

The Path of

NEGRO

LIBERATION

By

BENJAMIN J. DAVIS

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INTRODUCTION

The position of the Communist Party of the United States on the question of Negro rights is that the Negro people are entitled to immediate and unconditional political, social and economic equality in all aspects of American life, civil and and military.

At the plenary session of the National Committee of the Communist Party held in New York, December 3-5, 1946, this position was infused with a profound Marxist-Leninist content. The Party at this meeting adopted a resolution which recognized the Negro question as the national question within our country and placed the Party squarely in support of the right of self-determination—or self-government—for the Negro people in the Black Belt area in the South where they are in the majority. This is now the policy of the Communist Party, although not a slogan of immediate action. And it fundamentally strengthens the effectiveness of our Party—and of the Negro people and their labor-progressive allies—in the fight for the full citizenship of Negro Americans in all the current struggles of the day.

The booklet, entitled *The Communist Position on the Negro Question* (New Century Publishers), contains the resolution adopted at the above-mentioned meeting of the National Committee, plus excerpts from the discussion at this historic meeting.

This pamphlet contains the main report on this question upon which the discussion was based. The two pamphlets, in addition to the eighteen months of democratic discussion which took place throughout the Communist Party prior to adoption of the resolution, provide the main foundation of the Party's position. Answers will be found in the two publications to many of the questions raised in the course of the extensive discussion.

Some aspects of the question require specialized and more extended treatment, which will be done as quickly as possible. Other aspects of the question will be clarified in the course of life itself. In any event, neither of the two pamphlets is exhaustive, although they provide the essential framework and guide to all further work in this field. For maximum benefit it is recommended that this pamphlet be read in conjunction with *The Communist Position on the Negro Question*.

This pamphlet makes no pretense at dealing at length with a host of immediate issues—for example, the anti-lynch and anti-poll tax legislation, the necessity for an F. E. P. C., the ouster of Bilbo, the pro-fascist Talmadge coup and the South, and the whole gamut of Jim Crow discrimination and segregation—around which there are and must be many current struggles. These questions are dealt with only insofar as they have a bearing upon the trends among the Negro people toward the goal of their full liberation. How to win immediate battles against the national Jim Crow system as they manifest themselves in a thousand different forms is of the most urgent importance. The main questions here are of a tactical nature on how to develop a national united Negro peoples' movement and at the same time establish the closest conscious ties of collaboration between this movement and the organized labor movement on a minimum program against the trusts and monopolies. This, too, deserves specialized handling. Meantime, it is equally necessary to realize that the formulation of our ultimate position on the Negro question will help win victories on the immediate issues.

What this pamphlet does that is new, is to approach the question of self-determination from the point of view of the thinking and trends among the Negro people themselves. This is basic to an all-sided approach to the question. It constitutes one of the soundest guarantees against first, the left sectarianism from which our original adoption of this position in 1928 suffered; and, secondly, against the right opportunism of revisionism which led ultimately to the anti-Marxist negation of the right of self-determination altogether. Only through relating the position to the thinking and trends among the

Negro people and their allies can the many developments which have taken place since 1928 be taken into account.

It is to be hoped that the publication of this pamphlet will assist in illuminating the path to the full freedom of the Negro people, and will stimulate further the rich contributions of the Party membership, without which the sound and correct position of our Party could not have been taken last December, 1946. Not only will this policy greatly strengthen the struggle for Negro rights, but it will effectively contribute to the building of a mass Communist Party among the Negro people as well as among their white, working class allies.

BENJAMIN J. DAVIS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Benjamin J. Davis, the author of this pamphlet, is one of the foremost leaders of the Communist Party, a member of its National Board and Chairman of the Harlem Division of the Party's New York State organization. He is also President of the Freedom of the Press Company, publishers of the leading labor newspapers in the United States, *The Worker* and the *Daily Worker*.

Loved and respected not only as a leader of the Communist Party, but also as a militant spokesman and champion of the rights of the Negro people, he was elected in 1943 to the Council of the City of New York, and re-elected in 1945 to a four-year term, with one of the highest votes achieved by any candidate.

Formerly a defense attorney in the Scottsboro and Angelo Herndon cases, his active participation and leadership in the labor and Negro people's movements started in the South in 1933, and he has since become a national figure, particularly in the field of struggle for Negro rights and advancement.

THE PATH OF NEGRO LIBERATION

By Benjamin J. Davis

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THE Negro people have reached the highest level of maturity of any period during their struggles. This is indicated in their militancy, along with their white allies, in their battle for freedom and against the present lynch terror drive against them. Secondly, it is noted in their growing and increasingly conscious alliance with the labor movement, especially with the most advanced section of that movement, the C.I.O. Thirdly, it is to be noted in the wide and sympathetic influence of the Communist Party among them, sometimes congealing into an alliance.

Despite the extreme proscriptions against them, the Negro people during their 300-year history in the United States have made phenomenal contributions to American democracy—in the labor movement, in science, industry, statesmanship, art, education, sports, agriculture, the armed services, in artistic endeavors and in all other walks of life.

In its present phase, the struggle for Negro liberation is concerned with gaining equal rights throughout the country, and in the South, representative government and land reform. As our own history shows, particularly during Reconstruction, development towards full and equal participation in state and federal government also moves in the direction of various forms of self-government by the Negro people, together with their white allies, in the Black Belt areas where they are in the majority. The fight which the Negro people are putting up in the South against the poll tax, the white primary and other restrictions against the ballot, their efforts to run for public office and to have a voice in the governmental bodies

in the South is in the direction of self-government—which is the highest right that a nation can possess.

This movement provides the basis for a long-range solution for the full realization of Negro nationhood, whether under our present capitalist social system, or under Socialism. The Communist Party gives unqualified support to this movement, including the right to self-determination for the Negro people—that is, their right to realize self-government in the Negro majority area in the South and on this basis determine freely their relation to the Federal and State governments.

Further, the Communist Party maintains that there is no other perspective that fits the rising self-government and equality demands of the Negro people, the conditions of their struggle, or their present status as a people in the American nation.

NEGRO PEOPLE A NATION

Since the prime roots of the oppression of the Negro people, on a nation-wide scale, are in the Black Belt areas of the South, we must look here to ascertain their true status. In order to wage a successful fight on the day-to-day issues of Negro rights and to defeat the objectives of capitalist Tories, the ultimate, long-range perspective of democratic solution of the Negro question must be clarified and fully settled. Otherwise, one cannot distinguish which trends and developments are growing and permanent, however weak at the moment, and those which are temporary and disappearing, however strong at the moment. The conscious seizure and development of that which is new and rising, sound and permanent—even though not fully developed—is the key to the complete liberation of the Negro people, as it is to the emancipation of the working class of our country.

The Negro people in the Black Belt are a nation and possess the basic characteristics of a nation. According to the only scientific definition of nationhood, given by Stalin:

A nation is an historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture.

Fears may be expressed that this definition comes from Stalin as if from the brow of Jove. However, it will be found that every country or people in the world today which is popularly as well as accurately described as a nation, possesses the basic characteristics of nationhood analyzed by Stalin. The Black Belt area in the South is the core and main center of the Negro nation in America.

When, over 300 years ago, the Negroes were first brought to this country against their will, they were enchained in chattel slavery and did not ripen into nationhood over night. Even before the Civil War they had certain common characteristics, namely, a common land, language and psychological make-up growing out of their common oppression. But it was not until after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery that they developed the higher qualities of nationhood even though in elementary form.

They have developed a strong proletariat, a petty-bourgeoisie, professionals and middle class, and a distinct, although weak capitalist class, landowners and industrialists. The Negro bourgeoisie is almost 100 per cent confined to the Negro market for its profits. All sections of the Negro people are subject to national Jim Crow oppression. The great majority of the Negroes in the Black Belt area are sharecroppers and poor farmers—almost physically attached to the soil through peonage and debt slavery. They tend the land which has been their common territory for over 300 years, but which they have never owned due to semifeudalism and poverty. This land is owned by the big Northern trusts, insurance companies and banks in an alliance with the semifeudal landlords of the South.

Under the conditions of capitalism and the abolition of slavery since 1865, the Negro has become a composite whole—that is, a nation—and are no longer just a transplanted agrarian people living under conditions of slavery or semi-feudal plantation system. Obviously, the Negro people would have reached a higher level of maturity as a nation, had their growth not been partially stunted by the extreme rigors and double oppression of the Jim Crow system which served to

blunt and smother their consciousness of nationhood. No one can speak of the full freedom of the Negro people in the Black Belt of the South unless willing to remove all obstacles to their full, conscious growth as a nation, leading to their own self-government.

RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Only the Communist Party supports the right of the Negro people in the Black Belt area where they are a majority, to self-determination. The sound view of the Communist Party is that the Negro question in the United States is different from that of all other minority groups and peoples in the United States, although having certain marked similarities; that the Negro question is a national question—the question of an oppressed nation, all strata of whom must be supported against the crushing weight of American imperialism at home.

The right of self-determination has been assailed as Jim Crow and segregation—viciously and wrongfully, of course. Yet the main centers of the Jim Crow system—the semifeudal landlords and the big Northern trusts—are violently opposed to it and never have found word or deed inflammatory enough to condemn it to their satisfaction. They see in it, of course, the germ of self-government for the Negroes, and the doom of the super-oppression of the Negro and the degrading of the poverty-stricken whites.

If as yet today, the Communist Party is the only organization which supports this right of the Negro people, it will not seem strange to the Negro people and to sections of their white allies that the Communists should take the lead in supporting the right of Negroes to the highest expression of equality. Unfortunately also, our Party is the only organization in America advocating and working for Socialism. But undoubtedly this demand in time will become the property of all sections of the working class and the people. Progress has to begin somewhere, and we are justly proud—although not surprised—that it begins again with our own Party.

However, widespread honest misconceptions with respect

to the right of self-determination have been created by our Party's own incorrect interpretation of this concept. This was a serious weakness in our Party's work among the Negro people and generally. Our adoption of the slogan in 1928 was a big step forward in the fight for Negro rights and was a unique Marxist-Leninist contribution to the fight to enhance American democracy. It was the lever for moving labor and the people against the Jim Crow system as in the historic Scottsboro case. But unfortunately (except for Browder revisionism, when the slogan was dropped altogether) the Party propounded this slogan in a sectarian and Leftist manner. This tended to make it misunderstood and unacceptable to the Negro people and their advanced white allies. In the past, the progress of our Party, resulting in its high prestige among the Negro people, was the result of our Party's recognition of the Negro question as a national question; but it was in spite of the incorrect sectarian manner in which our basic position and the self-determination perspective were put forth.

There were other misconceptions concerning this slogan for which our Party must share responsibility. Among them was the failure to emphasize sufficiently the stake of the white workers and poor farmers in the South in supporting the right of self-determination; secondly, the schematic and mechanical presentation of self-determination, as if our Party had the omniscient last word; and, thirdly, that our promulgation of the slogan left the impression in wide circles that self-determination necessarily meant separation of the Negro people from the national land and country of which they are a part—America. All of these misconceptions we must now categorically reject.

The only way to avoid these serious pitfalls is by relating the right of self-determination not only to the present status of the Negro liberation struggle, but above all, by examining the thinking and trends among the Negro people themselves.

Where are the Negro people going in their efforts to free themselves from national oppression and win full citizenship? Why don't the Negro people raise the demand of self-de-

termination? What demands are they raising? How are they seeking to achieve these demands?

CONSCIOUSNESS OF NATIONHOOD

In the first place, the Negro people are not yet conscious of their nationhood. The full realization of this fact on their part is a pre-condition to their raising the demand of the right to self-determination. The Negro people are a relatively young nation, in formation only during the last 80 years. They have not yet reached the point of political maturity where they recognize and accept the concept of nationhood and fight for the slogan of self-determination. Nations must pass through a period of growth and maturation.

Not even our own American working class has reached full political maturity. It took the American nation a much greater period to arrive at maturity and nationhood sufficient to fight for and win the right of self-determination from the British Crown. Some of the Latin American nations had great difficulty in acquiring national consciousness, and other attributes of nationhood. But many have matured into national consciousness. The Negro people in the United States are now in the process of acquiring such national consciousness.

The main difficulties which have tended to retard the developing national consciousness of the Negro people are:

1. The capitalists have skillfully used the concept of race to justify their oppression on the grounds that the Negro people are a biologically inferior race. This is the substance of the so-called theory of "white supremacy," which is the ideological basis for the whole system of Jim Crow and national oppression of the Negro people. Because of certain so-called racially physical characteristics in the overwhelming majority of cases, it has been easy to single out the Negroes for special oppression. This has been used by the bourgeoisie to lend a sort of diabolical plausibility to their lying protestations of the Negro's inferiority. This has compelled the Negro people to fight intensely against this myth of racial inferiority and the segregationism that accompanies it. In consequence

this makes them highly suspicious about any proposals, even those of national self-determination, that would set them apart from the white population. Preoccupation with this question of racial discrimination tends to obscure the more basic conception of their status as a nation. But it would be a major error to underestimate the large role that the concept of race and physical characteristics plays in the intensification of anti-Negro oppression.

2. A second ideological barrier to the development of national consciousness among the Negro people is the general question of American democratic traditions. Negroes rightly feel themselves to be Americans and are justly proud of their country's democratic traditions. They take great pride in the contributions they have made to develop these traditions. Their attitude toward discrimination is that they want this cancer eliminated from the country in order that they can more fully realize their birthright as full-fledged American citizens. Thus as a young and developing nation, they do not yet see themselves as a nation within the broad American nation. They are inclined to think of themselves as an oppressed minority section of the American people, even though they recognize the specially vicious character of that oppression.

3. Situated literally in the bosom of the largest and most powerful capitalist nation in the world, it is difficult for the Negro people, the most impoverished and defenseless section of the population, to picture themselves taking a stand as a nation, and as demanding the right of self-determination.

4. The ideological barrage which the bourgeoisie has laid down against the concept of self-determination is creating confusion and distortions calculated to conceal its self-governing, land-owning features and other fundamentally progressive features.

Despite the fact that the Negro people have not reached fully mature recognition of its nationhood, of demanding self-determination, their general orientation is clearly in the direction of achieving consciousness of nationhood.

First, what so-called solutions and courses of action are the Negro people rejecting?

The Negro people do not regard mass assimilation, amalgamation, or intermarriage or any other form of physical absorption into the white majority of the nation as a solution of their just demands. At the same time, they correctly realize the bans against intermarriage as a "white supremacy" practice and energetically fight against it.

Secondly, the Negro people have rejected the utopian Back-to-Africa movement as advocated following World War I by Marcus Garvey. The fact that this scheme is now advocated by the Ku Kluxer Bilbo shows its reactionary character. Experience and their political maturity have exposed the unsoundness, the utopianism and utter impracticability of this scheme.

Thirdly, the Negro people are not dispersing their organizations and giving up their struggles and simply relying upon the good-will, generosity and leadership of the American capitalists to lead them to the promised land of economic, social and political equality, as Browder and Browderism recommend. Their foresight in this regard is matched only by the ferocity of the drive of the monopoly capitalists today against labor, the Negro people, Jews and the foreign born as well as against other minorities and mass living standards. The Negro people are realizing that such capitalists cannot be relied upon but must be fought tooth and nail in order to defeat the anti-Negro drive and win equal citizenship rights.

Fourthly, the Negro people have rejected mass migration from the South, as fantastic and essentially impracticable. At the same time, they fight vigorously against the debt slavery, peonage and lynch law which keeps them chained to the land in violation of their right to move to any section of the country in search of better opportunities. Instead of giving up the land as implied in mass migration, they are fighting for land reform and land ownership.

Fifthly, they have rejected the 49th State idea which was to carve out artificially, with no regard for their political roots or homeland, a separate state in the most undesirable section of the country on a Jim Crow basis, with forced migration into such a Jim Crow, segregated state.

Sixthly, the Negro people are not looking in the South toward a separate Negro Republic.

NEGRO PEOPLE'S MILITANCY

What, then, are the courses of action being followed by the Negro people?

1. They have reached a degree of militancy higher than at any time during their modern struggles. They are fighting, together with their white allies, for political, social and economic equality and first-class citizenship, and are seeking to integrate themselves into every walk of American life on the basis of equality. Examples are to be seen in their fight against the poll tax, lynching, Jim Crow in the armed services, job-discrimination and other manifestations of discrimination.

Some notable successes have been achieved. State F.E.P.C.'s have been secured in several states, and in a large number of states the fight to enact such fair employment agencies on a state scale are being constantly pressed, while the struggle for a national F.E.P.C. goes on unabated. Restrictive covenants which are the basis of the Jim Crow ghettos are under sharp attack and important legal victories have been won against them as in California. Victories have been won against Jim Crow and segregation in some A. F. of L. unions, like the boilermakers and railroad workers, although there is a much greater distance to go. Despite the victory of the Republicans nationally, the number of Negroes elected to local offices in the last elections was increased. A high point of their militant efforts in this direction was the American Crusade to End Lynching which compelled certain meager concessions from the Attorney-General with reference to the prosecution of lynch terror. In New York, the Freeport case was forced into the political arena as one of the major issues of the election campaign, and helped to expose the clay feet of the Hoover-G.O.P. idol, Gov. Dewey. The Negro veterans are in the vanguard of daily struggles for equal rights.

Those organizations and leaders among the Negro people stand highest who are identified with the struggles of the

Negro people. The old-fashioned crass Uncle Tom who played the role of the bourgeoisie in heading off the struggles of the Negro is at the lowest ebb of prestige in the Negro communities. The growing Negro proletariat has played an ever-increasing role in leading the Negro liberation movement, collaborating with progressives in middle class circles of the Negro people.

2. A consistent thread running through the movement of the Negro people today is the fight for unity of the Negro liberation struggle. In the North and South, the Negro people are attaining a new high level of unity around the issues that face them on every front. Such efforts are seen in the fight for a national permanent F.E.P.C., the ousting of the self-confessed Ku Kluxer and fascist Bilbo, the outlawing of the Klan and other fascist organizations, the prosecution of lynch-ers, the fight for veterans' rights, housing, jobs, education and health facilities on a national as well as a local basis. Around these, the principal issues of equal rights, the Negro people are fighting on a national basis, to a degree hardly equalled since the Civil War.

Red-baiting—Wall Street's secret weapon of division, disunity and confusion—has been rejected more overwhelmingly by the Negro people than by any other section of the population. This has been done in the face of overwhelming pressures upon them by the bourgeoisie and its propaganda agencies, and despite certain centers of Red-baiting within their own ranks, principally from those who don the mantle of labor such as A. Phillip Randolph, the main outpost of Dubinsky Social-Democracy among Negroes. No organization of the Negro people is following the correct and effective trend of development among the Negro people unless it is energetically pursuing the goal of unity among them. While there is no single organizational expression of unity among Negroes, there is a general ideological unity on a national scale on all the principal issues of equal rights.

3. Facilitating their orientation toward unity on a national scale, the Negro people are building their organizations. The most dramatic example of this trend is the growth of the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. But also the Negro people are building the United Negro and Allied Veterans, the National Negro Congress, and other organizations. In the sphere of trade union organization, the Negro workers have contributed to their growth to a marked degree.

In 1940, the N.A.A.C.P. membership was a little over 75,000. Today it is over 550,000. In five years it has secured almost six times as many members as during its whole 27 previous years of existence. This period of growth corresponds to the period of the greatest increase in the Negro's militancy and national consciousness, which increase was a natural outgrowth of the war.

DEVELOPING NATIONAL CULTURE

4. The Negro people are developing their national culture and national consciousness. The culture of Negro people which has already profoundly affected American culture in general is showing tremendous vitality. The latest period on Broadway has been marked by the vitality of numerous plays involving Negro themes and artists on an unprecedentedly high level, thus counteracting to a marked degree decadent trends in the legitimate theatre. In the field of art, music and literature, Negro culture leaves its specific imprint.

An indication of the developing national consciousness of the Negro people is the way they consider themselves more and more as the "Negro people" rather than as the Negro "race." Reputable scientists and anthropologists in America and the world over have dealt irreparable blows to the so-called theory of "race inferiority," and with this the whole myth of "purity of race" has declined. Although there are many different designations current among Negroes, the concept of "people" is beginning to be the one most generally accepted. It is interesting that the *Chicago Defender*, major national Negro weekly, which first popularized the concept of "race-man," is today one of the principal spokesmen of the collaboration of the Negroes as a *people* with labor and white

progressive forces. The developing maturity of the Negroes, plus the well-established influence of the Communists among the Negro people, have played no small role in helping to promote this higher concept.

A considerable sense of solidarity with the colonial peoples has grown among the Negro people now fighting for liberation—and not just with Africa and the West Indies, which is keenly uppermost in their minds, but also with India, the people of China and the Pacific as well as with the people of Latin America and other colonial and semi-colonial countries.

5. The solution of the national question in the Soviet Union, where formerly Czarist-oppressed nationalities today have their equality and their national autonomy and identity, is a subject of profound interest and study by the Negro people. Frequently the Negro press carries highly informative material on the freedom of minorities in the Soviet Union. This is a topic of wide conversation among all sections of the Negro population.

6. In the South, a veritable revolution of progressive changes is taking place, which will bring benefits to the entire country. A proper estimate must be given to the pioneering role of our Party in laying the basis over the years for many of these developments.

In their courageous resistance to the lynch terror, the Negro people are playing a leading role in the fight for democracy. Their efforts in this regard are shown by the self-defense of the Negro veterans, their families, relatives and friends in Columbia, Tenn. In Mississippi, the Negro people have defended themselves with arms in accordance with their rights in protecting their homes against Ku Klux officials. In many communities, in the heart of the Black Belt, the Negro people braved lynch terror to cast their ballots for the first time since the Reconstruction era. The white workers and sharecroppers for the first time since Reconstruction and the Populist movement, have begun to ally themselves in considerable numbers with the Negroes against the poll tax and the white primary.

Typical of the voices being raised in the South for Negro and white unity is that of a representative of the Teamsters

Union in Atlanta who declared at a Southern gathering: "The fight against the subjugation of the Negro will also free the white man." Such progressive organizations as the Southern Negro Youth Congress and the Southern Conference for Human Welfare are enjoying an ever-wider influence. Voices from among both liberals and workers' groups are being raised against segregation and discrimination. Although no cases of punishment of lynchers have taken place, developments have reached the point where Negro veterans have been upheld in their right to defend themselves and homes and families against lynch mobs, as in the Columbia, Tennessee, verdicts. Labor's organizational drive in the South—particularly, the C.I.O.'s—has shown progress in setting up non-Jim-Crow unions.

It is clear that the terrifying, violent character of the anti-Negro drive in the South is an effort to arrest these developments and to save the political lives of the Bilbos, Rankins and Talmadges, many of whom have been retired in recent elections by the voters. This vicious terror is not the expression solely of reaction's power, but also of its desperation.

The very core of the progressive developments taking place in the South is the tenacity of the Negro peoples' struggles to vote, hold public office and to secure representative government, in order to establish some limited guarantees of attaining the elementary necessities of equal citizenship.

These factors indicate that the Negro people are on the way toward recognizing their status as a nation, and will eventually adopt the slogan of self-determination with corresponding practical demands for their economic, social and political freedom. Although today in the North and South they are putting forth the demands of equal rights, demands appropriate to those of an oppressed national minority, they will, when reaching full maturity, raise these demands to correspond to the new stage of their struggle for national liberation.

Consequently the Negro people are moving in the direction of some form of statehood in the Black Belt. This would mean an adjustment or rectification of the lines demarking 12 states

through which runs the Black Belt area where the Negro people are in a majority. The states involved are Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas. According to the 1940 census, the Black Belt contains 172 counties of acknowledged Negro majority, where the total population was 4,107,248, and the Negro population 2,594,660, or 63 per cent. But these counties are only the core. The Black Belt overflows to 368 adjacent counties whose boundaries cut across a naturally contiguous majority. On this basis the real Black Belt spans 540 counties, with the total Negro population about 4,500,000, a third of the Negro population of the country. Statistical indications are that the migrations of World War II, unlike those of World War I, did not have any appreciable affect on the basic composition of the Black Belt area.

American history shows that for far less sound reasons, than to give a subject nation the right of self-determination, county, borough and even state lines have been changed and adjusted. State lines have been many times adjusted in the course of American history.

TOWARD A BI-NATIONAL STATE

The orientation of the Negro people is such, however, that statehood would take place within the confines of the United States. The growing development of the Negro people has practically disintegrated any remaining nationally organized centers of separatism among them; and the Negroes look, and justly so, with extreme skepticism upon any concepts which would isolate them from their American citizenship rights.

Indications are that the Negro people are not seeking a separate Negro Republic in the South, but are more definitely veering toward relationships obtaining in a bi-national state, toward the relationships analogous in some respects to those of the French-Canadians toward the rest of the Canadian people.

However, while supporting the right of the Negro people

to self-determination, the Communist Party does not seek to impose any specific solution in advance, nor does it prematurely raise self-determination as an immediate slogan of action. The solution must arise from the living movement itself, out of the struggles for democracy and equal rights. Its form of expression or coming into being will also be determined by the level of class relationships in the country as a whole and by the relation of the Negro people to the progressive coalition. The lessons of the bi-national and multi-national states in other parts of the world will be extremely helpful in helping to arrive at a final solution appropriate to the specific and peculiar conditions of our own country.

We must not underestimate the stake of the white workers and poor farmers in the Black Belt area, in achieving the right of self-determination. For the first time, they would have the guarantee of freedom from the exploitation and poverty imposed upon them by the common enemy, the big trusts and semifeudal landlords. Equal citizenship among Negro and white in such a state would be the highest expression of Negro-white unity. The increasing unity between Southern Negroes and whites shows this is possible. During the Reconstruction period only, where the Negro people approached self-government, did the white masses impoverished by slavery, enjoy the benefits of full suffrage and progressive government.

In summary, while boldly supporting the right of self-determination of the Negro people, as the logical, necessary and only solution to the growing national aspirations of the Negro people:

1. We should avoid presenting the slogan in any manner whatsoever that creates the impression that self-determination would necessarily lead to the creation of a separate Negro Republic. Separation is only one form it could take, and life itself shows that the Negroes have a contrary orientation. Nor would self-determination entail the forced migration of Negroes elsewhere to the area of self-government.

2. The question of race should not be brushed aside as in the past. The role of racial prejudice in intensifying the oppression of the Negro people must be recognized, and its

relation to the larger, more basic political question of national oppression of the Negroes shown. This question must be further studied.

3. Our advocacy of the slogan must correspond more closely to the general stage of the national development which the young Negro nation has attained. We must adopt as a major task the awakening of the Negro people's consciousness of nationhood, purposefully seizing upon those sound and permanent trends developing among them and fighting beside them to develop them to higher levels. The slogan of self-determination should not be presented in schematic, or mechanical manner or in any other fashion as would assume that the Negro people are a nation fully matured politically.

4. We must more concretely connect the question of Socialism with the fight of the Negro people against oppression. We must point out that while their present fight for economic, social, and political equality, and their eventual struggle for national self-determination are indispensable for their welfare and freedom, it will only be under the Socialist transformation of society, that they, together with the white working masses, finally and irrevocably achieve full liberty, equality and prosperity.

5. We must not make this a slogan of immediate action but must point out its long-range character flowing out of existing conditions and class relationships involving many factors. We must be sensitive to the past that the bourgeoisie and all its henchmen will seek to distort and discredit it even as they do Socialism and every other major step toward progress proposed in the country.

6. The adoption of this slogan in no way interferes with, but strengthens, the effectiveness of the fight for the basic policy of our Party on the current issues, all over the country—namely for full, unconditional, social, economic and political equality of the Negro people in all aspects of American life.

THE COMMUNIST POSITION ON THE NEGRO QUESTION

A compilation from reports and discussion speeches at the Plenary meeting of the National Committee, C.P.U.S.A., December 3-5, 1946, together with the Resolution on the Question of Negro Rights and Self-Determination. This booklet includes material by the following:

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