

Must Clarify the Negro Question in the Pre-Convention Discussion

Comrade Haywood Draws Lessons from the XIII ECCI Plenum for Our Work Among the Negro Masses

By HARRY HAYWOOD

The XIII Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International characterized the present international situation as a period of a new round of wars and revolutions, and of the maturing of the objective prerequisites for a revolutionary crisis and world war.

What is the political significance of this analysis for the Negro question in the U. S. A.? What is its implications for our work among the Negro masses? Already the resolution of the XV Plenum of the Central Committee of our Party, in estimating the events in Tallapoosa County (Reeltown, Ala.) where Negro croppers and poor farmers resisted with arms in their hands, the attempts of landlords and sheriffs to expropriate them declared:

"The Negro question in the South is one of the most sensitive sectors on the home front of American imperialism, a point where revolutionary explosions are most imminent."

Must Fight Back Orgy of Fascist Lynch Terror

The fascist New Deal program of the Roosevelt administration directs its sharpest blows against the Negro masses and has resulted in an all-around strengthening of national and social oppression. The N.R.A. codes, with their differentials, legalize discrimination against Negroes in industries; the Farm Acreage Reduction Plan (cotton plow-under program) results in the further ruination of the Negro agrarian masses in the South. The "No-Plow" program of 1934, which proposes to take 40,000,000 acres of cottonland out of production, is a virtual death sentence for thousands of croppers and poor farmers and their families.

These attacks on the economic field are being accompanied by the wildest orgy of fascist lynch terror, persecutions, and lynch frame-ups. In the South, the capitalist landlord offensive assumes its most murderous and plundering forms.

The bold application of the

Leninist program of the Party in the work among Negroes in these conditions of deepening crisis and sharpening national oppression, has led to a great advance of the revolutionary movement of the Negro masses for national liberation. The activities of the Party around the Scottsboro issue, the campaign against lynching, unemployed struggles, North and South, strike actions involving large sections of Negroes—St. Louis, Buffalo—the further development of mass struggles and organization among the Negro poor farmers and sharecroppers in the Black Belt—all this has brought the Party forward as a leader among broad masses of Negro toilers throughout the country.

Thus there is taking place a progressive sharpening of all contradictions between the Negro masses and American imperialism. There can be no doubt but that the Negro question has become a major question in the political life of the country. The national revolutionary struggles of the Negro masses is already a powerful factor in the sharpening of the crisis of American capitalism, and, depending upon our ability in the further organization and leadership of mass struggles, it will become an important instrument in hastening the maturing of the revolutionary crisis in the United States. The mass movement around Scottsboro brought to light in the sharpest manner the extreme tension of class and national antagonisms in the South. It revealed the smouldering fires of national rebellion among Negroes, which may break out into the open at any moment.

"Even some relatively insignificant acts of the Ku Klux Klan bandits on the Black Belt can become the occasion for important political movements, provided the Communists are able to organize the resistance of the indignant Negro masses. In such cases, mass movements of this kind can easily develop into real

rebellion. (ECCI Resolution 1930).

Negro Question Most Explosive

The Negro national question takes on extraordinary importance in connection with the developing war situation. There can be no doubt that the national revolutionary struggles of the Negro masses for land and freedom constitute an explosive sector in the rear of American imperialism, for to paraphrase the slogan of the Irish revolution: "America's difficulties are the Negro people's opportunity." The feeling of the Negro masses, today stronger than ever, to take advantage of the difficulties of American imperialism which would accrue from a war situation, will undoubtedly be an important factor in the next war. The fear of a blow in its rear from the national liberation movement of the Negro masses is already causing great concern to the imperialist national government. For some time, already, the War Department has been carrying through a policy of disbanding Negro regular army regiments as active combat units, and has ceased the recruitment of Negroes into the regular forces. It is significant that Mr. Charles Houston, N. A. A. C. P. leader, warned his imperialist masters of the dangers of defection of the Negro masses in the event of war. Mr. Houston, in the hearing on the Costigan-Wagner "anti-lynch" bill said:

"... I think that you and the country both should know that there is grave disillusionment and deep distrust among large elements of the Negro population, especially in the South... And the time may come in an international crisis when the loyalty or disloyalty of one-tenth of the population may spell the difference between national success and national disaster; and that day unless sooner wiped out, the country may reap the lynching harvest."

Growing fascism carries with it a strengthening of white chauvinist

propaganda among the masses in an attempt to disrupt the rising revolutionary fight of Negro and white toilers against the New Deal offensive at home, and for consolidating the "national front" for imperialist aggressions abroad. The existence of an oppressed and outlawed Negro nation within a country affords a convenient target for rising fascism in the country. The ferocious chauvinist lynch wave sweeping the country, is at the same time a cloak under the cover of which the forces of fascism are mobilizing, not alone against the Negro masses, but against the revolutionary movement of the whole working class. Just as Hitler used the Jewish question in the interests of German fascism, so his American counterparts are attempting to use the Negro question to promote fascist reaction in the United States. The ruling class South with its backward semi-feudal social structure based upon the violent plundering of the Negro masses and the degradation of the white toilers, with its Negro-baiting shibboleths of "white supremacy," "race purity," is a fertile breeding ground for rising fascism in the country.

The XIII Plenum of the E.C.C.I. places the fight against chauvinist ideology as a central task in the mobilization of the masses against growing fascism and the war danger.

"The Communists must daily and concretely expose chauvinism to the masses in every country and oppose it by proletarian internationalism; in the imperialist countries come out determinedly for the independence of the colonies, for the liberation of the dependent nations from all national oppression."

Expose Social-Fascists and Negro Reformists

In this connection, it is particularly necessary to carry through persistent exposure of the social-fascists—Socialist Party leaders, A. F. of L. bureaucrats, who are acting as the main social bearers of white

chauvinism in the labor movement. Under the formula of the Negro question as a "pure" labor question, as opposed to an oppressed nation, they gloss over the national oppression of the Negro people by American imperialism and consequently reject the struggle for Negro rights. In practice, the counter-revolutionary activities of the Socialist leaders is best exemplified in their vicious sabotage of the united front around the Scottsboro issue and in the campaign against lynching.

The fight for proletarian internationalism for the unity of the Negro and white toilers also necessitates a more popular and persistent exposure of Negro reformism, "which takes advantage of national oppression in order to further its own bourgeois class aims."

Reformists in Desperate

Demagogy

The Negro reformist leaders of all shades are feverishly working to halt the revolutionary drift of the Negro masses, to hinder the growth of working-class unity in the struggle against rising fascist reaction. Thus we see the new maneuvers of the N. A. A. C. P. leadership against the rising mass anti-lynch movement, as witnessed in the bringing forward of the so-called Costigan-Wagner anti-lynching bill, the increased demagogy on the field of economic struggles, particularly around the N.R.A. codes. In this way they are being more and more revealed as the chief social prop of imperialist reaction among the Negro masses—as the main enemy within the ranks of the Negro people.

Indicative of the present situation is the appearance of definite "left" reformist trends and movements, already in part characterized in the Draft Resolution for the Convention: neo-Garveyism, the petty bourgeois around the issue of jobs for Negroes, (Costigan, Baltimore, Negro Alliance, Washington, D. C. etc.) the movement for a united front of the darker races under the leadership of Japanese

imperialism, known in some places as the Pacific movement (Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, etc.), the Jim-crow nationalist movement for a 49th State (Chicago). These movements are particularly dangerous because camouflaged with anti-imperialist slogans while propagating the wildest, reactionary utopian ideas. However, much more material is necessary on these latest reformist trends based on the experiences of the comrades in the field.

National Rebellion on the order of the Day

The present situation in the Negro national liberation movement places on the order of the day the preparation and organization of the national rebellion of the Negro people as an integral part of the task of preparation of the American working class in the struggle for power. This means an energetic and bold putting forth of our full program, equal rights, confiscation of the land, self-determination, and the closest linking up of the fight for the specific demands of the Negro masses with every phase of the general fight of the whole toiling population against growing fascist reaction. It means the speedy overcoming of all weaknesses, and shortcomings in our work among Negroes on the basis of the line laid down in the resolution of the XIV Plenum of the Party, and the Open Letter of the Extraordinary Conference. In this connection, it is important to bear in mind the resolution of the C. I. (1930) on the Negro question, which states:

"Whether the rebellion of the Negroes is to be the outcome of a general revolutionary situation in the United States, whether it is to originate in the whirlpool of decisive fights for power by the working class, for proletarian dictatorship, or whether on the contrary the Negro rebellion will be the prelude of gigantic struggles for power by the American proletariat, cannot be foretold now."