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BLACK  
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(The first part of this article deals with aspects of the Negro movement in the U.S.A.: and in particular with the view of it as a national question. The second part deals with the Black Power movement in Britain.)

THE AMERICAN NEGRO NATION

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We read in "cogito", the theoretical magazine of the Y.C.L.

"The idea has been put forward that the coloured people in the western nations represent an "internal colony". In a certain sense this is true... This cannot be held to imply however that the strategy for dealing with racialism is to be modelled on that of national liberation. One aim unites all classes in the national liberation struggle --the expulsion of the colonial power and the formation of an independent state on the national territory. Nobody advocates doing the same thing inside Britain or the U.S...." (BLACK POWER issue. P.5)

For a generation, however, somebody definitely did advocate the establishment of a Negro national state in the U.S.A. --the Communist Party of the U.S.A.: "In 1928 a historic turn was achieved in the scientific understanding of the Negro question in the U.S. In that year the C.P. adopted a program which clearly placed the Negro problem as a question of an oppressed nation suffering from an especially oppressive form of subjugation." (Negro Liberation, by Harry Haywood. International Publishers: 1948. P.205. The following statement of the Communist position is taken from this book.)

"The Black Belt is the center of America's Negro problem, the core of its great concentration." (P12)

"In order to fully understand the Negro question as a whole, one must first see clearly that, despite state and county borders, the Black Belt is an entity in itself, comprising a pop-

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ulation chiefly Negro and constituting a stable community of Negro Americans." (P15)

Haywood refuted the racial view of the Negro question:

"...the so-called racial persecution of the Negro in the U.S. is a particular form and device of national oppression."

"...until quite recently Negro protest has been shunted off in -to the blind alley of a defensive 'racialism'. What is in reality an aspiration for identity as a nation has sought expression through false symbols of 'race' foisted on him by white rulers. He has perforce defined his fight for freedom as a fight for 'racial equality', 'racial opportunity'.

"Manifestly, the Negro problem cannot be defined by any racial formulae. Ideologically, they obscure the economic and political conditions for the achievement of Negro equality, and impede the full and necessary clarity as to the nature of the issue".

"The secret to unravelling the tangled skein of America's Negro question lies in its consideration as the issue of an oppressed nation. Within the borders of the U.S., and under the jurisdiction of a single central government, there exist not one, but two nations: a dominant white nation, with its Anglo-Saxon hierarchy, and a subject black one."

"The Negro is American. He is the product of every social and economic struggle that has made America. But the Negro is a special kind of American, to the extent that his oppression has set him apart from the dominant white nation. Under the pressure of these circumstances, he has generated all the objective attributes of nationhood." (139-41)

The development of the American Negro nation is described as follows:

"...the Negroes, who at the time of their release from chattel bondage comprised an almost undifferentiated peasant mass, had at the beginning of the 20th century become transformed in -to a people manifesting among themselves the class groupings peculiar to modern capitalist society. Along with the increasing mass of wage labourers, there began to appear a class of small business people, with more or less well-defined capitalist aspirations. This class was to find its spokesmen among the educated middle class. The rise of the Negro bourgeoisie marked the appearance of a class which, striving to defend its own interests under American conditions, was destined to initiate a historical movement which could only develop in the direction of national freedom. The process of class differentiation developing against the background of Jim Crow oppression, and in conditions of continued majority concentration of Negroes in the Black Belt, thus formed the main objective condi-

ons for their emergence as an oppressed nation."

"Thenceforth the issue of Negro equality could be solved only via the path of the Negro's full development as a nation. The Negro question had now definitely become the problem of an oppressed nation striving for national freedom against the main enemy, imperialism." (P.143).

"Among the Negro people of the (Black Belt) area, there exist all class groupings peculiar to capitalism, which historically provided the basis for the emergence of the modern nation..."

"There is a Negro upper class or bourgeoisie, living in both urban and rural communities, striving as do all bourgeois classes for the extension of its market. Its most influential segment resides in the cities, functioning mainly in the fields of insurance, small-scale banking, real estate, undertaking and other services to the Negro community. There is also a sprinkling of well-to-do Negro farm owners in the rural areas. This Negro bourgeoisie has its ideologists in the educated middle classes, striving for the modern development of their people. There is a thin stratum of professional people, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, ministers (the largest group) and social workers. The development of these classes is artificially retarded by American monopoly capitalism..."

But the Negro economy is mainly agrarian. "The full development of modern capitalism has been arbitrarily arrested. In this respect the region's (ie the Black Belt's) economy is typical of that of colonial and other retarded nations. One can say that the Black Belt is a kind of internal colony of American imperialism, made to function merely as a raw material appendage of the latter." (P146)

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"The spurious dogma of Negro inferiority is sunk deep in the thinking of white America. It has left its indelible stamp on the nascent Negro nation, befogging the basic concept of the Negro's status as that of an oppressed nation. The charge levelled against the Negro people that they are less than human, has forced them into an untenable defensive position, in which much of their energy has been consumed in the assertion of their basic humanity, their right to be considered human beings. To meet this invidious attack they have perforce rallied under the slogans of racial equality, racial solidarity, slogans which, though militant, do not hit the center of the target -- their oppression as a nation in the Black Belt." (P153)

"...an additional deterrent to the Negroes quest for freedom, via nationhood, is that the concept of Negro nationality is a totally new one, and thus outside the bounds of traditional thinking of American democrats. Thus the idea of Negro nation

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hood, on American soil, when first projected by the Communist Party, met with attack not only by the reactionaries, but also by well-meaning liberals, including many Negro leaders, who felt it to be a retreat before Jim Crow, an acquiescence to segregation." (p154)

Haywood describes three stages in the development of the Negro movement in the U.S. "In the first stage, from the turn of the century to World War 1, the organised movement was in the main confined to a small segment of the educated middle class. It was expressed first in the conservative Booker T. Washington school of the late nineties and early nineteen hundreds, then in the dissident Niagara movement of 1906, and later in the liberal reformist activities of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples founded in 1909."

The Washington school urged the Negro masses to thrift and industry and discouraged social and political involvement. It was financed by Carnegie and other members of the U.S. ruling class. The N.A.A. C.P. was dominated by the influence of white bourgeois liberals.

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"World War 11, with its accompanying great migration of Negroes from the rural South into industrial urban centres, resulted in the political awakening of large Negro masses and their active involvement in the struggle for Negro rights, reflecting in part the upsurge of the colonial world... the movement reached its height in Marcus Garvey's Negro Zionism" which advocated the return of American Negroes to Africa. Garveyism was a variety of petty-bourgeois Utopianism. It "reflected the ideology of the Negro petty-bourgeoisie, their abortive attempt at hegemony of the Negro movement... Garveyism reflected the desperation of these strata before the ruthless encroachments of predatory monopoly capitalism upon their already meager market" (p197/9). In 1924 Garvey sought the support of the Ku Klux Klan for his return-to-Africa scheme. But by then the movement was bankrupt.

The third stage began in 1928 with the Communist analysis of the Negro question as a national question, and the putting forward of the demand for Negro national self-determination in the Black Belt area.

Regarding the possibility of a dispersal of the dense Negro population in the Black Belt, Haywood wrote: "Any substantial disintegration of this Negro community would depend entirely upon a continuous and uninterrupted process of industrial expansion and prosperity in the country as a whole. But there is absolutely nothing in the perspective of capitalist development to warrant such an assumption." (p17)

Of, course, largely due to the triumph of modern revisionism in the Soviet Union and E. Europe in the mid-fifties which relieved the pressure on the capitalist world market and allowed it great scope for expansion, things have turned out otherwise than Haywood envis-

aged in this respect.

In 1951 Gus Hall, the present secretary of the revisionist C.P.U.S A., wrote in "Marxism and Negro Liberation":

"...the growing Negro nation remains under the domination of the most ruthless and the most powerful capitalist country in the world." (P3-4)

"Like class exploitation and expression, national subjugation is inherent in capitalism. Like the diminution of exploitation of one class by another, national equality and freedom are inseparable from Socialism and Communism." (P12)

"What was the approach of the early Socialist movement and the advanced sections of the working class in the U.S. prior to World War 1 on the nature of the Negro question, the character of the oppression of the Negro people? Their position was largely based on a sentimental humanitarianism, an approach of "uplifters", which itself smelled of chauvinism... There was no concept that here was a question of national oppression, and therefore there were no ideas of the need to struggle...for the rights of self-determination. The Negro question was generally considered a "race question"." (P13)

"...what is the Negro nation we speak about? There are some who say that all the 15 million Negro people in the U.S. A. comprise the oppressed nation. This, of course, is not so. We are speaking about the subjugated Negro nation (where some 6 million Negroes are a majority in an area inhabited by 4 to 5 million whites) in the Black Belt area of the South. Here the young, growing Negro nation has all the characteristics of nationhood and is kept in subjugation by the Wall St.-Bourbon capitalists and landowners... The Negro people outside of the area of the Negro nation constitute a national minority." (P.17/18)

The idea that all Negroes constitute the nation"leaves room for confusion as to the tasks, outlook, program of the Negroes in the South and its struggle for self-determination and the struggle for full equality of the Negro people in the rest of the country. As a rule this confusion results in a watering down of the programme and tasks of the national liberation struggle.." (P18)

#### THE TROTSKYIST POSITION

As an example of the trotskyist position on the Negro question we will take the resolution adopted by the 1963 Convention of the Socialist Workers Party, and published in the S.W.P. pamphlet: "Freedom Now":

"General definitions of nationalism are inadequate for understanding and explaining Negro nationalism in the U.S. today. While it has resemblances to insurgent nationalism in African countries and the oppressed minorities in the Tsarist empire, American Negro nationalism also differs from them in certain important respects.

Moreover, Negro nationalism is still in an early stage of its development and will surely undergo changes in the future. A definitive analysis will have to wait until Negro nationalism becomes a mass movement and acquires firmer and more fixed features than it now displays..."(p7)

"..Negro nationalism, as it now exists, should not be equated with Negro separatism, the tendency that advocates the creation(?) of a separate Negro nation... All separatists are nationalists but all nationalists are not separatists"(p8) "Negro nationalism is progressive because it contributes to the creation of an independent Negro movement. It will remain progressive so long as it fulfills that function, whether the struggle be fought along integrationist or separatist lines... For us, Negro nationalism and revolutionary socialism are not only compatible but complementary forces, that should be welded closer together in thought and action"(p9)

The S.W.P. are "patient because we know that the logic of the Negro struggle inevitably leads it to socialist channels.. Nationalism itself is an empty vessel which can be filled with vastly different contents... Militant Negro nationalists can have wrong ideas and petty bourgeois illusions. Negro Marxists have to imbue the nationalist sentiments and struggles of their people with a revolutionary, scientific, anti-capitalist content and direction."(p9)

"In 1939, we foresaw the possibility that the Negro people, as part their struggle to end centuries of oppression and exploitation, might some day decide that they want a separate nation(?)... We said that if this happened, it would settle the long theoretical dispute about whether or not the Negroes are a national minority as well as a racial minority, and that we, as supporters of the right to self determination, would support the Negro demand...

"In taking this position we did not become advocates of a separate nation, as the Communist Party used to be, nor do we advocate it now. What we advocate is the right of the Negro people to decide this question for themselves. All we commit ourselves to do is support their fight to achieve whatever they decide they want, whether it be equality through integration or equality through separation, or both."(p10. Our emphasis. This "creative" development of Marxism, by which the S.W.P. is enabled to support a demand for integratid. separation, even outdoes the "creativity" of the market socialist miracle workers.)

"Until the Negro masses decide, the S.W.P. neither advocates nor opposes a separate nation. (p10)

Of course the question is not whether to "advocate" the establishment of a separate Negro nation but to determine whether there is

a Negro nation: and, if there is, to decide whether to advocate the setting up of a separate Negro state. Now if there is a n Afro-American nation it is certainly an oppressed nation; and unless there are great peculiarities which determine otherwise (and these peculiarities would have to be very clearly and compr-ehensively analysed), there is an objective basis for a struggle for Negro national independence. And if a struggle for Negro national independence is in order the Negro workers should not merely "support" it but should strive to lead it, and the workers in the oppressing nation should give it every possible form of active support. After the overthrow of U.S. imperialism the question of the state relations between two free nations would arise, but while imperialist oppression of the Negro nation continued it is difficult to see how Marxist could refrain from demanding freedom from oppression for that nation; and it is difficult to see how this demand could differ from a demand for national independence.

If, on the other hand the Negroes are not an oppressed nation, but an exceptionally oppressed group within the U.S. nation, (and mainly in the U.S. working class) then the revolutionary strategy will be very different. And if the Negroes are neither of these but are transitional between the two (either a nationality that is in the process of being absorbed into the U.S. nation, or a part of the U.S. nation that is in the process of sepe- rating from it) --that should be made clear for a start. But the Trotskyist position on the Negro question clarifies nothing: it is only a particularly case of the usual trotskyist phrasemon- gering tail-endism. But it has much in common with the modern revisionist position, and with that of subjectivist tendencies within the anti-revisionist movement as it now exists.

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M I G R A T I O N F R O M T H E S O U T H

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We are not in a position to give a comprehensive account of devel- opments in the Black Belt area during the last 20 years. The following figures are given by J. Williamson in "Marxism Today", April 1967: "While in 1900, only 10% of the Negro population lived outside the 11 Southern States, but 1964 it had reached 51 % or more. And in the South itself while only 7% of the Negroes there in 1910 lived in the cities, by 1960 this had reached 41%. The Negro question is no longer primarily one of their relation to the land."

Migration from the Southern States has increased steadily, being 207,000 in the decade 1900-1910; 1,613,000 in the decade 1940-50; and 1,431,000 in the decade 1950-60. The number of Negro share- croppers in the South has fallen from 776,000 in 1930, to 548,000 in 1940, to 122,000 in 1959.

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## T H E E R E V I S I O N I S T P O S I T I O N

In 1956, following the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U., Benjamin Davis delivered a Report on the Negro question to the National Committee of the C.P.U.S.A. (published as "The Negro People On The March") in which the policy of the Party in the Stalin period was criticised:

"The principal sectarian errors of our Party in the struggle for Negro rights over the last decade flowed from the faulty overall estimates of the Party in respect to the temp of fascist developments, the imminence of economic crises etc. They had their particular expression in the area of Negro rights, for which I bear considerable personal responsibility." (p30/31)

"...it would seem that the slogan of self-determination should be abandoned and our position brought up to date, expanding creative application of Marxist-Leninist science in the light of the special American features of this question. We must examine all wrong and sectarian concepts on this question, which have long given the wide impression that we are seeking to import a foreign formula and apply it dogmatically as the solution. Utilising Stalin's contribution on the national and colonial question, our Party has derived tremendous and unique strength from viewing the Negro question as a national question as a national and special question, and that in my judgement is still sound. But we should review the rigid and mechanical application of these principles to our country, especially to the Negro people in the Deep South. This has led to confusion and misconceptions to the effect that the Negro people must necessarily establish a separate nation-state to secure their full citizenship. Our theoretical position has always had certain sectarian implications which today stand out more sharply. Stalin's well-known contributions on the national question gave the 'cult of infallibility' special prerogatives in our theoretical work on the Negro question... Today, the Negro people in the South are fighting for integration and are moving in the direction of democratic representative government, not towards a separate state." (P32-3)

In the same Report, Davis made a remark about the past which is certainly true of the period since then: "Our Party's recent role in the Negro people's movement has been weak in terms of slogans, program and practical activity. We are today playing an entirely supporting role, too often a side line role, behind the often vague and fragmentary slogans of bourgeois leaders Negro and white." (p22/3)



We will now look at a current publication of the C.P.U.S.A. which expounds the revisionist view of the Negro question: Black power and Liberation by Claude Lightfoot, a report to a National Conference of the CPUSA in 1967. Whereas in 1948 Haywood declared: "The unsolved Negro question is a focal point of vulnerability of American imperialism. It is therefore a most vital part of concentration for attack by the working class and the masses of democratic Americans in their fight against the imperialist and war-mongers" (p218), in 1967 the revisionist Lightfoot is desperate to find a solution for the Negro question within the bourgeois system, because it is only thus that "America is going to be saved from the catastrophes threatening it." (P15). The "catastrophe", of course, only threatens imperialist America, as the CPUSA realised twenty years ago. If it now fears this catastrophe it is only because it has become an adjunct of the bourgeois system.

On the national character of the Negro question, Lightfoot says:

"Those who speak of a wrong line say in essence that we should have retained the slogan of self-determination for the Black Belt. My answer to that is categorically 'no'. We were 100% correct in dropping that slogan of self-determination. Having done so, we proceeded to state further that the Negro question is still a national question. The Resolution of our 17th National Convention says: "To conclude that the Negro people in the U.S. are not a nation is not to say that the Negro question in our country is not a national question. It is indeed a national question. The question is, however, a national question of what type, with what distinguishing characteristics, calling for what strategic concept for its solution"... But we didn't define the distinguishing characteristics, although we knew it wasn't the same as the national question in relation to any other minority group, also that it wasn't the same as it was when we talked about a nation in the Black Belt." (p34)

When abandoning the aim of a Negro nation state, "We underestimated the effects of the accumulated years of material developments towards nationhood in the South ... We interpreted too mechanically the undermining of the nation in the Black Belt by migration into the cities and into the North. We expected changes more in the direction of the class character of the struggle and less in the direction of the national character.

"But things did not go that way. When we say that the majority of the Negroes are now in the industrial proletariat, that the main center of the problem lies not in the peasantry but in the proletariat, we must remember that ideological changes usually lag behind material changes. But we overlooked the fact that certain national

attributes that the Negro was evolving in his Black Belt experience could spill over (?) when he came North." (P35)

The view expressed here is that the objective conditions for Negro nationhood no longer exist, but that national consciousness continues to exist as a leftover from the time when the Negroes began an abortive development towards nationhood in the Black Belt. There is no longer an American Negro nation, but there is a Negro national question because 'ideological changes usually lag behind material changes'. There is a Negro national question to which the principle of self-determination is not applicable.

Lightfoot says: "It is conceivable that tomorrow...the present trend toward nationalism could evaporate..." (P37). But if this nationalism has only a subject basis, if it only exists by virtue of the lag between consciousness and material change, this is not only conceivable, it is inevitable if the political movement of the Negro masses is to develop. But Lightfoot does not draw this conclusion from his own premises: he does not draw any conclusion, except the most meaningless generalities. He says: "Our Party at all times should be prepared for all eventualities" (37). Meaning that it should be prepared to follow behind the mass movement of the Negroes whether it tends towards nationalism or trade-unionism: that it should not analyse this movement and attempt to develop a clear revolutionary strategy for it, but should adopt an attitude of flexible tail-endism.

The "vanguard role of the Party...must be to introduce a class content into the present wave of black nationalism. We must fight against all separatist tendencies as self-defeating." (P43) How does one "introduce a class content into ...nationalism"? Is not the class content of nationalism bourgeois? And what is the meaning of introducing a class content into nationalism while "fighting against all separatist tendencies", i.e. against all tendencies demanding national self-determination?

For a nation dominated by imperialism the struggle for national self-determination is a revolutionary struggle. The internationalism of the working class in such a situation expresses itself in the struggle against national oppression. But if there is no nation; if the mass of the Negroes form part of the working class of the single U.S. nation; if there can be no struggle for national independence --what then? It is certain that, in such a situation, to encourage a variety of "nationalism" which could not achieve, and which does not aim for, national independence is to help to disrupt the militant movement of the Negro masses; to encourage it to wear itself out in militant struggle which has not objective.

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Lightfoot adds that:

"...we have historically underestimated the role of colour, of race and of oppression as driving forces for Negro nationalism. We have tried to explain this trend from the definition Stalin gave of a nation as a historically evolved community having in common language, geography, economic life and psychological make-up. This definition is generally sound, but in dealing with the American Negro, we are dealing with a people that has a history different from any other people on earth. And fully to understand his make-up, we must take into consideration that here color, race and oppression operate independently of Stalin's definition." (P37).

The revisionist C.P. here ends up in the position that it clearly refuted as being obscurantist in the period when it was Marxist: the position of treating the Negro question as a question of race or colour. The Negro struggle then becomes neither a struggle for national independence nor a struggle for socialism, but a struggle for "racial equality". If Negro militancy can be diverted from national or class goals it becomes relatively harmless to the U.S. imperialist system. The militant Negroes are diverted from struggle for an objective revolutionary goal into the blind alley of struggle on a racial or colour basis. Then, as Haywood explained, Negro militancy is wasted in a futile struggle merely to assert that the Negro is a human being -- a fact which the Negro masses have never doubted. And thus the basic starting point of the Negro masses, their awareness that they are human, is made the ultimate aim of their militant struggles.

Viewing the Negro struggles as being neither struggles for national independence, nor part of the struggle for socialism, the revisionists see it merely as an anomaly, an oddity. A "racial" question which is neither a class nor a question of national self-determination can be seen as nothing else but an anomaly. Furthermore Negro militancy upsets the notion of peaceful transition to socialism in the U.S.A. Accordingly:

"In the struggle for the immediate unconditional citizenship of the 20 million Negro Americans, the issue is not capitalism or Socialism. It is the central broad democratic task of our present society as a whole. A realistic assessment of the present moment in our country, entails that this task must be achieved under monopoly capitalism, prior to the establishment of socialism." (B. Davis. Against Tokenism & Gradualism. 1963. p15)

Lightfoot describes the movement as being "for radical and deep-going changes in...status" (p10). A "radical change in the status of black people" must be achieved if "America is going to be saved from the catastrophes threatening it." (P 15)

Who would agree more than the supporters of the late liberal imperialist Mr. Kennedy? Lightfoot disagrees with those who

"advocate a policy which sees no progress for the masses under capitalism" (P30). He tells the Negro (the Negro what?, one should ask) that "it is possible to change his status substantially, short of socialism" (p31), and that he "can compel some meaningful changes even in the framework of the capitalist system" (p33).

And of course "there is nothing in the present state of affairs which justifies the call to arms as an offensive weapon. The political decisions at present are in considerable part in the ballot boxes." (p29) "We are about to reap the harvest from the voter registration drive... And now some are losing faith in this development and call for more dramatic action - the resort to arms." (p33)-thus ruining the pipe-dreams about peaceful transition. Mr. Lightfoot even took Martin Luther King to task because "he said that the power structure responds with concessions only to violence!" (p25)

The revisionist strategy then is to resolve the Negro question within the bourgeois system. A substantial section of the U.S. ruling class has now reached the conclusion that the old style oppression of the Negroes creates unnecessary contradictions and unnecessary dangers for the bourgeois system, and favour a policy of lessening these contradictions and dangers by modernising the oppression of the Negro masses and making the Negro bourgeois elements part of an all-American bourgeoisie. The revisionist policy is to help the imperialists to do this.

Is it possible that this could be done? It is certainly possible, if the bourgeoisie are allowed sufficient time and have sufficient determination. There are great practical difficulties (i.e. strong vested interests within the bourgeoisie, and other factors) which lie in the way of these adjustments in the system - difficulties which have been created by the history of the system. But theoretically it is possible that the bourgeoisie could make these changes in the system, and what is theoretically possible can never be ruled out in the long run as a practical possibility.

But is it the business of Communists to help the system to liberalise itself, to help it to overcome its unnecessary contradictions? Or should Communists make use of all the contradictions existing in a bourgeois system - whether they are essential to the system as such, or are the product of a peculiar history, or have been created by a bungling ruling class - to develop the revolutionary movement?

The bourgeois-Tsarist system in Russia got a very severe shock from the 1905 revolution. As soon as that revolution had been suppressed the liberal Tsarist Minister, Stolypin, developed a policy which aimed at solving the peasant question in Russia in the capitalist interest:

of eradicating the remnants of feudalism in agriculture, developing<sup>13</sup> a capitalist agriculture, and thus eliminating the threat to the bourgeois system from the obsolete agrarian system.

The practical difficulties (such as a strong vested interest of landowners in the old land system) were obvious, and were certainly not less than the obstacles to achieving the aims of the liberal imperialists in the U.S. Lenin did not deny that Stolypin's policies could be successful. He showed clearly that their success was possible. But did not therefore decide to help Stolypin to accomplish this democratic reform in the bourgeois interest. On the contrary, he said that for as long as the bourgeoisie had failed to resolve this contradiction in their own interest the Communists should attend to it in order to develop the revolutionary movement.

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The policy of helping the bourgeois system to overcome contradictions which are not essential to it (which always goes hand in hand with the policy of helping them to remain in control of the essential capital-labour contradiction through a reform policy) is the policy of renegades.

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# BRITAIN

The following statements on the Black Power movement in Britain have been made by the London Workers Committee, hitherto a group in the anti-revisionist movement, which has recently declared itself to be the vanguard Party of the English workers: the "Working People's Party of England".

In "Workers Broadsheet", August 1967, the L.W.C. asked "Why Is Imperialism White?" As a matter of fact imperialism is no longer exclusively white. Surely the L.W.C. has noticed the existence of Japanese monopoly capitalism! The L.W.C. declared that "Every Worker Must Support Black Power", but neglected to explain what Black Power meant. In Sept. 1967, however, this deficiency was supplied:

"The British working class is today almost without leadership. It stands today where the Afro-Americans, the coloured sub-citizens of the U.S.A. stood in the days before Malcolm X, before the concept of Black Power as a political, not a racialist, slogan; the days when liberalism of the NAACP and the non revolutionary Communist party was dominant, seeking only to defend itself against MacCarthy, never dreaming or even wishing to attack, to claim rights not as "citizens" of a capitalist country, but as human beings, and to lead all the oppressed against their oppressors." (p8)

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This is Absurd. There has always been a trend in the anti-revisionist movement which tended towards the view that the whole period of the Communist International, or at least the period of Stalin's leadership, was a period when non-revolutionary politics dominated the Communist movement. Of late they have been openly expressing the view that since 1926 revolutionary politics has been dominant only in the C.P.C.; that Mao was the real revolutionary leader of the world Communist movement from 1926 onwards, but that Stalin failed to realise this and interposed his own wooden politics between Mao and the international Communist movement. This claim has never been made by Mao. And those who make it have never brought forward a shred of proof in support of it. They turn historical analysis into a game -- a game whose rules at every moment depend on subjective whims. They quote Mao. But their methods have nothing in common with Mao's. If they are persisted in these subjectivist methods can generate nothing but new variants of opportunism.

It is an unchallengable historical fact that the only Marxist political clarity that existed in the British and American situations from the 1920's until World War 2 came from the British and American sections of the Comintern. And it is an equally unchallengable fact that the "Working Peoples' Party of England", and the other sham "Parties" that have recently left the anti-revisionist movement, shed little revolutionary light on the situation. When investigating the Negro question today Marxism builds on the work of the Comintern: it does not reject that work as non-revolutionary with bothering to investigate it, as the L.W.C. has done.

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But what is the L.W.C.'s view of "Black Power as a political, not a racialist, slogan"?

"Black Power is not racialist, it is anti-Imperialist power, it is people's power, it is workers' power for Socialism..."  
(P9)

Or: Black power is not racialist, it is national bourgeois dictatorship ("anti-Imperialist power" e.g. Tanzania), it is peoples democratic dictatorship ("peoples power", e.g. Czechoslovakia 1945-48), it is proletarian dictatorship ("workers power")! The slogan which ends the article reads:

"BLACK POWER = WORKERS POWER = SOCIALISM."

Do words mean anything any more?

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The L.W.C. declares: "...any working class movement or party that does not unreservedly ally itself with Black Power is mere deceit and hypocrisy". We must therefore take a look at the Black Power movement in Britain. The following extracts are from

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clear that the position of the WPPE on this question has nothing in common with Marxism, and that the WPPE made no attempt at analysing the Black Power movement in class terms before declaring that it was the duty of communists to ally themselves unreservedly with it. How can communists ally themselves unreservedly with the idea that the main contradictions beinthe world today ahave not a class basis, nor even a national basis, but some kind of hazy racial-colour basis? To do that would be to take the revisionist notion of the CPUSA, that trace and colour are independently operating factors in the class struggle, and base one's politics entirely on it.

The class struggle of the masses against imperialism has no more hope of being successful if it is fought on a racial basis than if it is fought on a religious basis. It can only be fought successfully on a class basis. The main thing in the UCPA programme is the denial that oppression is essentially a class question and the assertion that it is essentially a racial question. (It has been suggested that race "really means" class, and black "really means" worker. But the UCPA is nothing if not articulate, and there is no doubt about what it actually says.)

In order to show what an enormous step backwards the UCPA Manifesto is in comparison with the position held by Malcolm X, we quote from a statement made by Malcolm X shortly before he was murdered:

"....when I was in Africa;...I was speaking with the Algerian Ambassador who is extremely militant and is a revolutionary in the true sense of the word (and has the credentials as such for having carried on a successful revolution against oppression in his country). When I told him that my political, social and economic philosophy was black nationalism, he asked me very frankly, well, where did that leave him. Because he was white. He was an African, but he was Algerian, and to all appearances, he was a white man. And he said that if I define my objective as the victory of black nationalism, where does that leave him? Where does that leave revolutionaries in Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Mauritania?  
...

"So I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of black nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as black nationalism. And if you notice, I haven't been using the expression for several months. But I would still be hard-pressed to give a specific definition of the overall philosophy which I think is necessary for the liberation of the black people in this country." (From Interview in Young Socialist, March 1965. Reprinted in Two Speeches by Malcolm X. Pioneer Publishers.

"Black Power In Britain", Manifesto of the Universal Coloured People's Association (emphases are ours)

"What we are talking about is the White problem. We are talking about the nuisance value of a race of people who, because of an illusion about the colour of their skin, are determined by words and deeds to reduce the rest of humanity to a level of animality from which they can never rise again." (p3)

"Today two people out of three in the world are dying of starvation, and the two who are starving are coloured and the one who is not starving, be he capitalist, worker, peasant, or priest, is white. Workers are no longer workers. They have become Coloured and White. A White worker employed with a Coloured worker wants to create an aristocracy of labour, and where this condition is unmet, goes on strike. White first and worker afterwards, he would rather form a racial pact with his kith-and-kin capitalist exploiter and go to distant lands with guns, bayonets, and napalm to decimate, rob and rape the workers of other races to whom he feels superior. Communists are not longer communists. They have also become Coloured and White..." (p7)

"We may not like this picture, but it is the picture of the world in which we live, a world in which the conflict between capitalist and worker is admittedly real, but one in which the polarisation of the world into Black and White is alas more real." (p7)

Is it this petty bourgeois intellectual nonsense that we must

"unreservedly" ally ourselves with?

In the publications of the Black Power movement in Britain there is a great deal of phrasemongering about "revolution". But no hint is given as to what the aim of this revolution is. It is obviously not a socialist revolution, since it is limited to the black population (it is not even an immigrants' movement, since a substantial portion of the immigrants are non-black). It is not a national revolution: national aims are nowhere formulated. It appears that the UCPA is opposed both to integration and segregation for black people in British society.

The U.C.P.A. reduces the "racial question" in Britain to a racial question. It aims at separating the black workers in Britain from the workers of other colours and integrating them with black bourgeois elements. In many ways it resembles the ideology with which Irish bourgeois elements in Britain prevented many Irish workers from taking part in the British working class movement. (A comparison between the two will be made next month).

In this article we are viewing the position of the L.W.C., or "Working Peoples Party of England". (Next month we will try to assess the significance of the Black Power movement). It is



Malcom X was murdered before he had the opportunity to work out the answer comprehensively. But he had left the UCPA position far behind him. And his position was far in advance of that of the "WPPE". He did not work out the required programme (and it has still not been worked out.) But he was grappling with the realities of the situation, whereas the "anti-revisionist" WPPE is merely sloganising. (TO BE CONCLUDED)

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