38 who persist in turning down ships without any good reason that they can substantiate, will have their names turned over to the Draft Board by the Agent and the Dispatcher as not being bonafide seamen."

2. "All men over 38 years of age who persist in turning down ships without any good reason that they can substantiate, will have their names turned over to the War Manpower Commission as not being bonafide seamen."

These provisions in the shipping rules mean that the union officials have become finger-men for government agencies upon whom they depend to enforce the union shipping rules! The union shipping card has been abolished and in its place there has been substituted the RMO (Recruitment and Manning Organization of the War Shipping Administration) time allotment card with the union's name on it. These measures, only a few of a number of other like measures that have been put into effect by the Curran-Stalinist leadership, serve to undermine union control over the hiring hall. And flowing from these, there arise certain vicious practices, especially a system of favoritism.

Shore-time allotments run from four to thirty days. This inequality in shipping cards makes rotary shipping impossible, forcing a man, say, with a ten-day card to compete with others with thirty-day cards. A seaman is doubly penalized for quitting even a ship on which the worst conditions prevail. First, he has to take a short shipping card. Second, he incurs disciplinary measures by the union for getting off without a replacement.

A most vicious practice has resulted from this. The ship's officers and company officials have fostered a system of favoritism whereby a seaman

who permits himself to become so involved can get little protection against the stringent RMO rulings. This divides the crew and always leaves the company with a few stooges on the ship. With a divided crew a seaman willing to fight for conditions finds himself fined. Because of the short shipping card he will then get, along with other possible penalties, and the unwillingness of the Patrolmen to back him up, even a good union man becomes reluctant to fight.

The end result is that bad conditions get worse and there is no way to stop it. A seaman is cajoled or threatened into taking a job where he must sleep in a crummy bunk on a lousy ship, while the shipowner gets praise for keeping it in operation.

When a seaman comes in from a trip, he is confronted in the Union Hall with all the red tape of a first rate government agency. On the conveyor belt of this red tape he gets pushed from pillar to post and from office to office, and finally lands in the Trial and Rules Committee which, to save time, will read him the rules and give him a trial at the same time.

Enforcing the RMO rulings is the job of the RMO and not of a union. However, the NMU officials even use the practice of reporting violations of RMO rulings to the RMO and Selective Service officials!

The Union Hall is no longer a place where a union man can expect to find protection and just representation against a shipowner or a government bureaucrat. On the contrary, this system by which the Union has undertaken the functions of the WSA, the RMO and the Selective Service System makes going to sea just like being in jail, only more efficient. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the shipowners eagerly accept when they are invited into the Hall and are received with open arms.

At the April 27 membership meeting Curran boasted: "For the first time in history personnel representatives of 60 shipowners were sitting in the Hall, talking cooperation. I told them that for seven years we've been fighting to keep them out of the Hall, and now we're fighting to get them in." Shipowner Taylor of the Merchant Marine Institute dedicated the new Hall. An evil omen for the future!

Among the fruits of Curran's "fight" is this, that, as everyone knows, recently there has been an epidemic of seamen shipping off the dock through company offices and on unorganized lines (Standard Oil, Isthmian, etc.). National Vice-

President of NMU Meyers has complained to the War Shipping Administration that seamen do this in order to escape and evade the shipping rules of the NMU. The *Pilot*, official weekly of the Union, reported on May 5: "The union has even gone so far as taking drastic action against men who violate our shipping rules...after the union takes this action however its hands are tied because the individual...is free to go to any one of the few unorganized lines..."

The policies of NMU leaders in supporting the government and its bureaus become so oppressive that seamen are driven away from the Union Hall to the protection of—the shipowners and their crimps. This is virtually what the *Pilot* itself says.

This is the price that the seamen pay for the support their officials give to Roosevelt and the war machine. This is the price of the new Hall.

Soldiers Cheer Striking Workers

From the Workers' Forum section of the Militant, 15 December 1945. Dick Fraser worked briefly with the Socialist Workers Party's Newark branch at that time.

A couple of days ago we were distributing the *Militant* on a corner close to the Hyatt Plant in Harrison, N.J. The pickets in front of the plant were marching in file with their placards raised high. There was a meeting of the union to be held shortly and the workers were either just arriving or standing around before going into the meeting. Besides this group, the Crucible Steel Local was to have a meeting about a block away. This made quite a crowd of workers along the street, and what with the pickets marching, and my comrade and me distributing the *Militant*, and the workers milling around, there was quite a little activity.

Now the Pennsy (Pennsylvania R.R.) runs on

an elevated track right by the plant. And just at this time along came a troop train from New York loaded with GI's who had debarked from Europe and were on the way to separation centers. As the train passed the plant the GI's threw open the windows and gave a tremendous cheer, as only the GI's on their way home can, and waved to the pickets. The pickets waved their placards back, and an answering yell rose up from the workers across the street near the hall.

The striking workers got a great kick out of this event and I wish that all G.M. strikers could have witnessed it. And the next best they can do is to read about it in the *Militant* which is why I am writing this.

Cover of original August 1954 SWP *Discussion Bulletin*
containing "The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution"

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

A-19

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THE NEGRO STRUGGLE AND THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

By R. S. Fraser

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The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution

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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 slaveowners 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 slaveowners 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 the 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 rest 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 re-establishment 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 colonists 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 slaveowners, 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," folklore 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 folktales, 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 overriding 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 yardstick 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 inferior-

ity 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 were 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, Caribbean 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, anyone 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 worldwide 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 San 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 18th 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 transformed 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 require 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, folklore,

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.

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.

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. Du Bois has stated that the problem of the 20th 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. Du Bois 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 skin. 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 worldwide 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 planta-

tion 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 main two 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 born 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 slaveowners 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 product 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.

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 in which it existed in the 1920's, might have developed much further.

Leon Trotsky enumerated two such historical possibilities. First: "Under the condition that Japan invades the United States and the Negroes are called upon to fight—they may come to feel themselves threatened first from one side and then from the other, and finally 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 derives 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 towards 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 inde-

pendent 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 slaveowners. 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.

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 cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it 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 worldwide 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 fore-

taste 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 battleground 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 countryside. 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.

Contribution to the Discussion on the Slogan “Send Federal Troops to Mississippi”

As the civil rights struggle grew in the South, the 17 October 1955 Militant called on the federal government to send troops to Mississippi. This demand precipitated debate within the Socialist Workers Party: National Committee member and Buffalo branch leader Sam Marcy wrote a letter criticizing the slogan, which was then extensively discussed at Political Committee meetings on 9 and 13 February 1956. Marcy's letter and the transcript of the PC discussion were printed in SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 18, No. 12 (October 1957). Dick Fraser's contribution to the discussion, written from Seattle, Washington and dated 10 March 1956, was published in the subsequent Bulletin (Vol. 18, No. 13, October 1957).

The first P.C. discussion of Comrade Marcy's point of view on the slogan “Send Federal Troops to Mississippi” revolves largely around the questions of consciousness, transitional vs. immediate demands, etc. These are rather exhaustively discussed without serious consideration being given to the concrete objective effects of the use of Federal Troops in the South, regardless of the ostensible reason for their being sent there. I feel that this is a weakness in the discussion, and that this aspect of the question has a priority in the discussion. For the objective result is the final test of the principled nature of a slogan.

Concretely, it is highly probable that Federal Troops will be sent to the South some time during the coming period whether we ask for them or not. The social antagonisms are too great to be indefinitely contained by the traditional terroristic police regime, and sooner or later the troops will be called in. Any analysis of the problem should begin with this probability.

Troops most probably will be sent to the South under quite different conditions from those envisioned by the P.C.—at a time when the Negro masses are in motion. If we advocate that the Federal Government send them there, we will bear political responsibility for the consummation of the demand.

We have advocated a broad movement involving a March on Washington for the purpose of effecting the demand. This will take time. The movement will be removed from the specific current situation and will have the character of a

general demand, which it really has become now: “Send Federal Troops to the South for the purpose of defending the Negroes against terrorism and establishing democratic rights.” This is how it is understood by the Negro leaders who have raised it, and it is apparent from our discussion and use of the slogan in the paper that we do also.

Under either Eisenhower or Stevenson, the most probable condition under which the Federal Government will send troops to the South will be that the Negroes hold the initiative in the struggle. As long as the white supremacists have the initiative and the lid of repression is clamped on tightly, the social equilibrium is not upset by a lynching or other terrorist actions. When the Negroes take the initiative it is a “race riot” and the public security is threatened and an excellent reason is given to the government to intervene.

When the Negroes hold the initiative it will be the function of the Federal army to restore law and order on the basis of the existing social system, and will involve severe repressions against the Negroes. There hasn't been a “race riot” in this century in which troops were used that they didn't do just that—and there is not likely to be one.

At such a time we might be able to stop short, and reassessing our dangerous position, reverse direction and demand that “No Federal Troops be sent to the South.” But it would be impossible to reverse the direction of a mass movement led by people who are convinced that U.S.

troops could have a beneficial effect upon the South.

I do not believe that it can be demonstrated that there is a qualitative difference in our use of this slogan as compared with the Stalinists calling upon the use of troops during the Little Steel Strike. They were, after all, only calling upon the government to enforce the right to organize and bargain collectively. A right that had been written into the laws of the land. In the comparison of these two cases, I don't think that there is a difference in the objective actions of the troops, or a difference in the kind of illusions which will be fostered, nor even a substantial difference in political responsibility.

* * *

So far, I have considered the problem only on the assumption that troops would be sent to the South as a result of the need to protect the status quo from a powerful movement of the Negroes which would upset the social equilibrium. It must, of course, be considered from the opposite assumption as well. Although unlikely, it is not theoretically excluded that given sufficient social pressure in the North, the government might be forced to make a move with troops ostensibly to prevent a lynching, enforce a court order, or upon some other occasion which would place the troops at the inception of the move in opposition to the apparatus of the southern system. In such a circumstance there would be an appearance of conflict between government and capital, as we saw during the war when the government took over industrial plants during labor disputes.

Such an action would tend to create, at least momentarily, a relaxation of the oppressive machinery which maintains the South in its fascist-like police state. The temporary enlargement of the area of struggle thus made possible would be an immediate signal for a social explosion on both the political and economic front.

In the present stage of the struggle only the most elementary democratic demands are being pushed by the southern masses. This is only because there is an insufficiently wide area of struggle to permit the consideration of other demands. However, it is the super-exploitation of labor which is at the foundation of the southern system and the immediate result of any relaxation of the traditional agencies of repression which might follow, temporarily, the interposition of Federal Troops between these agencies and the Negro people would be a social upheaval with a tremen-

dous strike wave as its probable focal point.

There can be no doubt about what the role of the Federal Troops would be in this circumstance. They would become strike-breakers and the conditions of civil war which would accompany the strike wave would force the army into a firm alliance with the white supremacists and the equilibrium of the traditional southern system would be restored by the use of Federal Troops.

The high probability of such a series of events is one reason that it appears most unlikely that the government would risk the consequences of this kind of "cold" occupation of the South. More probable is that the government will use the agitation in favor of sending troops to the South to do so under conditions of "public emergency." The government can indeed claim that it is acting to protect the Negroes, but the logic of events and indeed the class character of the army will impel it to protect white supremacy against the Negroes.

* * *

In the first P.C. discussion, Comrades Dobbs, Stein and Hansen analyze the question of slogans in general, the nature of transitional demands in general, and the question of principle involved in setting the capitalist army in motion under any conditions whatever. And in so doing they correctly take issue with Comrade Marcy's exposition of some of these matters, although none of them touches the heart of the question.

In this respect Marcy's document has a one-sidedness and contains a schematism and formalism which detracts from and tends to obscure a fundamentally correct position: that irrespective of the question of consciousness, the slogan is wrong; essentially because it leads to strike-breaking and other repressions.

For instance, Marcy contends that because of the class character of the capitalist state and its army, to put it into motion in any manner at all is wrong. Therefore, it is wrong to call for it to be sent to the South. This is an oversimplification of the problem and is a formalistic schema. A fact which others have observed. The real reason that it would be wrong to use this slogan is to be found in the *relationship* between the southern social system, American capitalism and its state. Marcy makes his excellent analysis of this relation subordinate to his schema of the *state*, and this is a misfortune.

Even the most elementary democratic demand which is general in form tends to transcend the

limits of American capitalism. In this sense while it is true that the demand for *equality* put forward by the Negroes is a democratic demand in the historical sense, it is at the same time a very good example of Trotsky's definition of a transitional demand. For racial equality transcends the southern social system and consequently American capitalism.

The South is a fascist-like police state and its social relations can be contained in no other. Therefore, any *general* demand put forward in the South today tends to become transitional in content for there will be no general alleviation of conditions there under capitalism. (It would be wrong to confuse a *general* demand with specific democratic demands which may not necessarily by themselves be anything more than an immediate demand which has at least a theoretical possibility of being realized. I refer to such demands as "justice to the lynchers of Emmett Till," the present boycott demands, this or that individual problem of integration, specific strike demands, etc.)

Any one of the general grievances of southern workers, moreover, leads immediately to the others, so closely interwoven are the democratic, economic and racial problems there. Once the movement breaks out of the pressurized circle of the police state, around one question, all others will spring forward demanding solution. Under these conditions, the presence of the U.S. Army in the South during such a period could lead only to disastrous consequences for the southern workers. This would be particularly true if the presence of the troops was initially welcomed by the northern supporters of the movement, for this would tend to disarm the southern workers and prevent them from making whatever plans they could to defend themselves against this army in its inevitable role.

So actually, in spite of its formalism, Comrade Marcy's statement needs but a slight alteration to fit the situation quite well: The nature of the southern social system and its relation to American capitalism dictate that the army would play only a reactionary role in the South. Furthermore, the nature of the Jim Crow system and its relation to capitalism seem to me to justify Marcy's criterion of *transitional* demands when dealing with the South.

* * *

Two peculiarities of the "troops" slogan. The slogan reveals the following contradictions:

1. That it is motivated around the question of consciousness of Negroes of the North and West for the solution of a question involving directly only the Negroes in the South. I think that this is substantially correct, irrespective of the fact that some middle class southern leaders are apparently in favor of the demand.

2. That it arose in the Negro petty bourgeoisie and corresponds perfectly, not so much to their illusions about the Federal Government, but to their fear of the Negro masses. That is, as opposed to the tendency of the workers toward mass actions, the petty bourgeois proposes a legal-military solution. To the demands by the workers upon the petty bourgeoisie for leadership in the struggle, the middle class attempts to get the masses off its back by turning the whole thing over to the government.

Regardless of the fact that there are sections of the Negro working class movement which do and will continue to support middle class slogans and leadership, there is a very strong current among the workers both North and South, of hatred and fear of the U.S. Army. They have never seen or heard of the army doing anything to the advantage of the Negroes. In such groupings, any illusions which may exist about the Federal Government do not extend to its armed forces.

The Negro leaders envisage a re-enactment of the Reconstruction in their proposals to refuse to seat congressmen and to send troops. While we could easily find a formula to support the former demand, we have no business supporting the latter. During the many strikes during the NRA [National Recovery Act] period we never once called for the use of troops to enforce Section 7a, although we certainly supported the act of inserting this clause into the law. (And incidentally, the question of an FEP [Fair Employment Practices] with enforcement provisions has nothing whatever to do with a general appeal to the government to send troops to the South.)

In connection with the historical aspect of the question, therefore, it would be wrong to overestimate the progressive uses to which the U.S. Army was put during Reconstruction. Besides the factors which Comrade Marcy has already mentioned, there are two others which should be recalled as modifying the progressive character of the military occupation of the South during Reconstruction.

One is that the question of the success or failure of the Reconstruction was in some cases

influenced not by the presence of the U.S. Army in general, but specifically, of *Negro troops*. On more than one occasion the demand of the white supremacists was not for the removal of troops altogether, but specifically for the removal of the Negro troops. If there were today a completely segregated army, the Negro community would be responsive and unafraid of the demand to *send the Negro regiments to the South*. And such a slogan would tend to have an altogether different social content than the one proposed. This is obviously not possible, as it would cut across the main line of the struggle for equality—it would be, in effect, a demand for segregated units in the armed forces.

The second recollection of the Reconstruction which pertains to the discussion is that on many occasions, the southern Republicans and the Negroes, both through the Republican Party and independently, requested, pleaded and agitated for Federal Troops to protect them in given areas, only to have the government turn a deaf ear... until the Negroes began to arm and protect themselves. In these instances the army, even in this revolutionary period, was brought into action only when the masses gave evidence of being prepared to embark upon an independent solution to their problems.

While the generally progressive character of the occupation of the South during the Reconstruction is not questioned, at the same time it must be recognized that one important feature of this occupation was the frustration of the independent action of the masses in the solution of their problems. Theoretically, the main tangible reason that the Reconstruction failed so miserably in the end was precisely because of the bureaucratic-military control which the presence of the Union Army enforced over the revolution.

* * *

The problem of elaborating correct slogans for the present situation is obviously a difficult one—principally because we are dealing with several different layers of consciousness. 1. The Negro petty bourgeoisie in the North and West. 2. The labor bureaucracy. 3. The Negro petty bourgeois leadership in the South. 4. The Negro masses. 5. The organized working class.

The “troops” slogan obviously pertains largely to the need of the northern Negro movement to do something in support of the actions of the southern masses. For instance, the southern workers would tend to be hostile to the idea of

a mass March on Washington from the South. They would justifiably feel that this would be a means of removing the most militant sections of the population from the scene of struggle. And inasmuch as it is the March on Washington which is the present active feature of the campaign, it can have little significance for southern workers.

I was rather surprised that the paper did not develop the idea (once commented upon) of a “March on Mississippi.” Such a slogan contains a direct transition to the Workers Defense Guard. It corresponds to the requirement of the northern workers to do something to express their solidarity with the struggles in the South.

It is perhaps further removed from the agitational stage than the “troops” slogan principally because neither the Negro petty bourgeoisie nor the labor bureaucracy have picked it up—nor are they likely to. Propagandistically, however, it has some rather substantial advantages. It provides the framework for explaining the real nature of the southern social system and its relation to American capitalism; it counterposes mass action to the legal-military type solution of the NAACP lawyers, just as we counterposed mass picketing to the use of troops to enforce Section 7a, a government arbitration award, an NLRB order, etc. The audacity of the slogan is a means of revealing the depth of the social crisis in the South.

This slogan or one like it would be necessary in any consideration of the problem of union organization of the South. Pending an overturn of the southern system by the workers of the South, the union movement cannot hope to achieve the degree of democracy consistent with the requirements of a mass union movement short of massive intervention from the organized working class of the North and West.

(I am aware that the P.C. is planning a separate discussion on this question, and it is not my intention to attempt to divert this discussion to that one ahead. However, the intimate connection between all the social problems involved in the Negro question will break through somewhere in any discussion, and sometime we will have to integrate these separate problems. In this case, it seems impossible to ignore completely the relation between the use of the “troops” slogan and the problem of labor organization in the South, not only for the specific reason mentioned above, but secondly, because the slogan is incompatible with union organization in the South.)

A Workers Defense Guard—a giant flying squadron half a million strong—corresponds to

the needs of the objective situation, is easily explained and justified, will find response in the working class, and would be a means of dissociating ourselves from the legalistic approach of the middle class reformers, and unless we are prepared to do this we are going to postpone indefinitely the building of a left wing movement in the Negro community or specifically in the NAACP.

“March on Mississippi” coupled with the demand on Congress that it purge its bodies of the Jim Crow congressmen and senators would at least give us an active position in the present situation which would not be in violation of principle. We demand of Congress that they do the legal end of it and leave enforcement to the people. The March on Mississippi would guarantee the legal elections and the other democratic rights contained in the anti-slavery constitutional amendments.

It is difficult if not impossible to develop at this time general action slogans for the southern movement itself. I don't think that the southern Negroes require a slogan in order to create defense guards, for this is already in their con-

sciousness. They have been preoccupied with the business of self-defense ever since World War II. Comrade Dobbs has pointed out their tendency to create defense guards when the situation permits. However, they do not possess the necessary legal organizations to develop defense guards.

However, the idea that they are thrown upon the necessity of self-protection, because nobody else is going to protect them, is very strong among the Negro masses of the South. This represents a very advanced stage of consciousness—far in advance of the slogan of “Federal Troops to Mississippi.” It would be wrong in my opinion to advance this slogan for this reason alone. Even if it did correspond to the consciousness of the whole mass of Negroes in the North, and even if it were not wrong in principle, it still would be wrong to try to send the consciousness of the southern militants backward for the sake of their northern allies. On the contrary, our slogans should flow from and reflect the most advanced thinking of the Negro masses, rather than the fearful and treacherous thinking of the petty bourgeoisie.

Communist Party Internal Discussion

As an SWP militant, Dick Fraser intervened in the Stalinist movement, seeking to win its best elements to Trotskyism. As part of that work in Seattle in 1956 he wrote the following document, which was distributed by SWP supporters in the Communist Party. As Fraser commented in a 1 October 1983 letter to Jim Robertson, "I wrote it for one of our fractions in the CP, who had the two members of the District Negro Commission.... I don't know if it will be of any value to the Labor/Black operation, but it would probably be nice for your archives."

Parts of this document are duplicative of "Resolution on the Negro Struggle," section VI, "The Communist Party" (see page 65). To avoid repetition we have excerpted the beginning, followed by section 3 ("The question of Civil Rights legislation at the 84th Congress"), where Fraser exposes the CP's West Coast newspaper, the People's World, for covering up the anti-civil rights conspiracy in Congress, and the conclusion.

The undersigned members of the District Negro Commission in consultation with rank and file members of the party have drafted the following report for the consideration of the District Negro Commission. This report does not represent the opinions of the Negro Commission, but only the views of those who have signed this document and the opinions in whole or part of those they consulted with.

Due to the fact that this is a pre-convention discussion period we have decided to mimeograph and circulate this report among the general membership as a contribution to that discussion.

V.J.D.
S.O.I.

Report to the District Negro Commission

The surprising front page headline of the *People's World* of Sept. 21, entitled "How Integration Won in Louisville," forces us, now that the election campaign is over and the pre-convention discussion period has begun, to review critically the effects of the turn of the party toward the Democrats upon our relations with the Negro community.

The support by the *P.W.* of the Louisville Plan for "voluntary integration" (which the Negroes call "voluntary segregation") is only one of a series of gross violations of the principles and tradition of militant struggle against Jim Crow which various party leaders and even the National

Committee have committed us to.

The following examples of this tendency will be examined in detail:

1. The support of the Louisville Plan.
2. The question of the Louisiana "Right to Work" law.
3. The question of Civil Rights legislation at the 84th Congress.
4. The support of the "moderate white supremacists."
5. The question of prejudice.

* * *

3. Civil Rights in Congress. The history of congressional legislation since the Supreme Court decision of 1954 [*Brown v. Board of Education*] reveals that one of the important factors in the unanimity of the decision by a court which included both Republicans and Southern Bourbons was that it provided a formula for keeping the issue at least temporarily off the floor of Congress.

This was highly desirable to the Republicans because Eisenhower had categorically promised during the 1952 campaign that he and his party would fight the Southern filibuster and get rid of Rule 22.

It was completely acceptable to the Democrats because every time the Civil Rights issue is debated it threatens to tear their party apart.

Chief Justice Warren's formula was further acceptable even to the Bourbons in principle be-

cause it lacked implementation and the clear perspective was to turn enforcement over to the Southern states themselves.

This attempt to remove the Civil Rights question as a whole from the responsibility of the legislative branch of government and to turn it over to the courts was fairly successful for the first three years of the Eisenhower administration. An occasional futile face-saving gesture on the part of the few ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] congressmen did not make a ripple in the sublime peace between the capitalist political factions around this question. Even the occasional outbursts of indignation and resentment in which Representatives [Adam Clayton] Powell and [Charles] Diggs expressed the feelings of the Negro people failed to de-rail the congressional conspiracy of silence on the Civil Rights question.

The Democrats in the North and West followed the policy of concentrating a great deal of propaganda and some action on the state level around the Civil Rights question. The object of this apparently over balanced campaign on the state level of politics was to establish in the minds of labor and in the Negro community that the Democratic Party stood for Civil Rights *in spite of the fact that this party was united in a conspiracy to keep the question off the floor of the national Congress, and to keep it out of the 1956 election campaign.*

The mounting pressure of the Negro protest and discontent could not be denied, however, and in spite of all that a bi-partisan anti-Negro Congress could do, it spilled over onto the floor of the House of Representatives. It took the form of rather innocuous proposals by the administration for a bi-partisan committee to "investigate" violations of Civil Rights and work through the president. It further set up a bit of legal machinery to enhance the prestige and authority of judicial actions against violations of Civil Rights. There was reference neither to FEP [Fair Employment Practices], segregation nor lynching. Nevertheless even this very mild Civil Rights bill placed both capitalist parties in the same dilemma as before the Supreme Court decision: the great majority of congressmen of both parties were committed in advance to promises to the Negro people, yet the capitalist bosses of both parties were committed to the maintenance of the *status quo* in the South as a fundamental condition of their profits and the political stability of capitalist rule.

The only condition under which the Demo-

crats could permit the Civil Rights bill to reach the floor of the House was if they could be assured in advance that it would be killed in the Senate. The only way that the Republicans could agree to kill it in the Senate would be to keep it off the floor, because Eisenhower's promise to fight the filibuster was still fresh in the minds of at least a considerable section of the Negro leadership.

Consequently, it was with great deliberation and planning that the bi-partisan opponents of Civil Rights engineered the elaborate series of maneuvers to kill the Civil Rights bill in the 84th Congress.

The object from the beginning must have been to make the Judiciary Committee be its grave. *And the plan could never have worked without the concurrence from the beginning of the so-called "liberal bloc" in both houses.*

Following are the maneuvers which were necessary to carry out this betrayal of the Civil Rights struggle. Steps in which all factions played their assigned parts:

- A. Delay in the House until closing hours of the Congress.
- B. Uncontested referral from the floor of the Senate to the Judiciary Committee.
- C. Locking the bill in the Judiciary Committee.

Delay in the House. The role of all major characters in the Punch and Judy show is demonstrated by the action of the House Rules Committee. On June 21 after innumerable delays of which this episode is representative, the House Rules Committee was committed to clear the bill for a hearing on the floor of the House. Those that played the role of "Civil Rights supporters" had a clear majority on the committee. But 20 Southern congressmen appeared to testify against the bill. Under cover of this semi-filibuster, the Civil Rights supporters absented themselves from the Committee until there was no longer a quorum. At this point Rep. Colmer (Dem. Miss.) called for a quorum, and Chm. Smith (Dem. Va.) declared the hearing adjourned. This automatically postponed it for another week at a time when minutes were precious.

The capitalist press said that the Civil Rights supporters had been "caught napping."

Referral to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The extra week's delay in the House permitted other legislation to precede the Civil Rights bill in the House and so it was not finally passed there until July 23. It was abundantly clear to the

most casual observer that it was unimportant what happened in the House by this time. It was understood that the bill was headed for the Senate Judiciary Committee where it was scheduled for oblivion. The *New York Times* of July 20 reported that the debate in the House was "carried on, despite the intensity of the fight, with a large measure of good humor...the whole struggle was exposed in argument as being a futile operation...it was evident the House Members had made it a vehicle for putting themselves in the record for their own campaign." In other words, the Civil Rights bill was being used as a political football by the liberal congressmen.

So the bill was cynically voted on and passed on July 23. Then it went to the floor of the Senate. The only possibility of keeping the bill alive would have been an objection from the floor to its being referred to [James] Eastland's Judiciary Committee. But some strange coincidence took Senator Hennings (who was largely in charge of strategy for the Civil Rights Senate consideration) off the floor of the Senate at the strategic moment, and according to the *NY Times* (July 24) he "was not on the floor to objectSomeone of the civil rights group was caught napping, and the bill went quickly and firmly under the jurisdiction of the Eastland panel."

Locking the bill in Committee. The basic device by which the bill was locked in committee was this: those senators playing the role of Civil Rights supporters, *although they had a majority on the Committee, agreed not to report out this particular bill except by unanimous vote of the entire committee.*

To obscure this particular piece of treachery on the part of the "liberal" Democrats sitting on the Committee and to attempt to camouflage their role as the "caught napping Civil Rights supporters" on the Senate floor, Senator Lehman on July 24 moved to discharge the bill from committee. This was brushed aside on technical grounds by Senate Majority Leader [Lyndon] Johnson and defeated.

This conspiracy against the Civil Rights bill in the 84th Congress deserves to be placed beside that conspiracy by which the question of popular sovereignty, through the Dred Scott decision, opened the door to the nationalization of slavery in the last years before the Civil War. Lincoln's contention, which he proved in public debate, was that a conspiracy against free choice by the people had existed from the beginning between Stephen Douglas (Dem. Ill.), Pierce (the outgoing

Democratic president), Buchanan (the incoming president) and Taney (Chief Justice of the Supreme Court). The object of this conspiracy was to make a niche in Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska bill into which the Dred Scott decision could be placed.

The analogy which Lincoln made in his speech "A House Divided" is particularly applicable to the present case. He said: "We cannot absolutely *know* that all these exact adaptations are the result of preconcert. But when we see a lot of framed timbers, different portions of which we know have been gotten out at different times and places and by different workmen—Stephen (Douglas), Franklin (Pierce), Roger (Taney) and James (Buchanan), for instance—and when we see these timbers joined together, and see they exactly make the frame of a house or a mill, all the tenons and mortices exactly fitting, and... adapted to their respective places, and not a piece too many or too few—not omitting even scaffolding—or, if a single piece be lacking, we can see the place in the frame exactly fitted and prepared to yet bring such piece in—in *such* a case, we find it impossible to not *believe* that Stephen and Franklin and Roger and James all understood one another from the beginning, and all worked upon a common *plan* or *draft* drawn up before the first lick was struck."

The scuttling of the Civil Rights bill was such a structure of "framed timbers...gotten out at different times and places and by different workmen"—Howard (Smith), James (Eastland), Tom (Hennings), Lyndon (Johnson) and Herbert (Lehman). And when we see these timbers joined together so perfectly in the construction of a series of maneuvers which succeeds so smoothly in getting rid of the one piece of legislation which could upset the political equilibrium of the country and expose the capitalist politicians as fakers, we are quite as justified as Lincoln in believing that the whole thing must have been cooked up before hand and that "all worked upon a common *plan* or *draft* drawn up before the first lick was struck."

This is to be expected from the capitalist politicians. It is quite in keeping with the traditions. But when the *People's World* conceives it to be its job not only to support the treacherous "supporters of Civil Rights" up and down the line, to become a partner in their betrayal by covering it up from the left, then conditions in the leadership of the party have indeed become grave.

The *P.W.* history of the Civil Rights fight in

Congress is:

Mar. 29: "Civil rights bill pushed in House": "A civil rights bloc of Congressmen Wednesday launched a drive to pass a far-reaching bill striking down discrimination...."

Apr. 16: "Demo Senator tells Ike: Stiffen stand on civil rights": "Thomas C. Hennings..., chairman of the Senate Civil Rights Subcommittee, charges that the Administration program...offers only a fraction..." etc.

Apr. 23: "Key test for civil rights bill Tuesday": "Rep. James Roosevelt..., a leader of the House civil rights bloc, warned today that fast action is essential..." etc.

June 13: "Civil rights bill showdown today": more accurate would have been the substitution of "sellout" for "showdown."

The *P.W.* is building up the liberal Democrats as determined fighters at this stage. As the conspiracy unfolds, the *P.W.* serves as a left covering for the betrayal.

When the transfer of the bill from the House Judiciary to the House Rules Committee took two months instead of two days, the *P.W.* claimed that it was because "Southern members of the House Judiciary Committee wanted to file a minority report, and they took their time in writing it." The *P.W.* does not mention that the majority holds all the basic rights if it chooses to exercise them.

When the Rules Committee finally got ready to vote on the bill and the liberals absented themselves to permit another stall for lack of quorum, the *P.W.*, instead of exposing the liberal betrayal, fulminated against the "Dixiecrats": "The long-delayed civil rights bill may come up for still another test this coming Thursday after having been sidetracked by a Dixiecrat parliamentary sneak play last Thursday" (*P.W.*, June 25).

No reference is to be found in the *P.W.* of the curious absence from the floor of the Senate of Sen. Hennings at the time the bill landed there, nor of the failure of any member of the group of spurious "Civil Rights supporters" to say one word in objection to its being sent to Eastland's Committee. Nor is there a mention of the liberal senators' agreement not to report the bill out of Eastland's Committee without unanimous vote.

As a matter of fact it is probable that at the conclusion of the congressional carnival, there was probably not a single capitalist paper in the country which went to such pains to cover up the betrayal of the Civil Rights bill by the liberal

Democrats as did the *People's Daily World*.

While the capitalist press as exemplified by the *New York Times* at least reported the relevant facts, the *P.W.*, by ignoring some (such as the "caught napping" episode) and over-stressing others, creates an idealistic picture of the "Civil Rights bloc" waging a brave though losing battle against tremendous odds: "the Senate was challenged to stay in session and pass the measure" (by virtue of the "smashing House victory" which was more accurately described by the *Times* as a game of political football) (*P.W.*, July 24).

P.W., July 25: "Liberal Demo Senators blocked in fight for civil rights bill." This was two days after they had been "caught napping." "Liberal Northern Democrats were blocked Tuesday in an effort to save the House-passed civil rights bill from certain death in the Senate Judicial Committee headed by Sen. James O. Eastland..., leader of Senate white supremacists." No mention of the "liberal" majority on Sen. Eastland's Committee.

P.W., July 26: "GOP, Dixie allies dump civil rights." In thus summarizing the scuttling of the bill, the *P.W.* on the following day analyzes the one element which "was not foreseen" by an otherwise farsighted Civil Rights bloc: that "the Administration would desert the fight."

So, instead of exposing the real culprits—those liberal congressmen whose seats in Congress depend upon labor and Negro votes, but who use the Civil Rights question as a political football, betraying the struggle at every decisive turn—the *P.W.* makes the whole thing merely a piece of Democratic Party election propaganda. That is, the *P.W.* also uses the Civil Rights fight as a political football.

The new "coalition" apparently requires that we attach ourselves as a left covering to this gang of conspiratorial fakers on Civil Rights.

* * *

Conclusion

It is thus demonstrated that the new "coalitionism" as illustrated by the Democratic Party orientation during the past months resulted in placing the party in disgraceful positions before the Negro people. It has led us toward GRADUALISM on the question of integration, at the same time that we have a very correct article rejecting gradualism ("Enough of Gradualism," *P.W.*).

It has made our policy a tail-end to the labor bureaucracy and the liberal betrayers of Civil Rights.

It has brought us into actual support of "moderate" white supremacy.

It has taken us toward liberalism in our approach to prejudice. This is no "mainstream"; it is a muddy back-wash of reaction and compromise!

We feel that the District Negro Commission has a special responsibility in addition to the general responsibility of members and leaders to demand that this preconvention discussion take a serious and critical review of our work along the lines of this report, and that the coming national convention be prepared to rectify the great harm which has been done to the party and its reputation in the Negro community as the result of the policy of the past period.

In the meantime, to begin the task of making

a turn toward realistic revolutionary participation in the Negro struggle and in the support of its true objectives, the following program of action should be elaborated and implemented.

1. Truthful and factual exposure of the role of the liberals in the fight for Civil Rights.

2. *All-out* campaigns of support by the party directly and by our forces in the unions and other mass organizations for the heroic struggles now going on in the South: the Montgomery and Tallahassee boycotts, etc. These fighters, far in advance of the general working class, are conducting a vanguard struggle against American capital which demands that we do *everything in our power* to assist, support and spread their struggle.

3. A return to the practical day-to-day struggle against discrimination on the neighborhood and local union level, unfettered by whatever relations we may have with the capitalist politicians and in the spirit of the struggle of the masses.

Resolution on the Negro Struggle

From SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 18, No. 11 (September 1957). Fraser's document, dated 25 May 1957, was submitted for discussion at the SWP's 17th National Convention. It was counterposed to "The Class Struggle Road to Negro Equality," sponsored by the SWP Political Committee and largely written by Farrell Dobbs.

I. The Permanent Revolution in America

The objective conditions have matured for the eruption of the class struggle in the South. The task of this struggle will be to overthrow the fascist-like yoke of white supremacy.

Since the destruction of popular government in the South at the close of the Reconstruction, the Southern Bourbon oligarchy, in close alliance with the whole American capitalist class, adapted the social relations of chattel slavery to the requirements of property relations and capitalist production.

The capitalists and planters achieved this Jim Crow system by a method which has been copied by all the imperialist ruling classes of the world. They broke up the working masses into hostile racial groups by the use of organized murder and terrorism against the Negroes and all who would stand side by side with them. They degraded labor through the enforced peonage of the Negroes. They created a white middle class which derived special privileges from the degradation of labor in general and the Negro in particular. They eliminated popular government and substituted the rule of a small minority of the privileged, the rich, the powerful: the white supremacists.

By creating a living hell for the Negro people, the ruling classes were thus able to achieve a super-exploitation of all Southern labor, bringing in profits which could be compared with those from colonial exploitation.

Thus, a whole social system became organized around the degradation of the Negro—a system which became an integrated and indispensable part of the economic, social and political structure of American capitalism.

The emancipation of the Negro people through social, political and economic equality is the fundamental condition for this liberation of all the oppressed in the South. This requires the

destruction of the whole Southern system. Short of this there can be little change and few democratic rights for anyone.

However, the permanent revolution in America reveals itself in the following manner: the Southern system represents massive survivals of chattel slavery. These survivals take the form of great social problems unsolved by the Civil War and Reconstruction: an antiquated system of land tenure, the absence of democratic rights, segregation and racial discrimination. The solution of these questions was the responsibility of the capitalist class when it took the national power from the slaveowners in 1860. But they proved incapable of this. So these survivals of an antique system of exploitation have become integrated into the capitalist structure and form a component part thereof.

Capitalism could not solve these problems during its youth and virility, even under conditions of waging a bitter war against the slave power. Now, when amidst the decay and death agony of capitalism, these problems have become integrated into its very structure, the capitalist class will positively not prove able to solve them. This circumstance leads to the inescapable conclusion that although the tasks of the liberation of the South are of an elementary democratic nature, they have no solution within the framework of American capitalism: they become a part of the socialist struggle of the proletariat to overthrow the whole capitalist system of production.

The second manifestation of the permanent revolution lies in the question of leadership of the Negro struggle. The goal of the Negro struggle has been determined historically: the elimination of racial discrimination lies through the struggle for economic, political and social equality. The axis of this struggle is the fight against segregation. At the present time the leadership of

this struggle is in the hands of the middle class. This Negro middle class suffers social, economic and political discrimination because of skin color. It is a far more terrible discrimination than is the usual lot of privileged layers of an oppressed group. This circumstance has produced a great galaxy of Negro scholars who have brilliantly analyzed and plumbed the depths and sources of racial oppression.

But, at the same time, *the position of the middle class as a whole derives from and feeds upon segregation, the axis of the social force which oppresses them as Negroes.*

This conflict between their racial and class interests causes the middle class leadership to act in a hesitant and treacherous manner. They will prove totally incapable of giving adequate leadership to the movement as it develops on to higher planes of struggle.

But the Negro workers have no such conflict of interest. They receive no such economic privileges from segregation. On the contrary they are super-exploited at the point of production and in all economic spheres. Discrimination against them as Negroes is intimately connected with their exploitation as workers. Finding themselves below the standard of living of even the white workers, they must of necessity open up a struggle for racial equality as the key to raising their standard of living as workers.

So as it falls to the American working class as a whole to solve the basic contradictions of American society, so does it fall upon the shoulders of the Negro proletariat to take the lead in the struggle for equality.

II. The Significance of Montgomery

The successful struggle of the Negroes of Montgomery shows a changed relationship of forces in the South. This is the first successful sustained mass struggle of the Negroes of the South in nearly seventy years. It demonstrates the decay and disintegration of the power of white supremacy and reveals that the situation is ripening for the liberation of the people of the South from the Jim Crow system.

The changed conditions have been brought about by the industrialization of the South and the deepening of the penetration of monopoly capitalism into all spheres of life. The salient features of this change have been: (1) The urbanization of the Negro population which now finds its center of gravity shifted from the dispersed rural areas into powerful mass forces in the cities.

(2) The undermining of the mass base of the Southern system through the partial destruction of the white middle class and the proletarianization of large contingents of this former mass petty bourgeoisie.

This changed relationship of forces results in the inability of the white ruling classes to crush at will the aroused and organized Negro masses. The magnitude of the Negro struggle, reaching national and even international proportions, has rendered the U.S. government helpless to intervene decisively in behalf of the white supremacists.

These objective conditions have been ripening for decades and provide the groundwork for the outbreak of the Montgomery masses. The immediate factor preparing the masses for the actual struggle was the [Emmett] Till case and its aftermath, which demonstrated to the Negroes that the Federal Government would do nothing against the Jim Crow system, that any feeling that the Negroes had an ally in the national capital was an illusion, and that if anything was to be done they would have to do it themselves.

The struggle is now beginning to unfold. As it develops, all the resources of the American capitalist class will be aligned against it: all the forces of reaction, all agencies of government, the army, the avenues of information and the schools, churches and courts. Yet, the victory of the masses will be assured under two conditions:

1. That the struggle of the Southern workers, led by the Negroes, will rekindle the fires of the class struggle throughout the country and bring into play the great powers of the American proletariat in solidarity with them.

2. That the Southern masses will produce a revolutionary socialist leadership fully conscious of its aims, the road of struggle, the magnitude of the task.

The Montgomery boycotters forecast the unfolding movement which will take the lead in the emancipation of the Southern masses.

We support the courageous internationalism of their sympathy for and self-identification with the struggles of the dark-skinned colonial masses. This kinship arises from the common bond forged by years of common struggle against white supremacy. It is our elementary duty, however, to warn the Negro people away from Gandhi's program of "passive resistance" as a means of their liberation.

This program, fostered by the Indian bourgeoisie, paralyzed the action of the masses

of people, kept the Indian capitalists at the head of the movement for Indian independence and made it possible for the native bourgeoisie to reap all the rewards of the struggle against imperialism at the expense of the masses.

In the United States this program has been super-imposed upon the struggle in Montgomery by its petty bourgeois leadership. By thus identifying a dynamic struggle with "resistance in the spirit of love and non-violence" they blunt the consciousness of the masses who require a program which corresponds with the reality of their militant actions.

We hail the emergence of the proletarian militants in the Montgomery struggle. They are the coming leaders of the struggle of all the Southern masses. It is they who have nothing to lose and the world to gain. Their class position gives them courage and insight, for it is they who have the fundamental stake in the struggle against the Jim Crow system.

We salute the women of the South both black and white for their heroic role in the struggle.

The unbounded revolutionary energy of the triply oppressed Negro women is making itself manifest in the initiative and leadership which they have given to the movement in its initial stages.

The decay of the Southern system which foretells its doom is expressed by the defection of the white women away from the forces of white supremacy and by their organized appearance in greater and greater numbers in joint struggle with the Negroes. This is the proof that they recognize that they, too, are the victims of the system of white supremacy. They understand that the so-called "chivalry" of Southern tradition degrades them: that the pedestal of "sacred" white womanhood is in reality a prison for chattels which denies independence, the rights of citizens and the status of human beings.

They are aware that the myth of "sacred" (i.e., segregated) white womanhood is one of the focal points of the ideology of white supremacy and ties the struggle for the emancipation of women directly to that of the Negroes.

Other large sections of the white population hide their disgust with the Southern system in fear of reprisal. We recommend the example of the women and urge them to give organized support to their courageous struggle.

III. *The Labor Movement*

The existence of the Southern social system

is a constant mortal threat to the entire labor movement in the U.S. Every factor of political and economic life shows that the extension of unionism into the open-shop South is a life and death question.

But unions cannot exist on any mass scale in the total absence of elementary democratic rights. On the other hand labor unions will grow hand in hand with the successes of the Civil Rights movement. Consequently the labor movement must dedicate itself to the destruction of white supremacy as the only way to assure the extension of unionism into the South.

We call upon the officials of the AFL-CIO to begin the campaign to organize the South with a repudiation of their political alliance with the liberal Democrats who are the protectors and defenders of the Southern Bourbons. We call upon them to take the next step in the Southern drive: to declare for the formation of a political party of labor which would become the political and organizational center of the struggle against Jim Crow.

IV. *The Advanced Position of the Negro Movement*

The struggle for racial equality is an integral part of the struggle of the American working class for socialism. The connection between these two goals is so fundamental that one cannot be envisaged without the other.

This connection has been implicit from the very beginning of the anti-slavery struggle and found clearest expression in Karl Marx's dictum to white American workers: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded." The consistent logic which led many abolitionist leaders such as Douglass and Phillips to embrace socialist principles confirmed this connection.

The power of the ruling class and the pernicious influence of the Southern system has kept the American working class divided along color lines for long periods of time. However, the past twenty years have demonstrated again in life the identity of interest which had been implicit all along.

The close connection between the Negro struggle for equality and the labor struggle became one of the paramount features of the great struggles of the 1930's. One of the greatest achievements of unionism during this stormy upsurge was the successful conclusion of the long struggle to build the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. This achievement was capped by the

emergence of the CIO which represented the first mass joining of the two movements in modern times.

Together during the 30's the two movements made giant strides. But with the preparation for World War II they diverged: the CIO under the pressure of a newly created bureaucracy capitulated to the bosses and the government and it wasn't long before the Communist Party did likewise. Together they sacrificed the interests of the working class to the needs of the U.S. imperialist war machine. But the Negro movement, under the stimulus of workers arising from great depths of super-exploitation, refused to be taken in or intimidated by the patriotic hysteria.

Ever since the beginning of 1941 the unions have taken one backward step after another and the bosses have followed through with body blows. Although the labor movement was able to mobilize briefly in 1946 for a successful defense when mortally threatened, it soon gave in again and as a result has endured a never ending string of humiliating repressive measures inflicted on them by the government and the employers.

But all through this period and even at the height of the worst wave of reaction which has been unleashed against the American workers in many decades—the Negro movement has registered steady advances. The source of this difference in achievement lies in the divergent lines of development which were laid out in 1941 when the Negroes were organizing for a March on Washington in defiance of the needs of the government for domestic tranquility at the very time that the labor bureaucracy was giving no-strike pledges to this same government. The Negroes were able to withstand the patriotic pressure upon them and to see through the lies of American imperialism because of their *advanced consciousness* derived from super-exploitation and discrimination.

Upon this background the Montgomery uprising propels the Negro movement into a greatly advanced position which, coinciding with the ebb tide of the labor movement, approaches isolation.

And this poses a dual danger: First, that this great movement may remain isolated and be crushed for lack of needed support from the labor movement. Second, that such a defeat inflicted upon this dynamic sector of the working class would set back the development of the labor movement.

It is the duty of all socialists to spare no energy in rallying the working class and the labor

movement to the aid of the Negroes struggling in the South and to connect and integrate the struggles.

But the decisive force in determining the future course of events, and relations of the Southern fighters with the labor movement in the North and West, is the Negro movement itself. In this vital movement just unfolding there is great attractive power: *in the relations between the Negro movement and the labor movement the Negroes hold the initiative*. But only a proletarian leadership of the Negro movement will be able to utilize properly this strategic advantage and to draw the labor movement into support and intervention. Such a leadership will grasp the political significance of the situation.

Above all, the Negro movement must beware of the "isolationist" feeling that if the labor movement doesn't seem to move, and if, as a consequence, the working class as a whole appears unmoved by and unconcerned with the heroic struggle in the South, then the Negro movement can turn its back and go its way alone. Such a course would be disastrous, would end in the crushing defeat of the Negroes and retard the whole labor struggle.

Such proposals arise from an underestimation of the task ahead and from the dangerous illusion that racial equality can be achieved without the overthrow and complete destruction of the Southern social system. In this struggle, the Negroes will be the initiators, because of their super-exploitation and advanced consciousness. But the fight can be won only by the united struggle of all toilers.

V. What Political Road?

The advanced consciousness of the Negro movement expresses itself politically. First, by their refusal to be taken in by patriotic war propaganda. Second, by their willingness to launch broad struggles in spite of the reaction. This political understanding also encompasses the knowledge that the problem of civil rights is neither a moral question, one of law, or of the "hearts and minds of men," but that it is a political question which must be fought by means of political party.

The Negroes are also quite aware that the Democratic and Republican parties are their enemies, and that serious advancement of the struggle for equality is impossible through these channels.

But the Negroes are the captives of the labor

bureaucracy: the alliance between labor and the Negro people finds its degenerate expression in the captivity of the Negro middle class leaders in the Democratic Party. We have every sympathy with the Negroes in this political bondage and with the dramatic move of Roy Wilkins, shortly followed by Representative [Adam Clayton] Powell, to the Republican Party, as signifying a protest against the hypocrisy of the liberals and the labor leaders rather than support to the Republican bankers.

But this situation dictates bolder action by the Negro leaders: the isolation of the Negro movement demands that it give full scope to its advanced position to raise the workers in the labor movement toward it: we call upon the Negro leaders to reject the degenerate alliance with the labor fakers in the party of the Bourbons as well as the ineffectual bolts to the Republican Party. We urge them to join with the Socialist Workers Party in the demand upon the labor unions that they form a party of the working class.

We call upon them to emulate the qualities of leadership of a Frederick Douglass, who was not afraid to break even with William Lloyd Garrison and to split the abolitionist society when an opportunity appeared to prepare the way for the coming political party of emancipation.

VI. *The Communist Party*

The Communist Party, at one time the most successful of the socialist organizations in attracting Negro militants, has by now dissipated its influence in the Negro community and lost the large majority of its once powerful Negro cadre. This cadre was won by the prestige which the Russian Revolution commanded among peoples who seriously wanted a social change, and by years of devoted work by the rank and file of the party.

The basic reason for the present isolation of the Communist Party in the Negro community lies in the following political circumstance: the leaders of the CP have never hesitated to sacrifice the interests of the Negro people to the interests of maintaining alliances with privileged sections of the white population who might temporarily be of use in furthering the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

This was most horribly demonstrated during World War II when the CP openly denounced struggles of the Negro people as being disruptive of the "war effort" of American imperialism which

was in alliance with the Soviet government. Betrayals of a like nature have followed the various twists and turns of policy until the Negro militants have become completely disaffected.

A second cause for the dissipation of the influence of the CP has been the persistence with which it clung to the erroneous idea that the Negroes constitute a nation and that their consequent political development would lead them to assert the right to nationhood and national self-determination. The authors of this doctrine envisaged that their theoretical contribution was, therefore, to prepare the ground for this inevitable separation.

This whole line of thought is in diametric opposition to the real nature of the Negro struggle and its historical tradition. It is segregation by skin color which is the traditional and present enemy of the Negroes, not national oppression.

The movement of the Negro people is the oldest social movement in existence in the United States. It is over 300 years old, and *since 1818, the beginning of the struggle against the American Colonization Society, this movement has had a virtually uninterrupted existence and one fundamental direction: integration.* Ever since then, the fundamental course of the Negro struggle has been to reject the demand of the ruling class that they become a separate subordinate nation, through segregation, and to demand the full rights of American citizenship and nationality. It will take a social catastrophe, more devastating than any yet visited upon the Negro people, to change the fundamental course of their struggle.

The Negroes considered that it was impudent, stupid and against their interests for the Stalinists arbitrarily to brush aside this great tradition of struggle and say to them in effect: "You'll take self-determination and like it. When you develop out of your great political backwardness, the CP will be vindicated." The Negroes replied that they already had segregation which was their worst enemy, and that the plans for a segregated socialism didn't appeal to them. In spite of this almost universal reaction in the Negro community, the Stalinists blindly hung on to this theory.

Another consequence of this theory was that it created an almost gravitational attraction between the CP and sections of the Negro middle class. This was the only social group in the Negro community in which there seemed to be any expression of nationalism. This nationalism took the form of a willingness to accept segregation, the economic foundation of the Negro middle class

and to confine the struggle to gaining improvements for its position within the framework of segregation.

Even during the "left" periods, this alliance between the CP leaders and the Negro middle classes resulted in the frustration of efforts of the rank and file communists, both white and black, to undertake serious struggle.

The present policy of "peaceful co-existence" is similar to the World War II jingoism in its betrayal of the Negro struggle. We call the attention of the Communist Party to the following actions and policies of the past year which tend to place the whole radical movement in bad repute in the Negro community:

1. *Support of the "Louisville Plan."* This reactionary scheme to compromise the demand of the Negroes for immediate desegregation of the public schools, through "voluntary segregation," was blatantly supported by spokesmen for the Communist Party. (See front page illustrated story *People's World*, Sept. 21, 1956.)

2. *Support of the Louisiana right to work law.* This amended version of the original law was condemned by the National Agricultural Union and other spokesmen for Negro workers in Louisiana as a measure which gave to the largely white skilled workers certain immunities from the law at the expense of the Negroes and other agricultural, lumber, processing, etc. workers. The leaders of the CP committed the party to its support as an example of a "peoples' anti-monopoly coalition" and even placed this support in its Draft Program. (See Draft Resolution for 16th National Convention of CP presented by NC, page 32, 1956.)

3. *Support of the liberal betrayal of the civil rights struggle at the 84th Congress.* This betrayal, now exposed by Rep. Powell and many others, consisted of devices whereby the liberal Democrats could guarantee the Bourbons that nothing would come of the Civil Rights legislation, but that the liberals should be permitted to appear as partisans of the legislation. In order to do this, however, they needed a smokescreen. The *Daily Worker* and the *People's World* provided this admirably for them, and every time the liberals betrayed by giving in to the Bourbons, the CP leaders provided the smokescreen by endless fulminations against Eisenhower or the "Dixiecrats."

4. *Support of the "moderate" wing of White Supremacy.* The so-called moderate wing of the Southern white supremacists, represented by such figures as Lyndon Johnson, is also part of the

projected "anti-monopoly coalition." (See *Political Affairs*, June 1956.) But this group is just as completely anti-Negro and anti-union as the rest of the Southern Bourbon politicians.

The support of these reactionary policies by the leaders of the CP disqualifies them completely from speaking with any authority on the civil rights struggle. We call upon them to repudiate these policies and join with us in a united front of action in defense of civil rights and the Negro struggle around the following propositions:

1. That we jointly memorialize Congress to refuse to seat the Southern Bourbon politicians, and continue to so refuse until it has been demonstrated that their elections are not carried out in violation of the civil rights of the people of the South.
2. That we demand of the president of the U.S. a second Emancipation Proclamation, proclaiming the workers of the South free from the white supremacist rulers and proclaiming an immediate and unconditional end to all segregation, discrimination, terrorism, etc.
3. For joint action in all local struggles against discrimination.
4. For a joint program for all socialists in the trade union movement on the civil rights question:
 - a. Demand of the international unions that they conduct a campaign in their Southern locals to bring them into conformity and support of the Negro struggle.
 - b. For the elimination of all Jim Crow locals and other discriminatory practices.
 - c. Against the extension of wage differentials and the privileges of skilled workers bought at the expense of the unskilled.
 - d. For a campaign to solve the discrimination inherent in the fact that Negroes are the last hired, first fired. This discrimination is perpetuated and frozen in most prevailing seniority systems. Seniority lists can be revised to advance the seniority of that number of Negroes required to maintain an equitable proportion of Negro workers in a plant at any given time, as is the policy of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.
 - e. For all-out aid to the Southern struggles and to demand that the labor

movement intervene directly, linking the problem of the organization of the South to the struggle against white supremacy.

5. To prepare for the overthrow of the Southern system by a continued democratic discussion of all issues at stake in the socialist movement with the object of creating a new revolutionary socialist party which is the only assurance of victory.

VII. Negroes and the SWP

The Negro people have long been preparing for the opportunity to open up the final struggle against white supremacy. Their preparations have been, in the South, painstaking and systematic. As their opportunity comes closer in time and more tangible in form, they must review their preparations and consider what element is lacking or in insufficient quantity or inadequate quality.

They must consider that they are a vital part of a great world revolutionary process which has as its goal the reorganization of the whole globe along lines of complete equality for all, through socialism.

They must recognize the crisis of this world revolutionary movement: that while the masses of the world have demonstrated their willingness to struggle for this aim, the leadership has not responded in kind, and therefore the movement fails to fulfill its historical goals. *This has resulted in the historical crisis of leadership which is the basic problem of our epoch.*

The critical point of all preparation for struggle in this era is the creation of adequate leadership. The struggles of all peoples and all classes require the *organization* of leadership into a political party. This is the means by which leadership can be tried and tested and is the means for unifying program with practice, leadership with ranks—and keeping them all in proper balance.

We call upon all socialist-minded Negroes to take advantage of the ideological ferment in the general socialist movement around the question of the *regroupment of socialist forces*. This discussion holds forth the possibility of clearing the political atmosphere and creating the foundation for a more powerful socialist party through the regroupment of the revolutionary currents.

We call upon them to participate in the discussions which are taking place. They will bring to these discussions the militance, realism and character of the Negro struggle and at the same time broaden their own understanding of it through a heightened consciousness of socialist ideology.

The Negro militants have the following ultimate responsibility in this situation: to determine the program which corresponds to the objective needs of the whole struggle and to make it theirs.

We call upon the militant Negro workers to join the Socialist Workers Party, the party of the American revolution. We stand before them as the party of the proletariat, of the poor and oppressed. We stand upon no economic, political or social privilege, but consider that the oppressed of the world must act together to gain peace, prosperity, security, equality; with abundance for all but special privilege for none. This is the only way to save the world from the catastrophes unleashed by decaying capitalism.

The SWP stands before the Negro people as the only party in the U.S. which has never under any circumstances forsaken or subordinated the needs of the Negro struggle in the interests of alliance with privileged groups or enemy classes.

We call upon the Negro intellectuals to cast their lot with the proletariat. This is the class which will lead the Negro struggle to victory. But this means, first of all, to adhere to the program of revolutionary socialism—which is the only road of the victorious proletarian struggle.

Summary Remarks on Negro Discussion

From SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 18, No. 14 (October 1957). Dick Fraser debated George Breitman at the SWP's 17th National Convention, held 7-9 June 1957. The Convention adopted the Breitman resolution with 54 delegate and 33 consultative votes in favor, although a number of delegates recorded objections to its support for "self-determination" and for the slogan "Federal Troops to the South." Five delegate and five consultative votes were cast for the Fraser resolution.

A study of the first discussions of the Negro question in the American political movement reveals that the question which was originally quite simple has become extremely complicated. The Negro struggle for equality was an obvious type of movement, as viewed by the IWW, a matter of equality for all workers. They would not tolerate any ideas of segregation. They would go into the deep South and hold integrated meetings there. It was simple, but incomplete. It required Marxism to clarify the question.

Of recent years, since the introduction of the nationalist conception of the Negro question by the Stalinists, the problem has revolved around the question of what is the nature of the Negro question. Dan [Roberts] says it is a national question and it isn't a national question. So, if it isn't a national question, what is it? It is a *racial* question. It is a question of racial discrimination. This is a unique category of special oppression which is different from national oppression.

Religious oppression, which Dan relates it to, is closely associated with national oppression. It is oppression of a part of the culture of a people; but that is not what the Negro question is like. The Negro question is only like itself. That is, it is a unique phenomenon arising fundamentally in the United States, and emanating from there in various forms throughout the world.

Color discrimination is a unique problem and requires an analysis of its own. Upon close examination the first thing which you find in the Negro question is its diametric opposites to the national question. Not in the whole history of the national struggle of Europe or Asia, did you ever see a national minority or a nation, whose fundamental struggle was the right to assimilate into the dominant culture. You never saw it. It is the diametric opposite of all the national struggles.

The national struggle is characterized by the desire for self-segregation, the desire to withstand the pressure of the dominant nations to force them to assimilate, give up their economy, give up their language, their culture and their religion. All of the militant tendencies of the nationalist movement stress the requirements of the nation to organize itself and to segregate itself from the nation that oppresses it. The conservative, conciliatory elements are on the side of assimilation and integration. That is absolutely characteristic of the national struggle. That is one of the fundamental characteristics with which Marxists were historically confronted.

This was the problem in dispute between Lenin and Luxemburg, and Lenin and everybody else who dealt with this problem of nationalism. It is the precise opposite of the Negro struggle. From the very beginning of the modern Negro struggle 150 years ago, all tendencies of a militant, revolutionary, progressive nature in this struggle have tended to find as the axis of their struggle a resistance against racial separation because this is the weapon of racial oppression.

Comrade Dan, you say that you want to leave the door open for self-determination at some future time. Will you not permit the Negroes a self-determination *now* based upon 150 years of struggle? Everything points to this fact. They do not want to be designated a nation. Why do you demand to place this designation upon their struggle? It is not a national struggle. It is a struggle against racial discrimination. That's from whence it derives its independent and dual character, i.e., its independence from and identity with the class struggle.

It is the feature of *the* permanent revolution in American life. What is involved is the vestigial remains of color slavery, an antique social system

unsolved by the capitalist revolution in the Civil War and Reconstruction. These vestiges, the social relations of chattel slavery, color segregation, color discrimination, white supremacy adapted to and integrated into the whole economic, political and social life of capitalism, become one of the important driving forces of the movement for socialism because capitalism can no longer even be considered as a possible ally of the Negro people in the solution of this question. The capitalist class has decided this long ago. They integrated their system with the Jim Crow system, it is one and the same thing now.

Consequently, the Negro struggle for equality, in its independence, arises out of racial oppression, attacking a Southern social system which is the result of these vestiges incorporated in the capitalist system. This struggle begins on the plane of elementary consciousness. Equality is an elementary democratic demand which has no solution under capitalism and therefore becomes, because of its nature, a transition to the struggle for socialism.

Comrade Dot accuses me of accusing the P.C. of being pro-Stalinist and pro-reformist.

(Note by Kirk: The following interchange was not picked up in the transcription. I have reconstructed it as it occurred according to my memory:

Interruption from the Presiding Committee:
That what you said yesterday?

Kirk: That's not what I said.

Presiding Committee: Then you implied it.

Kirk: I implied nothing of the kind.

Presiding Committee: Let's have plain speaking here.

Kirk: I say that your program is an *adaptation* to reformism.)

That means that you do not differentiate yourselves from the reformists in the Southern movement. The critical problem of the moment, the crisis of leadership in the Negro movement, revolves around the question of reformism or revolution, and the resolution does not differentiate between these two tendencies. If it did we would have a different situation today in the convention. I would not have written another resolution.

The resolution does not differentiate. It supports the basic line of the religious pacifist leadership of the Negro movement in the South.

Comrade Breitman and the resolution say that the Southern Leaders Conference is the

differentiation, that this is the differential force in the Negro movement; and that's not true. The S.L.C. is just another wing of the petty-bourgeois leadership. This is not the decisive differentiation. The differentiation will come as a result of our being able to inject the revolutionary proletarian program into that struggle. And the struggle will not have its over-all religious character then, as the workers take the power in the Negro movement.

Comrade Jones says we are not, never have, and never will be separatists. We had a resolution in 1939 which Comrade Breitman said was the guiding line of the party for 10 years, which is essentially a nationalist document on the Negro question. It is entitled "Self-Determination and the American Negroes." And it is organized around the concept of self-determination. That was the program adopted by the 1939 convention. "It is not improbable, therefore, that the bulk of the Negroes have absorbed their lesson far more profoundly than is superficially apparent and that on their first political awakening to the necessity of revolutionary activity, the *first* political awakening, they may demand the right of self-determination, that is, the formation of the Negro state in the South."

The 1939 Resolution analyzes the Garvey movement as representing the desire for a Negro state, and speaks about the opponents of the Negro state as follows: "The opposition to a Negro state comes mainly from the articulate and vocal but small and weak class of the Negro intellectuals concerned with little else besides the gaining of a place for themselves in American capitalist society, fanatically blind to its rapid decline." This is the characterization in the resolution of the theoreticians of assimilationism who have been now vindicated by the whole course of the Negro struggle. That is a wrong formulation and it has not been vindicated by the course of events, but nevertheless this is an important part of our history and it is wrong to say that it never existed.

Now, Comrade George Lavan accuses me of twisting words when I say the resolution designates the Negroes as a national minority. That's what it says and Comrade Dan agreed that it did; he said, what are you going to call it if you don't?

Comrade George says that there is no such movement as I described as quoted in the *Militant* as a movement of Southern women. There's no movement, there's no struggle. There is! The item

in the *Militant* is only one aspect of it, only one facet. There is a movement which has been in continuous existence since 1930, in overt struggle against the system of segregation.

A very exceptional book on the movement in the South, Lillian Smith's *The Killers of the Dream*, describes this organization and what role it plays there. She speaks about the Southern women and what their stake in this struggle is. She describes them as follows: "Culturally stunted by a region that still pays nice rewards to simple mindedness in females they had no defenses against blandishment. The gullied land of the South, washed out and eroded, matched the washed-out women of the rural South whose bodies were often used as ruthlessly as the land; who worked as hard as animals; who were segregated in church, sitting in separate pews from the men; who were not thought fit to be citizens and vote until three decades ago and who, in some states in the South, cannot own property except in their husband's name. Who even now cannot officiate as ministers in most of the churches though they are the breath of life of the church."

These women, she says, decided to make a war upon their oppression. These "lady insurrectionists," she calls them,

"these ladies went forth to commit treason against Southern tradition. It was a purely subversive affair but as decorously conducted as an afternoon walk taken by the students of a female institute. It started stealthily in my mother's day. Shyly these first women sneaked down from their chilly places, did their sabotage and sneaked back up, wrapping innocence around them like a lace shawl.

"They set secret time bombs and went back to their needle work, serenely awaiting the blast. Their time bombs consisted of a secret under-ground propaganda movement which was developed from mothers to daughters and through the years spreading out to encompass vast sections of the white female population. And so degraded was the position of women in Southern society that white men of the South could not conceive of their women having ideas and had no inkling of the insurrection until it happened.

"The lady insurrectionists gathered together one day in one of our Southern cities. They primly called themselves church women but churches were forgotten by everybody when they spoke their revolutionary words. They said calmly that they were not afraid of being raped and as for their sacredness, they could take care of it for themselves. They did not need chivalry or a lynching to protect them, they did not want it. Not only that—they continued that they would personally do everything in their power to keep any Negro from being lynched and furthermore, they squeaked bravely, they had plenty of power and this was the foundation of the Association of Southern Women Against Lynching in 1930."

It began a struggle against segregation, as the fundamental hereditary enemy. They claimed that the Lord's Supper was a holy sacrament which Christians cannot take without sacrilege unless they also break bread with fellow-men of color. They systematically set out to break down one of the most important conventions of segregation and engaged in inter-racial feeding.

This organization has been in continuous existence since that time, has been active and has now become a tremendous factor developing support of the movement against segregation.

On Federal Troops in Little Rock

Attachment to Socialist Workers Party Club Executive [Political Committee] Minutes No. 18, 5 November 1957. On 10 October 1957 Fraser wrote this letter from Seattle, Washington to the SWP Political Committee, protesting the Militant's call for federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas.

The editorial on the action by the Federal government in sending troops to Little Rock, published on the front page of the *Militant* of September 20th, brings the dispute over this question into sharp focus.

This episode has posed the fundamental question point-blank: shall the struggle in the South be waged in abject dependence upon the government, or independently by the masses?

The entire Negro community of Little Rock, numbering 25,000, was poised and ready for action. Their eagerness to participate in the struggle at times *overflowed in dramatic eruptions, as testified to by the Negro press*. Moreover, this mass eagerness occurred within a favorable relationship of forces.

The Negro middle class leaders refused the masses any part in the struggle, demanding that they cease aspiring to act and to accept a passive role meekly. Having betrayed the masses' desire for action, the leadership appealed instead to the government to solve the crisis.

The demand for Federal Troops to the South is revealed in action, not as an adjunct to but as a substitute for the organized action of the masses and is counterposed directly to it.

The editorial sees in this situation a "Valuable Precedent"—"For the use of federal troops in Little Rock constitutes a precedent for the Negro people that the capitalist politicians—much as they will squirm and try to weasel out of—will never be able to get away from. At each

crucial stage in the fight for the enforcement of the rights they now possess on paper, the Negro people will be in a position to demand federal intervention if they need it...."

If they need it? Who is to determine if they need it? The editors of the *Militant* seem quite willing to take the word of the middle class leadership whether the Negro people need Federal soldiers—and this leadership will continue to prefer governmental action to mass action, as has been their tradition.

This perspective for the struggle is justified by the *Militant* in the following manner: "The resulting political pressure...can blow the Republican-Democratic political monopoly sky high." Such a formula provides a political justification for continued dependence on the government and for perpetuation of the policy of *no organization of the masses*.

Spokesmen for the P.C. convention resolution have repeatedly claimed that one of its central points was the question of *mass action vs. dependence on the government*. The editorial in question, however, illustrates the contradictory character of the resolution which at one and the same time calls for a class struggle policy in the Negro movement, but also endorses parts of the consciously collaborationist and anti-revolutionary program of the middle class leadership.

I request that this letter be circulated to the N.C. as soon as possible.

On the SWP and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement

From an unnumbered Socialist Workers Party Internal Information Bulletin, "Material on the Kirk-Kaye Split," dated July 1966. Dick Fraser addressed this 13 December 1965 letter from Seattle, Washington to the SWP Political Committee. In February 1966 he was censured by an SWP National Committee (NC) Plenum for circulating the letter to non-NC members. The SWP leadership then began an "investigation" of the Kirk-Kaye tendency, precipitating its split from the SWP in April 1966.

The policy of the PC in the antiwar movement had its final result at the Thanksgiving Conference in Washington. Here the party and youth carried on an unprincipled, disruptive and politically reformist struggle against the entire left wing of the antiwar movement. They disrupted the conference around tertiary organizational demands and ended in isolation and national disgrace. They established an indelible and deserved record for political conservatism and dead-end factionalism. They also emerged as the only tendency present able to ignore and snub the civil rights movement.

This episode constitutes a political catastrophe for the SWP of a magnitude never before experienced by American Trotskyism. If immediate steps are not taken to counteract the effect of this performance, the reaction to it will render the party and youth as contemptible among honest militants as was the CP during its worst days. This can be prevented only by an abrupt change of policy and a public repudiation of the course followed by the party and youth in the antiwar movement during the past three months.

The party and the youth entered the conference armed with two "principles":

1. To imprison the antiwar movement in the U.S. in the single issue of peace in Vietnam.
2. To manufacture a centralized national membership organization of the independent committees on a Peace Only program, to supersede the present united front arrangement.

I contend that such "principles" are alien to revolutionary program and tactically impossible to implement given the actual composition and mood of the living antiwar movement.

I. The Programmatic Problem

1. Can the Peace Movement Stop the War?

The policy of the PC is based upon an

unproved and unfounded assumption that the war can be stopped by mass peace pressure on the government. This is an illusion unworthy of revolutionists.

The *Militant* has been saturated with this line for many weeks. Comrade Halstead's articles constantly refer to the "millions of lives" which are at stake in the decision of the peace movement on the "single" versus the "multi-issue" question.

The Nov. 29 *Militant* editorial of "The Antiwar Conference" gives the line fairly clearly. "The war in Vietnam cannot be ended solely by the activities of local committees. A powerful national movement will have to be built."

This concept is even more emphatically stated in a fantasy called "A Draft Perspective for the Antiwar Movement." After advocating the single-issue-national-membership-organization policy, the Draft concludes: "We are convinced that an organization can be built in this country on the basis of the program outlined above, that can be the decisive factor in bringing an end to the genocidal war in Vietnam."

Comrade Britton, in a youth communication, describes this Draft as one "passed by the Washington Heights CEWV, an upper Manhattan community-based committee in collaboration with individuals, mainly our comrades, in the other New York committees listed. It has been circulated in the New York antiwar movement to serve primarily an education function in preparation for the Washington convention.... Hopefully, the representatives at the November 18 meeting will approve this statement or a modified version of it...."

The PC, having utterly failed to make a general analysis of the politico-economic conjuncture for the SWP convention, has the totally false impression that the capitalist class has no fundamental stake in this war, and would

pull out of it in response to a little more pressure.

While it is true that some of the lackey-columnists close to the administration are assigned to give that impression, it is only a ruse. The ruling class is desperately attempting to create large new investment opportunities and views South Vietnam as a key to the exploitation of East Asia and India. Furthermore, it regards Vietnam as essential to its preparations for an eventual war with China.

This war is fundamental to the economic and political interest of U.S. capitalism. No powerful national "Withdraw the Troops" movement alone can stop this war.

2. How Can the War Be Ended?

The *Militant* says, "Bring the GIs Home." But this only raises another question—how? The party and youth line is that an enlarged peace movement can do it by nationally directed pressure and agitation.

In reality, a more tangible and quicker possibility for the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from Vietnam could be accomplished if the National Liberation Front can drive them into the China Sea. This is the active revolutionary solution to the question. But there is no hint of recognition in our literature that this is the most favorable alternative.

The party and youth leave it to others who are bolder to be partisans of the NLF, others who may lack something in program, theory or experience, but make up for it in the revolutionary spirit of solidarity so dismally absent from the pages of the *Militant*.

It is doubtful that this war can be ended on domestic initiative by anything else than the proletarian revolution. However, short of such a basic explosion, the only force on U.S. soil capable of pressuring the capitalist government out of Vietnam is the proletariat, in the course of its prosecution of the class struggle. To promise and advocate anything else is to sow an opportunist illusion.

The Negro movement represents that section of the proletariat which is presently in motion and has the initiative. The virile youth movement linking up with the Negro movement would together comprise a formidable force, agitating sections of the proletariat into action.

Out of this process will emerge a new fused and regrouped revolutionary party composed of radicals from the socialist, antiwar, and civil rights vanguard organizations. The appearance

and maturing of this development—the process of a fused vanguard stimulating the working class into struggle at the point of production—are the only political realities that Johnson & Co. can respect.

No matter how radical the slogans and broad the composition of the peace movement, it will be politically ineffective until it links with the Negro radicals and the working class. To a Trotskyist, under capitalism, "There Is No Peace!"

3. Towards Coalition Politics

If a "properly organized" peace movement can stop a war, then we have been erroneously fighting Stalinism and pacifism on this issue for 30 years. And if we were correct then, and are still correct now with the new "tactical" line because times have changed, then the PC is indeed guilty of the old revisionist habit of reversing a principle because of supposed tactical necessity.

This "tactical" excitement is a new shocker in SWP practices. Has the party forgotten that the tenacity with which previous peace movements clung to reformism was rooted in part in the liberal-Stalinist compulsion to isolate war and peace from the other great social problems? And don't they similarly isolate civil rights from the questions of war and peace, poverty, imperialism?

The upshot of this traditional limitation of the antiwar movement to peace only and the civil rights movement to civil rights only has been the incarceration of both movements inside the Democratic Party, for only the interrelation of all the great social problems makes it possible to identify capitalism as the cause of any of them and lay the groundwork for independent anti-capitalist political action.

Now that for the first time in the modern era, militant antiwar youth and militant southern Negroes are seeking to broaden the concept and scope of both the antiwar and civil rights movements by integrating their aims and directing an appeal to the proletariat, the party and youth claim that such youth are sectarian splitters of the united peace front!

The capitalist class is profoundly fearful of the possibility of the Negro movement identifying itself with the colonial revolution and linking up with the antiwar movement around the issue of Vietnam. Every time a Negro leader opens his mouth on Vietnam or colonialism, the entire capitalist press rakes him over the coals with a line

quite similar to that of the party and youth: "It's all right for Negroes to build their own movement on their own grievances, but you only injure the cause of civil rights by taking positions on other social problems, because that will alienate your supporters."

What they mean is that a break from the Democratic or Republican parties would be the next logical step and this must be prevented at all costs.

Larry Laughlin, one of the prominent co-chairmen of the militant Berkeley VDC [Vietnam Defense Committee], said in his speech to the Seattle committee three weeks ago: "We are disillusioned with protest. We are going to enter politics. We are going to run radical candidates on the twin issues of war and civil rights. We plan a frontal attack on the Democratic Party which is calculated to break it up. We consider it our duty to shake-up the labor movement to a realization of labor's responsibilities."

It is quite true that this is not the whole story, that there is a lot of confusion about what a "frontal attack on the Democratic Party" means, and that for many it includes running candidates in the Democratic primaries. And, to be sure, danger of coalition politics exists. However, the proposed treatment prescribed by the party and youth does nothing to counteract coalition politics.

The party and youth claim that if we permit issues other than peace to enter into the present movement the Stalinists will utilize the circumstances to take the movement into the Democratic Party. This argument not only stands the thing on its head, but fails to grapple with the reality.

In the first place, the antiwar movement is going into politics whether we like it or not, and its only chance to avoid the trap of people's frontism is not to avoid politics, but precisely to relate the war question to the other social problems and create an over-all anti-capitalist political philosophy.

The newly radicalized elements, many of them politically naive, are still people moving rapidly leftward who desperately require the intervention of revolutionary socialists on the big political questions to aid their development.

In so far as the youth movement is successful in confining the movement to peace only, it will insure a strong development of people's frontism, because a movement which is orientated exclusively to the peace issue inevitably winds up supporting "peace" Democrats.

II. Tactics and Organization Forms

1. *A Radical Peace Movement and a Conservative Youth Movement*

The "single" vs "multi-issue" position of the party and youth is not only wrong politically, but tactically blind, revealing a complete lack of knowledge of the actual political condition of the movement, which is far more sophisticated and advanced than the party and youth comprehend.

The party and youth have now been active in this movement for a few months, and in some cases a few weeks. Yet they presume to dictate to the movement a scheme for stopping the war which has no plausible chance for success and which the antiwar militants had two years ago, but have now discarded, realizing that they must integrate the antiwar movement with the colonial revolution, the Negro struggle, economic problems of the working class—in short, make a class-struggle internationalist movement of it. The party and youth demand that they return to their political infancy of two years ago and wait for the masses to catch up.

Those who have led the antiwar movement during the past two years in protest marches and demonstrations are now coming to the realization that the White House and Pentagon are impervious to any amount of protest or public opinion, intend to stay in Vietnam until every square foot of soil has been churned by bombs, every leaf of foliage laid to waste and every man, woman and child murdered, if necessary. The ruling class is clearly prepared to go to any lengths of domestic policing and terror to prevent obstruction of the war. The antiwar militants now understand that something more basic than even powerful single-issue routine protest must be organized.

The Washington Conference represented objectively an attempt by newly radicalized youth to begin reaching general anti-capitalist conclusions derived from the past two years of protest. Even the newest CEWVs [Committee to End the War in Vietnam] are ripe for revolutionary conclusions. The rapid leftward development of large sections of this movement clearly opened up the perspective for the creation of a mass revolutionary youth movement in this country.

The main and only responsibility of the revolutionary socialists at this conference was to attempt to broaden and deepen and generalize the anti-capitalist sentiments—to raise the political level of the movement.

This task was undertaken by the left wing of

SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], PL [Progressive Labor Party], the May 2nd Movement and other non-Trotskyist currents, but especially by the Spartacist and Bulletin forces. Our youth movement resisted and disrupted the attempts to draw general radical, socialistic conclusions, and became in fact the right wing of the conference, in objective programmatic alliance with the established peace addicts on the "Peace Only" issue, and no amount of compensatory righteousness over the "withdrawal" versus "negotiate" issue can obscure this fact.

The party and youth are thoroughly isolated in their irrational resistance to the universal desire among militant sectors of the antiwar movement to reach out to the civil rights movement. A high point of the convention was the powerful and militant plea of the delegation from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party for a recognition of the unity of purpose between the antiwar movement and the civil rights movement. Ignoring this plea the SWP rejected this alliance for supposed "tactical" considerations, but it is clear that the chief reason is the party position on black nationalism, i.e., Negroes should keep their movement separate from whites, and Negro goals are not yet the business of the peace movement.

2. *The Unity Splitters*

The party and youth under the hypocritical slogan of "unity" of the peace movement raised the demand for a single membership organization as the central vehicle for the struggle against the war in Vietnam. This demand proved to be the vehicle to amaze, appall, demoralize and disrupt the conference.

Irrespective of the merits of the proposal, the experience of the previous weekend at the Bay Area Conference demonstrated conclusively that this demand was a divisive rather than a unifying issue, and that the main militant tendencies in the antiwar movement would not go along with it under any circumstances. To continue to press this issue at the Washington Conference indicated a preconceived plan on the part of the party and youth to divide and splinter the movement while shouting "unity."

This organizational demand cannot find acceptance. It is an organizational gimmick which would tend to freeze part of the movement at the present stage and force other sections back to a previous stage of development. The tactical stupidity of this proposal for a centralized national organization stems from its unreality; it is totally

out of tune with the mood of the newly radicalized youth who have a healthy mistrust of centralized organizations and of becoming over-concerned with problems of organizational structure, except to maintain some local autonomy—until they have found out for sure where they are going politically.

To make matters worse, the proposal itself is entirely without objective political merit because it is maneuveristic and violates the principle of the united front, the cornerstone of our mass work.

3. *The United Front*

As against Stalinist attempts to subject independent organizations to a single minimum issue or program, or all embracing organization, Trotsky enunciated over and over again the principle of the united front of different organizations, which were free to maintain their autonomy and independence. To subordinate independent organizations to a single minimum program and permanent organization is people's frontism.

A stated motivation of the policy of a new peace-only national membership organization is the aim of cutting off the development of SDS in a socialist direction.

The reality of antiwar politics is that it has pushed the left wing of the SDS into the forefront of socialist politics. The left wing of SDS today represents the most important, largest and most militant radical youth movement in the U.S., rapidly moving towards an open socialist program.

Our youth movement, an essentially conservative organization, instead of welcoming this development and encouraging it, views it competitively with alarm and hostility. They fear it and are jealous of it. Feeling that they do not have the ideological or political equipment to compete with it, they want to maneuver it out of existence. Our youth say, in effect, to the SDS, "Socialism is not your business—you are only rightwing peaceniks. Dissolve yourselves in a single issue peace movement. You can be useful there. But leave socialism to our movement, which is ordained to be the only young socialist organization in the country."

The approach of the youth and party leaders to the SDS and other leftward developing currents has a childish-sectarian nature not seen in the radical movement for decades, but returning now with a vengeance.

At the Washington Conference, the National Coordinating Committee issued proposals which

contained the essence of the principle of the united front. As opposed to this, the party and youth exploded a frantic 4-day factional assault around the Stalinistic demand for a national membership organization, on the spurious grounds that they represented the "masses" or the "independents."

The NCC, understandably indignant but anxious to prevent a split, revised its proposals closely in accordance with the specific demands of the youth movement, retaining only the basic unity front structure rather than the totally unacceptable national membership organization for independents.

However, the party and youth forces were arrogantly deaf to the concessions of the NCC and blindly pressed on towards virtual split. A new policy of attack, raid and the hell-with-everyone-else has replaced Trotsky's united front for action.

4. Defeat

The party and youth went into the conference with very little real knowledge of the composition, political character or mood of the antiwar movement. They were steeped in fanciful preconception and errors, but they had the opportunity to learn something about the real movement. They rejected the chance. They didn't even attend the conference proper, except when and where their petty organizational proposal could be pushed. The great moments, the political discussions and mood, the discussion in the various workshops, the evidence of leftward trends, all this they missed, as they raced around organizing essentially a counter-conference which in the end turned out to encompass only themselves and a few bewildered followers.

All that the party and youth participants can report about the Washington Conference is what was done and said in their various sectarian caucuses.

When one after another of their previous allies publicly dissociated themselves from our youth movement and denounced it, the party and youth forces were soundly defeated. Refusing to abide by majority decision they convoked a pre-planned dismal rump convention which set a goal of creating the new organization they had been unable to sell at the conference. Like the Stalinists of by-gone days, our troops incurred the wrath of an originally friendly mass movement and managed only to capture themselves. The disgrace is now part of the SWP's public record.

III. Significance

1. *Intervention and the "Holding Operation"*

The young activists pledged at the last SWP convention that they would cease their sectarian, do-nothing, abstentionist policy. The various minorities urged them to intervene in the living movement—to intervene ideologically and politically.

The present disruptive organizational "intervention" is the diametric opposite of the political intervention needed, and merely constitutes another form of the "holding operation" wherein all non-trade-unionistic areas of struggle are regarded as historically unimportant and thereby fair game for contemptuous raids and any old policy.

2. *The Political Direction of the Present Current*

What is revealed in this episode is a rapid movement towards reformism by the youth leadership. The youth movement is an essentially petty-bourgeois formation without serious connection with the working class either theoretically through Marxism or directly through contact or organization. It has now broken out of its precarious condition of total isolation and insulation from the mass movements of its time, and come into contact with the essentially middle class antiwar movement. Its conservatism on the draft question, its reluctance to become the champions of the NLF, its refusal to face programmatic questions all demonstrate an affinity with the more conservative layers of the peace movement.

Sensitivity to the conservative elements of a middle class movement has apparently impelled the youth group itself in a rightward direction with great speed, at the very time that the major sectors of the movement are moving rapidly leftward.

Inasmuch as the youth nationally represents the principal base of the party, the velocity of this petty-bourgeois, essentially reformist, current tends to sweep the party along with it.

3. *What Is the Source of Policy?*

The policies which led to the Thanksgiving disaster were the subject neither of SWP convention debates nor documents, and discussion cannot be summarily refused because the issues were "decided by the convention." Furthermore, the peace movement policy has not been recorded in any comprehensive form in any PC minutes. The source of policy in this matter is not precisely clear.

On the contrary, during Comrade Dobbs' tour stop in Seattle, we reported our local activity and line in the antiwar movement (which have, incidentally, met with considerable success), in both public and closed branch discussions. We stated that our emphasis has been the broad politicalization of the movement towards revolutionary socialism, connecting it with the civil rights movement, the colonial revolution, and seeking a relationship with the proletariat.

Comrade Dobbs indicated no point of disagreement with this policy whatsoever, and it appeared that our local approach corresponded to the majority decision of the convention: to politicalize and radicalize the antiwar movement. Yet two days after Comrade Dobbs' visit, the youth organizer received a letter from the youth national office that included a criticism of local work for being against the "national policy" of peace only.

What evidently happened in the party was that some branches were actually mobilized as factions in the local peace organizations before the rest of the party—or Seattle alone!—was informed of the line.

Who is responsible for our single-issue-national-membership organization program? The NC as a whole has a right to know.

The present crisis of policy is sufficiently acute to warrant an immediate special plenum of the NC to begin to extricate the party, and if possible the youth from a dangerous drift in both organizations.

I request an immediate poll of the NC on the holding of a special January plenum.

If the PC has any inclination to begin undoing the momentous harm that has been done

both to the party and youth and to the antiwar movement, I believe it should adopt the following emergency propositions:

1. To require the national leaders of the youth to disband their National Caucus of Independent Vietnam Committees to set up a new national organization.

2. To issue directives to all SWP branches to do everything in their power to prevent the youth from carrying out its threat to begin to promote its national organization in the local Vietnam committees, a threat, which if carried out, will plunge these committees into turmoil on subordinate organizational questions and result only in the deeper isolation and disgrace of the youth, the weakening of the committees, and an open door for the Du Bois clubs to leadership of the antiwar movement.

3. To instruct all branches contemplating or executing disciplinary measures against comrades as a result of this situation, to hold such actions in abeyance until the whole situation has been reviewed by the party.

I am sending under separate cover, the minutes of an all-night meeting of the delegates from the South to the Washington Conference which are essential reading material for all NC members. The occasion for the meeting was as follows: the delegates from the South were bewildered by the political chaos created largely by the party and youth organizational program. Many wanted to leave for home. An all-night meeting was held at which Staughton Lynd was assigned by the NCC to attempt to get them to stay on.

Although some NC members may have had access to this document, I think it should be sent out to all members.

Why We Left the Socialist Workers Party

From an undated pamphlet issued by the Freedom Socialist Party. Richard Fraser co-signed this June 1966 document with Clara Kaye, Frank Krasnowsky, David Dreiser and Waymon Ware.

On behalf of the former Seattle Branch of the Socialist Workers Party, and other SWPers who supported the Marxist evaluation of the Negro Question developed by Richard Kirk, we present this statement explaining why we left the SWP—that party to which most of us have devoted our entire lives since our youth.

Origin of the Kirk-Kaye Tendency

Our political group, known within the SWP as the Kirk-Kaye tendency, was formalized at the 1957 convention of the party, when we opposed the unprincipled adaptation of the SWP to the pacifist-reformist leadership of the Negro struggle. Adulation of Dr. King replaced a revolutionary approach to the question within the party, and heralded a process of degeneration which reached a decisive stage at the 1963 national convention of the party.

In that year, the SWP proclaimed a boycott of the southern struggle; condemned leftward-moving SNCC as “reformist/integrationist,” and turned toward Elijah Muhammad and the Black Muslims as the “most dynamic” section of the Negro movement.

In regard to other areas of the class struggle, the 1963 convention rejected the perspective of socialist regroupment and deepened its hostility towards all the new leftward-moving organizations on the political scene; the perspective of political revolution in China was reaffirmed; party organizational procedures were formally “tightened up” while an ongoing purge of critics of the leadership was accelerated.

Our tendency opposed this course. We particularly resisted the slanderous identification of the southern militants with “tokenism,” and the all-out support of Negro separatism.

Our counter-resolution to the convention, “Revolutionary Integration,” called on the SWP to permit its Negro cadre to intervene in the living struggle for equality with a Marxist program. We developed our thesis that the Negro movement for

equality is a unique and central phenomenon of the class struggle in the United States, integrally connected with the proletarian struggle for socialism.

The SWP Espouses “Black Separatism”

The SWP leadership rejected the interconnection of the Freedom Now and socialist movements. The ease with which the SWP slid over from adaptation to Rev. King to glorification of Mr. Muhammad expressed the basically false theory—inherited from the Communist Party—that the Negro Question in the U.S. is only a variation of the National Question in Eastern Europe.

This theory maintains that the Negro problem can be solved by “self-determination” and racial separation. Thus, all policy problems of the Negro movement can be solved without strenuous analysis and thought, for the SWP leadership says in effect that whatever the Negro leadership does is good enough for the Negroes and good enough for the SWP because whatever policy is most prominent at any stage has been “self-determined.”

The SWP’s confusion of the *mood of black nationalism* with the *politics of separatism* bore bitter fruit when Malcolm X engineered a split in the Black Muslims. Malcolm was clearly oriented toward combining the ghetto struggle with the southern movement and with socialism. He denounced the Muslims for their basically reactionary character, and consequently felt the wrath of Mr. Muhammad’s goons. The SWP, supporting Muslim unity, was caught in its own trap. It became both the supporter of Malcolm and the defender of his enemy and probable murderer.

The SWP, now discredited in the Negro community, presents the ludicrous spectacle of an all-white party with a black nationalist program.

Our Perspective on the Unfolding American Revolution

The logic of the SWP’s position on the Negro

struggle led to a de facto isolation of the party from the struggle, for black nationalism itself stands aside from the main thrust of the Negro struggle—the fight against segregation. We now felt impelled to publish within the party an analysis of the basic reasons for the party's sectarianism on this and other vital questions.

Since 1957, we had responded to severe changes occurring in the party program by formulating our own position on a number of domestic and international issues. We believed that the party was departing from the dynamic course dictated by the spirit and letter of Leninism and Trotskyism, and that it was stagnating into conservatism.

In what proved to be a vain effort to arrest this general drift, we submitted to the 1965 national convention an extensive Political Resolution dealing with the current stage of the crisis of U.S. imperialism and the consequent strategy and tactics needed for the realization of our revolution. We sought to orient the party toward the Negro struggle as the crux of the American Revolution, and toward China as the key to the colonial revolution and the major policy-problem of the international revolutionary movement. The Resolution also called attention to the essentially anti-capitalist nature of the struggle of women and youth today, and concluded that the road to the American Revolution did not lie directly through the trade union movement, but followed the course of the struggles of the most oppressed wherever they broke out. We said it was the destiny of these struggles outside the labor movement to become the vitalizing currents that would eventually move the labor movement and become the vanguard of the revolutionary movement as a whole.

We called for a commitment to the struggles of women under capitalism, and for the formation of a truly independent revolutionary youth movement.

The SWP Becomes Monolithic

The convention rejected our perspective and tactics. Indeed, rank and file consideration of our Resolution was virtually impossible as the long-honored internal democracy of the party had by then been destroyed by a protracted "tightening up" campaign. The majority was hostile to all criticism and any new proposals emanating from outside the leadership. The proletarian principle of minority representation on all leading bodies was abandoned and the very right of factions to

exist was denied in a new Organizational Resolution submitted by the leadership and adopted by the convention.

The majority simply refused to debate the issues in dispute and discussion was effectively proscribed. Instead, we were threatened and denounced over local administrative practices. This type of unprincipled politics was fast becoming characteristic of the party leadership.

We concluded from this experience that the SWP had become a doctrinaire party, mired in a "holding operation," i.e., a prolonged state of suspension based on the assumption that nothing significant can happen until the revival of the trade unions and the emergence of a Labor Party. The SWP was ossifying around conjunctural evaluations of 25 years ago, and neither changes in national or world conditions, the isolation and disasters resulting from its own mistakes, nor the loss of its basic cadre of revolutionary Negroes, women, unionists and intellectuals could shake its complacency.

The Last Struggle—Over Anti-War Policy

The policy of the SWP leadership in the anti-war movement brought our differences to the breaking point.

After standing aside from the anti-war movement during its critical formative stages, the SWP decided in mid-1965 to plunge in—for an organizational raid.

We made one last attempt to prevent a disaster for Trotskyism in the U.S.

We protested against the single-issue, anti-political policy of SWP and YSA, which led them into the presumptuous demand that the Thanksgiving NCC [National Coordinating Committee] conference in Washington, D.C. center its deliberations around the party's peculiar and confusing organizational proposals, rather than around questions of program and principle. This course was unprecedented in our movement. We denied the SWP characterization of the left wing of the anti-war movement as "Stalinist." We condemned their fearful refusal to proclaim clear support to the National Liberation Front and their super-cautious and outdated policy on the draft, which prevents effective opposition to it.

We advocated a proletarian anti-war policy that would solidarize the party with the revolution in Vietnam, with working-class Negro youth who are the key victims of the draft, and with the radical wing of the anti-war movement.

The SWP Substitutes Organizational Attacks for Political Debate

The party's policy in the anti-war movement had never been subject to rank and file discussion. Comrade Kirk, a member of the National Committee for 25 years, requested a debate on the issue within the N.C. He flew to New York to participate in it, and discovered that the chief results of his protest were punitive organizational measures directed against him personally, against the Seattle Branch as a whole, and against other supporters of the tendency. Such measures are understood within the party to be a prelude to expulsion.

Under such circumstances, the resignation we had contemplated for some time became inevitable.

The SWP's estrangement from the Negro struggle and its refusal to intervene politically in the anti-war movement or in the present rebirth of interest in socialist thought have removed it for this period from the epicenter of revolutionary activity and ideology in the U.S. We would welcome a turn which would reverse this tragic degenerative process, but we cannot wait for this possibility. There are more vital things to do in the class struggle than conduct a futile and debilitating internecine organizational struggle over tertiary administrative issues. Since every political difference and discussion is now muddied and prejudiced by an organizational smoke-screen thrown over it by the party leadership to obscure the principled issues in dispute, the party can no longer contain critics. And revolutionaries who are not critical cannot maintain for long their revolutionary quality.

Our Objectives

In resigning, we reaffirm our commitment to Marxism, to Leninism and to Trotskyism, and we have set forth these immediate objectives:

(1) To join with other independent socialists in the Pacific Northwest in the creation of a new revolutionary socialist party here.

(2) To continue collaboration with our colleagues throughout the country, with the object of making our views known to the various components within U.S. radicalism.

(3) To advocate, support and participate in a revival and regeneration of Marxism in the U.S., and in a fundamental reorganization of socialists in a new revolutionary socialist party, able to unite the Negro vanguard with the socialist radi-

cals. We believe this to be the indispensable formula for the foundation of a genuine revolutionary socialism in this country.

* * *

Our Program

The following is the gist of the program we have developed and fought for within the SWP for many years. We are presenting it now publicly for the first time for the consideration of all revolutionary socialists and all mass movement militants and radicals.

I. *For a Revolutionary Marxist Approach to the Negro Struggle*

The connection between the proletarian struggle for socialism and the Negro struggle for equality is INTEGRAL and proclaims the unfolding of the permanent revolution in the U.S.

The fascist-like police states of the south are structurally basic to the capitalist political economy of the U.S. The struggle against segregation, therefore, threatens the entire nationwide social system. This fact demonstrates the impossibility of achieving equality under U.S. capitalism, and it further transforms the demand for integration into a transitional revolutionary demand. This in turn guarantees the emergence of a revolutionary left wing that will contend for leadership against the reformist/tokenists in the civil rights movement.

The development of all-black organizations expresses and cultivates the pride and self-reliance of the most oppressed, and opens new avenues in the struggle for freedom. But these so-called "nationalist" formations do not result from any inherent drive toward *national separatism*, but from organizational needs and from an *internationalism* that identifies the Negro struggle with the colonial revolution. The demands of the essentially proletarian masses express the historic needs of *the working class as a whole* in the struggle against capitalist exploitation.

No amount of all-black independence can overcome the terrible isolation of the Negro masses from the white working class and the socialist movement. What is revealed here is the backwardness of the labor movement and the theoretical bankruptcy of the established left. This isolation is a mortal danger both to the freedom struggle and to the struggle for socialism, since each is impossible without the other.

The Negro struggle is the central question of the American Revolution and the Negro movement is the vanguard sector of the entire working class. That is why the Negro movement is the first target of reaction: racism and the southern system are the launching pads of American fascism.

The Negro movement must be encouraged to develop a Marxist program and cadre that can unite the ghetto masses with the southern struggle into a powerful revolutionary force, and there can then be forged a working alliance among the Negro vanguard, socialist revolutionaries and the militants in the white working class.

This is the key to the American Revolution.

II. *For Solidarity with the Chinese Revolution*

The Chinese Revolution upset the international class peace agreed to at Potsdam and Teheran. This great revolution confirmed once again the validity of Trotsky's thesis of permanent revolution by demonstrating that the national revolution in backward countries cannot achieve its goals of national independence, national unification and economic growth without going over to the stage of socialist revolution.

China's experience (not lost on the Cuban revolutionaries) established China as the key to the colonial revolution and the principal target of world imperialism.

At first in practice, and then in an ideological polemic against the Soviet bureaucracy, the Chinese CP opposed the policy of class collaboration with world imperialism as expounded and practiced by both Stalin and the current Soviet leadership. The international debate which ensued, forcing world Communism to examine the issues, began the creation of revolutionary tendencies who opposed the reformist leaderships throughout the Communist movement. The necessary prerequisites were thereby established for an international revolutionary regroupment.

Still, the progressive character of the international role of the Communist Party of China is severely limited by the residue of Stalinism. The Khrushchev revelations about Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU revealed the cracks in the Soviet bureaucracy which might have been exploited by the Soviet workers to the point of political revolution against the entire regime and the reinstitution of proletarian democracy in the Soviet Union. But the Chinese Communist Party by its public adulation of Stalin and Stalinism struck a severe blow at the democratic aspirations of the Soviet proletariat and thus

helped to re-cement the power of the bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union.

The CPC stubbornly maintains Mao's theory—not fundamentally different from Stalin's—that the national revolution in colonial countries can be carried to fruition by a joint dictatorship of the proletariat and the native bourgeoisie—in spite of the CPC's own experience which refutes this theory!

The disastrous results of the policy flowing from this theory are to be seen in Indonesia. The Chinese leadership must share responsibility for the policy followed by the Indonesian Communist movement, a policy in no way distinguishable from that of the CP in China in the twenties in respect to the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek, and a policy that produced the identical end: massacre and utter rout.

The CPC's favorable references to Stalin result from this chronic contradiction in both their theory and practice.

China's internal life, however, differs sharply from the Soviet model. Clearly absent is the immense privileged bureaucracy, wielding arbitrary authority through an all-powerful secret police. The concentration camps and blood purges that are the hallmarks of Stalinism are also absent. The expanding role of the workers and peasants in economic planning and control has resulted in a consistent economic growth and a realistic potential for greater proletarian democracy.

The Chinese Communists are sensitive to the growth of bureaucracy in China. But they cannot ultimately prevent its growth so long as they remain blind to its origin and history in the USSR. While the very symbol of bureaucratic privilege and tyranny—Stalin—continues to be idolized in China, they will hover on the verge of retrogression and degeneration.

Likewise, their Stalinist heritage prevents the CPC from playing a decisive role in the reorganization of a worldwide revolutionary international.

III. *For Serious Politics in the Anti-War Movement*

The capitalist class has a fundamental stake in the war in Vietnam and will not withdraw short of a military/political defeat or virtual civil war at home. The only way that the American people can stop this war is through a mass political movement of the working class.

Vanguard elements of the anti-war movement feel their isolation from the working class to be a basic weakness of the movement; they seek alliances with the proletariat and specifically with

the Negroes, that section of the working class already in motion. As a consequence of a serious effort to stop the war, anti-war militants are groping for fundamental solutions to social problems. They seek to unite Negroes, the poverty-stricken, draft resisters, radical unionists, socialists, etc., into a broad political movement.

Revolutionary Marxists should help them find the correct road to political unity by demonstrating the necessity of independent anti-capitalist politics that connect the war to the other evils of the system. Political ventures short of such a program are doomed to eventual capitulation to the Democratic Party and other forms of class collaboration politics.

The liberal plea for "Negotiations" with the Vietnamese Revolution must be exposed; the only principled slogan is "Withdraw U.S. Troops Now." But a demand for withdrawal that is devoid of a meaningful economic analysis of the cause of war, even this slogan fosters the illusion that the anti-war movement by itself will pressure the U.S. out of Vietnam. The notion that simply more activism and more protesters can end the war is an essentially pacifist proposition. This unrealistic and anti-political approach is a dangerous conservative barrier to the political development of the anti-war movement.

IV. *For a Revolutionary Approach to the Woman Question*

We place the struggle for women's emancipation on the level of a first-class theoretical and programmatic question.

As the first tendency in the history of American radicalism to formally incorporate this question into our basic program, we proclaim our resistance to the creeping paralysis of male supremacy which by now has become an ingrained practice in the entire labor and socialist movement, and a growing danger in the civil rights movement.

The leading role of women in the fight for civil rights, in the anti-war movement, in civil liberties campaigns, etc., is not accidental, but results from the special dynamic developed by women as an oppressed sex, seeking liberation for

themselves and for all other victims of discrimination.

The feminine mystique, along with racism, remains the Achilles heel of the labor movement and a significant factor in the history of union degeneration. Women's equality must be raised as a transitional slogan whose dynamism flows from the pivotal location of the Woman Question in U.S. life, where the oppression and special exploitation of women is a burning injustice that intersects with every other political question and social movement.

V. *For Revolutionary Unification and the Regeneration of Socialist Thought*

Conditions for a meaningful discussion of Marxist ideology and for the creation of a united revolutionary socialist party have rarely been as favorable as they are today.

The essentially anti-capitalist character of the Freedom Now and anti-war movements draws the militants from both movements together in a search for political unity. The end of the Stalin era and the current Sino-Soviet dispute have weakened old prejudices and created an atmosphere favoring political discussion in the socialist movement. The crisis of capitalism, demonstrated by the permanent war policy of the Democratic administration and its hypocrisy in civil rights and anti-poverty, has forced one-time liberals and pacifists into a serious consideration of Marxism. An entire generation of radical youth, disgusted by its inheritance, and enthused by the courage and determination of the colonial revolutionists abroad and the Freedom fighters at home, is seeking more effective methods and ideas for the struggle against capitalism.

Revolutionary Marxists must accelerate and help give form to this growing need for a new socialist movement. We must add to the energy, inventiveness, and boldness of the New Left the most important qualities of the Trotskyist Old Left: Marxist ideology, a proletarian orientation, experience in the class struggle, and the recognition of the need for a centralized, disciplined and thoroughly democratic revolutionary party.

A Letter to American Trotskyists

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE (Memorandum on the Problems of Building a Revolutionary Party)

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It would be redundant to independent radicals to observe that the movement is dispersed. Nevertheless, I must say it, because that is the starting place of this memo. This condition is brought about by the degeneration of its major parties, the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, the disintegration of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], and the ebb tide of the class struggle. At the same time, the radicalization of the '60s, principally in the ghetto and on the campus, has left a residue of high social consciousness. Dozens and perhaps hundreds of revolutionary-minded groups, grouplets, leagues, and thousands of unorganized individual radicals, are seriously debating what to do next. This condition objectively demands a massive regroupment of revolutionary forces and the formation of a new party. This memorandum is designed to be a contribution to the discussion of how this may be accomplished.

The evolution of an aspiring revolutionary party is determined by the reciprocal relations of four basic elements:

THEORY. The understanding and ability to use creatively Marxist political economy and historical/dialectical materialism.

STRATEGY. The foresight and ability to put the organization in a position to struggle effectively for political hegemony over the proletariat in a constantly changing situation. From strategic concepts flow most of the decisive tactical elements: fusions and splits, the United Front, opponents work; support and critical support, entries or partial entries, etc.; mass organization orientation.

PROGRAM. The political program. The evaluation of current political problems facing the working class and proposed solutions, designed to heighten political consciousness. This applies

not only to the formally adopted resolutions, but to the daily life and work of the organization, its leadership and organizational principles.

SOCIAL BASE. That social sector from which the organization derives its basic support and to which it has its main sensitivity. The extent to which it successfully seeks that social base in non-privileged sectors of the proletariat will be decisive to its development.

Any one of these categories can become decisive in determining the direction of motion and the final product, because all are interacting.

The CP Degenerates to Reformism

For instance, the Communist Party after 1929: Despite its developing mass influence and militancy, it had come under the complete domination of the Soviet secret police (GPU), and found its social base in the Soviet bureaucracy. The first consequence of its change of social base was the erosion of theoretical concepts, and wild strategic gyrations. The strategic failures on an international scale led to defeats (Germany, Spain) which strengthened the reactionary character of the social base—the Soviet bureaucracy. The outcome of this process led finally to programmatic degeneracy, eventually to reformism; in no way qualitatively different from Social Democratic reformism.

The interrelationship between these categories is elaborately demonstrated and developed in the founding documents of the Trotskyist movement: "Criticism of the Draft Program," "The Strategy of World Revolution," etc. (contained in *The Third International After Lenin*).

The Socialist Workers Party

More pertinent to those seeking to profit from the problems of the past is to examine the

history of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) from the criteria outlined above. More pertinent, because the SWP was a native movement, and because it was the best of the Marxist-oriented formations to emerge from the turbulent class struggles of the '30s. It had, however, basic defects *at the time of its formation* in 1938, which it is necessary to examine. For this, I will have to rely on my recollections. I entered the Trotskyist movement shortly after the fusion of the (Trotskyist) Communist League of America and the (Musteite) American Workers Party (AWP), forming the Workers Party of the U.S. in 1934.

At the time of its formation the SWP had a dual social base: 1. Middle-class intellectuals. 2. Two white craft unions: the Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP) and the Minneapolis Teamsters (eventually designated Local 544). In this discussion I shall ignore the question of the intellectuals' influence, because this was solved in the 1940 split when the Shachtmanites left: solved only for the period under consideration, however, as the SWP has lost its working-class orientation and become essentially petty-bourgeois in both composition and social base.

The 1934 Teamsters' strikes in Minneapolis were, in terms of elementary class struggle, classics. The General Strike, masterminded by V.R. Dunne and J.P. Cannon, combined a well planned and brilliantly executed civil war with a phenomenal rise in social consciousness. This strike put the CLA on the political map and created the magnetism which drew the Musteites and the Socialist Party militants toward it, developing new strategic possibilities.

The 1936-37 Maritime strike (its West Coast segment) gave us the opportunity for decisive intervention in support of the militant struggle of the SUP against the conservative policies of the Stalinist-led unions.

Regardless of the militance and even historical significance of these episodes, the narrow social base which they supplied the SWP at the time of the emergence and turbulent development of the CIO was to produce devastating consequences in other categories—Theory, Strategy, Program—as I shall demonstrate.

The Sailors Union and the Teamsters

Both of the unions of our social base were pitted against the CP. In Minneapolis, the Stalinists weren't a real danger, as we were powerfully situated. They were mainly a political nuisance. But in the SUP there was a struggle—"to

the death"—with the Longshoremen (ILWU), the Marine Cooks and Stewards (MC&S) and finally the National Maritime Union (NMU).

The Lundberg machine which effectively ran the SUP was based on three semi-privileged groups of coastal seamen. 1. The Matson Shore gang: seamen who stayed in San Francisco and did maintenance work on the large Matson fleet. 2. Steam schooner sailors: working the coastal trade bringing lumber from the Pacific Northwest to California (steam schooners were being rapidly replaced by modern ships, however the trade retained its designation). 3. The Alaska run, largely based in Seattle. After the 1936-37 strike these sailors, working a short season (approximately May to October) made fabulous wages loading cargo from the Alaska canneries—overtime, double-time and triple-time, etc. They could usually make much more in five to six months than an off-shore sailor could make in a year. Most of them were in home port half the year and frequently during the season.

The relative stability of these groups gave them a preponderant influence on the affairs of the union, at the expense of the off-shore sailors, who represented the majority of the union. These conditions also applied to the Marine Firemen (MFW).

In many of the issues of the struggle of the SUP against the CP, the former demonstrated a superior militancy on the elementary level of union issues. However, its fanatical anti-Stalinism sounded more like *anti-communism*, and had distinctly reactionary connotations. The SWP was a political spokesman for the SUP, and our comrades became experts in the struggle against Stalinism in the unions.

Expertise at Anti-Stalinism

Most prominent in this field of expertise was Tom Kerry. In support of SUP policy, he led the fight against Walter Stack and the CP group in the MFW, finally driving them from the offices they held. He accomplished this largely in the capacity of editor of the *West Coast Fireman*. He was also associated with the *West Coast Sailor* and the *Seafarers' Log*. After coming to New York he guided a "progressive" opposition to the Stalinist leadership of the Painters Union, which was successful in dislodging them.

By pursuing our specialty we came to the edge of disaster twice in the Auto union.

Both of the unions of our main social base were strongly committed to the AFL—partly

because the CP was the dominant political force in the CIO. In this circumstance we drifted rather unconsciously, I think, into a kind of pro-AFL attitude which obscured to the party the fundamentally dynamic quality of the CIO. This prejudice was sustained until 1940-41 when the Minneapolis Teamsters, under fire from the high bureaucracy, went over to the CIO. It must have been partially this prejudice, plus a growing Stalinophobia, which was responsible for our first crisis.

When we got our first foot-hold in the UAW, we offered our services to Homer Martin, President, in his struggle against the Stalinists. But Martin was headed straight for the AFL, where he soon went, attempting to set up a dual union. Cannon tells (in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*) how V.R. Dunne and other men in the field extricated our Auto group from this disgraceful policy in 1938, by challenging the central leadership in New York.

But we were in for yet another "bloc" crisis. For most of World War II, Walter Reuther, as head of the General Motors division of the UAW, had played a better role than most others, particularly the CP; and after the war we sometimes joined forces with him.

However, after the strike wave of 1945-46 Reuther took a right turn, and we found ourselves in his caucus as he was carrying a reactionary war against the controlling Thomas-Addes caucus which was energized by the CP. This struggle pointed toward the campaign by the CIO hierarchy to wipe out all CIO unions which were under the influence of radical elements: Farm Equipment Workers, Mine Mill and Smelter, United Electrical Workers, etc.

It is to the credit of Clarke and Cochran that we were able to reverse this policy and pull out of the Reuther caucus. A continuation of this policy would have hopelessly compromised us. I recall that during the National Committee debate in the summer of 1947 which broke the bloc with Reuther, Clarke remarked (in comment upon eulogies about our successful struggles against the Stalinists in past years), "Yes, we fought the Stalinists well in the MFWO and elsewhere, but I have a feeling that perhaps we fought them too well." (Among all the progressive and militant bureaucrats for whom we did our sanitizing jobs against the CP, I don't recall one who didn't turn against us once the Stalinists were whipped. They were to wind up more often than not in the camp of reaction.)

Clarke and Cochran came into that NC meeting a minority, but finally Jim [Cannon] supported them and the day was saved.

Generally speaking, our criterion for political advancement among the militant and progressive workers was anti-Stalinism. The idea was that progressive unionism combined with anti-Stalinism was by itself an almost automatic transition to socialist consciousness.

The conception found its theoretical expression in the erroneous perspectives of our labor party propaganda during the entire period from 1938 to 1948. It was postulated by Dobbs that the labor party, based on the trade unions, beginning as a reformist party, would become so jolted by crises and the radicalization of the workers that it would take power, nationalize the means of production and, in effect, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Theory and Strategy

The strategy of the Trotskyists before 1938 may justifiably be characterized as flexible. The fusion with the Musteites (1934) and the entry into the SP (1936), whatever the ultimate consequences of the latter, represented a serious evaluation of political trends and efforts to face them realistically.

We Are the Party!

However, at the time of the formation of the SWP (1938) Cannon proclaimed new doctrines. As we left the SP Cannon said: This is our last maneuver, barring the possibility of a labor party development. We shall have no further orientations toward other political tendencies. We are the *one and only* party. The Stalinists are finished. We don't have to worry about them—just fight 'em.

At this time the CP still exercised a clear political hegemony over the radical working class in both the mass production industries and Marine Transportation!

We had registered important trade unionistic successes in the SUP, the MFWO, and the Midwest Teamsters, and in these areas we had politically discredited the CP. However, the contradiction between union militancy and political conservatism, and the great successes on a narrow social base, seemed to warp Jim's judgment, and induced him to negative strategic conclusions. He thereby elevated *tactics* to a pre-eminence over *strategy*, and congealed the party in a rigid mold of "we are the one and only,"

which denied us the flexibility necessary to take advantage of opportunities in the CP milieu: the temporary left turn of the CP in 1940, the development of the New York Labor Party and the Progressive Party, and the crisis created by the Twentieth Congress and Khrushchev's revelations.

Organizing the Revolution

The second of Cannon's proclamations stated that ours was only the task of *organizing the revolution*, Theory and Program had been all worked out and laid down by the Masters. It was finished. It was not our responsibility to make new analyses of the changing reality, but to follow the blueprint and organize the revolution. We all understood that this meant that the problems of meeting new realities theoretically was not so much a matter of concrete analysis, but of applying formulae. Thus we began to replace *Theory* with *Doctrine*, and took a further step in destroying *Strategy* by elevating the *Organization* question along with *Tactics* to this exalted level. Although we worshipped at the shrine of Theory, it was the theory created by others—principally Trotsky—and which provided us with a Doctrine.

A *Cult of the Organizer* arose (of which I must admit I was a charter member), which had the sad consequence of creating the super formula-organizers among the young Shachtmanites who had come with us from the SP.

I might say parenthetically that the ultimate product of this school of formula-theorizing and formula-organizing was Jim Robertson. Having a strong personal liking for him and a high regard for his ability, I must nevertheless say that Robertson and his organization (Spartacist League) have only appropriated these worst aspects of Cannonism and Shachtmanism and drawn them to their final, ultimate and logical but utterly ludicrous conclusion.

Origins of Racism and Male Chauvinism in SWP Support to the Sailors Union

In the struggle against Stalinist influence among seamen, the SUP and finally the MFOW pitted themselves most viciously against the MC&S, a predominately black union. There is no denying that most of the Syndicalists, with whom we were allied and whom we supported uncritically, were racists, including Lundberg, the unquestioned leader.

Lundberg was—at least in these early days—a militant and a consistent one in the framework of craft unionism. He would probably have laid

down his life for the SUP. He fiercely hated the shipowners, the government and the "Commies." He never hesitated to tie up a ship on a half-way reasonable beef. He was fearless on the picket line and a tough negotiator—and he had a sense of humor.*

Lundberg had built the SUP in a split and a war with the AFL International Seamen's Union (ISU). When he was refused a national charter by the CIO, who gave it to the CP-controlled NMU, he negotiated an agreement with the Executive Committee of the AFL to take over the remains of the moribund ISU and re-charter it as the Seafarers' International Union (SIU). As he was signing the Charter, William Green said something to the effect that "we are taking a chance with you, Harry, you know, you've been no angel"; to which Lundberg replied, "I did not know that the Executive Committee of the American Federation of Labor vass composed of angels."

But his racism was most pronounced. At one time Revels Cayton, Secretary of the MC&S, came to the Sailors Hall, apparently on a conciliatory mission. He was met at the door by Lundberg, who threw him bodily down the stairs with the following (approximate) salutation: "Get out and stay out—nigger black son of a bitch!"

The hostility between the two unions, which lived together in isolation aboard ship, brought on racial tensions in which the racism of the Sailors and Firemen was usually present.

In the whole history of our West Coast Maritime group, I never heard of anyone in the group having a friend or "contact" among the black MC&S. Various speculations were expressed as to why the CP had all the influence there. The most peculiar of these views, apparently generally accepted, was that this circumstance was of no consequence because inevitably the Cooks and Stewards, mostly black, were historically bound (as a kind of peasantry) eventually to follow the "proletariat" represented by the deck-hands and black gang (firemen).

Transportation workers in general and particularly seamen have always been among the most outspoken and habitual male chauvinists in

* In a negotiation session, after the shipowners had laid down proposals for tightening up working rules, penalties for violations, etc., Lundberg arose and quickly took down his pants, revealing his penis. The opposing negotiators were taken aback and he explained: "If we going to work like horses, we gonna look like horses," fracturing the session.

the working class. This is probably made inevitable because of the segregated male character of the industry, combined with political backwardness. Among seamen this was aggravated by the long periods of segregation and the semi-itinerant nature of their employment. Their characteristic term for woman was "bag"; their principal female contacts, prostitutes.

Given the uncritical support which we gave to the SUP and its Syndicalist leading core, plus the overwhelming pressure not to appear "different" from the working class in spite of being political, it is understandable how, in the absence of brutally clear theoretical training and understanding, some of even the worst characteristics of seamen would mold themselves into our members. And by virtue of the importance of this milieu as one of our main points of social support, many of these characteristics began to rub off on the party membership generally.

One of the consequences of this negative evolution was the eager acceptance of the 1939 Resolution on the Negro Question proposed to the National Convention by Johnson. It was an intensely nationalistic document, advocating the most extreme forms of self-determination and racial separation. Although it was not adopted by the Convention but referred to the National Committee, where it was somewhat modified, the party was substantially indoctrinated by this resolution.

There was, from the beginning, a tendency to ignore the problem of the emancipation of women. One of the products of our maritime policy was to exacerbate and crystallize this tendency, whereby the party completely turned its back on this question and virtually adopted the theory and practice of male supremacy.

At a later time, their dedication to women's liberation was probably the principal reason that the Weiss group was driven out of the party.

Of course, when the movement for women's liberation burst forth, the party was willing to jump on the bandwagon; but it brought with it an opposite tradition and inadequate theory.

By the time the women's movement got underway, every theoretically capable woman leader in the party who had not already submerged herself to purely organizational and/or family duties had been driven out of the party or quit.

The party had effectively avoided any discussions of the woman question, and those women who had been concerned with the subject

were—one way or the other—kept silent. Evelyn Reed, an amateur anthropologist who dabbled in politics, and who had consistently supported the male chauvinism of the SWP leadership against women concerned with the development of revolutionary theory on the "woman question," was suddenly projected into a position of political leadership.

The SWP therefore could approach the women's liberation movement only from a purely opportunistic standpoint. It consistently placed itself at the service of the liberal wing of the women's movement in opposition to every attempt to give it a revolutionary, proletarian or socialist orientation. Its cadres thus served as the socialist cover for the reformists. This corresponded to the SWP's conviction that the woman question was only a liberal reformist issue and that the main task was to recruit a few women from the movement to socialism, rather than to advance the movement toward socialist and class consciousness.

It must not be imagined that J.P. Cannon did not become aware of the sad state of affairs in the party created by the anti-theoretical doctrine which he had advanced. In a conversation with him dealing with problems of our maritime work, I mentioned the resistance we were encountering in moving West Coast seamen to the East Coast where they were desperately needed. His only remark was "We didn't make *communists* out of them."

Jim tried to begin a remedy in the creation of the Trotsky School, designed to dignify Marxist scholarship in the party. Every year a group of leading activists were to be selected for a six-month study course—full time and at party expense—on the fundamentals of Marxist Political Economy, Dialectics and Historical Materialism.

Beginning in 1946, it was, indeed, a fine Marxist school, but it was allowed to degenerate into an indoctrination seminary and then quietly passed on. It had no profound effect on the party; it was too little and too late. All it accomplished was to create a few malcontents who, after a rigorous study of the first volume of *Capital* and the method of Historical Materialism and research, realized the shallow and non-Marxist method of virtually the whole party leadership.

It had a profound effect on me, however, and I became one of the malcontents. This resulted in a fourteen-year struggle to "reform" the party which, along with others, I gave up as hopeless.

From Leadership in Black Liberation to Failure

The first disastrous effects of the degenerative process I have described were to be felt during the period from 1942 to 1948 around the problem of assimilating black workers into the party.

During World War II the Trotskyists were the only ones who did not desert the black struggle. Most prominently the CP, which had always held a large influence in the ghetto, was most treacherous in its fanatical support of the war, the government and the demand for domestic peace. They renounced and even condemned all struggle except for a second front and to sell war bonds.

Black workers were demanding a piece of the war industry employment, defending themselves militantly against police and racist attacks in the northern cities and around southern army bases, and resisting persecution and discrimination in the Army and Navy. Almost alone among the socialist parties, the SWP militantly defended them. Consequently the SWP newspaper, the *Militant*, became a popular paper in the ghetto, and soon black workers and some professionals began to stream into the party. We never had it so good.

The party faced two basic contradictions as it attempted to cope with this development. The first was in Theory and Program. The party leadership had been indoctrinated in the 1939 resolution, which was arrogantly nationalistic, calling for self-determination and separation, and characterizing the struggle for equality as reformist, and implicitly anti-revolutionary. But the blacks coming into the party were militant integrationists and had enough of separation, and rightly considered the demand for self-determination to be a justification for segregation.

The second contradiction was in the realm of Strategy and Tactics. The SWP, having substituted tactics for strategy, developed a trade-unionistic conception of the black struggle. We had been skillful and successful in trade union work, and in the absence of a concrete analysis, the tactical and strategic problems of any mass struggle should follow the trade union blueprint.

I shall discuss this second contradiction first, because if we had solved this strategic-tactical problem as it was offered to us, it might have eventually overcome the deficiencies in Theory, Program and Social Base.

The problem arose in this way: A prominent black doctor in Detroit had been awarded a

commission in the Navy on the basis of his professional qualifications, never having seen him. When he went for induction the Navy took one look at him and told him it was all a mistake. His draft board then ordered him inducted into the Army. He put up an historical fight against it and, with our support and help, won the case.

He became our foremost spokesman in the black community, and wrote a regular column in the *Militant* under the name Jackson. He built a tremendous black SWP in the Detroit ghetto, composed principally of militant workers. I don't know if anyone knew how many members he had, but I heard estimates as high as "over 200."

In any event, he wasn't satisfied that the propagandistic life of the SWP, supplemented by union politics, was adequate for this formation, which was beginning to assume the characteristics of a mass movement. In 1946 he came to the Political Committee with the proposal to create a new and independent black movement for the day-to-day struggle for equality. The Political Committee referred the problem to the Trotsky School (held at the Grass Lake Summer Camp near Detroit), plus all N.C. members visiting the camp or in the area.

There was some justification for this change of venue, as there were several members of the N.C. at the school (including myself), the director of the School, William Warde [George Novack], was a member of the P.C., and there were always N.C. members visiting the Camp. However, it was characteristic of the SWP that the central leadership almost invariably chose to have very little to say on black liberation, abdicating this responsibility to "specialists."

The meeting was quite a gathering. Jackson made his proposal and the roof fell in on him. All the brains at the meeting landed on him with the following line: We predicted correctly in the early '30s that, as the working class began to come to union consciousness, it would first come to the traditional and established organizations in the AFL. They did just that, and the CIO was formed first within the AFL. While we had a correct evaluation of the problem, the CP was hung up with their dual-union policy of Red Trade Unions.

So, they said, the Negro movement will inevitably go to the NAACP first, and your proposition is equivalent to the Stalinist Red Trade Union policy. You must take your militants and go to the NAACP.

There were three black members at the School, but none of them nor myself had a word

to say. Myself, because I didn't know enough about it to have an expressible position. The black comrades, Joe Morgan, Milton Richardson and Ernie Dillard, were probably intimidated by the force of the attack.

I was very uncomfortable during this discussion and the trade-unionistic tirade by the smart ones, and determined to get to the root of the problem, which I found could be done if you just try a little. The fallacy of the majority opinion—although it should be obvious—I will summarize here:

1. The trade union movement is an exclusively *class* movement. The movement for black liberation is multi-class, and the classes have different and sometimes opposing interests.

2. The working class movement of the 1930s was a movement of a class just coming into elementary consciousness for the first time in modern history. The movement for black liberation has been in almost continuous existence in one form or another on a massive scale for long over a century. In modern times witness the Garvey movement, the World War II March on Washington Movement, the Black Muslims, CORE. None of these messed with the NAACP.

3. The NAACP is and always has been a middle class movement which rarely represented the working class except in court. (It did, however, during the class upheaval of the '30s, establish a good reputation among auto workers when Walter White—then president of NAACP—pulled the black workers out of the Ford-Dearborn plant: an action which effectively broke the back of the corporations' resistance to union organization.) In spite of the untiring work of Herbert Hill in building a labor department, the NAACP was and remains the property of and instrument of the black middle class.

It was exclusively concerned with legal problems and opposed to mass action. All attempts to "reform" it (mostly by radicals) ended in disaster. It took the Montgomery bus boycott to shake it up somewhat, but even then it was totally inadequate for a mass movement. This is why Randolph bypassed it in the formation of the March on Washington Movement.

In 1946 the militant workers refused to go to the NAACP; and, although Jackson had an entirely legitimate proposal, and had the forces to begin it, at least on a local scale, he was overwhelmed by the obvious majority pressure and gave up. He left the party soon after this and his movement dispersed.

Later that year, when I had had time to think the thing out a bit, I made a protest of the policy to the School. I was greeted with silence. Too little and too late.

Nearly twenty years later Jackson came to a social event in New York during our National Convention in 1963. This was at the height of the popularity of the Black Muslim movement, which the SWP was courting. I recalled that Grass Lake meeting to him, saying that I wished we had accepted his proposal, particularly in light of the Muslim development, which merely filled the vacuum created by our failure. He said, "Yes, it is a shame. We could have had all that."

Theory and Politics

Our movement held itself together through years of adversity and persecution by the profundity of Trotsky's writings, the best expression of Marxist theory of the era.

However, we were never able to open up Marxism to the black revolutionaries. When confronted with our proposition that the problems of race relations in the U.S. could be solved through racial separation, they said—if that's Marxism, it's not for me.

So, even while many were coming in, many were always going out.

Black Nationalism Abets White Chauvinism

However, the nationalist theory had other negative results. It would be no discovery to observe that the white working class is saturated with race prejudice. However, on occasion, either in the necessity of class solidarity in struggle or in profound conviction of the need for revolutionary change toward socialism, the militant white worker is prepared to rid himself of this obnoxious and self-destructive prejudice. But when you tell him that racial separation is a necessary part of the class struggle, this gives him an opportunity to hold on to his prejudice as a virtue. This has happened.

Probably the most disastrous of all the consequences of the nationalist theory was in the problem of interracial marriage. The party operated upon the following theorem: If the black movement will, when it matures, become a nationalist-separatist and anti-white movement (like the Garvey movement), any black revolutionary who marries whites will be ostracized.

During the years under consideration, 1942-48, ours was an interracial party, and in these

circumstances close personal relations developed interracially, both in the organization and its periphery. Such relations sometimes easily developed into marriage. The leadership did everything it could to discourage this practice, from friendly reasoning, to pleading, to pressure and social ostracism.

Milton Richardson, our candidate for Governor or Lieutenant Governor in one of our post-war elections in New York, married white. She was socially ostracized and he was highly pressured. He finally left the country a broken man.

Joe Morgan was hounded out of the Party.

Louise Simpson, candidate for New York Lieutenant Governor in about 1944, married a white sympathizer. When persuasion was to no avail, harassment began, and became so intolerable that the husband threatened to go to the NAACP with a grievance. Jim finally told one of the offenders in the leadership to for Christ's sake leave those kids alone. Finally, at the 1949 Convention, an announcement was made by the N.C.—through the presidium—that the SWP does not oppose interracial marriage. The damage, however, had already been done. It was just too little and just too late.

When Dobbs' daughter married Clifton DeBerry and finally moved to New York, they were, of course, tolerated, and probably escaped the pressures exerted upon other like couples. However, this occurrence did not ameliorate the problem in New York to any appreciable degree, even spreading westward when Tom Kerry invaded Los Angeles in the '50s—witness the case of E. Banks.

Under the impact of all of these factors, our black membership eroded. False strategic concepts, false theory and program made it impossible for the SWP to change its social base, a factor which might have prevented the ultimate degeneration which eventually overcame it.

As a result of accumulated grievances and frustrations the last substantial group of black members left in anger at the 1948 Convention. As Dobbs expressed it to me (as I was negotiating to get one of them back), "They shit on the floor as they left." One of the ironies of this situation was that it was at this convention that the first resolution on the black struggle which made any sense was adopted. Johnson had just come back to us and had modified his 1939 position drastically and produced a fine literary document. However, it was superimposed upon the Party, and bore no relation to the real problems that the

Party had encountered and failed to solve. While being objectively a refutation of the 1939 resolution, it didn't say so; we never disassociated ourselves from this horrible document. Consequently most of the leadership and the old timers in general, who had been indoctrinated in the old resolution, saw in the new one only a temporary tactical compromise with the overwhelming militancy of the movement demanding equality. There were, too, a few statements in the new one justifying this view.

Because of this, I at one time erroneously laid our failures to this resolution. At any rate, it also was too little and too late. The SWP returned almost to its original pristine purity with a few dark-skinned members for window dressing.

The leadership was constantly plagued with demands to explain the loss of its large black cadre. The leaders replied with a series of bromides which explained nothing and were, of course, at the expense of the dear departed. However half-true some of these explanations may have been, the problems and experiences I have related contain the basic truth.

The Bitter End

The substitution of Doctrine for Theory, Organization for Strategy, Tactics for Program, and the continued narrowness of social base had a cumulative effect on the SWP. In the mass movement we rarely had an independent policy, and the prolonged blocs with anti-communists—Lundberg, Paul Hall, Reuther, Curran, Roerback, etc.—led us into opportunistic phases.

Adventurism soon followed, destroying our forces as we tried to extricate ourselves from compromising positions. The notable exception was in the UAW, where opportunism continued unabated. Cochran, the mentor of this work, succumbed to the prevailing tendency of the old-time militants of the '30s to continue to maneuver between power blocs and take it easy politically. This led to the formation of a politically liquidationist tendency which destroyed our UAW work in a split.

These cycles of opportunism and adventurism resulted in eventual disaster in the mass movement and had a conservatizing political effect on the Party policy, which finally came to rest in its present condition: political opportunism, a fetish for legalism, and a demand for conformity and respectability replaced the class struggle.

The national disaster was intimately related to the collapse of the Party's revolutionary inter-

national outlook, as revealed most of all by its approach to the Chinese Revolution. This revolution was the longest and most bitterly contested civil war of the modern era, beginning as a proletarian revolution (1925), retreated into an anti-imperialist war with the Japanese invasion (1931), but re-emerging in a victorious proletarian revolution in 1949.

Mao Tse-tung was in both overt and covert opposition to Comintern policy, beginning in 1927 (he was thrice expelled or suspended from the Central Committee). Finally, in 1935, he gained ascendancy and finished a process of re-making the Communist Party along Leninist lines.

This was the formula for the final victory—an essentially de-Stalinized Communist Party.

However, the SWP, unable to analyze theoretically and concretely *the* revolutionary current in the U.S.—black liberation—was hardly in a position to do so with far-away China. Thus it was forced to rely upon doctrine. Its guide was the Resolution of the founding Congress of the Fourth International (1938) on “The War in the Far East and the Revolutionary Perspectives.”

However, this document, not written by Trotsky, was basically false, including gross misrepresentations of the actual developments in China. Alleging that the “Stalinist” leaders had turned this grandiose agrarian movement, despite its historic battles, back into the fold of the Kuomintang, the key passage is as follows:

“What remained of the Chinese Communist Party after Chiang Kai-shek’s forceful liquidation of the peasant soviets, has publicly surrendered the last remnants of its revolutionary policy in order to enter a ‘People’s Anti-Japanese Front’ with the hangman of the Chinese revolution. The Chinese Stalinists have formally liquidated ‘Soviet China,’ handed over to Chiang Kai-shek the remnants of the peasant Red armies, openly renounced the agrarian struggle, explicitly abandoned the class interests of the workers. Publicly embracing the petty bourgeois doctrines of Sun Yat-sen, they have proclaimed themselves the gendarmes of private property and, in conformity with Stalinist practice everywhere, the enemies of the revolution.”

The monstrous lies and distortions of this key statement are too obvious for comment in this article, and, irrespective of the fact that its author, John Liang [Frank Glass], later essentially repudiated this thesis, the SWP has remained glued to it in their constantly-reiterated Hate China campaign.

Vietnam and China

The total misunderstanding of the Chinese Revolution could not help but reflect itself in the practical work of the Party. This was most obvious in the SWP’s refusal to give public support to the Vietnamese Revolution. The SWP/YSA expended enormous energy in the service of pacifism around the slogan “Bring the Troops Home Now.” But they would never face up to the basic question of *whose side are you on?* They flatly rejected the proposition that it was our political duty to proclaim that WE ARE FOR THE VICTORY OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, THEIR CAUSE IS JUST. Among other objections, they said it would be against Trotsky’s “Proletarian Military Policy,” worked out for World War II.

I recall a heated debate on this subject. I don’t remember whether it was at the 1965 Convention or at the N.C. Plenum where they boiled me in oil. I tried to explain that we couldn’t fall back on the old doctrine for WW II because this was a *different kind of war*. I was refuted by M. Alvin, who accused me of trying to make WW II look good (implying that I was moving toward the Stalinist supportive position on WW II). I mention this because it was typical of the SWP leadership, when confronted by political criticism, to label or insinuate something sinister about the criticism and the critic.

It was proposed by a minority in 1966, I believe, that we adopt Lenin’s policy of revolutionary defeatism, which would demand that we come out openly for the victory of the NLF. They would have none of it. However, I am not overcome with sympathy for this formulation. In reality the situation was not so complicated. When workers are on strike and the National Guard is called in, one doesn’t have to be a Marxist-Leninist to determine whose side one is on. All it requires is a little bit of class solidarity.

Likewise, when an imperialist army invades a colonial country struggling for independence and freedom, it is over-dignifying the shabby politics of the SWP to have to go to doctrine to become a partisan of the NLF. All that is required to take this elementary dignified course is more elementary, and a quality that the SWP has lost—a sense of solidarity with the oppressed.

Many young revolutionaries who have experienced the SWP only in its recent years of degeneration didn’t like the way the Party operated organizationally (they certainly have a point there), and tend to concentrate their attention on

this aspect of the problem.

This is a one-sided approach, however, the organizational question being basically derivative. The fate of SDS should sound a warning. I do not mean to say that the organization question will solve itself, and will flow automatically from higher principles. There is much legitimately to be said about what we want a new party to look like organizationally, especially in contrast to the old ones. Problems of freedom of discussion and criticism, the right to challenge, public discussion of party problems, personal relations between

members, educational principles and methods, the sanctity of leadership, and all the criteria of organization, deserve special examination.

There is one thing for sure, however. Nearly every Marxist-oriented organization claims to operate on the basis of Leninism: democratic centralism. But in all cases every principle of Leninism has been turned upside-down and wrongside-out, until its basic tenets have been buried. Leninism must be re-discovered and—if found adaptable to our problems and conditions—adapted and used.

On Transitional Organizations

This excerpt from a 29 May 1983 letter written to Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee member Deborah Maguire is taken from the SL's Internal Discussion Bulletin whole No. 41, August 1983.

A few days ago I wrote one letter on the Black/Labor project and discarded it. I had been confused about what, essentially, this first experimental stage is. I was misled by the idea of a "transitional," multi-ethnic organization.

The organization adheres to the full party program. This is too narrow a base for a transitional organization, except in a very narrow sense. A transitional organization, in the sense that the Old Man taught, requires a transitional program. We start from the present mass consciousness, with its immediate demands, and build a programmatic bridge toward the ultimate demands. Labor/Black may be adequate for the present, because it obviously reflects what you have. But if you intend a multi-ethnic organization that designation will not attract the Latino militants.

To me, what it adds up to is that you are really assembling a non-(party) membership black cadre. This is not a bad first step. The radical blacks are the key to a broader really transitional organization.

We were on the verge of such a development in 1946. During the war and immediately after, we never had it so good. The CP had deserted the field, and could not come back except with the Progressive Party. So, we had the black cadre, at least in New York, where I was organizer of the Chelsea Branch off and on for some years, Los Angeles, and Detroit. I was able to spend 2 summers at the Grass Lake Camp which is near Detroit, where we had a fabulous black movement. It was led by (Dr.) Ed Keemer (Jackson in the *Militant*). He proposed to the Political Committee that he be authorized to launch an independent organization to fight against discrimination, racism, etc. The question was referred to a group of NC members in the Midwest, and to the Trotsky School, which contained 3 NC members.

Keemer made his proposal, and the brains went to work on him. The principal argument with which they destroyed his proposal was that

the black workers, when they reached a social consciousness, would move to the NAACP—just as the working class first moved to the AF of L as they developed consciousness.

The three black comrades—Milton Richardson, Joe Morgan, Ernie Dillard—and myself just sat there like wooden Indians selling cigars. If learning from failure and error is really so great, I ought to be smartened up pretty good, for I have had my share of both. My failure at that time was largely just ignorance, but also partly a too great respect for my betters, so to speak.

That episode disturbed me. I had an ugly feeling that everybody except Keemer had been wrong, but I didn't know why. I decided to try to analyze why I had that feeling, and when I realized that the brains had, indeed, been wrong, I brought it up in the school, asking that we find some way of getting the decision against Keemer reversed. I didn't get much response, but George Novack finally agreed to present my ideas to the P.C. Of course, nothing came of it.

Virtually the entire black cadre disappeared within a very few years. This was partly because of the fundamentally nationalist-separatist feelings of most of the leading white people, who had been indoctrinated by C.L.R. James in his nationalist period. After he changed his mind, he hadn't admitted an error, but just quietly slid over into the opposite, as though there were no contradiction. Consequently, the indoctrination remained intact. The desertion of the black comrades was also caused by the fact that the strictly political activity of the party was too narrow a framework for them—they required action on pressing problems.

It wasn't until years later that I realized that the basic element in the NAACP argument, which had been put forward by all the leading people, was that they couldn't believe or admit to the maturity of the existing consciousness among the hundreds and thousands of blacks, who were militantly pressing toward integration. They con-

sidered blacks to be still without consciousness until they developed a nationalist consciousness.

Nearly 20 years later Ed Keemer showed up at a social function during the 1963 convention in New York. The Black Muslims were at the height of their popularity, and that was what the convention was all about. Needless to say, my resolution on Revolutionary Integration didn't get much of a play. That's putting it mildly: I was slaughtered.

I talked to Ed Keemer, told him how I had felt about having remained silent during the discussion of his proposal in 1946. He said, rather wistfully, alluding to the void that the Black Muslims had stepped into—"We could have had all that."

If he was correct in 1963, and I suspect that he was, similar prospects may be in store today. However, the problem is more complex. At that time, the black workers were about the only ones in motion. Today the key to organization of the oppressed minorities, lies principally between black and Chicano, here in the West, and I suspect that a similar relation problem exists with Puerto Riqueños.

In this situation, while it may not be possible to build a genuinely multi-ethnic organization right away, it is wrong to close the door on it, which I believe the Labor/Black designation does.

The problem of Black/Chicano relations is complicated by matters of principle. Chicano consciousness developed very late, but having lain quiescent for so long, it came on strong. This consciousness has been and will probably continue to be somewhat nationalistic—as is the case with native Americans.

While there is quite sufficient common ground to make a unified movement possible, there are important points of conflict. When the Chicano movement began to assert itself, it was confronted with the results of the years of pres-

sure exerted by the demands. They did not take kindly to much of the integrationist achievements. They have adopted a spirit of passive resistance to school integration, for instance, asking only for bi-lingual teaching, while the Indians loudly advance counter-proposals.

A not unimportant factor in this conflict is the fact that blacks had been awarded most of the social service jobs in minority communities. The Latinos were thus deprived of being serviced by their own, which handicapped them in their relations with the agencies. Not only that, but those jobs were considered to be plums in the ghetto and barrio.

The lack of sensitivity to black problems is illustrated by the most prominent Chicano candidate for City Council in the local election here, who has as his campaign manager the fellow who was attorney for the Bus Stop organization a year or so ago.

I recall one experience I had here in LA before I left for Seattle in 1956. The CP had an organization a little similar to the one that you propose, called the Southeast Interracial Council, I think. It was about evenly divided between black and white, the whites being either CP functionaries or middle-class types. I became active in it in about 1955, and remained so until I left. Their interest was mainly in legislative matters. We went on lobbying trips to Sacramento to protest racist and McCarthyite bills before the Assembly and Senate. Other local actions largely pertaining to legislative problems. My principal interest was to pick up a couple of contacts, which I did. I had planned that once integrated in the organization, I would begin an opposition to their absorption with legislative matters, etc., but I left for Seattle before I could do that. I contacted the (black) secretary of the organization after I returned here in 1969 (?). They are immersed in the Southside Democratic Clubs.

To the Democratic Socialists of America

This 18 June 1983 letter to Stanley Aronowitz, a leading supporter of the DSA, is edited from a xeroxed copy found in Dick Fraser's personal papers. Fraser sent a xerox of the letter to DSAer Dorothy Healey. Here we include a page of the manuscript which we were unable to locate for the first printing of this bulletin.

According to the eminent existentialist philosopher Walter Matthau, the greatest thing in life is winning at the horse races. (That's the Gospel according to Damon Runyon Chapter I:1. For myself, it is real greatness when the horse is one that nobody else likes; everybody thinks he's a dog and he goes off at 10 to 1 or better.) Matthau goes on to say that the next greatest thing in life is losing at the horse races. (Ch. I:2.) However, for those of us who are a bit politically inclined, and don't get to the track all that often, if the greatest thing in life is listening to Stanley Aronowitz lecture on Marxism, the next greatest thing is when he makes an error. And since I am a fan of yours, the next greatest thing should be if you are able to point out the error (or errors) which I now will do, to find out if it is indeed the third greatest thing in life.

I choose the first time I heard you speak: something about ideological trends, and your most recent talk on the crisis of Marxism.

The first one is memorable for me, not only because the error, though a minor one, has stuck in my mind for these several years, but also because it was the occasion on which I formally introduced my dear friend Roberta to our way of thinking. She had been through feminism a few years ago, was something of a mystic, and was becoming a nurse. It is my good fortune, that having spent the last six years under the rule of the medical profession in its present barbaric state, that I can number among my few personal friends some of the nurses who have had to put up with me in the various hospitals in which I have been confined. You may be gratified to know that since that lecture, Roberta has become more than a casual sympathizer of our way.

At any rate, the point is, that during the course of your lecture you asserted that the function of the Reformation was to make religion a private matter. I was shocked, because I had come to realize that you were not only our most

entertaining lecturer, but that you had a deep insight into contemporary problems, and had an extraordinary knowledge of Marxism. Well, Marx and Engels didn't think that way about the Reformation. I have lost nearly all of my old library, but I believe that the whole subject is dealt with at least in the Marx-Engels correspondence, if nowhere else.

What you say may have been one of the motives of the Lutheran Reformation, exemplified by the doctrine of *the priesthood of all believers*. However, there was little or no practice of this doctrine in the actual German Reformation, which failed miserably. Luther left religion in the tender hands of the petty princes, Protestant and Catholic, who devastated Germany for a couple of centuries in the religious wars, in which the religion of the miserable subjects was automatically changed with the victory of one or another prince. There was no religious privacy in that Reformation.

According to Marx and Engels you are wrong essentially. The historic task of the Reformation was to break the international stranglehold of the Church on all European society, which prevented the emergence of autonomous national states to serve as vehicles for the production and distribution of commodities. The Calvinist Reformation did just this: it first achieved mastery at Geneva; there followed the great Dutch Revolution, creating the first capitalist state in Europe; overthrew a "barbaric feudalism" in Scotland; unsuccessful in France, the Huguenots nevertheless forced a break with the Pope and permitted France at least to achieve political autonomy; established the parties of the Great Rebellion in Britain, which in turn laid the foundation for the French Revolution, which did not end the international sovereignty of the Pope, but assured the victory of the bourgeoisie.

When I studied the Reformation, I found very little of the making of religion a private matter in

the Calvinist church. The main feature of that church was its function as a revolutionary machine. It comprised the total organization of the population against Popery and in nationalism and for capitalist morality. All piety and morality, far from being private matters, were rigidly monitored by the church hierarchy.

* * *

Now, for your thought-provoking lecture on the crisis of Marxism. I found myself in basic agreement with the main thrust of your thesis as I understood it. Whether it is a crisis of Marxism or a crisis of Marxists and their organizations, I confess I haven't made up my mind. It is quite true that neither classical Marxism nor the Marxism of Lenin and Trotsky has given anything to many of the critical problems which have arisen today, and around which new movements tend to arise. I believe that this is both because of the particular stage of capitalist decline in which we live and because of historical peculiarity. On the other hand Marx, in adapting Hegelian logic to materialist philosophy, political economy and history, has given us quite fine methodological tools—the best that I know of—to deal with social reality.

In my opinion the trouble with Marxists has been that they have refused, or have been unable, to use these tools in concrete analysis. They have become largely dependent upon existing doctrine, and attempt by deductive logic to determine the shape of existing reality. Existing doctrine, as you have observed, doesn't treat with many present-day problems. This does surely bring in a crisis of doctrine, but I don't believe it overthrows the methodology which has been left us by the masters if we choose to use it.

I am mainly concerned with one specific problem which illustrates the limitations of modern Marxists. I was disappointed that in your description of the areas of present social conflict which have precipitated an upsurge of semi-proletarian movement in the country (and to an extent in the world generally), areas where guidance from Marxism is lacking, you did not single out the question of *race* as the most critical—which I believe it to be.

Modern history has demonstrated, particularly in the great Russian and Chinese revolutions, that great historical transformations in the present capitalist world may be achieved not because of the orderly evolution of capitalism and the class struggle. The advancement of capitalist

economic decline may accumulate crises which become the motive forces of revolution. But in opposition to this normality, some historical transformations have come about because of national historical peculiarities. This will probably be the case in the U.S. The most important peculiarity—and the one which reveals a basic weakness and contradiction here—is racial structure, which overlays the class structure, distorting it.

Marxism has given virtually nothing to this problem which would enable us to understand and cope with it. It is not that Marxists have had nothing to say on this question. On the contrary, our libraries and bookstores are loaded with what Marxists have had to say. The limitation of Marxists has been that on the basic theoretical level, they have, for the most part, written little but worthless claptrap. They have done more to obscure the nature of the problem than the authors of the racist doctrine.

Well, under separate cover I am sending you what I wrote 30 years ago on this matter. May I say with becoming Trotskyist modesty that it was and remains the only definitive materialist analysis of the whole race question in the U.S. It represents what a working person (a “raw worker” as Rose Karsner categorized me when I first joined the movement) who became a largely self-educated scholar can do with the tools which the masters have left.

Partly because of some experiences I had had, after 1946 I became dissatisfied with everything that both the Communist movement and ours had to say on this subject, and this challenged me to find out the truth. I ignored everything that Marxists had written on this subject. They had for me done already too much to obscure it. I studied the black scholars, of whom there was a whole galaxy in the early part of this century. I merely attempted, and I believe successfully, to synthesize their basic thoughts, adding only a little of my own and of my one collaborator. I did not document the work—I wasn't enough of a scholar for that—but that is its only defect. No black militant has ever read it or given me an audience who has not identified with it. Not many white radicals think much of it, because they seem to have been steeped either in Stalin's bureaucratic edict for a black state in the cotton belt or C.L.R. James' Marcus Garveyism of 1939. I have found the black nationalism of white radicals to be a most poignant expression of the theoretical poverty of the movement.

Anyway, I would appreciate very much if you would take time to read it and honor me with a comment.

* * *

In that lecture there were two statements, entirely peripheral to the main thesis, which got to me like a sharp stick in the eye.

I. You discussed the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution, saying words to the effect that you didn't know what caused it—but that Trotsky's analysis had been wrong. You didn't elaborate that, which makes it difficult to cope with, but I believe you meant it seriously, so I have to take it at face value.

By no means do I subscribe to everything that Trotsky wrote or said. However, his analysis of the process of bureaucratization of the Party, Soviet and the Comintern is probably the most important thing that he ever wrote except *The History of the Russian Revolution*, and I don't think deserves to be brushed off by a more or less off-hand remark.

This analysis described the phenomenon (a classical one) of the triumph of the counterrevolution in the name of the revolution. Over the years Trotsky compared in detail the successive stages of the reaction with that of the French Revolution, identifying the rise of Stalinism with the fall of Robespierre and the destruction of the Jacobins, and the stages of reaction—the Directorate, First Consul, Napoleon's Empire, and finally the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. There was a controversy surrounding the final product of the Russian reaction: did not the final restoration in France indicate the road that the Soviet Union was traveling—toward the restoration of capitalism? Trotsky defeated this argument with the demonstration that the restored monarchy had been an essentially bourgeois monarchy and did not represent a restoration of feudalism. He showed that the Soviet Union, in retaining the basic conquests of the Revolution, must continue to be defended.

The coup by which Stalin consolidated power was made possible by the devastation caused by the Civil War. The first major political problem that the Soviet state faced was obviously: who is going to run the country? The vast illiteracy of the masses of people dictated that the personnel of a bureaucracy be recruited largely from people of privileged classes of the old regime, including the Czarist bureaucracy. However dangerous this may have been, as long as the party of the pro-

letariat was in control, Lenin was confident of maintaining the revolution. In 1921 he described the situation in this way: "We have a workers state with bureaucratic appendages."

But after his death, the bureaucracy was able to inundate the party itself. Although I have lost most of my old library, I recall that Trotsky included the statistics in *The Revolution Betrayed*. At the time of the revolution, the party membership was about 115,000 members. In spite of severe erosion during the Civil War, it had increased to perhaps 500,000 in about 1921. By 1924, however, Stalin as General Secretary had been able to flood the party with 240,000 new members, largely recruited from the privileged section of the population, composed of bureaucrats of an alien class origin [the "Lenin Levy"]. This was at a time when the proletariat had been virtually destroyed.

After consolidating its power, the bureaucracy forever after was concerned primarily with maintaining its privileged position. It gradually crystallized into a privileged *caste*. The bureaucratization of the party was followed by that of the Soviets and finally the Comintern.

The first decisive politico-economic turn made by the new ruling stratum was to search for a non-proletarian social base, and they turned to the peasantry with the dictum "enrich yourselves." This created the kulaks. When the wealthy peasants staged their bloodless uprising in 1929, Stalin abruptly turned to their extermination and decreed forced collectivization, the combination of which destroyed agriculture and created horrible famine.

In foreign policy, the bureaucracy turned to rapprochement with the imperialists and the colonial bourgeoisie, particularly in Britain and China. The trouble arose not because of renewed diplomatic relations and trade agreements, which were absolutely necessary for survival, but because bureaucratic instinct demanded that the Communist parties of the world base their policies upon these diplomatic arrangements. In this way, through purges of leading Communist cadres, the Comintern was eventually degraded into a mere arm of Soviet foreign policy. Already, by 1926, when Britain and China were in revolutionary turmoil, the hands of both parties were tied to the capitalist class. In Britain, this was accomplished through subservience to Ramsay MacDonald as he betrayed the general strike. In China, although Trotsky had initiated the entry of the CP into the Kuomintang in perhaps it was

1922 or '23, he and Zinoviev both realized the limitations of coalition with the class enemy and demanded an end to it as the revolutionary period approached, but the bureaucracy was too comfortable with Chiang Kai-shek and couldn't break. The CP was all but physically destroyed.

Regardless of the fact that the Trotsky-Zinoviev analysis of the problem in 1926-27 was not adequate to encompass the later unfolding of the Chinese Revolution under different conditions, at that time, it was quite correct. If it had been considered by the Comintern in time, it could have meant the difference in the outcome of the whole history of China.

The Soviet economy was first organized in an exclusive, bureaucratic manner. Just divide the branches of industry among the available communists. Trotsky's proposal to create a planned economy was rejected as "super-industrialization." When the old method had utterly failed to revive the economy, Stalin finally agreed to the principle of planned economy. However, by this time, all democracy had been stripped from the soviets, and if there is one thing in history which completely validates your present criticism of the lack of democracy in the Soviet countries, it is that lesson. Without some democratic control the nationalization of the means of production loses a great deal of its vitality—principally its ability to adjust to new circumstances. That was the problem with the five-year plans. Unrealistic planning preceded bureaucratic bungling of execution. And it went on like that. It took roughly 50 years to unravel the tangle in the economy created by that early history of planning without democratic responsibility. I doubt that even now the industrial planning is fully rationalized.

The international defeats of the 1920's brought on, as a conditioned reflex, the nightmare of the Third Period. Stalin's giant intellect produced the theory of social fascism and the united front from below, characterized the Social Democracy as only one variety of fascism, prohibiting any approach to the united front of the working class. Hitler marched through Germany by the path created by this division in the class, without which he could never have come to power without civil war. This catastrophe brought on the Moscow Trials, as if to demonstrate to the world that everyone but Stalin was responsible for the failures. During the purges of that period every single surviving member of Lenin's Political Committee, save one, I think, was murdered or executed.

The popular front comes next for the International. Totally disregarding Lenin's thesis on the united front of the working class, it was such a relief from the Third Period madness, that Communists everywhere embraced it joyfully, hook, line and sinker, and have never recovered. This permanent coalition with the capitalist class led directly to the defeat of the Spanish working class, the abandonment of France to Hitler and the emasculation of the parties everywhere. I am weary of hearing over and over again that the Spanish tragedy was caused only by German and Italian bombers, etc. It's nonsense. The die was cast before Franco ever landed in southern Spain with his Moroccan troops.

Trapped in a coalition government with the capitalist class, the working class parties were powerless to secure adherence of Moroccan nationalists or the southern peasantry. Abd el-Krim, the legendary leader of the Rifs, went to the Popular Front and assured them that even an emancipation proclamation would prevent Franco from recruiting an army there, but the Spanish capitalists were the imperial masters of the African colonies. Likewise with the peasants. The capitalist class was the biggest landlord in Spain, having taken all the Church lands and some more during the revolution of 1931. This was a fact that even Felix Morrow, our best propagandist, failed to understand in his otherwise fine analysis of the Spanish Civil War.

Every international catastrophe brought more purges at home. This time they reached into the ultimate defense of the Soviet Union, the Red Army, where the cream of the officer corps was ripped off. Even a careless scan of the phony Hitler diaries would have revealed their fraudulent nature as Hitler is imagined as commending Stalin for his execution of Tukhachevsky. He would never have said that in private—he would have gloated over it and ridiculed Stalin for falling into the trap, for it was the Gestapo which framed the general of the Red Army, precisely to weaken the Soviet Union militarily.

I can't force myself to belabor this question longer. Trotsky's analysis of this evolution of bureaucratization of the Soviet political economy and its product were complete and proven sufficiently to require more consideration than the old cliches.

Is all this only ancient history, to be forgotten along with everything that is either unpopular or distasteful? I don't think so. I don't see how we can possibly understand either the Soviet Union

today or the Communist movement of Europe without knowing its origins. Furthermore, I have found that analysis and the refreshing analogy to the Thermidorian reaction in France to be extremely helpful in understanding the rise of the Slave Power in the 19th century U.S.—which brings us closer to home because the whole problem of race relations today is intertwined with what happened in the early part of the 19th century. Without that revealing insight into the French Revolution, I don't know if I would have been able to understand what seems most important to me today.

* * *

Just yesterday I received from a friend the *Socialist Review* which contains the second of your pieces on Socialism and Beyond. I haven't had time to study it yet, but a cursory reading of it allows me a brief comment. In all respects it is the most important thing that I have read concerning the problems of the left in general and our movement in particular. Many of your thoughts have been on my mind a long time, but I have seldom had an opportunity to say them.

* * *

One of the greatest ironies that I know of is that it was precisely the exceptional analytic achievements of the Old Man that made for the sectarianism which was part of the failure of the SWP. We used all the arguments which could be derived from his writings, and used them continuously. We proved and predicted on a global scale. We became hypnotized by our propagandistic successes. Then came the Minneapolis strikes which became one of the major achievements of the modern labor movement before the CIO. We got the feeling that all we had to do was to hold on to the doctrine, ready-made for us and perfect—that is, hold on to every jot and tittle, without even the slightest alteration. The purity of doctrine coupled with Cannon's trade union expertise was a sure formula for winning 'em all. When the Old Man was killed, the fountain dried up. The ideological cupboard was bare and we were left with the formula, which was totally inadequate for the changing world.

II. Mao's Stalinism. Just another peripheral point. I was a bit stunned by your remark that Mao was a Stalinist. Again without any elaboration. That is not quite true. After 1927 at least until the Long March Mao was in constant opposition to the Comintern which had become tightly

held by Stalin. The disastrous twists of the Comintern were particularly cruel to the Chinese. Particularly the Third Period. The theories that designated the Social Democracy as fascist turned in China into the theory that the nationalist bourgeoisie was not capitalist at all, but feudal, and even after the Japanese invasion, was the main enemy and had to be constantly fought militarily. Needless to say this precluded any possible united war against the Japanese. To take this situation from bad to impossible, Stalin conceived the idea that the Chinese nationalists were preparing a war against the Soviet Union and that "apocalyptically" (John Rue) the Chinese Revolution must be sacrificed for the defense of the Soviet Union.

Overlaying these sources of conflict was the fundamental one involving the peasantry. Stalin refused to admit that his policies had led to the utter defeat of the revolution in 1927. The Chinese proletariat, a smaller minority of the population than even the Russian workers at the time of the revolution, had been mauled by Chiang Kai-shek probably worse than Hitler was to maul the German proletariat. Mao seemed to understand this and proceeded to ignore whenever possible the constant directives from Moscow to attack the cities where the proletariat was ready to revolt again.

All through this dismal period Mao ignored, resisted, defied and struggled against every policy of the Comintern, and for that was expelled three times from the Central Committee, barely retaining Party membership, imprisoned once and put under house arrest once.

When Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the founding leader of the Party, was expelled in 1929, Li Li-san was placed in the leadership of the Central Committee, and took charge of Stalin's policy of extermination of the kulaks (which was simply absurd when bureaucratically transplanted to China) and the Third Period, both of which were ordered by the VI Congress of the Comintern. Li was unable to pursue either policy effectively, nor was he able to completely defeat Mao's peasant policy and his resistance to the policies of the Comintern. He was summoned to Moscow, which was second best to expulsion, and the regime of the 28 Bolsheviks was inaugurated. They were young Communists who had been sent to Moscow to study. (I was acquainted with two Communists who had attended the Lin School in Moscow during that period. They returned to the U.S. anti-Semitic and anti-Trotskyist in the extreme.

They were no less hostile to Browder principally because they claimed he was a Jew.)

A long and bitter struggle between Mao and the Central Committee which nearly devastated the Party ensued and caused Mao's third expulsion and his imprisonment in 1934. However, within a year, operating from a strong base in the Army, he succeeded in overthrowing the 28 Bolshevik Central Committee and reorganizing that Committee. He then organized the 7th Plenum of the Central Committee, which had not met since 1928, at the Tsun-yi Conference [1935] which adopted his complete political, military and organizational policy, which was subsequently adopted by the 7th Congress of the Party. By then the Comintern was powerless to interfere to any extent in the operation of the war.

The long internal conflicts, the abrupt changes in policy, the extensive purges and the final complete defeat of the Comintern greatly weakened its authority in China. This was followed by the Long March, in which its basic policy was scrapped, and World War II and the dissolution of the Comintern, all of which left Mao able to pretty much go his own way until his final victory over Chiang and the consolidation of Soviet power in China.

The [1929] expulsion of Ch'en Tu-hsiu was precipitated by his open confrontation and challenge to Stalin's whole policy in his "A Statement of Our Views." His expulsion ended his effective political career in the Chinese Revolution. This I view as one of the tragedies of the revolution. For he was not only one of the most able and devoted of the old leaders, but was the finest scholar among them, having been able to modernize the written language and other achievements.

Mao evidently took his demise as a warning and chose not to follow his path of confrontation with Stalin. He masked his non-Stalinism by dissimulation. For instance, in describing his own works, he states that he has "developed Lenin's and Stalin's theses on the revolutionary movement in colonial and semicolonial countries, as well as Stalin's theses on the Chinese revolution." But he goes on to describe only his own ideas, referring to Stalin only in regard to a thesis of the later period of the first united front with the Kuomintang (circa 1923). But nowhere does he state that Stalin's later positions were correct. (See "Resolution on Some Questions in the History of Our Party," 1945.)

Mao probably never supported Ch'en's poli-

cies after he went into open opposition. However after Ch'en's final expulsion, the Central Committee condemned open discussion in the Party of his "liquidationism" as "extreme democratization." It is of interest that this was a primary charge against Mao by Li, and continued to be for several years.

A misleading notion of the internal life of the Party is given by both Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley as a result of their interviews with Mao in 1936 and '37 in which he makes no mention of the struggle with Li from 1928 to 1934 which was the central axis of the internal life of the Party.

While Mao seems to have completely avoided written reference to his disagreement with and struggles against Stalin's and the Comintern's basic lines, he had this to say about their organizational policy and the purges which he witnessed both in China and in Moscow: they

"invariably attached...damaging labels to all comrades in the party who, finding the erroneous line impracticable, expressed doubts about it, disagreed with it, resented it, supported it only lukewarmly, or executed it only halfheartedly. Labels like 'right opportunism,' 'line of the rich peasants,'... 'line of conciliation,' and 'double dealing'...waged 'relentless struggles' against [them] as if...they were criminals and enemies. Instead of regarding the veteran cadres as valuable assets to the party, the sectarians persecuted, punished, and deposed large numbers of these veterans in the central and local organizations.... Large numbers of good comrades were wrongly indicted and unjustly punished; this led to the most lamentable losses in the party.... Comrades who upon investigation are proved to have died as victims of a miscarriage of justice should be absolved from false accusations, reinstated as party members, and forever remembered by all comrades."

Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*,
Vol. IV, pp. 206-207

Mao thus survived Stalinism by dissimulation and is somewhat reminiscent of Claudius, who survived a whole series of the most brutal Roman Emperors by pretending to be a moronic dunce, and of Khrushchev, who lived through Stalin's reign of terror by playing the role of a willing and obedient clown.

John Rue in his remarkable book, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition: 1927-1935* (Stanford U. Press, 1966), gives an intricately detailed and elaborately documented study of the struggle between Mao and Stalin's agents. After the war he appears to have made his peace with Stalinism.

However Rue, having made a definitive study of the history of the relations between Mao and Stalinism, says in his introduction that Mao

“fought his way to the chairmanship of the CCP in the face of continuous and determined opposition from Chinese party leaders appointed and supervised by agencies of the Comintern. He consolidated his power over the party in spite of everything its former leaders could do to overthrow him. He developed his political, organizational, and military lines in opposition to the lines the Stalinists expounded when they were in command of the central organs of the CCP: he developed his ideological line in his struggle to maintain his position of leadership on the Central Committee. So by 1945 Mao had few ideological commitments to Stalin. After that year relations between the two were dictated by their relative power positions. Mao, as the leader of the party controlling the weaker state, occasionally had to bow to the authority of Moscow, but even under great pressure he maintained intact the essential features of his special position.

“A careful examination of the revised edition of his works, which was published between 1951 and 1953, will illustrate the many problems Mao faced in denying the correctness of certain aspects of Stalin’s theory and practice to a Chinese audience while simultaneously maintaining officially correct and cordial relations with the omniscient dictator

in the Kremlin. Such an examination is of general interest as an example of the use of sophisticated verbal camouflage by relatively weak groups who need to conceal their opposition status under the conditions created by a tightly disciplined and highly centralized international party regime.”

So what is the final product of his remarkable political odyssey? Mao undertook a brief sally into internationalism in his fine polemics against [Palmiro] Togliatti in 1964. For this, I was misled into writing (along with my former wife, Clara) in our resolution to the SWP convention the following year that “China was realigning the old Third International against the Kremlin.” Whatever Mao’s intention at that time, this did not come about. He received very little response to that one try and went back into his shell. He personifies the one big defect of the Chinese Revolution: he became crystallized as a *national* Communist, head and shoulders above Stalin’s nationalism, in which, however, there are similarities. As for Euro-Communism, having taken over much of the heritage of Social Democracy in their concern for the national welfare of the various countries in which they practice, I agree completely with your characterization. I am tempted to call these Communists Communo-Democrats.

On "Color Caste"

From Spartacist League/U.S. Internal Information and Discussion Bulletin whole No. 43, March 1984. Dick Fraser addressed this 15 January 1984 letter from Los Angeles to Jim Robertson.

During the comrades' recent visit, we had a lively discussion triggered by my lectures on black lib of 1953 in which I put a knock on the proposition that blacks are a caste. This would, of course, apply equally to *color caste*, a view which I still hold. The discussion having been opened, it seems reasonable that I should continue it with you.

First, I must abstract from *color caste*, which is derivative, to get to the basic caste alone—for if it is admissible to consider blacks as a caste in any way, color caste would, of course, be valid. The opposite would also be true.

I discussed this briefly in Oakland last summer, and when I observed that Oliver Cromwell Cox's analysis of this question would have to be confronted before a legitimacy for designating blacks as a color caste could be established. It was argued—and this argument continues to surface—that Cox refers to *color caste* only in an off-hand footnote and that therefore it is not important to confront him. This is a counterfeit argument in which it is attempted to circumvent the fact that Cox spent at least 1/3 of a comprehensive scholarly work demonstrating that blacks in the U.S. are not a caste of any kind. I found Cox's analysis to be absolutely conclusive, and I cannot see how it can be dismissed.

My view of the race question, first publicly expressed in 1953, derived in large part from a study of the works of the black writers and scholars, principally of the first half of the century, which was a period of a great outpouring of profound thought on race relations from the black community.

I read everything I could get my hands on in the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, Alain Locke, Richard Wright, Ralph Bunche, Charles H. Thompson, James Weldon Johnson, Kelly Miller, Oliver Cromwell Cox, and others whose names escape me.

I sought to take the important basic concepts of race and race relations expressed by these

thinkers, many of whom were Socialist/Communist-minded militants, and synthesize them into a scientific Marxist doctrine. In the process, I was able to cull valuable hints from the erudite display of C.L.R. James. Dave Dreiser was very helpful.

If I had found a single hint or suggestion in all that, that the idea of caste could be applied to blacks, I would have investigated it, but that whole body of thought is devoid of any such suggestion. Such a proposition is to be found in the book by Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist who was hired by the Carnegie Corporation to solve the "Negro Question" for the ruling class. I had decided from the beginning to be wary of white bourgeois scholars, as well as the Socialist and Communist theoreticians, whom I decided had made a mockery of Marxism with pseudo-theories of black lib.

I claim little originality in my final work (first in a resolution designed for the National Convention written in 1952, then the lectures) except for the synthesis of the key thoughts of the black scholars and the views of the black workers who I was fortunate enough to have as friends. I think that the only original contribution of mine was the end product of the following sequence: 1. The race concept of biological superiority/inferiority has been destroyed: the race concept has no biological reality. 2. Nevertheless the phenomenon *race* exists. Proof: try to tell black people that there is no such thing. (I went through a period trying that.) 3. The reality of race is that it provides the form for social discrimination. 4. Race, therefore, much like value, is a *social relation*.

Next, I attempted to demonstrate that the racial structure and race relations in the U.S. are historically unique. That no society has ever been founded upon a division based exclusively upon superficial physical characteristics. There is, of course, a similarity between social relations in the U. S. and South Africa. However, the oppression

of blacks there bears a basically *national* character—the oppression of the Bantu and other African nations by the Afrikaners.

Further, that the fundamental historical tendency of the relationship between black and white is towards *mutual assimilation* as evidenced by the interactive and reciprocal cultural development which has been an active phenomenon almost from the beginning of black and white populations living side by side during slavery. However, this mutual assimilation, which under any other circumstances would have produced a more or less unified and homogeneous people after a period of time, was thwarted, first by the Anglo-American racist mentality fostered by the slaveowners, and then by the requirements of capitalism for the control of the working class: with a united working class capitalism will not survive. This is demonstrated in the stormy and uneven history of working class struggle.

Mutual assimilation is a powerful social force. Racism is an irrational institutionalized condition—in its extreme form individual or mass insanity. That capitalism must use racism to survive, cutting across and violating this powerful social force towards assimilation, reveals that however imposing its history and however universally it shapes life and social relations, it is fragile. It will be overthrown with the overthrow of the capitalist class, and only by that. (Perhaps this was the original thought.)

It is argued that defining blacks as a caste or color caste is justified by its similarity to the caste system in India, where it is said the lower castes are of darker skin color. This may be true, but the upper-caste Hindus I know would be designated black in South Carolina if not clearly advertised as foreigners, and are recognized by the Third World as part of the darker peoples.

It would be reasonable that the Hindus might have color consciousness without racism, however, even the factor of color consciousness seems to be minor and unimportant. Cox states categorically that viewing the various gradient castes “no sense of physical distinction need be aroused.” It may be that the Hindu castes exhibit darker color as they descend the social scale, but that in itself does not qualify them as a parallel to U.S. race relations.

The race concept has been expressed many times by many people, but none better than Thomas Dixon, Jr.: “no amount of education of any kind, industrious, classical or religious, can make a Negro a white man or bridge the chasm

of the centuries which separates him from the white man in the evolution of human history” (from “As to the Leopard’s Spots: An Open Letter to Thomas Dixon, Jr.” by Kelly Miller). There is no race concept incorporated into the Indian caste system, and the attempt to equate black oppression in the U.S. to the castes of India only tends to transfer the stability and relative permanence of the age-old Hindu caste system to the race system, which questions its fragility. This fragility is one of the most important factors to consider when dealing with the possibility of its disappearance—a problem of vital concern to blacks. This fragility of racism is one of the great contradictions of U.S. capitalism and is its Achilles heel.

I have found that it is not uncommon for white liberals and radicals, having realized that the race concept—even its modified version in modern anthropology—is a gigantic fraud, to try to find some way to eliminate *race* from the vocabulary. But race is nevertheless a social reality, and the search for a way to call it something which it is not is fruitless.

Blacks generally ignore this idiosyncrasy, and socially concerned blacks go about the task of building racial pride, which I have called race consciousness, an important stage in political development. Would you take this away from them, substituting a caste pride? If you would, it’s just not in the cards. I recently reread Ralph Ellison’s introduction to his *Essays*, and it is impossible to imagine that he should forsake racial pride as is indicated by your insistence on the color caste.

When you consider this, you run into all kinds of difficulties, for if you are to be consistent in relating race to Indian caste, the analogy must be that blacks relate to the Untouchables, and I think you would agree that there is little there to encourage caste pride for black Americans. Furthermore, once having designated blacks as a caste, you are logically required also to designate at least White Anglo-Saxon Protestants as another caste, and perhaps a graded hierarchy of intermediate castes. Although you don’t want to do this, I believe that this is a necessary extension of the color caste theory. I have stated that the racial structure of American society overlays the class structure, blurring and distorting it. On the other hand, the theoretical construction of a caste system would tend to replace the class structure, nullifying the class struggle.

When I was writing about “The Materialist

Conception of the Negro Question" in 1954, I was concerned mainly with Nationalism. That was the ground of the argument with Breitman. I was aware of the existence of caste as one of the facets of the problem, but there didn't seem to be any urgency to deal with it. It was inconceivable then, as it is today, that the idea of caste could ever be given currency among blacks, even in its derivative form, color caste. If I had considered it, in absence of the necessity of replying to an opponent, I would probably have merely referred to Cox's work, which on this subject is complete and definitive.

However, had I been confronted with an argument such as I have had recently, I would have written pretty much what I have said today.

This is integral to "The Materialist Conception of the Negro Question."

The Communist Party in the '30s had a great burden to carry in the theory of Negro Nationalism and Self-Determination of the Black Belt. The CP was militant enough and sound enough on practical matters of racism, that blacks disregarded this theoretical and programmatic fault, and joined and assimilated into the party in large numbers. Your theory of the color caste will not prevent black workers from supporting and joining Spartacist and the Labor/Black League, but you will repel many intellectuals, whom you would otherwise get. Ultimately, you cannot afford to be anything but scientifically correct all the way.

On Libya

From Spartacist League/U.S. Internal Bulletin whole No. 49, January 1988. Dick Fraser addressed this 21 March 1986 letter to Jim Robertson.

One of my failings has been a reluctance to apply energy to analysis of International problems—usually until the problem virtually hits me in the face. Such is the case with Libya, to which I have paid only the attention due to newspaper articles.

While in the hospital in January, I happened upon a broadcast interview with Qaddafi. It is possible that due to your travels you missed it, although it was reported in full in the *LA Times*, so I will recapitulate my recollection of the memorable parts.

First, I must say that he makes a good appearance. Serious and firm, occasionally a little emotional, but subdued. For the most part spontaneous, as opposed to the studied and rehearsed and posed delivery of our aging juvenile actor.

Very early in his presentation he talked about Reagan's tirades, calling them "stinking crusaderism," which I thought was a nice way of putting it. He went on to talk about the sanctions, saying that they were not hurting Libya, and if they should do so, "we'll go Communist. That's what happened to Cuba. Castro wasn't a Communist but you made him go that way."

He made a telling point on Reagan's anti-Semitism in his dealings with the Arabs.

Only a few hours later, I caught a semi-documentary on Libya from PBS. Without my

being aware of it, there has been a considerable revolution going on there. Libya is the only Arab country where the oil revenues are shared by the people. The Libyan workers and peasants have the highest standard of living of all Arab countries. A revolutionary step towards women's liberation has taken place. Libya is the only Arab country which has almost completely violated Moslem orthodoxy in this area. In the metropolitan areas they claim to have approximated equality of women. Showed women in the armed forces in combat training. There is resistance to this in the interior from the orthodox hierarchy.

I presume that you have given some thought to Qaddafi, as the Healyites seem to have had some dealing with him. However, I was very impressed with what I heard and read, and I would suggest that either yourself or some member of your International apparatus in Europe investigate getting an interview.

It becomes clear to me now why Reagan is so afraid of that man. He is not afraid of the Soviet Union, but is merely awaiting the time for a first strike capability. But Qaddafi he is afraid of because in spite of the fact that he is somewhat isolated in the Arab world, principally because of his flouting of orthodoxy, he has nevertheless become a principal spokesman for the Arab world.

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This bibliography is necessarily partial; for example, we were unable to locate all of Fraser's extensive correspondence with other individuals. The Prometheus Research Library would appreciate notification about any additional materials.

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