



SPARK

Strategy For Black Liberation



The Black masses and the masses of white working people in the U.S. have common interests and common objectives to struggle for. Therefore the Afro-American struggle is winning sympathy and support from increasing numbers of white working people and progressives in the U.S. The struggle of the Black people in the U.S. is bound to merge with the American workers movement, and this will eventually end the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class. 29

Mao Tse-tung

To "merge the struggle of Black people with the American workers movement" is the strategic aim—the path to Black Liberation and Socialist Revolution—the key to "ending the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly class."

The firmest foundation for this merger exists in the emergence of a multi-national proletariat that has concentrated large numbers of Black workers in basic industry. It is here in the factories, mines and mills where the most mature and favorable conditions exist for merging the national and class struggles. The forging of unity between the white and Black workers on the basis of commitment to the aims of Black Liberation will enable the proletariat to draw the entire Black people closer to itself. The forging of the United Front on the basis of the key alliance of the proletariat and the oppressed national minorities will confront the monopolists with an unbeatable combination.

While the objective conditions have never been more favorable for forging class unity and building a United Front, this will not occur spontaneously. The monopoly capitalist class fears this development above all others and thus has and will continue to place formidable obstacles in the path of the revolutionary movement.

The most powerful obstacle is the promotion of the ideology of white supremacy, which not only serves to divide the class and split the white workers away from the Black freedom struggle, but actually enables the bourgeoisie to recruit sections of the white workers into its camp. The powerful grip of white chauvinist ideology over the masses of white workers turns them against the struggle for democratic rights on the part of the Black people. This ideology is the single most divisive weapon in the hands of the class enemy, splitting the working class, disorienting it politically and preventing it from gauging its true friends and its real enemies.

Secondarily, the monopolists promote bourgeois nationalism which sows distrust of the white workers and strengthens national exclusiveness among the Black people. In the ranks of the Black workers, the strength of bourgeois nationalist ideology provides another obstacle to the forging of class unity.

The task for the proletarian revolutionary movement, then, is the breaking of the hold of these ideas over the masses of the workers. While the struggle against white chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism stand in dialectical relationship to each other and must go hand in hand, it is the struggle against chauvinism that is primary and decisive.

The idea, which is held by some so-called Marxist-Leninists, that nationalism is merely the reverse side of the coin of white chauvinism, that these ideas are simply two different expressions of racism, qualitatively no different from one another, is itself a particularly vicious form of white chauvinism. White chauvinism is clearly a consistently and wholly reactionary ideology. Bourgeois nationalism, on the other hand, has a certain democratic content as an expression of the Black bourgeoisie's fight against national oppression. Moreover, from the vantage point of the struggle for class unity, bourgeois nationalism is primarily of a reactive character in its manifestations among Black workers. It is only the continued strength of white chauvinism that generates any substantial base for it among the Black workers. Thus we must direct our main blow against white chauvinism. Only if we do this do we generate favorable conditions for the struggle against bourgeois nationalism in the ranks of the Black workers.

THE DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE

The struggle for proletarian ideology and the fight against white chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism can be carried out only in the framework of the actual, day to day struggles of the mass of workers and the Black people. The class struggle, including the fight against discrimination in all its forms, is the school in which the white workers will learn that their real interests lie with the Black workers. And it is the active struggle of the white workers against racism that will generate confidence in the power of the united proletariat on the part of the Black workers.

There is no Chinese wall between the partial, reform struggle for democratic rights and the proletarian revolution. The monopoly capitalist class stands firmly in opposition to democracy for Black people because it desperately needs the super-profits it wrings from Black workers and because it even more desperately must maintain the division of the working class and prevent the proletariat from uniting with its natural allies. *It will not and cannot end white supremacy.* Only the overthrow of monopoly by the revolutionary proletariat can do this. For this reason, the democratic struggle of the Black people leads logically, although not spontaneously, to the fight for socialism and the proletarian revolution. It is firstly in this sense that the Black Liberation struggle is a revolutionary struggle.

Secondly, because the mass of the Black people are proletarians, their struggle for equality is inextricably bound up with the broader class struggle. Not only are their interests as part of an oppressed people linked to the socialist revolution, but as workers, their class interests demand the abolition of class exploitation. In life, of course, the Black worker makes no distinction between his interests as a worker and as a member of an oppressed nationality, nor does his boss who unites class exploitation with national oppression in the form of super-exploitation. The concurrence of national oppression and class exploitation in the case of the Black proletariat—which constitutes 90% of the Black people—underlines and deepens the revolutionary

character of the Black Liberation struggle.

The many-sided struggles that Black people are waging throughout the U.S. must be approached in the same way Marxist-Leninists approach any partial, democratic struggle. These struggles must serve to educate, unite and organize the class and the Black people. Communists must bring them the most advanced program and resolute leadership. As schools for the development of revolutionary consciousness, Communists join in these struggles in order to teach—to draw out the lessons and consolidate the understanding the class struggle generates. It is only infantile leftists who stand outside these struggles because of their reform character, because they are not sufficiently "revolutionary". To teach, one has to be in the classroom.

The notion that the reform struggle can only generate harmful illusions about capitalism's capacity to address the needs of the masses is another leftist stupidity. Reforms can to some degree improve the situation of the masses if they are accompanied by mass struggle and organization. Whether these victories generate illusions or not is largely a function of their leadership—reformists will promote such illusions, while Communists will expose them.

Thus, the heart of the Communist program for Black liberation must be the full involvement in the democratic struggle in order to advance it and draw out its revolutionary potentiality.

TOWARD A PROGRAM

Concretely, this means the development of a program of struggle against white supremacy and for Black equality that speaks to the varied forms of Black oppression and bases itself on a correct estimate of the state of the mass movement. All the manifestations of national oppression—discrimination on the job, in hiring, in education and housing, police terror, racist courts and the inhuman prison system, the deprivation of welfare recipients, the inadequacy of health care, the high rate of unemployment—combine to form the content of the day to day life of the Black masses. Marxist-Leninists must bring to the spontaneous resistance that arises on the basis of this oppression the political leadership that can lead these struggles forward.

Communists must make work among the Black proletariat, particularly in basic industry, the main priority. The organization of the Black workers and their emergence within the Black Liberation movement as a conscious force is the requisite for winning the broader Black movement to a correct path of struggle. The primary focus of this work must be in the trade unions and the rank and file movements that have developed within them. Both in Black caucuses and in multi-national forms, the Black workers have been in the vanguard of the class struggle within the trade unions. Their activity provides the clearest example of the merging of the workers movement and the Black freedom struggle. While seeking to strengthen the struggle against discrimination on the job, Communists must work to broaden the content of the Black workers' movement to embrace the full range of political tasks of Black liberation.

Another critical area for concentration of

Communist work must be among the Black youth—in the schools, on the corners and in the prisons as well as on the job. The Black youth represent a tremendous reservoir of militancy. Victimized by racist education, vicious police repression and job discrimination, the Black youth experience the full brunt of national oppression.

A central focus here must be the struggle for jobs. While unemployment is clearly a problem for the whole working class, it is especially the urgent problem of Black youth who in the urban areas now face unemployment rates of close to fifty percent. It is this high rate of unemployment, among other things, that compels so many Black youth to turn to anti-social behavior in the form of drug addiction and crime against other working class and poor people. The individualistic culture of drugs and crime has robbed the proletariat and the Black Liberation movement of many a militant fighter. While multi-national organization of the unemployed of all ages is obviously necessary, a special thrust must be made in the Black community among the Black youth.

The last decade has seen a massive and militant movement among Black prisoners. The masses of Black people incarcerated in the prisons cannot be regarded as a classical lumpen-proletariat. Constricted opportunity, racist law enforcement and criminal justice and the consequent growth of a sub-culture that to a certain extent legitimizes crime as a means of social survival and advancement are the dynamics of national oppression that have produced the Black prisoner. These conditions, combined with the rise of the Black liberation movement, have made the Black prisoner a highly conscious and militant asset of the struggle. On the other hand, the isolation of so many Black prisoners from production, the individualistic conditions of life that prevail in the ghetto culture of the unemployed young, combined with the brutal intensity of oppression in the prisons, breed anarchistic political currents within the prisoners' movement. To these currents Marxist-Leninists must counterpose the perspective of mass struggle.

Yet another special area for Communist work is Black women. On the job the Black woman endures triple oppression manifested in the statistics that show that Black women workers are the lowest paid in the nation. Unemployed Black women, many of them mothers and the sole supporters of their families, are victimized by the welfare system and have organized a powerful mass movement in response to it. Furthermore, Black women are among the most victimized by this country's miserable health care system. Besides being robbed of decent health care, Black and other minority women have been targets for fascistic-style sterilization programs. Besides being a major force in the Black people's and workers movements, Black women are bringing anti-racist and working class politics to the democratic women's movement.

Finally, there is the Black petty bourgeoisie—small businessmen and professionals, grouped in civic, community and professional associations as well as some of the older, established civil rights organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League.

This class has an influence and importance out of proportion to their actual numbers. Traditionally, it has provided much of the political leadership of the Black people. The content of that leadership reflects the ambiguous interests of this class. Since the strategic task of Communists within the Black Liberation movement is to firmly establish the leadership of the working class, work among this strata is subordinate to work among the proletarian sectors, and much of the content of this work must necessarily consist of ideological struggle against the narrow nationalism and reformism characteristic of the Black petty bourgeoisie.

But at the same time, the progressive and democratic content of the struggles being waged by these forces cannot be overlooked and must be supported. Black lawyers, social workers and clergymen have not only made important contributions to the struggle as individuals, but progressive organizations among these strata have also emerged and played a positive role.

The struggle against police repression, racist criminal justice, and legislation aimed at curtailing the democratic rights of the Black people is a central struggle that cuts across all the various constituencies that we have identified here. Repression poses an ever-present threat to the political organization, education, and mobilization of the Black people. The fight against it must be an element in the program of all mass organizations.

Another element in the program for Black Liberation must be solidarity with the struggles of peoples oppressed by imperialism both in the U.S. and throughout the world. The ideologies and practice of white chauvinism and a generalized national chauvinism toward the peoples of the third world are closely related. The strength of Black opposition to the Vietnam war demonstrated this understanding is already widespread. Of particular importance is the bond between the Black people in the U.S. and the African peoples. As the Communist International noted in its 1928 resolution:

The Negro Race everywhere is an oppressed race. Whether it is a minority [USA, etc.], majority [South Africa], or inhabits a so-called independent state [Liberia, etc.], the Negroes are oppressed by imperialism. Thus a common tie of interest is established for the revolutionary struggle of race and national liberation from imperialist domination of the Negroes in various parts of the world.

This is no less true today.

Within these varied struggles, it is the responsibility of Marxist-Leninists to win the Black masses to a working class approach to struggle. This has several elements: First of all, it means correctly identifying the enemy as monopoly and its agents rather than the white masses. Communists must put forward the perspective of Black-white unity in opposition to racism and class exploitation. Secondly, Communists must stand for the viewpoint of mass struggle as opposed to relying on politicians, poverty program agents and other misleaders. Active

mobilization of the masses around their own needs, and political demands that correspond to them, must be counterposed to the notion of substituting the terrorist activity of a revolutionary "elite" for the action of the broad masses. Narrow nationalism in the form of Black capitalist schemes and petty bourgeois reformism that seeks to tie the Black movement to the coat tails of white liberal politicians both represent retrograde bourgeois trends within the Black struggle that must be defeated with proletarian ideology and practice.

The tasks of Communists in regard to Black Liberation are by no means limited to the struggles of Black people. On the contrary, the main task is to win the whole working class and other progressive forces to a position of active struggle against national oppression and to a decisive rejection of white chauvinism. The key to achieving this task is the linking of the struggle against racism to the rest of the class struggle. The struggle against racism is a key part of the class struggle, but this is not evident on the face of it to the white masses because of the strength of chauvinist ideology. Thus we cannot pose the question of racism abstractly. We must expose racism as a weapon of the bourgeoisie and show how it is used to set the whole working class back.

Here special attention must be given to work in the trade unions which, as the broadest and most powerful mass organizations of the class, have a critical role to play. Within the trade unions, the struggle against racism is a key thrust of the rank and file fight to unseat the labor bureaucracy. This struggle, which unfortunately has been carried forward largely by the Black workers on their own, must be broadened to include the white workers. Its political character must be deepened by showing the ties between racism and class exploitation generally and by exposing the racist policies of class collaborationism on the part of the bureaucracy. (For a full treatment of the struggle against racism in the trade unions see *Racism and the Worker's Movement*, a PWOC class struggle trade unionism pamphlet.)

In every mass organization, in every struggle, Communists have a duty to bring the fight against chauvinism to the fore. Only if this is done can the unity of the class be forged and the United Front be built.

THE QUESTION OF FORMS

The organizational forms which the Black Liberation struggle and the fight against chauvinism utilizes are as varied as the struggle itself. Marxist-Leninists do not seek to impose an organizational blueprint on the struggle, but instead are guided by the concrete needs which that struggle generates as it develops.

Today both multi-national and national organizations exist at all levels and in all the various spheres of this struggle. There is no political value judgment that can be consistently attached to the diverse forms that exist on the basis of whether or not they are multi-national. Multi-national Communist organizations and advanced multi-national rank and file organizations are the most mature forms that exist,

corresponding to the high level of class consciousness these forms embody. But then there are also spectacles of multi-nationality like the NAACP which reflect the comprador-like stance of sections of the Black petty bourgeoisie on the one hand and the paternalistic, chauvinistic attitude of white liberalism on the other. There are national forms that are exclusive as a matter of principle like the RNA or the Nation of Islam. And then there are national forms that simply reflect the segregated geography of the U.S. like hundreds of progressive Black community organizations. Still other all-Black organizations reflect the absence of a serious struggle against racism on the part of whites as in the case of many Black caucuses.

There are also many all-white organizations that are, at least in word, committed to the fight against racism. Some of these organizations are genuinely progressive in many respects. Their composition is in many instances a reflection of the misguided "parallel struggles" attitude that pervaded the New Left—the idea that whites must organize whites and Blacks must organize Blacks. This idea rests on a utopian idealist approach to the struggle against racism. Only multi-national organization can consistently and effectively carry out this struggle. A working multi-national organization assumes a high level of commitment to struggle against chauvinism on the part of its white members. If this is not present or does not rapidly develop, the organization will succumb to chauvinism.

There can be no justification for an all-white organization. In one way or another, it can only be a reflection of a failure to carry out a consistent struggle against chauvinism. For those organizations, including many Communist collectives, whose all white composition is to some degree a reflection of the prevailing forms and ideologies of the sixties, the task is to root out these attitudes and begin a serious struggle to build multi-national organizations on the basis of a principled fight against chauvinism.

In approaching the task of mass organization, Communists naturally seek to develop multi-national forms which correspond to the need to simultaneously fight against racism while forging class unity. But at the same time we recognize that under a variety of concrete circumstances, all-Black organizations are necessary. We would favor building such organizations in situations where a low level of anti-racist consciousness on the part of whites precluded principled unity. What we must oppose in principle is national exclusiveness, the idea that people unite around color or nationality rather than on the basis of formulated political objectives.

SOCIALISM AND EQUALITY

While there are considerable advances that can be made under capitalism, and indeed must be made if class unity and the united front are to be forged, the abolition of national oppression is only finally possible on the basis of proletarian revolution. However, the winning of state power by the working class does not eliminate the need for a special approach to national oppression. Neither the material nor the ideological

manifestations of inequality vanish at the moment the dictatorship of the proletariat is realized. On the contrary, the abolition of all the vestiges of national oppression requires a conscious and systematic struggle that must be conducted over the whole epoch of the transition to Communism.

To underline the importance of this struggle and give it concrete expression, Communists must include in the program for Socialist Revolution specific measures aimed at the abolition of national oppression. In relation to national minorities, we should emulate the Bolsheviks, who called for the enactment of a special law "prohibiting all national privileges without exception and all kinds of disabilities and restrictions on the rights of national minorities." (Stalin) In the U.S. such legislation would ensure the right of national minorities to freely develop their own culture. It would ensure equality in the realm of language, a particularly important demand for the Chicano and Puerto Rican minorities.

Under the auspices of the dictatorship of the proletariat, such revolutionary democratic legislation, unlike bourgeois civil rights laws, would be taken very seriously and strictly enforced. Violations by state officials and acts of racial discrimination by individuals would be treated as felonious offenses.

The Socialist program must also call for regional autonomy for the Black people in the remaining areas of the Black Belt where large concentrations of Black people continue to live and constitute a majority of the population. The Black Belt areas of South Carolina and the Mississippi delta are such regions. The state and county boundaries which were drawn with the effect of denying Black people their democratic rights must be replaced by boundaries that allow the Black people to exercise regional autonomy.

The Socialist state must make among its highest priorities the rapid elimination of material inequality between the oppressed peoples and the rest of the U.S. population. Preferential measures must be employed to eradicate these inequalities in short order. For example, the revolutionary state would give first preference in building new housing in the decaying inner cities and rural southlands. Investment in education would allocate the most resources to the schooling of children of the oppressed nationalities. Accelerated job upgrading would be initiated in all sectors of the economy. The goal of the revolution would be to wipe out the ghetto, the barrio and all the other material expression of hundreds of years of national oppression within a generation.

Simultaneously, an intense ideological struggle would have to be waged against white chauvinism. Socialist culture must aim at a far-reaching purge of the racist stereotypes that characterize the art, literature and journalism of bourgeois U.S. society. Public education would incorporate the struggle against white chauvinism into all aspects of the curriculum. The advocacy of white supremacy or any measures injurious to the interests of the national minorities would be strictly outlawed. All racist organizations would be repressed.

Only a protracted ideological struggle against all the remnants of chauvinism, combined with a

program of socialist reconstruction that rapidly eliminates material inequality, can insure the total destruction of national oppression which is the promise of the proletarian revolution.

THE MULTI-NATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

It is perhaps the most elementary axiom of Leninism that the class struggle cannot spontaneously proceed to the proletarian revolution but requires the highest degree of consciousness, direction and organization. The concrete embodiment of the conscious element is the proletarian vanguard party which, on the basis of its revolutionary theory, leads the working class and its allies along the difficult road to power.

The critical need for a communist party is no where clearer than when we consider the task of uniting the class and forging the United Front between the proletariat and the oppressed nationalities. Spontaneity means subservience to bourgeois ideology, to chauvinism and nationalism. While the spontaneous workers' struggle generates embryonic forms of Black-white unity, without the maturation of class consciousness this unity cannot find a firm and lasting basis. It remains uneven, imperfect and fragile.

It co-exists with popular expressions of chauvinism, disunity and racial strife characteristic of the narrow and backward outlook that dominates the consciousness of the U.S. working class today, particularly the mass of white workers. The contradictory expressions of the spontaneous struggle often co-exist within the same individual worker who one day will unite with his Black class brothers on the picket line while the next day will sign a petition to stop the busing of Black children into his neighborhood.

This behavior reflects the low level of class consciousness among the workers. The dominant tendency is to view the world from a narrow special interest or trade union point of view, rather than from the vantage point of the whole class. This outlook narrows the horizon of the worker and leads him to see his immediate interests as contradictory to other groups of workers. White chauvinism represents a historically specific form of this narrowness, the most vicious and poisonous expression of bourgeois ideology in the ranks of the working class. The struggle against white chauvinism is thus bound up with the struggle to develop and advance the class consciousness of the workers. It cannot be divorced from this context.

It is the role of the Marxist-Leninist party to provide the all-sided political leadership that will break the hold of spontaneity and smash the ideological and organizational hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the working class. Without the party—without the leadership of Marxist-Leninists who represent the most scientific and developed expression of the proletariat's interest—the workers' movement remains locked in the strait jacket of an uneven reform struggle within the framework of bourgeois society.

The struggle to defeat chauvinism is a central component of the overall struggle to transcend the spontaneous, fragmented character of the mass movements against monopoly in the U.S. today, and

in their stead create a conscious revolutionary movement. The prerequisite for the building of such a movement is the proletarian vanguard party and the building of this party is the central task for Marxist-Leninists in the U.S. at this time.

In relation to Black Liberation, the role of the Party is to provide the political leadership that can succeed in achieving the "merger" of the workers' movement with the struggle of the Black people. The tasks associated with achieving this unity have already been outlined. It is clear that these tasks are not realized on the basis of spontaneous struggle, but only on the foundation of persistent, protracted and conscious struggle. It is the party that develops the consciousness of these tasks among the masses and leads the fight for their attainment.

The party obviously must possess the correct strategic line as well as grasping the full range of tactics necessary for the implementation of the line. Revolutionary theory on the national question, a correct theoretical analysis of the character of Black Liberation, is the requisite for political leadership. But it is not the only thing. The party cannot test its theory except through its application, except through its practical activity in the mass movements. The party cannot lead without cadre, without strong roots in the mass movements of the working class and the national minorities. The party must be able to draw to it and recruit the most advanced fighters from the proletariat and the oppressed nationalities. The party must clearly be a multi-national party. Bundist conceptions of nationally exclusive "communist" organizations have no place in our movement and it is a sign of the growth of our movement that no Marxist-Leninists today hold any brief for such notions.

In the process of establishing the party's political leadership, there is a division of labor that obtains between white Communists and Communists of the oppressed nationalities, a division of labor that involves distinct political tasks. The primary duty of white Communists is to bring the struggle against chauvinism to the white workers, to actively win them to the fight against national oppression. For the Communists of the oppressed nationalities, the task is to fight national aloofness and win Black workers to actively unite with the white workers in the class struggle.

It is the successful execution of these tasks that makes the Communist party a sharp instrument in the struggle for Black Liberation and Proletarian Revolution. It is also the carrying out of these tasks that provides the basis for the internal multi-national unity of the party. If this does not occur—if the white comrades neglect the struggle against chauvinism or if the Black comrades do not combat bourgeois nationalism—then there can be no principled unity. Again, *it is the fight against chauvinism that is primary and decisive*, for its existence in the party is no less corrosive than it is in the class as a whole.

The party must remain vigilant in the fight against white chauvinism within its own ranks. The attitude that this is a "liberal" or moralistic indulgence can only set the struggle against chauvinism back and

harm the party's unity.

At the same time, the party cannot tolerate caucuses along national lines within its own ranks. Forms of this sort encourage a separatist approach to the struggle against racism. It institutionalizes the notion that the struggle is the special province of the minority comrades. It unites comrades according to nationality rather than on the basis of principle.

Any caucus, by demanding the subordination of its members to its line in opposition to the line of the party, is by its very nature factional and a clear violation of democratic centralism. Any attempt of a particular group of party members to claim autonomy or special authority above and beyond the democratic centralist determination of the party as a whole on the basis of nationality (or sex for that matter) is simply Bundism and cannot be tolerated.

A form does not need to exist that will serve to advance the theory and practice of the party in relation to Black Liberation and supervise the internal

life of the party in order to rid it of chauvinism. This form must be a special party commission with a mandate from the party as a whole to carry out this work. Such a commission should be composed of leading comrades with special experience and ability in the anti-racism fight. While the commission would be predominantly Black it cannot be a national form and the involvement of qualified white comrades must be sought.

We have been discussing the role and character of a party that currently does not exist. Both white and Black Marxist-Leninists are going to have to intensify the struggle for theoretical clarity, correct line, and a more advanced practice in the struggle against white chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism in order to lay the basis for bringing together the presently scattered and disunited forces into a single, powerful communist party.