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**BLACK RADICALIZATION IN AMERICA**  
(Resolution of the Milwaukee Branch)



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## BLACK RADICALIZATION IN AMERICA

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### Introduction

Of three drafts submitted by the Majority Leadership, the resolution on "The Freedom Now Movement in 1965" is the most workable in that it provides a substantially accurate summary for the evolution and present level of the Negro social movement to date.

More significantly, in the area described as "Organizing the Black Ghetto", the resolution directs our attention to the "tremendous tasks that cannot be tackled without building independent black political power from the asphalt up." The conditions engendering the renewal of intense struggle are set forth to indicate that power begins at the social-democratic level of organization and struggle.

It will be premissable to state that the resolution implies a Party task to engage the organizational work.

The important deficiencies in the draft resolution originate in the basic premise of the Party Majority Leadership:

It is the denial that a great revolution of immense power and ideological consistency in its regime is shaking the world and shaping the consciousness of its leaders among the dark peoples of the earth. Hence this draft, like that describing the next phase of American politics, has failed to distinguish the origin and direction in which the world revolution is moving, and the subsequent split within the American bourgeoisie. Again it will be premissable to state that there is an opening, and it can only mean that the Party must engage the organizational tasks.

The Black Nationalists in the camp of Malcolm X do not turn to the feeble white propaganda groups of the American socialist left for inspiration, instruction, and initiative. They turn to the centers of victorious socialist and national revolutions. Howsoever, their tasks may then have begun; they begin and develop without the Socialist Workers Party.

On the other hand, the civil rights movement engages ever larger forces on the field of action. And among these there is a notable heightening of racial pride for the black leaders. They become increasingly aware of the universal racial chauvinism among the white workers, taking especial note of the impoverished leadership capacities of white radicals among white workers.

On what foundations, then, do the American Marxists engage the political task of unification in the movement?

### I. The Split in Capitalist Ruling Circles

The imperialist adventures of the American ruling class demand a resolution of the social crisis at home. For the capitalist leaders only two possibilities for the welding of social unity exist: either effective class collaboration and integration of the Negro leaderships in support of the worldwide counter-revolutionary role of the U.S.; or total prostration of the American working-class beneath a crushing victory of petty-bourgeois reaction.

So fraught with dangers and overhead costs is the latter course that a marked retreat can be described among normally conservative Republicans. They preferred a Johnson victory, just because the bourgeois "turn to fascism as a desperate man goes to a dentist." (Trotsky)

The draft resolutions are woefully deficient in appraising the Johnson electoral victory - albeit they do describe the poverty of the left parties, the softness of the white proletariat, and the prostration of their union guardians.

An overwhelming sector of the bourgeoisie weighed in behind the sinister figure who emerged from a Texas border intrigue; while an impressive mass of traditional small capitalists and petty-bourgeois, complemented with heavy drafts of white chauvinist workers, registered support for the Arizona apostate. That is the physiognomy.

The fundamental class-collaborationist line of Johnson et al was, and continues to be, that of assuaging and bribing the underprivileged sectors in American social life. It is their experience that the "good life" might perpetuate the political prostration of the American proletariat - white and black. Even the churchman, Saul Alinsky, has perceived the moral and political intent in Johnson's wild proliferation of pork-barrel projects; and Walter Lippman, dealing from the bottom of the deck, was candid enough to say that you can buy them off at home but not all over the earth.

If the white proletariat and a preponderant section of its leadership have proven amenable to cornucopiae at the price of unflinching support to the objectives and methods of American imperialism at war - the capitalist leaders may assume that the Negro masses are equally tractable. That is the Johnson perspective.

American capitalism has notable reserves; but there are some pin holes in the microfinish of the shaft and, under

spectroscopic analysis, even some serious fractures at the steel's core. Eventually it will have to be scrapped.

There are two or three serious fractures. Most serious of these is the division within capitalist leadership circles over the feasibility of an all-out military confrontation of the socialist revolution in Asia - and its incipient features in South America and Africa. From the point of view of method, one should not be misled by Stevenson's failure to commit an open break over the "massive blunder" in Santo Domingo. "In the high places, lo! there is no light;" but there is doubt!

Clearly, from the capitalist viewpoint, a defeat for the revolution in Asia might stabilize the sub-strata beneath these quakes that launch the oceanic tidal waves of revolution. But is such an undertaking possible without extending the revolutionary encirclement of the United States to an enraged humanity the world over? And every atrocity abroad deepens the seething hatred of awakened black workers in the U.S. The bourgeois are impaled upon the horns of this dilemma - and under the leadership of an experienced Texas gun.

Moreover the unity of the world bourgeoisie, so impressive a short decade past, has blown up in the face of the Americans despite all of their schemes to federalize the world market on terms favorable to the American sector. All capitalist regimes of the "free world" are beset with class-collaboration problems of their own, as well as that fatal trait of jealousy toward the fattest pig.

The division up on top has moved directly into the Democratic Party. While Johnson seeks to unite the middle-class warhawks behind his aggressive regime, the Democratic liberals seek to invent a Henry Wallace and sponsor "protest" movements on the university campuses. And there has been a troubled outdry too, against unleashing movements that might not be contained. It is this division in bourgeois circles that has permitted the emergence of radical movements on the campus - and afforded the underpinning for a bridge between the student movement and the civil rights movement. It is indisputable that the white middle-class youth are "in" and the white workers are "out".

The system of racial oppression at home has been the dominant feature of American social life, and it has provided an indispensable tool for building the regime of class unity in America. Now an important segment of the financial bourgeoisie would readily junk the whole structure of racial segregation and discrimination to fortify their social and political power in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Yet these perceptive bourgeois strategists are very small in number relative to the preponderant body of small capitalists and petty-bour-

geois entrepreneurs whose privileges and sinecures are dependent upon the highly profitable condition of segregation in every American community.

More compelling for the consideration of bourgeois strategists is the instructive experience of the Second World War. They lost China to the forces of socialist revolution - and they have been losing ever since. Every advance of the world revolution deepens the ardor of Negro freedom fighters at home, and enlarges their experience.

At the same time, the American program of policing the entire world, militarily, economically, and politically, has reared the frightening spectre of financial bankruptcy - expressed in the depletion of gold reserves, and monetary instability throughout the capitalist world.

The American bourgeoisie has split on the question of world imperialist design and on the question of sustaining the system of racial oppression at home. New political tendencies are exploiting these divisions. For the Socialist Workers Party there is a clear mandate to engage a tactic of intervention in the civil-rights movement at the social-democratic organizational level.

## II. Black Nationalism and Integrationism

When we examine the burning question before the Party - an immovable isolation in the midst of gigantic Negro social upheavals, we must question the permissibility of describing the two main currents in the evolution of the Negro social struggle as mutually exclusive opposites. This was never the case. Both the evolution of Malcolm X toward a leadership objective in the civil-rights movement, and the growing racial consciousness of the black participants in the civil-rights movement, testify to the reciprocal relationship between these two facets of a unified development.

From the Marxist point of view, the exclusively integrationist variant for the evolution of Negro social and political forces is entirely sound as an objectively derived resumé of historical necessity. That has been indeed true since the time when Karl Marx made the emancipation of the black-skinned workers an exclusive condition for the emancipation of labor as a whole. But that is to describe an historical necessity apart from the logic of development. Surely it is standby credo for the revolutionary perspective to define the unity of white and black workers as a pre-requisite condition to the establishment of state power. But that is all.

Defined in terms for the actual genesis of the struggle, social unity of black and white workers can take on a purely conditional character. Such unity as emerged in the industrial union action of the 1930's had largely dissipated in the bureaucratic surrender of class solidarity. And because the bourgeoisie would support concessions favoring the emergence of social privileges for the white workers at the expense of the Negro people as a whole. For that reason, militant struggle of the Negro people was confined to forms of struggle initiated by the radical left up until the Supreme Court school integration decision of 1954.

Given the excessive privileges enjoyed by a wide strata of the white working-class, the default of all socialist and labor leaderships is expressed in the depth and brutality of social inequalities for the poorest Negroes, in the confinement of the labor market, and in the eruption of independent religious and pacifist forms of struggle. In the light of the whole resumé of oppression, it is logical to expect that the subjective facet of the Negro revolt (or class movement) would take the form of racial nationalism.

Once the power of the Negro masses had found expression independent of the labor movement and the battered working-class (sic) parties of the left, the movement might be expected to unfold in accordance with its own needs, experiences, and illusions! The political unity of the white and black workers was effectively ruptured.

Black nationalism was not designed to afford rich harvests for the overwhelmingly white Marxist parties; while the civil-rights movement and leaders sought allies outside of the labor movement. If the black nationalists were anti-political the civil-rights leaders were committed to their own liberal-reformist illusions of rich rewards in the capitalist political camp.

The Freedom Now resolution of the 1963 Convention enabled the SWP to drive a clean stroke on one pin, black nationalism; even as it failed in machining a properly balanced counter-stroke pin, i.e. the dialectic appreciation of the civil rights movement.

That which is rational necessity does not usually correspond to the logic of development. A dialectic view of the Negro movement will describe the inter-penetration through experience of nationalist and integrationist conceptions, aims, and methods. It is a question of development, of the forms expressing the antagonisms and the conditions for their transformation in relation to the primary social contradiction of capitalist society: bourgeoisie and proletariat. Both nationalist and integrationist forms of organization and

struggle are mutually inclusive opposites expressing the social revolt of the whole Negro people.

Dominating the further evolution of this complex in the Negro struggle is the lock-up of the white proletariat in America, the internationalist movement of the proletarian revolution in China, and the new political divisions in bourgeois circles. To admit of any autarchic view for the independent evolution of these two movements, that of the Negro people in America and that of the colonial proletariat, is untenable from the point of view of Marxist method. And it ruptures the unity as concept of the world revolutionary process. Autarchic principles are unsound from the point of view of ecology and Marxist internationalism. Yet they make up the agronomy of the centrist wine merchants who prize those revolutionary grapes gardened in their own exclusive vineyard.

What the Majority Freedom Now resolution fails to comprehend in the black nationalist movement is its ideological growth in relation to the colonial and the Chinese struggle. It is undoubtedly true that had a powerful socialist Party of the white proletariat been effective in the U.S. the entire movement had unfolded differently, as the Henry Wallace experience indicated. What the Majority Resolution fails to comprehend in the integrationist movement is the growth of racial pride and resistance among the black participants; while the default relationship of the labor movement and white radicals to the civil rights movement continues unabated.

Serious black nationalists can be expected to develop political conceptions that militate in a socialist direction even as Rev. Vivian describes the latent political power in a union of the civil rights and labor movements. Interestingly, Director Hill of NAACP has expressed the view that any meaningful change in America's racial patterns would require far-reaching changes at the base of the power structure.

The chiefest restraint upon a Negro political breakthrough, originating in the integrationist sector of the Negro leadership, is the apathy and traditionalism of white workers whose political independence in the U.S. had been thoroughly undermined in the war years and aftermath. The tax-cut pump and the "War on Poverty" are designed to prolong this condition for the bourgeoisie. And this condition can only intensify the "go-it-alone" conceptions of the Negro leaders who are entirely empirical in the matter. In this respect some black nationalist leaders are extreme, demanding that the Trotskyists produce the movement of the white workers. Indeed, the Trotskyists will require a proletarian levy if only to resolve the crisis in their own movement!

Tactically, it should be clear that the black nationalists provide the best lever for a leadership struggle in the whole civil rights movement. And this orientation should be

predicated upon the developing split between class-collaborationists and militants in the integrationist sector. For an increasing number of integrationists the struggle for freedom at home becomes incompatible with imperialist actions abroad.

A Party deeply entrenched in the civil rights movement and speaking the language of black nationalism to the black workers engaged might find a receptive ear at a fluid conjuncture for its indispensable line of independent political action. This is the arena in which we are increasingly able to contend politically, in accordance with the same conditions governing our labors in the trade union. And it is much more inspiring. The Party cadres cannot stand aside from the organizational development, if only for the experience of being alive in the class-struggle!

The merit accruing to the Freedom Now resolution for 1965 lies in its recognition of the concrete conditions and grievances that can only engender multi-forms of Negro action in the Ghetto North and the Bourbon South.

The only recognizable and serious departure during the past period from the narrow propagandistic approach to an evolving social movement of the oppressed lie in the Michigan initiative behind the Freedom Now Party of '64. Nor does the subsequent evidence pointing to the restricted base for that undertaking negate the urgency for that test.

Parenthetically it should be pointed out that the Party's administrative decision against local initiative for intervention in the racist primary campaign of Gov. Wallace for '64 amounted to a sad affirmation of its narrow propagandist approach. There is grave danger that this method may be formalized as a stationary feature of Party life. Then we shall have taken the tail-endist road.

Initially our tasks begin at the social-democratic organizational level and demand initiative, great tactical flexibility in relation to the political experiments engaged by the civil rights movement at its present level..

### III. The Negroes and the Trade Unions

A perceptive comrade in the YSA, G. Carlton, has perceived a concrete relationship of the Negro actions to the dormant and bureaucratized trade unions. And it is absolutely feasible now to "challenge" the conservative forces by a bold address to the Negro rank-and-file. Such opportunities must be defined, prepared, and earned through close solidarity at the point of production. This possibility, nay, necessity has far more substance than the Majority draft on American Politics, once again cautious, conservative, not a bit ahead!



Now the precise basis for an organic trade-union left of any meaningful propositions is nothing other than the combined nationalist and civil rights sector of the Negro rank-and-file in industry and trade.

Why? Because their consolidated experience, the condition of second-class membership, the condition of homogeneity in the ghetto, the unbelievable hypocrisy and inaction by the labor guardians, the "go-it-alone" experience of the civil rights fighters, the Muslim nationalist indoctrination, the irrepressible activity of the Chinese regime, and the volatile character of the colonial revolts has undermined their imperialist loyalties to the point where the bourgeois leaders have called for "swords around the Cross" on the civil rights front. For us, there is a proletarian base.

It is sincerely hoped that the SWP will chuck its weathervane functions, for these go badly battered in real weather, to throw its worker cadres into the storms as rough weather champions of the Negro industrial workers. The mobility of the civil rights movement readily favors, even begs for the introduction of concrete support demands, employment demands, and community action demands upon the trade union movement. These can be prepared directly, and even apart from the point of production, in the welter of neighborhood civil rights clubs.

Class-collaboration in politics continues to restrain the predominant white trade union workers while the economic contractions in the labor market, favored by automation and the privileged position of white youth in the educational pool, deepens the Negro upheaval. The antagonism between black and white workers is expressed in black nationalism and the paralysis of the white trade union guardians.

The "civil rights" conjuncture in the American class-struggle is distinguished by a complex of antagonisms which only refract the primary social contradiction of capitalist society. However the class-struggle never had displayed that easy simplicity of the Western morality play, starring Gary Cooper. Class-collaborationist restraints flourish side by side with forms of active struggle that only militate toward a clear cut challenge.

The immediate antagonisms refracting the primary struggle and influencing the civil rights conjuncture are:

1) The antagonism between white and black workers, deriving from the very real material basis for the privileges of white workers in segregation and colonial exploitation. Nevertheless this very sharp antagonism is wholly conditional in that objectively the white and black workers have a common class enemy.

2) the antagonism between the whole Negro people and the bourgeois social structure in the U.S. This antagonism is

also conditional, subject to:

3) The antagonism between Negro workers and the Negro petty-bourgeois compradours.

4) The antagonism between the oppressed colonial masses combined with the socialist sector of the working class toward American imperialism.

5) The antagonism between the proletarian revolution in China and the Kremlin compradours.

Insofar as the primary social contradiction of world capitalism is manifest in active forms influencing the civil rights conjuncture in America, it is refracted in these antagonisms. For each, new forms of organization and new methods of struggle have crystallized, describing the Leninist test for a new conjuncture. Moreover, the new conjuncture has produced the inevitable crisis in the SWP, exposing the inadequacy of its traditionalism.

It was not for incidental reasons that Mao addressed fraternal greetings to the whole Negro people on the occasion of the 1963 March on Washington. For it marked a stage in the active class-struggle in America.

The integrationist movement, undergoing continuous crises where the petty-bourgeois leaders fear a break with white bourgeois society, is tied to the "democratic" aims at home and abroad of American imperialism. Yet each explosion abroad and each atrocity at home undermines the imperialist sycophants. The black nationalists are everywhere in solidarity with the aims of their colonial brothers; and their colonial brothers enjoy the open support of the Chinese revolutionary regime, and the penetration of its internationalist ideology.

At this stage of the struggle in the U.S. the breakdown of class-collaboration between the Negro workers and reformist Democrats will move along the road of racial solidarity against the white bourgeoisie. The civil rights movement is faced inevitably with radical changes in its structure, direction, and methods. The trade unions and their bureaucracy will not be left untouched by the Negro militants.

It is noteworthy also that the antagonism between white and black workers in the U.S., like the antagonism between the Chinese revolutionary regime and the Soviet compradours, does not correspond to a rational definition of necessity. These conditional antagonisms describe the logic of development; while it is entirely true that the socialist objective demands the unity of American workers, and the unity of the workers' states.

The pre-condition for a political radicalization of Negro workers in the U.S. lies in a conscious rupture with traditional dependence upon this or that white leadership, and precisely because the white workers do not support a leadership of struggle. Hence the urgent need for a Party cadre of serious Negro socialists.

For the Trotskyist Party in America the "civil rights" conjuncture demands a thorough programmatic internationalism, considerable tactical fluidity in the Negro organizations and in the political arena as a whole, a proletarian levy that can be earned among white and black workers through common action with those Negro militants and nationalists imbued with class-hatred! Class-hatred is not abstract.

Political Negro workers can be enlisted again, as in 1945-47 by the SWP, provided the Party can establish its ideological integrity among the radical youth of all classes, and develop a meaningful tactic of intervention in the mass movement as disciplined organizers and socialists.

#### Iv. The Question of a Negro Cadre

We have come to the question of a Negro cadre which cannot be won at all through a purely propaganda effort, a parlor integrationist routine, a one-sided view of the whole movement, or through mere "support" for progressive actions. The Party confronted the Negro upheaval at its inception in 1955 completely barren of Negro cadres; and it has made little progress in erasing that deficiency. A journalistic resume of these cataclysmic events and the evolution the several tendencies, however brilliantly pursued, will not substitute for a cadre, without which the Party position becomes a debenture:

Organizationally, whatever viable Trotskyist cadres are extant will function productively as white workers in the civil rights movements, provided:

1) That we define the relationship of the black nationalists to the integrationists as a dynamic one, as conditionally antagonistic forms expressing the social movement of the whole Negro people.

2) That we recognize the social-democratic basis of struggle and organization; that we relate in an even more disciplined way to these organizational tasks than was customary for Party cadres in the trade union movement.

3) That we regard the black nationalists as ready allies for militant action in the civil rights and union movements.

4) That we prove ourselves to be first in theory and first in action, demonstrating courage and initiative equal to that of the civil rights fighters.

5) That we support our propaganda by addressing the demands of the Negro people to the organized white trade union workers.

6) That we draw the strength of revolutionary optimism in correctly estimating the untenable position of American imperialism at home and abroad - laying the basis for the ~~s~~ deepening split in ruling circles and the labor bureaucracy, and for a break-up in the traditional social and political surface of the U.S.