

CHAPTER 3

History and Politics of the Black Belt Nation Thesis from 1928 until 1945

Introduction

Chapter one of this thesis, "An examination of Self-Determination and Its Application To the African-American People," attempted to define Self-Determination and to describe the African-American Nation. Chapter two attempted to analyze the history of self-determination before World War II, using the Russian model. This chapter will explore the resolution of the Third International approved at its Sixth Congress (July 17-September 1, 1928), and its 1930 resolution concerning self-determination for the oppressed African-American nation.

The leading actors on the stage of history in the formation of the Third International were members of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Bolshevik. As a member of the Second International formed in 1890 and described in the previous chapter, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Bolshevik objected very strenuously to the failure of the parties of the Second International to live up to their agreement to fight against the imperialist war of 1914 and for self-determination of nations. To counter this failure the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Bolshevik attempted to build the foundations of a new Communist International by calling various conferences such as the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences.¹ After assuming power, in order to help implement its ideas on self-determination and other matters throughout the world, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Bolshevik took the leadership in the actual formation of the Third International (1919-1943).

This organization was known as the Communist International (CI). At its Sixth Congress (August-September, 1928) held in Moscow, the capital of the U.S.S.R., the Third International adopted a constitution that stated: "The Communist International — The International Workers' Association — is a union of Communist Parties in various countries; it is the world Communist Party."² The Communist International sought to organize the working class and agricultural laborers to establish the objectives of one world free of all classes, and racial, sexual, religious, or national differences. Each of the member parties carried the name of the Communist Party of its country. The constitution of the (CI) stated that in each country there could be only one party affiliated with the Communist International. Within all of the Communist Parties, membership was open to all those who accepted "the program and the rules of the respective Communist Party and of the Communist International."³ A member of a Communist Party was known as a member of the (CI). A member of any Party had to work with one of the units in places of employment such as a factory, a farm, store, workshop, etcetera. All members were required to pay dues and "abide by all decisions of the Party and of the Communist International."⁴ In the rules of the Communist International political education was not mandatory.

The relevance of this point is that the question arises in historiography as to why there seems to be constant failure on the part of the various Communist Parties throughout the world. One variable of the highest order that may cause constant failure is the lack of a systematic political education program in the various parties. An examination of the constitution and practices of the various parties tends to reveal that people are recruited and expected to do work but they are not required to attend educational classes. On the other hand, capitalists in most countries have a mandatory educational process in which the youth of a given country are subjected to constant indoctrination in the values of and practices of capitalism. The philosophical outlook of capitalism can be changed only if there is a constant, counter-educational program.

Concerning self-determination of nations, the Sixth Congress of the Communist International adopted the following provisions: (1) regardless of race, every nation had the right to self-determination that included the right to separation from any oppressor state or nation; (2) every nation liberated from capitalism had the right to voluntarily unite and centralize its economic and military forces with other nations; (3) there was to be equality for all nations and races, and a determined and broad struggle against any form of racial and

national discrimination; (4) the new Soviet State, the U.S.S.R., was to render every possible material support to new nations anywhere in the world liberated from capitalism, and the U.S.S.R. was to aid in the cultural development of liberated nations in conformity with the best interest of the international working class movement; (5) the entire Communist International would render every possible assistance to insure that former territories, colonies, or subjugated nations would be able to transform their countries into socialist nations, the most lasting basis for insuring national equality; (6) the Communist International pledged itself to actively combat all forms of chauvinism, racial prejudice, national hatred, and divisions between people; (7) the (CI) pledged to nationalize the means by which the capitalist class negatively influenced the workers of each country, printing plants, newspapers and book publishers, movie houses, theaters, etcetera. The Communist International promised that it would use these nationalized institutions for widespread political and general educational programs for all workers, thereby helping to build a new society in the best interest of the working people.⁵ In addition to the seven general provisions on self-determination that were binding on every party and all the members of the Communist International, the Sixth Congress of the (CI) voted a specific resolution on the African-American oppressed nation in the United States of America.

I. The Resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International on the African-American people.⁶

Containing twenty-five paragraphs and a conclusion, the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International on the African-American people starts from the premise that the industrialization of the south, the development of and concentration of an African-American working class in large cities in the North and East, and the entrance of the African-American people into basic industrial plants creates for the first time in the history of the United States the opportunity for the African-American working class to direct the struggle of the African-American people, under the leadership of the Communist Party USA, for their national liberation and direct participation with the American working class for a socialist revolution in the United States. Analyzing other aspects of the objective situation of the African-American people, the resolution stated that 86 percent of the African-American people lived in the Southern states, 74 percent of that number lived in the rural areas, and over one-half of that 74 percent lived in the Black Belt. Inside of the Black

Belt, the African-American people constituted over fifty percent of the population. Subjected to extreme exploitation and oppression, lynchings, segregation and political inequality, the African-American people were capable of waging a revolutionary struggle for their national liberation, providing the Communist Party implemented the 1928 resolution and the decision of the Second Congress of the Communist International that also stated the African-American people in the United States were a nation in the south. To wage a successful struggle for self-determination, the Communist Party of the United States of America would also have to fight for the full equality of the African-American people everywhere and in all places in the United States.

Concurrent with the fight for national self-determination and equality for the African-American people, the Communist Party in the United States was mandated by the Communist International to stress the fight for the full emancipation of the Negro race anywhere in the world, for the Negro race was an oppressed race wherever it existed, in South Africa or in Liberia. Moreover, due to their relationship to the means of production, it was expected of, and possible for, the African-American people to play a leading role in the emancipation of the Black race throughout the world. The resolution of the Sixth Congress did not explicitly speak to the possibility that the African-American working class or the African-American people could lead the way in promoting negative forms of reaction in the United States or other parts of the world through incorrect leadership and an acceptance of capitalist ideology and practices inculcated by schools, books, movie houses, television, Churches, Mosques, Temples and other houses of worship. However, the resolution did concretely state that the Communist Party had to combat the influence of the churches for the leadership of the African-American people, and the Program of the Communist International stated that the philosophy, politics, and practices of Garveyism also had to be combatted, since the plans of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, of which he was the founder, were opposed to those of the Communist International.⁷ For further clarification of the objectives of Marcus Garvey, consult Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik, Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago, Illinois: Liberator Press 1978) pp. 101-114, and Marcus Garvey, "The Communists and the Negro," printed in John Henry Clarke, *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 1974) pp. 317-320.

In order to obtain national self-determination for the African-American people, equality, and the full emancipation of the Black race wherever it existed, the Communist International stressed that the Communist Party in the United States had to work primarily in the trade unions. Work in other organizations was considered important but not as decisive as working in the trade unions. Trade unions were considered the basic formation that would assist the Communist Party to achieve national self-determination for the African-American people as well as full equality, and emancipation of the Black race throughout the world. The Communist International urged the creation of new unions for the African-American workers in places where they were blocked from entrance into unions with white workers. The Communist International further urged that the Communist Party of the United States never relinquish the fight for the full acceptance of the African-American workers into all trade unions, but it had to provide protection for the black workers, even if that meant creating special formations of a temporary nature. To further achieve equality and self-determination for the oppressed African-American people, the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International also stated the Communist Party of the United States had to overcome national distrust and race prejudice by always placing the realities and aspirations of the African-American people on its agenda for all items and all campaigns. This meant that not only in its trade union work but in all of its other activities the problems of the African-American people had to be constantly raised for solution.

Criticizing the Communist Party of the United States for white chauvinism in its ranks, the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International cited two instances where black people were segregated inside formations of the Communist Party. The resolution stated: "In Gary, white members of the workers party protested against Negroes eating in the restaurant controlled by the Party. In Detroit, Party members, yielding to pressure, drove the Negro comrades from a social given in aid of the miners' strike."⁸ The resolution further stated the Communist Party had to fight all segregation tendencies among the oppressed nationality, proving at the same time it is fighting all forms of chauvinism among the oppressing nationality. Training oppressed nationality cadres and special cadres from the oppressing nationality to work among the African-American people was one method of overcoming white chauvinism and segregation tendencies. The African-American cadres also had to work in areas other than just among the African-American people.⁹

In its conclusion, "Leninism and Self-Determination," the 1928 resolution on the African-American people stated that certain leaders of the Second International sought to reduce the right of oppressed nations to people who exercised only certain cultural functions, leaving political power in the hands of the oppressor nation. Leninism, according to the resolution, had resolved this inequity and interpreted the right of self-determination to mean the right of colonies and dependent countries to separate and form independent states. Limiting the right of self-determination only to autonomy ran the danger of justifying colonial and imperialist plunder. Extending the right of self-determination to mean the right to separate from an oppressor nation provided a method by which oppressed nations could free themselves of colonial and imperialist plunder. The conclusion of the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International on the oppressed African-American nation and the Negro race is very firm and unequivocal on the point that self-determination of nations is an empty phrase if every possible material support and assistance by working class parties is not provided on a continuous basis to those fighting for their national liberation.

There is a fundamental weakness in the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International on the oppressed African-American people. The resolution failed to unequivocally state independence is not the only form of self-determination. Self-determination can be extended to federation and autonomy. Thus, the resolution tended to omit the body of work developed by Joseph V. Stalin for the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, Bolshevik, and the experiences of the Russian Federated Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in handling the national question and self-determination of nations. In other words, the resolution failed to state the three options that are open under self-determination to the African-American oppressed nation. The entire thrust of this resolution is that the African-American oppressed nation should fight for the right to separate from the United States. This weakness is corrected in the 1930 resolution.

Reporting on the Sixth Congress, the United States' official mission in Riga, Latvia filed a report on October 19, 1928 that stated the legation considered the Sixth Congress of extreme importance. It assigned its best translators for three months to analyze the pages of Pravda; the despatch and attachments of the legation were, consequently, based on a study of 150 to 200 pages of the Pravda newspaper. The legation was confident that after its report it would not be necessary ever again to describe the subversive aims of Soviet

Communism in the same magnitude. The legation of the United States in Riga, Latvia considered the treatment of the Negro question by the Communist International to be the most significant of all the items on the agenda.¹⁰

Representing the Communist Party of the United States at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International were such outstanding figures as James P. Cannon who later helped to form the Socialist Workers Party, Jay Lovestone who, after his expulsion from the Communist Party USA, became the Director of the International Affairs Department of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Unions, AFL-CIO, William Z. Foster, a former Chairman of the Communist Party USA, Earl Browder, the General Secretary of the Communist Party USA from 1930-1946, and Harry Haywood, whose name is widely associated with self-determination for the African-American people. Haywood is also the author of various pamphlets, articles, and two books that discuss self-determination and the African-American people. The books are *Negro Liberation* and *Black Bolshevik, Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist*.¹¹ Haywood became a member of the political bureau of the Communist Party USA at the time that Earl Browder was the Secretary-General of the party. Currently he is known as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist, a party in the world communist movement promoted by the People's Republic of China. This communist party is a different one from the Communist Party of the United States.

Organized into 22 chapters, the autobiography of Harry Haywood contains extremely important acknowledgements. In the acknowledgements Haywood writes; "My earliest political debts are to the first core of Black cadres in the CPUSA: Cyril Briggs, Edward Doty, Richard B. Moore, and to my brother, Otto Hall, all former members of the African Blood Brotherhood, the ABB."¹² In 1922 Haywood wanted to join the Communist Party USA. Because of some internal problems regarding white chauvinism that were being resolved, Otto Hall suggested that Harry first join the African Blood Brotherhood. Haywood describes the African Blood Brotherhood in the following manner: "The ABB was a secret, all-Black revolutionary organization to which some of the Black Party members belonged . . . I took Otto's advice and joined the African Blood Brotherhood."¹³ Recommended by Edward Doty, commander of the Chicago Post of the African Blood Brotherhood, and his brother Otto, Harry Haywood underwent the induction process of the ABB. He describes his initiation in the following manner: the initiation "con-

sisted of an African fraternization ritual requiring the mixing of blood between the applicant and one of the regular members. The organization took its name from this ritual. Doty performed the ceremony: he pricked our index fingers with a needle . . . and when drops of blood appeared, he rubbed them together."¹⁴ Haywood states that after this, he proceeded to take the Oath of Loyalty which "contained a clause warning that divulging any of the secrets of the organization was punishable by death."¹⁵

When he joined, Haywood states that he knew very little about the African Blood Brotherhood "other than the fact that it was in some way associated with the Communist Party."¹⁶ Haywood states, moreover, that he got some of the history of the African Blood Brotherhood from Otto and other members, but it was not until he met Cyril P. Briggs, the original founder of the ABB, that he understood its origins. Founded in New York City in 1919, mainly by West Indians, under the leadership of Cyril P. Briggs, the African Blood Brotherhood exercised its influence through such publications as *The Crusader*, *The Messenger*, and *The Emancipator*. At the time of the formation of the ABB, Briggs was the editor of the *Amsterdam News*. In a policy disagreement with the owner Briggs left and started *The Crusader*. At the time of his initiation, Haywood says, Briggs was in the process of bringing the African Blood Brotherhood into the Communist Party of the United States of America. Haywood did not know of this development at that time.

Describing the African Blood Brotherhood, a work on secret societies in the United States, *The Dictionary of Secret and other Societies*, states the African Blood Brotherhood is a "Fraternity of Negro People" with headquarters at 2299 Seventieth Avenue, New York, New York.¹⁷ *The Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies* quotes Cyril Briggs as stating that the African Blood Brotherhood works for the rights and aspirations of the Negro workers and against exploitation by either white or black capitalists. With chapters in the Caribbean, Africa, South and Central America, the United States and North America, the African Blood Brotherhood had an initiation ceremony with seven degrees.¹⁸ Haywood states there are only two. with seven degrees.¹⁸ Haywood states there are only two. Often initiates do not know all the degrees or rules of a secret society. The seven degrees, according to Briggs, were the one upon initiation, five degrees based upon educational performances and the seventh degree for superlative service. The ABB was described by Briggs as a worker's organization not connected with any other political party or

movement except the United Negro Front Movement that included the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. *The Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies* lists nine principles of the African Blood Brotherhood, principles that were also common to other Negro organizations at that time. The nine principles were:

1. A Liberated Race in the United States, Africa and elsewhere;
2. Absolute Race Equality;
3. The Fostering of Racial Self-respect;
4. Organized and Uncompromising Opposition to the Ku Klux Klan;
5. A United Negro Front;
6. Industrial Development along cooperative lines with the profits evenly distributed amongst the people participating;
7. Higher wages for Negro Labor, Shorter Hours of Work and Better Living Conditions;
8. Education;
9. Cooperation With Other Darker Races and With the Class-Conscious White workers."¹⁹

Some documents of the African Blood Brotherhood are also printed in volume three of *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, by Herbert Aptheker.¹² These documents illustrate the working class objectives of the African Blood Brotherhood. They describe its participation in a general campaign in 1924 to free soldiers of the 24th Infantry arrested in Houston in 1917 for participation in an uprising. They illustrate its role in the organization of the American Negro Labor Congress, an organization that attempted to aid black workers. Haywood states the America Negro Labor Congress did not accomplish very much or last very long.²¹

After participating in the African Blood Brotherhood for approximately six months, Harry Haywood later joined the Communist Party USA. As a member of the CPUSA, he was sent to the U.S.S.R. for additional educational opportunities. While a student in the U.S.S.R., he attended the Sixth Congress of the Communist International and actively participated in the adoption of the 1928 resolution on the African-American oppressed nation. This resolution radically changed the nature of the fight of the African-American people in the United States of America. No longer were the African-American people fighting only for racial and political equality throughout the U.S.A. under the leadership of the Communist Party USA, but they

were now fighting for the liberation of the oppressed African-American nation located in the Black Belt of the South.²²

The 1928 resolution of the Communist International represented the climax of a long struggle inside of the entire Communist International on the question of the African-American people. Harry Haywood devoted four chapters covering one hundred and thirty-three pages to the fight for a correct line on self-determination. These pages describe some of the internal, organizational developments inside of the Communist International on its highest level with regard to the Black Belt thesis and self-determination of the African-American people. In them Haywood also illustrates power shifts in the composition of the Communist Party USA stemming from the adoption of the thesis that the African-American people were an oppressed nation in the Black Belt of the South. Haywood states that after the Sixth Congress of the Communist International blacks were elected "to the highest body in the Party, the Central Committee, and to the National Executive Committee of the Young Communist League."²³ Haywood states, moreover, that Black people were elected to the Party's Political Bureau. They were also elected to the Young Communist League's National Bureau; many were added to district committees and to section committees.

Opposition to the line of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International came mainly from forces represented by James P. Cannon, an outspoken advocate of the views of Leon Trotsky; Jay Lovestone, who developed the theory that capitalism in the United States was different from capitalism elsewhere, a theory called American exceptionalism; and Earl Browder, the person most responsible for the liquidation of the Communist Party in 1944. In the next Chapter this thesis attempts to analyze the life of Earl Browder in greater detail. Concerning James P. Cannon and Jay Lovestone, the former was expelled from the Communist Party USA on October 27, 1928 immediately after the Sixth Congress of the (CI) on charges of splittism, disruption, and political degeneration. Describing this development, William Z. Foster in his book, *History of the Communist Party of the United States* maintains that Leon Trotsky who had been expelled from the U.S.S.R. in December, 1927 made an appeal to the Sixth Congress for the repudiation of the decision to expel him from the U.S.S.R.²⁴ Though the Sixth World Congress rejected this appeal, James P. Cannon fought for the views of Leon Trotsky in a clandestine fashion inside of the CPUSA upon his

return from the U.S.S.R., and Theodore Draper in his work, *The Roots of American Communism*, clearly documents that James P. Cannon had been an ardent supporter of the line and policies of Leon Trotsky since 1922.²⁵ While a full analysis of the views of Leon Trotsky is beyond the scope of this thesis, both Cannon and Trotsky, however, did not agree that the African-American people were a nation inside of the United States, though they maintained verbal opposition to capitalism and for socialism.

Regarding Jay Lovestone, Foster states in the *History of the Communist Party of the United States* that in 1927 Lovestone became Executive Secretary of the CPUSA and retained this position for two years. He was expelled for factionalism and disruption in June, 1929, along with some 200 additional members of the CPUSA. In the CPUSA, Lovestone took the position that the views of the Sixth Congress of the (CI) concerning the acute crisis of capitalism were valid for the rest of the world but not for the United States. Lovestone also opposed the position of the Sixth World Congress that the African-American people were a nation in the Black Belt of the South. He maintained that the process of industrialization of the South would negate any special, national characteristics to the life and struggle of the African-American people, resulting only in a class struggle between the workers and owners of the means of production.²⁶

Clearly, the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International on the African-American oppressed nation and the Sixth Congress itself had a great impact in world affairs: The entire Communist International pledged its political and material support to the African-American people in the United States in their fight for an independent nation in the United States under the leadership the Communist Party USA; some opposition to the view that the African-American people were an oppressed nation vigorously surfaced in the United States after the Sixth World Congress, ultimately forming the Fourth International, described earlier in this thesis. Moreover, the United States government in its official documents clearly forecast a determined effort to liquidate any traces of the theory that the African-American people were an oppressed nation in the Black Belt of the South. In addition, however, to its 1928 resolution the Communist International passed a resolution in 1930 that affected the Black Belt Thesis. The next section of this thesis will analyze that resolution.

II. *The 1930 Resolution of the Communist International on the African-American oppressed Nation in the Black Belt*

A. *Background to the 1930 resolution*

After the 1928 resolution of the Communist International on self-determination in general and the African-American oppressed nation, in particular, factionalism in the Communist Party USA impeded the implementation of the CI's line on self-determination for the African-American people: Immediately after the Sixth Congress James P. Cannon and others were expelled for supporting the views of Leon Trotsky who did not consider the African-American people an oppressed nation. Jay Lovestone, who worked as the Executive Secretary of the CPUSA, had opposed the line on self-determination for the African-American people at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International and afterwards sought to subvert the 1928 resolution, necessitating another meeting in Moscow of the leadership of the Communist Party USA. Harry Haywood, the main African-American supporter of the Black Belt Nation thesis at the Sixth Congress, was asked to remain in the U.S.S.R. in order to participate in the strengthening of the 1928 resolution.²⁷ The 1930 resolution of the Communist International represents, therefore, an attempt to clearly prove that the African-American people are an oppressed nation in the Black Belt of the South. As such, they must exercise self-determination of nations in order to resolve their problems in the United States. While fighting for self-determination in the Black Belt, the resolution, further analyzed below, was clear that the fight for equality in political and social affairs was necessary in areas outside of the South as the main demand. While fighting for social and political equality in the South, the main demand in the South had to be self-determination for the Black Belt oppressed nation, defined in this thesis as the African-American oppressed nation.

B. *Explanation of the Resolution*

The 1930 resolution is divided into three parts: an introduction, a section on "the struggle for the equal rights of the Negroes," and a section on "the struggle for the Right of Self-Determination of the Negroes in the Black Belt." While commending the Communist Party of the United States for removing the Lovestoneites from its ranks, the introduction states there is still a tendency within the ranks of the CPUSA to underestimate the African-American question and the fight for the right of self-determination of the African-American

people. The 1930 resolution, therefore, sought to clarify for the Communist International and its American section two important aspects of the African-American question: the question of the fight for equal rights of the African-American people and the question of the fight for self-determination of the African-American people. The introduction stated very firmly that the Negro question in the United States had to be viewed from the vantage of an oppressed nation. The latter two words were placed in italics. The (CI) viewed the oppressed nation status of the African-American people as extremely distressing not only because of the prominent racial characteristics of the African-American people that were used against them but also because of the various legal and other social restrictions imposed upon the African-American people during and after slavery. In the introduction the Communist International stated the fight for equal rights applied to all the African-American people in the United States. In the Black Belt the main slogan, however, had to be the fight for self-determination for the African-American people.²⁸

The Struggle for Equal Rights

Since the African-American people were under a special oppression due to their former status as slaves and their political and economic and social reality, the 1930 resolution stated the fight for equal rights was justified. Describing conditions on plantations, the resolution also pointed out the social ostracism that was inflicted upon the African-American people. Condemning segregation in all aspects, the resolution stated the African-American people had to be guaranteed all the advantages and opportunities provided for others; to achieve equal rights it will be necessary to fight all attacks on the African-American people by the very rich in the United States and to dispel their myths and scare tactics; unity of the white working class with black workers was an essential condition for achieving equal rights for the African-American people. The section on equal rights for the African-American people concluded with the position that the Communist Party USA must combat all tendencies within its own ranks to ignore the question of the African-American people. The party itself had to assume responsibility for this work. It could not leave it to anyone else.²⁹

Right of Self-determination in the Black Belt

Opening with a criticism of Lovestone's position that the special problems of the African-American oppressed nation would

resolve themselves as the south became more and more industrialized, the 1930 resolution was very firm that the right of self-determination of the Black Belt must be the main slogan for action on the part of the Communist Party USA. To accomplish this objective the Communist Party must fight for the "confiscation of the landed property of the white landowners and capitalists" for the benefit of the African-American farmers, and the "establishment of the State unity of the Black Belt." Since most of the land in the Black Belt was in the hands of the white bourgeoisie, the resolution stated this represented the main form of oppression for the African-American people in the Black Belt. Resolution of this problem provided the material basis for self-determination in the Black Belt. Establishing state unity of the Black Belt was necessary due to the splitting of various Black Belt counties into different states. The resolution was opposed to any plan that called for an exclusive Negro nation or the sending of people to Africa.

After setting forth the need to fight for the confiscation of the land of the rich white landowner and capitalists and the establishment of state unity of the Black Belt, the 1930 resolution described what should not be done. Following are the major points: (1) The Communist Party USA must not limit its fight to verbal statements of self-determination. It must actually work for this possibility and stand ready to implement it as was done in the U.S.S.R. (2) The fight for self-determination of the Black Belt does not carry any conditions. The Party must stand ready to fight for separation even if the African-American working class is not in the leadership. The right of self-determination is interpreted as a free democratic right that any class might exercise. (3) The Party must not insist that the African-American people fight for separation. Self-determination also means they have the right to federate with the United States, the resolution stated. If the working class is in power in the United States, the Communist Party will fight against separation and for federation of the Black Belt. At all times, however, the Party will recognize the right of the Black Belt nation to separate, the essence of the right of self-determination.³⁰

C. The Scottsboro Defense Campaign and the National Negro Congress, (NNC).

Based on the 1928 and 1930 resolution, the Communist Party engaged in various activities designed to promote political and social equality of the African-American people as well as self-determination of the Black Belt. Two examples of activity concerning the African-

American people were the Scottsboro Defense Campaign and the organization and efforts of the National Negro Congress. The Scottsboro Defense Campaign grew out of the Scottsboro Case. Describing this case, Harry Haywood states: "On March 25, 1931, a freight train crowded with young people hobbing from Chattanooga to Memphis in search of work, passed through Paint Rock, Alabama . . ." ³¹ After being taken from the train, nine Black youths were charged with the rape of two white girls who were riding on the same freight train. Taking the arrested youths to Scottsboro, the county seat of Jackson County, Alabama, the Alabama authorities found the Black youths guilty of rape and sentenced eight of them to death in the electric chair. The trial of the ninth Black youth was declared a mistrial. In New York Harry Haywood was instrumental in getting the Communist Party USA to enter the Scottsboro Case through the International Legal Defense, an organization of the Communist Party USA created for legal defense.

Evaluating the significance of the defense of the Scottsboro defendants, Haywood says:

" . . . Every area of work — every mass organization we were involved in — was strengthened by our participation in this defense campaign . . . Through our militant working class policy, we were able to win workers of all nationalities to take up the special demands of Black people embodied in the Scottsboro defense . . ." ³²

Haywood relates, moreover, that many immigrant workers in the Needles Trades Union would sing with Yiddish or Eastern European accents a song about how the Scottsboro Boys Shall Not Die. Singling out the south, Haywood writes that the movement to free the Scottsboro defendants resulted in building the fighting Sharecroppers Union, an organization of thousands of poor farmers and people without land, many of whom were sharecroppers. Haywood also points out: "Scottsboro helped to pave the way for the growth of the Unemployed Councils and the CIO." ³³ The Scottsboro Defense Campaign also aided in the development of the National Negro Congress, a militant united front organization designed to fight fascism and war.

The National Negro Congress (NNC)

The (NNC) was founded in 1936, bringing together representatives from all classes in the Black Community of the United States.

Seeking to promote unity around the issues of Black Rights, the National Negro Congress held a major Congress at the Eighth Illinois Regiment Armory on Friday, February 15, 1936. Describing this event, Haywood states:

“The Armory was jammed with over 5000 delegates and visitors. Some 585 organizations from twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia were represented, sharecroppers and tenant farmers’ unions, 246 trade unions, eighty church and civic organizations, youth groups, political parties, cultural and fraternal groups, and women’s organizations. About eighty-five percent of those attending were black.”³⁴

A. Phillip Randolph was elected President of the National Negro Congress. The (NNC) attempted to fight for programs against fascism and war until its dissolution in 1946. At that time the Central Committee of the Communist Party USA sought to direct the energies of the Black people in the United States into organizations similar to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organizations that the Central Committee considered mainstream. The National Negro Congress in 1946 was considered sectarian by the leadership of the Communist Party USA. The dismantling of the National Negro Congress occurred after the Communist Party USA had dissolved itself in 1944 and reconstituted itself in 1946.³⁵ The next section of this thesis attempts to briefly explain how the line of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International held in 1928 and its 1930 resolution were liquidated.

III. *The First Liquidation of the Black Belt Thesis by the Communist Party USA*

A. *The Communist International is Dissolved.*

The Communist International dissolved itself on June 10, 1943; the various parties attached to it were no longer obligated to fight for its various rules, regulations, and resolutions; the 1928 resolution of the (CI) on the Black Belt Nation was, therefore, not binding on any party; neither was the 1930 resolution. In Chapter 49, “The Role of the Third International (1919-1943)” of his work: *History of the Three Internationals*, William Z. Foster writes that the Executive Committee of the Communist International released a statement announcing the dissolution of the Communist International. Parts of the statement said, “. . .the proposal to dissolve the Communist International had been unanimously approved by all of

its existing sections . . .”³⁶ Foster also stated that Communists all over the world realized the necessity of dissolving the Communist International; hence there was no opposition to it. Communists throughout the world, according to Foster, considered the sacrifice of abolishing the Communist International necessary in order to win the war against the Axis powers. Earlier in the *History of the Three Internationals*, Foster wrote: “No sooner had the Hitler attack upon the U.S.S.R. begun than Churchill, followed by Roosevelt after Pearl Harbor, accepted the plan of a war alliance with the Soviet Union, making all due reservations against communism as such.”³⁷ In his statement to the Reuters News Agency on the dissolution of the Communist International Joseph V. Stalin stated there were four reasons for this action:

1. The dissolution of the Communist International exposed the attacks of the Hitlerites that Moscow intended to intervene in all countries through the (CI);
2. The dissolution of the (CI) aided to end the attacks inside of labor movements that the Communist Parties in various countries were not acting in the best interest of their respective country;
3. The dissolution of the (CI) also aided the patriots in various countries to unite people of various religions and parties in order to mobilize to win the war against fascism, forming a single camp of national liberation struggles;
4. The dissolution of the Communist International, moreover, aided in uniting freedom loving forces for a battle against Hitlerism after the end of the world war and for a positive reconstruction of the world.³⁸

Regarding the Communist Party of the United States, it had withdrawn in 1940 from the Communist International. Its action was taken note of and approved by the Executive Committee of the Communist International. In the *History of the Three Internationals*, William Z. Foster states the withdrawal was necessary because of the Voorhis Act “which virtually outlawed proletarian international political organizations.”³⁹ In its own statement on the dissolution of the Communist International, the (CI) mentioned that the earlier withdrawal of the Communist Party of the United States had aided it to realize that the Communist International was becoming more and more ineffective. While the dissolution of Communist International, therefore, may not have had any direct effect upon the line and

policies of the Communist Party USA, since it had withdrawn, the position of the Communist Party USA on self-determination for the African-American oppressed nation and other members of the Black race was completely cancelled by its twelfth convention, held on May 20, 1944, the convention that abolished the Communist Party USA and formed the Communist Political Association.

The Twelfth Convention of the CPUSA

At the twelfth convention of the Communist Party USA held from May 20-22, 1944, the Communist Party voted to dissolve itself, thereby finally liquidating its acceptance of the Black Belt Thesis adopted at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. Earlier, on January 11, 1944 the National Committee of the Communist Party of the United States of America sent out a “. . . letter to the Party districts recommending that the Party as such be dissolved and reorganized into a ‘political educational association.’ ”⁴⁰ This action of the Communist Party of the United States of America occurred in the midst of the gigantic war against the Axis Powers. The person that led the fight to dissolve the Communist Party USA and the Black Belt Thesis in the midst of World War II was Earl Browder, the General Secretary of the Party and a delegate to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. The next chapter, Chapter Four, attempts to study post World War II positions of the Black Belt thesis, examining in some detail the background and actions of Earl Browder.

Summation and Conclusion

In this chapter, chapter three, this thesis has attempted to trace the history and politics of the Black Belt thesis from 1928 until 1945. It sought to analyze the resolution passed at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International held in 1928 in the U.S.S.R. that upheld self-determination of nations in general and the specific resolution that stated the African-American people in the United States were an oppressed nation in the Black Belt of the South. The specific 1928 resolution proclaimed the necessity for all Communist Parties to render every possible material and political assistance to the African-American people and others in the Black race who were fighting for their national liberation. To buttress the resolution of the Sixth Congress, the Executive Committee of the Communist International passed a resolution in 1930 that stated again the African-American people were an oppressed nation in the Black Belt of the

south: To gain and insure equality in that area for the African-American people, the Communist Party had to lead the fight for self-determination including the right to separate but not excluding the right to federate. In the northern areas the Communist Party USA should mobilize the African-American people and white workers to aid the obtaining of self-determination in the Black Belt. In the north the Communist Party also had to fight for the political and social equality of the African-American people and against any manifestation of white chauvinism or reactionary nationalism. In 1943 the Communist International abolished itself, freeing all parties of its rules and decisions. Before that, however, in 1940 the Communist Party USA had withdrawn from the Communist International. William Z. Foster states the withdrawal of the Communist Party from the CI was ‘made necessary by the passage of the Reactionary Voorhis Act, which virtually outlawed proletarian international political organization . . .’⁴¹ Later, in 1944 the Communist Party of the United States liquidated itself and became the Communist Political Association, cancelling any form of self-determination for the African-American people. As stated earlier, the next chapter of this thesis will attempt to trace post World War II positions on the Black Belt thesis.

¹William Z. Foster, *History of the Three Internationals, The World Socialist and Communist Movements from 1948 to the Present* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 240-249.

²Workers Library Publishers, *Program of the Communist International, Together With Its Constitution* (New York; Workers Library Publishers, P.O. Box 148, Station D, 1929) p. 87.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

⁶Both the resolutions passed in 1928 and the 1930 resolution that is also later described in this chapter are printed in Nelson Perry, *The Negro National Question* (Chicago, Illinois: Workers Press, 1972), pp. 133-158. They are also printed in the magazine, *The Communist International*, the official voice of the Communist International. The Communist International printed this monthly magazine from 1919 until 1942. The micro-film of the magazine, *Communist International*, is available in the library of Wayne State University located in Detroit, Michigan. Wayne State purchased its copy of the micro-film edition from the Hoover Library on War and Peace of Stanford University that sells the micro-film to anyone or to any institution. Greenwood Press, Inc. 51 Riverside Drive, Westport, Connecticut 06880 sells the entire set of the *Communist International*. Cornell University obtained its copies of the Communist International from Greenwood Press, Inc. The Tamiment Library and Wagner Labor Archives of New York University's, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library has a copy of the 1928 and 1930 resolution printed in a pamphlet by the United States Committee of Bolsheviks. This thesis has utilized the resolutions printed by the United States Committee of Bolsheviks for its source.

⁷Workers Library. *Program of the Communist International*, p. 76.

⁸U.S. Committee of Bolsheviks, 1928 Resolution of the *Communist International on the African-American people*.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Legation of the United States of America, *Report on the Sixth World Congress, October 19, 1928* (Washington: The National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. 316 Records of the Department of State, Relating to Internal Affairs of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1910-29, Roll 67, 1960), p. 2.

¹¹Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik, Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago, Illinois: Liberator Press), 1978.

¹²Haywood, *Autobiography*, p. vi.

¹³*Ibid.* p. 122.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.* p. 123.

¹⁷Arthur Preuss, *A Dictionary of Secret and Other Societies*, (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder Book Company, 1924), p. 4.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.* pp. 6-7.

²⁰Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, 1910-1932* (Secaucus, New Jersey: The Citadel Press, 1977), pp. 347, 413-420, 445, 488, 614.

²¹Haywood, *Autobiography*, p. 145.

²²*Ibid.* pp. 218-341.

²³*Ibid.* p. 317.

²⁴William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States*, p. 270.

²⁵Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism, The untold story of the formative years of the Communist Party in America*, a volume in the series, *Communism in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), pp. 382-384.

²⁶Foster, *Ibid.*, pp. 270-274.

²⁷Haywood, *Autobiography*, p. 327.

²⁸Committee of United States Bolsheviks, *1930 Resolution of the Communist International*. p. 17.

²⁹*Ibid.* p. 15.

³⁰*Ibid.* p. 19.

³¹Haywood, *Autobiography*, p. 358.

³²*Ibid.* p. 374.

³³*Ibid.* p. 375.

³⁴*Ibid.* p. 458.

³⁵Foster, *History of the Three Internationals*, p.437.

³⁷*Ibid.* p. 420.

³⁸*Ibid.* p. 438.

³⁹*Ibid.* p. 439

⁴⁰Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States*, p. 430.

⁴¹Foster, *History of the Three Internationals*, p. 439.