

CHAPTER 5

Which Way for the Black Belt Thesis

Introduction

Resistance to slavery and oppression has been a characteristic of the African-American people in the United States, a common trait of oppressed people throughout the world. Stemming primarily from many different African backgrounds and forged into a nation in the Black Belt area of the deep south and national minorities outside of the territorial boundaries of their oppressed African-American nation, the African-American people in the United States still suffer from unemployment, lack of sufficient medical and educational facilities, consistent police brutality and provocation, segregated facilities, racial insults, a denial of their sovereign rights, and other debilitating factors. Chapter five, therefore, attempts to formulate a path toward the resolution of these problems faced by the oppressed African-American nation and its national minorities throughout the United States. This path is outlined in section one of this chapter. An attempt will also be made in section one to explain the meaning, advantages and the major opposition to the position of this thesis on the Black Belt question. Section two of this chapter makes an effort to explain the contribution and lessons of this thesis; section three is the summation and conclusion.

I. The position of this thesis on the Black Belt question.

This thesis contends that the African-American people in the United States of America are an oppressed nation of people in the Black Belt area of the southern part of the United States. This area has definable boundaries and limits as set forth in this thesis. Outside of this area in the United States, the African-American people constitute national minorities. This thesis advocates, moreover, that the

African-American oppressed nation and its national minorities are entitled to self-determination. This self-determination is not something for the future. The African-American oppressed nation and its national minorities are entitled to self-determination now without any further struggle for its realization.

Consequently, as step one in this direction, negotiations with the United States government by various representatives of the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas should begin immediately with the expectation that autonomy, already described in chapter one, under the existing socio-economic arrangement of the United States will be successfully arranged for the oppressed African-American nation and its nation minority areas. Autonomy under existing arrangements would provide for a form of self-government consistent with forms of self-government for many other oppressed nations that currently have seats in the United Nations, a world body of more than 150 nations with headquarters in New York.¹ This body should also be notified of the efforts of the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas to negotiate autonomy now as the first step in the full realization of its self-determination. Full self-determination for the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas would mean that they have the right to exercise all of the provisions outlined in chapter four in category six of various positions on the Black Belt nation after World War II.²

In order to implement autonomy now this thesis urges the formation of a call committee that would prepare an agenda for a conference of African-American organizations. This small group would also prepare a list of organizations that would be invited to such a conference. Hopefully, one of the items on the agenda of the conference would be ways and means to carry out political education about the meaning of autonomy now and the necessary steps to negotiate its fulfillment. The possibility of holding a plebiscite to further determine the wishes of the African-American people concerning their self-determination might also be an agenda item.³ A necessary third agenda item would entail a discussion of the advantages and methods for involving more and more organizations and institutions in the negotiating process, including representatives of other nationalities.

What are the positive factors and advantages involved in negotiating autonomy now as the first step in the full realization of self-determination for the African-American oppressed nation and its national minority areas? Historians usually record the first

presence of the African-American people on the soil of the United States in 1619.⁴ Captured in Africa, many African-American people were forced to work the land of the United States as slaves.⁵ Many other captured African people were also forced to work as slaves in other parts of the new world.⁶ Through the suppression of the history of the African-American people, their contributions to world culture, their origins in Africa, their scientific discoveries and through various methods of torture, control, brainwashing, psychological warfare, and attempted genocide, the United States government has consistently tried to forcibly subjugate the African-American oppressed nation. African-American family life has been systematically made difficult by forces of reaction. In many cities the African-American family cannot go out to dinner or to other public places without enduring racial insults. In some places the names of various institutions are a constant affront to the African-American people and other people of good-will. Statistics on the length of life in the United States tend to show that the African-American male lives the shortest number of years of all people in the United States; the pressures of life in the United States on the African-American male are very great, a contributing factor to a short life: This thesis suggests that these conditions and many others faced by the African-American people can be resolved through the exercise of self-determination by the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas, for the African-American oppressed nation has continuously resisted any efforts to force it into subjugation, amalgamation, or annihilation. This resistance is also true for all the other oppressed nations and minorities in the United States.

Positions for redress of grievances to the United States government, nevertheless, to resolve these problems are constantly made and should continue. The options of life for an oppressed nation, however, and its national minority areas are not just limited to petitions to the oppressing government for changes. An oppressed nation can negotiate its self-determination as outlined in this thesis. Within the context of autonomy now under the existing socioeconomic arrangement of the United States, the African-American people will have a better chance to gain experience in resolving the racial, national, class, sexual, psychological, and religious problems with which they are confronted. These problems exist in various forms for all nations, oppressed or not oppressed.

What is most likely the main opposition to the proposed efforts to negotiate autonomy now for the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas as the first step in ex-

ercising self-determination? This thesis maintains that the most vigorous opposition will come from those who maintained the African-American people are not a nation and never were a nation. They are simply a minority in the United States and they do not have any rights to self-determination. They must learn to live and to adjust to their status as it currently exists. Various officials of the United States government will often speak as the representatives of this group. The next most vigorous opposition may come from those who assert that the will of the African-American people has not been expressed. Agents of this opposition group may work in various ways to block the expression of a national will toward autonomy now. Opposition to autonomy now may also come from sectors of the leadership of various parties.

As is true for all opposition groupings, this resistance can be overcome through the political education of the membership, most of whom have been denied the correct history and theory of self-determination. Every effort will also be made to prove conclusively to any opposition that autonomy now will be very beneficial to all the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Conversely, efforts will be made to show where the failure to sit-down and negotiate an end to the misery of the people of the United States and to the African-American people, in particular, will only prolong and worsen the agony and pain that the people of the United States are currently experiencing: high rates of inflation, massive unemployment, overseas runaway plants, urban blight, consistent rise in drug addiction among all races and all classes of people, the systematic destruction of the youth of the United States through successive war efforts that are counter-productive for everyone, and many other problems that are directly related to the forcible retention and suppression of oppressed nations and national minorities in the United States of America.

In order to win over the main opposition it will be necessary to unite more and more African-American people around the concept of autonomy now as the first step toward self-determination and to extend the struggle for autonomy now for the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas to all other oppressed nations, colonies, and national minorities of the United States government. Such an effort is just, correct, and strengthens the negotiations for all the representatives of oppressed nations, colonies and national minorities. Conversely, to limit negotiations simply for the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas weakens the negotiating power of oppressed nations, colonies,

and national minorities of the United States government. This thesis holds, moreover, that all of what are usually called immigrant groups in the United States are in fact national minorities.⁷ The term national minorities is therefore not limited to people of color in the United States such as the Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Filipino, Vietnamese, or Haitians. Rather, the Greek-Americans, Italian-Americans, Ukrainian-Americans, Polish-Americans, and other immigrant people and descendants of immigrants from the white race are also national minorities. As national minorities they have the right wherever possible to re-unite with their nation or to live in peace as national minorities in the United States and other countries. They also have the right to live and develop the positive aspects of their national culture and languages as essential guarantees in developing trust and overcoming differences between people of various cultures, races, and religions. As the representatives of the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas who seek to negotiate autonomy now involve more and more members of other oppressed nations, colonies and national minorities in the negotiating process, the opposition to autonomy now for the African-American oppressed nation and its national minority areas will lessen and forms of autonomy now for all oppressed nations, colonies, and national minorities will become more certain.

II. The contribution of this thesis

Autonomy now for the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas as the first step toward self-determination is a new theoretical position in the history of politics of the United States, international affairs, and the literature on self-determination of nations. Growing out of thesis committee discussions and the writing of this Master's thesis at the Africana Studies and Research Center of Cornell University, this concept attempts to provide an answer to the problems of the people of the world caused by the forcible importation of human beings from Africa into the new world and into the United States of America. Before their capture on the continent of Africa and in their forced slavery and development into nations in the new world and the United States, African slaves and their descendants have fought in various ways for their self-determination. Often allied with the Indians of North America, sections of the African-American people have consistently fought for a better United States, including fighting for the liberation of the colonies of the United States from the colonizing empire of Great Britain.⁸ Hence, based on the reality of hundreds of years of

denial of human rights and the fight to defend the sovereignty of the United States, immediate negotiations for autonomy now by various representatives of the African-American oppressed nation and its national minority areas are on the agenda for resolution.

Derived from many sources and various methods, the contribution of this thesis also grows out of discussion and observation on the Island of Martinique, a captured territory of the government of France, and in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, a sovereign country. The discussions and observations in Martinique were made in 1969 and in Vietnam in 1971. By making various comparative analyses of the theory and practice of self-determination through direct investigations in areas outside of the jurisdiction of the United States, this thesis has been better able to present evidence for its contribution. The significance of the many hours of discussion and debate with Harry Haywood in Detroit, Michigan in 1972 and 1973 concerning autonomy and other forms of self-determination cannot be underestimated.⁹ As described earlier, Harry Haywood was an actual participant on very high levels of the Communist International and in the formulation in 1928 and 1930 of the resolutions that stated the African-American people were a nation in the Black Belt of the south.

III. Summation and conclusion

Chapter Five has attempted to describe the path that the Black Belt should take in the future: Beginning with immediate negotiations with the United States government for autonomy now, this thesis takes the position that representatives of the African-American oppressed nation and its national minority areas should attempt to implement full self-determination through a process of stages. Organizing, mobilizing, and negotiating for autonomy now for the Black Belt oppressed nation and its national minority areas will greatly help to resolve many problems that confront the people of the United States, especially the manner in which the African-American people live and in which historically they have been forced to live.

Chapter Five also has attempted to describe the contribution of this thesis to knowledge: Autonomy now for the oppressed African-American nation and its national minority areas is a new formulation in the literature on self-determination of nations. Its implementation will greatly aid the cause of world peace, human rights, and self-determination of nations. Thus, through examining the

question of self-determination of nations and its application toward the African-American people, this thesis has been able to set forth a direction for the Black Belt thesis in the future, a contribution to the solution of the racial, national, class, sexual, and religious problems faced by the people of the United States and the other areas of the world. Autonomy now may also be a desirable step for many other oppressed nations and minorities in various countries.

¹*The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1980 (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1979), p. 599.

²Consult page 28, Chapter Four.

³Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites Since the World War, With a Collection of Official Documents*, volumes I & II (Washington, D.C., the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933) provides an excellent reference on this subject.

⁴Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 23.

⁵*Ibid*, p. 25.

⁶*Ibid*.

⁷For an overview of the immigrant process, consult John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964). The 1964 copyright was by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, pp. 3-9 ff.

⁸Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley, *The Story of the Negro Retold* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1959), pp. 50-58.

⁹Debates and discussion between Harry Haywood and James R. Forman. During this time, Haywood was writing his autobiography and Forman was studying the national question and self-determination of nations.

*The CPUSA was restored in July 1945 and the CPA was liquidated at an emergency convention to restore the Communist Party USA held in New York, N.Y.