

Introduction

In the Sept./Oct. 1981 issue of *THE 80's*, I wrote, "The legacy of the new communist movement with regard to the national question is a rich one. The proletarian elements who emerged from the powerful national movements of the 60's and 70's are among the best and most dedicated revolutionaries. . . . The communists from the Afro-American national movement spent many years struggling through Pan-Africanism, cultural nationalism, and many other views to seek out and discover the true source of the oppression of black people and the scientific guide of Marxism-Leninism to liberation. The Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO) played a major role in fighting for a correct presentation of the Afro-American national question and the question of national minorities in relation to the multi-national proletariat and the struggle for socialism. In the course of the struggle, there was (and is) a danger of one-sidedness among comrades from oppressed minority backgrounds. But this was not (and is not) the main problem. The main struggle in the movement has been against chauvinism, against revisionism and Trotskyist liquidation of the national question, from both the 'left' and the right."

The articles contained in this pamphlet are six years old. They were originally drafted as part of a WVO (predecessor to the Communist Workers Party) commissioned study of the Afro-American national question. The articles address the concrete historical presentation of the national question (periods and types of national questions); the development of racism and its relationship to national oppression in the Black Belt South; and common revisionist and

Trotskyite errors on the national question both in the experience of the Communist Party, U.S.A. and in general. While many of the names and organizations discussed in the articles are unknown to some or by now long forgotten, the arguments made are still valid and relevant today. The Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee position on the dissolution of the nation in the Black Belt South, for example, is hardly different from the "peaceful dissolution" theses of the Revolutionary Union years ago. Likewise, the race analysis of the Line of March today echoes the earlier position of Harry Chang. Both the RU and Harry Chang followed the footsteps of Lovestone and Trotsky decades before them. The tendencies we address are therefore both deep-seated and historical.

The Afro-American national question takes on particular significance in the context of the objective revolutionary situation today. There is a greater opportunity to unite the multi-national working class in a common struggle for jobs, peace and equality. At the same time there is a greater danger of reaction: racist attacks, chauvinist scapegoating, and even genocide of black people which is sanctified by the U.S. government. The Afro-American people must already face the fact that there is no recourse in the federal government. The biggest racist in the country is sitting in the White House. The future and hope of the Afro-American people is in socialism; chauvinism and liquidation of national oppression and struggles will only postpone the socialist revolution.

PHIL THOMPSON
Central Committee Spokesperson
Communist Workers Party, U.S.A.