

DEPENDENCY VERSUS DIALECTICS, TWO LINES OF ANALYSIS
ON THE AFRO-AMERICAN NATIONAL QUESTION

Comrades, colleagues, and friends:

The general concept of "dependency" is for many people a useful tool in the analysis of Afro-Americans in the United States because it links by analogy the internal exploitation of black people with the external exploitation of the peoples of the world by USA monopoly capitalism. We will argue that this is a mechanical error, and reflects an attempt to arrive at greater clarity through a conceptual shortcut. Even if it is done with good intentions, it ends up serving the interests of capital. Indeed, as Lenin pointed out, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

We will argue that the dynamic historical motion of this society, the dialectical development of the internal relations, has many contradictions in which we find the interpenetration of opposites. This basic theoretical point, when grasped in its concrete manifestation in USA history, is the key to developing strategy and tactics for revolutionary change in the USA. Therefore, we have titled this paper "Dependency versus Dialectics" in order to sharply contrast these two views.

Our aim is to set the matter straight, and convince you that dependency theory is not a useful approach to understanding the exploitation and oppression of Black people in the USA. This is an important task, in part because it is a self-criticism and repudiation of views we incorrectly held at an earlier period, and in part because these views are prevalent in intellectual circles, and held by a significant sector of the middle class. We present this paper as a polemic, a polemic with definite intellectual and political implications.

There are several basic axioms of dependency theory that must be

specified in order to understand the basic parameters of our subject.

- A. First, it is assumed that there are at least two distinct entities, countries or nations that each have a separate origin and historical development;
- B. Second, it is assumed that after contact, at least one of these two entities achieves economic, political and cultural dominance over the others.
- C. And third, it is assumed that the dominated entity increasingly becomes dependent on the dominant one, meaning that its economic, political and cultural development is shaped to serve the needs of the dominant society.

This is also the abstract model used in an attempt to illuminate the basic character of Afro-American people in the USA as an internal colony.

In general, this is a kind of mechanical logic and gross empiricism that focuses on pieces of reality, presents them in isolation and raises this to a level of theoretical abstraction. This view mystifies the dialectical complexity of the material reality of Afro-American life, and fails to point to the dynamic process of the struggle for socialism in the USA. Instead this approach seeks to substitute a weak, historically bankrupt, reformism by holding up a two stage theory of revolution for our critical study of the essential features of Black people's history. It plays on the opportunism of the middle class, whips up their visions of grandeur, (e.g., getting a bigger piece of the pie), and tries to make reform seem like revolution, when it draws the analogy of the civil rights movement and economic reforms with the independence movements in the third world. This approach, for the last century has been a tactic of the ruling class to pervert our analysis and defuse our struggle.

Continuing on a general theoretical level, it will be useful to sketch out a critique. Then, we will examine three particular manifestations of this application of dependency theory to the reality of Afro-Americans in the USA.

1. The first point is that colonialism is not a static phenomenon, but rather an expansionist policy that changed its content based upon the fundamental changes in the metropolitan countries. We can point to differences as far back as Rome, and as close as mercantile and early capitalist society, in contrast to the later development under monopoly capitalism, in order to prove that things might look the same but differ on the basis of the character and development of the society. Lenin puts it this way in Imperialism:

Colonial policy and imperialism existed before the latest stage of capitalism, and even before capitalism. Rome, founded on slavery, pursued a colonial policy and practiced imperialism. But "general" disquisitions on imperialism which ignore, or put into the background, the fundamental difference between socio-economic formations, inevitably turn into the most vapid banality or bragging, like the comparison: "Greater Rome and Greater Britain." Even the capitalist colonial policy on previous stages of capitalism is essentially different from the colonial policy of finance capital.

(Lenin, Vol 1, pp. 731-732)

This historical difference, essential to understanding the basis of european expansionism, is one side of the equation. Moreover, the level of material development and political organization of the colonized country is the major

factor, a factor that also dictates different patterns of development.

2. A second point is that with the development of the first socialist country, there was a qualitative change in the political meaning of colonialism, not in terms of the colonizing force, but in terms of the political meaning of the anti-colonial struggle.

Stalin puts it this way:

Formerly the national question was usually confined to a narrow circle of questions, concerning primarily "civilized" nationalities.... (Through the victory of socialism) the national question was thereby transformed from a particular and internal state problem into a general and international problem, into a world problem of emancipating the oppressed peoples in the dependent countries and colonies from the yoke of imperialism. (Stalin, Foundations of Leninism, page 71)

Moreover, an additional factor is that the struggle in the third world is based on peasant masses, whereas Afro-Americans are firmly rooted in the proletariat.

3. A third point is that the forced migration of workers is characteristic of all periods of domination of one country by another, but the meaning of this depends on the historical period, and the concrete circumstances of this entire process. Black people were captured and brought to the USA as slaves, the most brutal coercion of any mass forced migration of workers in the history of the world. But this should not blind us to the reality that this reflects for the relationship of the captains of industry to the workers of less developed countries throughout the world. Consider what Lenin says about another aspect of this:

Capitalism has given rise to a special form of migration of

nations. The rapidly developing countries, introducing machinery on a large scale and ousting the backward countries from the world market, raise wages at home above the average rate and thus attract workers from the backward countries.

Hundreds of thousands of workers thus wander hundreds and thousands of versts. Advanced capitalism drags them forcibly into its orbit, tears them out of the backwoods in which they live, makes them participants in the world-historical movement and brings them face to face with the powerful, united, international class of factory owners.

There can be no doubt that dire poverty alone compels people to abandon their native land, and that the capitalists exploit the immigrant workers in the most shameless manner. But only reactionaries can shut their eyes to the progressive significance of this modern migration of nations. Emancipation from the yoke of capital is impossible without the further development of capitalism, and without the class struggle that is based on it. And it is into this struggle that capitalism is drawing the masses of the working people of the whole world, breaking down the musty, fusty habits of local life, breaking down national barriers and prejudices, uniting workers from all countries in huge factories and mines in American Germany, and so forth.

America heads the list of countries which import workers. (Page 82, Lenin on the United States)

It is the essential similarity that must be seen here. In addition, it is also necessary to see that the slave system, a subsystem of the overall capitalist society, was the basis of a different history for Black workers. However, as we shall point out, the civil war ended the slave system and opened up new potentialities for working class unity in a direct confrontation with capital in the fight for socialism. This is a fact of historical

periodization, in which the nature of the historical process changed.

A basic way that this changed is that during slavery, Blacks were held apart from the benefits of bourgeois democracy in a retarded form of social and economic development. Therefore, a struggle against the slave system, even if it was led by elements that wanted to fully establish capitalist relations was progressive in that it weakened the rule of the capitalists and would have represented progress for Black people and the whole society. However, with the Civil War, the constitutional amendments, and a change in the production relations the veil was lifted and this bourgeois democracy was fully exposed as insufficient for the masses. This is true even though bourgeois democracy was never fully achieved by Black people. The objective score card approach, which lists "rights" achieved and "rights" not achieved, is not the correct approach to understanding this. The fact is that the essence of this society, the dictatorship of the capitalist class, was exposed and the lesson learned that the full freedom for Black people was only possible with the end of capitalism and the creation of socialism.

Before the Civil War a two stage revolution was possible, the first stage being an end of slavery and the creation of a bourgeois democracy, and then a fight for socialism. But the Civil War happened not as a separate fight for the national liberation of the Afro-American people, but as a convulsion of the whole society, in which the working class as a whole joined in the fight against this reactionary and degenerate system of slavery that infected the entire society. Now there is no longer a revolutionary character for any sort of bourgeois movement. In this society, with the level of development of capitalism at its highest point, the only revolutionary struggle is the fight for socialism, one mighty leap, one decisive break, one

qualitative rupture with the past.

This is the theoretical basis for our approach to the question of dependency theory and the case of Afro-American people. It is important to take up some of the concrete manifestations of this in order to fully grasp the importance of this polemic.

(B)

We have identified three major varieties of this dependency theory.

We shall call them

1. Cultural assimilation theory
2. Genocide theory
3. Internal colony theory

The first position is the thesis put forward in various ways by Robert Park, Gunnar Myrdal, Moynihan and Glazer, and a host of others. The basic thesis is that the only hope for Blacks as a group of people is to eliminate any group differences, and disappear into the dominant society. Robert Park had a Rudyard Kipling version of Black people. His misguided paternalistic liberalism is revealed by the following statement that the Afro-American

Has always been interested rather in expression than in action; interested in life itself rather than in its reconstruction or reformation. The Negro is, by natural disposition, neither an intellectual nor an idealist, like the Jew; nor a brooding introspective, like the East Indian; nor a pioneer and frontiersman, like the Anglo-Saxon. He is primarily an artist, loving life for its own sake. His metier is expression rather than action. He is, so to speak, the lady among the races.

(Ralph Ellison, Shadow and Act, New York: Random House, 1964, Pages 307-308).

Park puts forward a teleology that identifies a race relations cycle as the inevitable process in which Blacks disappear as a group - first conflict, then amalgamation and assimilation. This clearly affirms that the only context for the "freedom" of Black People as Park views it, is in the clutches

of the bourgeois social order.

Myrdal presents a pathological formulation of this line by saying that Blacks are simply the obverse reflection of whites, and, by implication, are totally dependent upon them:

" . . . The Negro's entire life, and, consequently, also his opinions on the Negro problem are, in the main, to be considered as secondary reactions to more primary pressures from the side of the dominant white majority."

And therefore, when he sums up the American dilemma he roots it in the dominant group. Somehow, Black people are so dependent, they don't seem to really or essentially count as an independent force in any possible future changes.

The most blatant liquidationist formulation is by Glazer and Moynihan when they simply state that "the negro is only an american, and nothing else. He has no values and culture to guard and protect."

In sum, this is the adopted junior brother thesis that views the oppression of Black people as child beating. The key problem is the contradiction between the child being totally dependent upon the parent, and yet the parent criminally beats the child. What flows from this approach is that the education of white people, or, the more systematic process of desegregation, is key to the solution. All efforts to end the problem by assuring democratic rights and inter-racial contact fall here. This view is clearly championed by optimistic liberals who function, even if naively, in support of capitalism.

The second major position is that of the genocide theorists. The basic premise of this group is that the historical role of the Black worker has been eliminated, phased out, and, since the society has always been hostile towards Black people, the Fascist solution of physical extermination is a

real possibility. Wilhelm asks the question "who needs the Negro?" and basically answers that they are not needed.

Wilhelm writes:

White harboring constant antipathy toward non-white people, white America could not dismiss the Black man until the intervention of machines severed its dependency upon labor. Now the economics of technology combines with white racism to make possible the Negro's total exclusion and possible extermination.

After much postponement due to economic dependence on Black labor during the last 350 years, the Negro question finally transforms into the Indian question. What is the point, demands white America, in tolerating an unwanted racial minority when there is no economic necessity for acceptance? With machines now replacing human labor, who needs the Negro?

(Sidney Wilhelm, Who Needs The Negro, pages XV-XVI, 334)

Yette's formulation is that based on this obsolescence a choice exists, and the choice of the ruling class has been made.

Whether Blacks have a place in US society is a choice that belongs to the nation. That choice was audaciously called to the attention of white America early in 1960, when four Black college students sat down at a North Carolina lunch counter reserved for whites. For the ten raw years of the 1960's the nation noisily grappled with its choice: freedom or death for Afro-Americans.

By the end of the decade, Blacks were forced to face the evidence heaped painfully upon them. The evidence showed that a choice had been made, and freedom was denied.

(Samuel F. Yette, The Choice, Page 19)

These are scare tactics, the opposite of the assimilationist position.

Both of the genocide positions blindly focus on technology as the major factor. Moreover, the politics of the issue are treated in an equally lopsided way, simply as the politics of the ruling class. There is no objective basis for this view in the working class, because of two fundamental facts:

- A. The working class is the only basis that the capitalists have to make profits, through low wages and high prices, and the working class is the human tool used to fight imperialist wars of aggression around the world;
- B. The working class has a long history of struggle in the USA and, contrary to being afraid of capital, despises it in anticipation of the strategic victory of socialism but in the short run it takes it very seriously.

These genocidal screams are the way a very insecure sector of Black middle class forces reacts to economic crisis. They actually fear for their own social standing and privilege, so they apply their fears to everyone. Even in the face of the syphillis experiments, the programs of forced sterilization, police murder, and many other fascist like programs, the answer of the working class is different from these weak-kneed elements. The working class pulls together in a mighty multi-colored fist to beat the monster to death, as McKay said so eloquently "And for their thousand blows deal one death blow." In our analysis we answer Margaret Walker's call to "Let the marital songs be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now rise and take control."

By comparison, the assimilationists hold out the carrot that germinates the urge of cultural (and to the extent that it exists national) suicide, the genocide theorists hold out the stick and generate a kind of Spenglerian

gloom, a fatalist eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die approach, or a more vicious collaborationist approach like the Jews in the concentration camps who saved themselves by pushing other Jews into the gas ovens. All of these are perversions, and attempt to force Black people into a degenerated state. This is the lot of a significant sector of the Black middle class.

The work of Harold Cruse, James Boggs, Charles Hamilton, Robert Allen, William Tabb, and Robert Blauner are the most widely cited applications of the internal colony formulation. How does this formulation view the structure of society and the process of social change? Rather than the precision of a surgeon's scalpel in dissecting the particular character of the changing reality of Black people, we find a discussion of the Black experience in rather broad strokes, asking us to accept by faith the validity of the colonial analogy. In the words of Harold Cruse:

From the beginning, the American Negro has existed as a colonial being. His enslavement coincided with the colonial expansion of European powers and was nothing more or less than a condition of domestic colonialism. Instead of the United States establishing a colonial empire in Africa, it brought the colonial system home and installed it in the southern states. When the Civil War broke up the slave system and the Negro was emancipated, he gained only partial freedom. Emancipation elevated him only to the position of a semi-dependent man, not to that of an equal or independent being.

As a wage laborer or tenant farmer, the Negro is discriminated against and exploited. Those in the educated, professional, and intellectual classes suffer a similar fate. This is much more than a problem of racial discrimination; it is a problem of political, economic, cultural and adminis-

trative underdevelopment.

In The Political Economy Of The Black Ghetto, William Tabb is arguing that the ghetto is a colony focused on political dependence and economic control and exploitation. But his discussion of the economic aspect is one-sided, an undialectical characterization of the process of development going on in the whole society. Correctly, Tabb emphasizes the importance of cotton grown through the brutal exploitation of slave labor in the rapid expansion of the U.S. economy between 1790 and the Civil War. But we find no mention of the simultaneous development and expansion of the cotton textile industry in New England and in parts of the south. The production of textiles gave rise to the industrial bourgeoisie and to the emergence of the industrial proletariat. Such a one-sided view is used further to discuss subsequent periods of the Afro-American experience. The result is that Tabb incorrectly assesses the relationship of Black people to the development of USA monopoly capitalism in general, and to white workers in particular. He concludes.

The Blacks act as a buffer pool, keeping labor costs from rising. In this way the entire society benefits by receiving goods and services more cheaply and white unemployment is cushioned.

From Tabb's own statement--and certainly from a thorough-going class analysis--we see that not all whites benefitted equally from racism. In fact, most whites did not materially benefit from racism and this even greater exploitation of Black people at all. White workers suffered because, as Tabb states, labor costs--meaning their wages--were kept lower by the threat of unemployed or underemployed Black workers. As a result of keeping labor costs low, white capitalists were enabled to make even bigger profits at the expense of Black and white workers.

This tendency to gloss over the material class contradictions and class struggles that characterize the real world--as well as ignoring the objective class unity of white and Black workers--is one of the most serious shortcomings of the internal colonial analogy.

Other formulations of the internal colonial analogy have been equally as one-sided, focusing more on the superstructure with almost no attention to the economic base. Robert Blauner, for example, in "Internal Colonialism And Ghetto Revolts," initially discussed four basic components of the colonization complex:

- 1) Forced, involuntary entry;
- 2) Effect on cultural and social organization;
- 3) Special relationship to governmental bureaucracy and the legal order; and
- 4) Racism, "A principle of social domination by which one group seen as inferior or different in alleged biological characteristics is exploited, controlled, and oppressed socially and psychically by a superordinate group."

Thus, the political and cultural factors--especially racism--are viewed in isolation from the economic factors.

It is the impact of this formulation in resulting practice in addition to its incorrectness as an abstract theoretical model that concerns us here. The internal colonial analogy, though conceived with good intentions of linking the exploitation of Black people and their struggles with the exploitation and struggles of the Third World, was in essence always the opposite of what was intended. Its real class content has become much clearer in subsequent practice. The internal colony analogy is used as an ideological justification of the efforts to secure personal gain by the Black middle strata at the expense of the Black masses. Many of these gains

have come as the struggles of the masses have been pimped and fronted off as a lever to pry dollars and positions from the U.S. ruling class and their agents.

We should make clear our view on the importance of the role of the masses in the making of history. While the struggles of the masses in the 1960s and in all periods is a good thing, it is the tendency of the petty-bourgeois middle strata towards being easily bribed and coopted that we here point out and criticize. While the masses waged heroic struggles, many of the programs created and concessions that were forced ended up serving the interests of a few Black people and having no meaningful impact on the lives of the masses of Black people. A few examples of this from several sectors should serve to illustrate how these victories from struggle have been consolidated by the middle class at the expense of the masses.

- 1) A few Blacks talked their way on to the boards of imperialist corporations as if a few Black faces in high places would improve the lives of the millions of Black and working people exploited by these corporations.
- 2) We have seen the proliferation of Black studies programs that have repudiated the initial goals of Black Studies to serve the struggle of Black people and fight to build a new society. These programs have become mere J-O-B-S for a growing, vacillating strata of bribed Black intellectuals.
- 3) Corporate, government and foundation grants are hustled in the name of the people, with little intention of developing and sustaining programs which speak to the real problems that Black people face.
- 4) Black capitalism is supported through the development of

small Black businesses, giving the impression that these businesses can somehow blunt the impact of monopoly capitalism on Black people.

- 5) Faith in capitalist democracy is strengthened by those who tell the masses that electing Black politicians like themselves on the local, state, and national level, is necessary or is even a first step in getting to the root of all the problems which Black people face - The dictatorship of the capitalist class. A most recent example is the religious zeal which characterized Black support of Jimmy Carter, with many saying that he will do something for Black people other than continue to aid the U.S. ruling class in the exploitation and oppression of Black people.

And all of these acts are carried out under the guise of "decolonizing the ghetto," of getting more control of the Black community (or colony) into the hands of Black people. And here we see the second major error of the internal colony analogy: its substitution of Black exploiters for white exploiters. This willingness--this desire--on the part of some Black people to exploit other Black people to enlarge their own individual pie has characterized the Black experience since the African slave trade and the existence of Black slave owners in the U.S. In the recent period, it has been a recurring theme among the small but growing group of Black capitalists. In the words of Floyd McKissack in his book 3/5 Of A Man:

By not providing economic opportunity for the former slaves, America missed the one chance to absorb Black people into the economic system. By developing Black capitalists at an early date, capitalism could have bought a great deal

of time with a comparatively short investment. . . Ownership of businesses in the ghetto must be transferred to Black people, either individually or collectively. . .

One needs only to survey the pages of Black Enterprise, the magazine of the emerging Black capitalists, and compare it with the class interests found in Fortune magazine to see that Black capitalists have the same thing in store for Black people that white capitalists have always had.

However, there has been an anti-capitalist tendency in some of the formulations regarding the Black internal colony. It is this formulation that seems most consistent with the struggles and aspirations of the masses of Black people. Robert Allen's Black Awakening In Capitalist America reflects this anti-capitalist view:

Black people cannot afford the social injustices of capitalism. They cannot afford a system which creates privileged classes within an already superexploited and underprivileged community. They cannot afford a system which organizes community resources and then distributes the resulting wealth in a hierarchal fashion, with those who need least getting most. Neither can Black people afford some half-hearted compromise which would make the Black community in general, and its educated classes in particular, subservient to the expansionist needs of corporate capitalism. Of course, capital must be accumulated to make possible the economic development of the Black community, but this must be done in a way that precludes the enrichment of one class at the expense of those below it. (p.231)

But because of the mechanical way in which the internal colony analogy is applied. The strategies for social change they propose are reformist and

inconsistent with the current conditions of struggle for Black liberation. Those who uphold the internal colony have opted for a two-stage theory rather than viewing the current struggle for Black liberation as an integral aspect of the struggle of the American working class against capitalism, for socialism. Tabb, for example, in The Political Economy Of The Black Ghetto, is quite explicit on this point:

There is a small but growing number of Blacks who see their struggle for autonomy and collective control over their communities as only the first step toward imposing new national priorities and forms of social and economic organization. Should Black militants move beyond an essentially trade-union mentality, then they will be projecting the so-called two-stage revolutionary strategy: first the nationalist or racial struggle for power in the Black community and then, in alliance with white groups, a class struggle for state power.

(p. 143)

In our view, this two stage theory represents an incorrect view which serves the interest of monopoly capitalism. It raises the spontaneous struggle for reform to the level of principle rather than seeing the constant efforts of the bourgeoisie (and their agents) to support and encourage reformist struggle, to divert the struggle of the masses away from revolution and keep it safe within the bounds of monopoly capitalism. The emphasis on reforms in the two-stage theory of revolution represents tailing behind the struggle of the masses rather than boldly educating the masses about the objective necessities and inevitable victory of revolutionary struggle in the United States.

Robert Allen can argue for "the dismantling of capitalist property

relations in the Black community and their replacement with a planned communal economy." Rather than confront the strategy and tactics for dismantling the capitalist property relations of monopoly capitalists in general, he revives DuBois' utopian scheme of a cooperative commonwealth (as made more profound by Harold Cruse). Other tactics call for links with revolutionary forces around the world, and links with domestic allies after building an independent Black political party. These reformist views flow from the incorrect view of the strategy and tactics of building revolutionary struggle in the United States. The view that results from the application of the colonial analogy which Allen states "lies at the heart of this study," (p. 2) is his reformist "transitional program":

Since the masses of Black people are not going to be integrated into the economy in the foreseeable future, as the reformers would have one believe, and since there are few signs of an imminent revolution in this country, contrary to the hopes of some radicals, it is necessary for the Black liberation movement to devise a transitional program, which will operate until such time as conditions develop that will make possible full liberation through social revolution. This program must be aimed at building a mass revolutionary organization, and it must facilitate community development and offer constructive interim reforms. (p. 231)

William Tabb's The Political Economy Of The Black Ghetto is more a summary of reformist strategies than anything else, no doubt consistent with Tabb's work as described on the book's cover: "Consultant to a number of government agencies on problems of income redistribution." Indeed, Tabb states his view on the dominant reformist character of the first stage,

the national or racial liberation stage, especially his expectation of the major role to be played by the state:

The type of policies which will probably get government endorsement in the coming years is likely to be neither a massive reallocation of national resources to serve the needs of our low-income groups, nor the acceptance of a police state. Before the latter is forced on the nation there are a number of reforms which can be attempted. (p. 34)

The book goes on to discuss the more likely of these reforms including: Black capitalism, community development corporations, cooperatives, location subsidies to encourage imperialist corporations to relocate in the ghetto and provide jobs for Black people.

While we are aware that some of those we have cited have changed their views in varying degrees, as we ourselves have repudiated our earlier use of the internal colony analogy, it is important that we study the more widely quoted examples of these incorrect views because of their continuing influence in certain circles. To reiterate our main point, the use of the internal colony analogy--the reliance on dependence as opposed to dialectics--has led many to an incorrect view of the dynamic historical motion of this society and the process of developing the strategy and tactics for revolutionary change in the U.S. In short, contrary to the view of those who uphold the internal colony model, the struggle is not for higher pay or for better conditions under which Black people can continue to be exploited. The struggle is to end the entire system of exploitation itself.

Now that we have exposed some of the most essential shortcomings and incorrect features of these three petty bourgeois attacks against the revolutionary struggle of Black people, it is imperative to sketch out the correct approach. Of course, what is meant by the correct approach is the stand, viewpoint and method of the proletariat, the revolutionary perspective of dialectical materialism as summed up in the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism.

As Stalin indicates,

The solution of the national question is possible only in connection with the historical conditions taken in their development. . . to repeat: the concrete historical conditions as the starting point, and the dialectical presentation of the question as the only correct way of presenting it - such is the key to solving the national question.

(Stalin, Vol. 2, pp 325,331)

Following this framework of analysis, we will address three basic questions:

1. What is the identity of Black people?
2. What is the principal contradiction facing Black people?
3. What is the revolutionary strategy for change?

Identity: This has been a major question for each generation to grapple with, just as the self consciousness of the working class has had its ebbs and flows. Some of the main aspects of this are revealed in the following questions:

1. What is race? And what role does it play in history?
2. What relationship do Afro-Americans have to Africa?
3. What relationship do Afro-Americans have with White Americans?
4. Do Afro-Americans constitute a nation in the USA?
5. What role do class differences have on the identity of Black people?

6. What are the differences between objective and subjective factors in determining the identity of Black people?

At best, in this speech we can only present the broad outlines of our analysis. Our basic approach results in a determination that Black people constitute a nationality, within a complex network of social forces, the main one being the overwhelming proletarian character of Black people. The objective fact of race, genetics, etc., is not a proven historical force, but the subjective phenomenon of racism is and has played a major role in Afro-American history. In broad terms we view the dialectical process in three stages:

1. Slavery and the origin of the Afro-American people
2. The rise of the Afro-American nation
3. The proletarianization of the Afro-American masses

During slavery, captured, enslaved Africans were generally concentrated in agricultural production in the deep south, and in a violent fascist manner transformed into the Afro-American people. Two secondary aspects of this are:

1. Not all African cultural survivals were wiped out,
- and, 2. Some Afro-Americans were so assimilated that only color kept them in; indeed some were white and "passed."

This dominant peoplehood was rooted in the production relations of slavery, so if the cotton gin increased the exploitation of slaves, so the resultant demographic concentration in the Black Belt turned into the potential strength of a common people, with a unity of culture, economic experience, and political status. The 2nd bourgeois democratic revolution, the Civil War, unleashed the aspirations of this new Afro-American people. Ideological debates had taken place for decades in the north, and armed struggle had been

a constant threat from within the slave system, but with the formal destruction of the juridical slave superstructure and the transformation of slave relations of production the potential liberation of Black people has redefined. We believe that the end of slavery ended the possibility of Black people fighting a bourgeois revolutionary struggle. From that point on the fight was against the bourgeois order in a fight for socialism. This has been true for the past 100 years or so.

After slavery, Black people were on the same land and continued to be exploited but now were more fully transformed into a bourgeois order of the USA, though with near feudal like fetters - not on the level of the national market (for this had always been true), but specific to the social relations of Afro-American life in the south. This was the context for the development of the Afro-American people beginning to more fully develop a national character, though this clearly had started before slavery. (Gutman on the family structure, Frazier on the invisible institution, the development of cultural expression in art, music, and dance, etc.) This national character can be measured in objective and subjective terms, and this is a very important distinction to make. Objectively we can point to the various factors that Stalin outlines as the basis for determining the existence of a nation during the period of the rise of capitalism. He defines a nation as follows:

A nation is a historically constituted stable community of people who share a common language, territory, economic life, and a common culture manifested in common culture.

The Afro-American people were clearly on the way to this status, although the economic organization of this people was clearly stunted since it grew up with the growth of monopoly capitalism and never fully matured. It was

mainly based on production for use, direct consumption, or as a market for consumption of goods retailed to them by Black merchants. But it was never an integrated economic system linking production, distribution, and consumption such that it had an independent character to it. What did exist and what still does, is the potential for that kind of economic integration.

During the tenancy period it was the tenant production relations that firmly established the material basis for nationalism in the Black community, because it is precisely this relationship that anchored the economic aspect of Black life in petty commodity production again, although in a distorted, stunted form.

But again, when we view this period dialectically, we also find that a second major, forced migration occurs in which the fate of Black workers comes much closer to that experienced by European workers. Black workers were pulled into the bowels of industry, first as mental service and unskilled workers, but then into the heart of industrial production and clerical work. This trend operated to play down the objective factors of national development of Black people. Rather, what this did was to more firmly root Black workers into the working class, and to a lesser extent a small sector into the petty bourgeois class (mostly the new professional aspect, but also the old small businessman sector as well).

But we have isolated the general trend of the objective factors (toward national development in the south, and toward objective unity with the overall working class in the north), but what of the subjective factors? Here an interesting reversal is evident. The overwhelming trend is for the conscious struggle to be against oppression, in a struggle for the attainment of rights, rights logically based on the idealist principles of a bourgeois democracy. However, when national sentiments have been raised, they have

been raised in northern cities and not the Black Belt south. This is an important distinction to make. In the south, when and if national demands are taken up by the masses, then the potential for national realization becomes the basis for holding to the principle that nations have the right to self-determination. This is supported when the fight is against capital for the realization of the national aspirations, and opposed when it is raised as an instrument of capital (such as an apartheid policy).

The national demands raised in the north as based primarily on the pattern of racial segregation in the major areas of housing, jobs, and education, the propaganda onslaught of cultural racism, and the positive existence of Afro-American cultural factors that have their roots in the southern experience. But more than the subjective expression of an objective reality, this is the longing for a nation based on facing a vicious racist attack. Again, the main factor is that this nationalism is progressive to the extent that it fight the rule of capital. So, the fundamental struggle is the fight waged by the entire working class, and when Black people aid this, or fight their fight as part of this fight then the struggle moves forward. When it is fought in opposition to the working class then it is a reactionary bourgeois nationalist force that must be opposed by all revolutionary forces.

Historically we can see that there is a difference between the overall class collaboration of Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey by linking the interests of Black people with the ruling class, whereas the union of sharecroppers and the Southern Negro Youth Congress linked the struggle of Black people to the fighting interests of the working class and oppressed peoples of the USA. Here is a major historical lesson.

In sum the identity of Black people has a dual character that is based on the historical development of the last 300 years or so, and not based on either some objective biological factor of genetics or some superficial fleeting reality like attitudes. The dual character is that, (A) Black people have a national identity that is rooted in the Black Belt South, and (B) Black people are overwhelmingly a part of the working class. This is where we can find the material nexus for the revolutionary struggle of Black people, if we can grasp its dialectical reality and not mystify it.

Now we face the question of contradictions: The principal contradiction, the one that must be overcome in order for capitalism to be destroyed and socialism to be established, is the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie. The main work is to muster the revolutionary forces of the single working class, including the Black workers in it, and strike the decisive blow that must and can be struck at this stage. The principal contradiction is the class contradiction, the fight of the capitalist ruling class against the working class.

Does this mean that the rest of the contradictions that we face in this society should be forgotten or put on a back burner? To this question we must give a resounding NO! The fact is that the contradiction that Black people have with the ruling class is the basis for a mighty aspect of the overall struggle. The key point is to find the common essence between the two. Our view is that the national question, the oppression of Black people, is in essence the material class exploitation of Black people. Therefore, the link between the class contradictions and national oppression is essential to the fight against the ruling class.

In this way we can understand that the mass aspect of the revolutionary strategy for the USA socialist revolution is the united front. This united front includes many parts of the society, led by the revolutionary party of

the working class, united in a fight against the rule of capital. Each sector of the society has an immediate objective basis for its joining the United Front, and each has the need to trace the basis of its contradiction with the ruling class to its class essence, its material roots, and openly declare its unity with the interest of the working class, and follow the leadership of the working class to a definite victory.

This is the task for Black people, and it is a task made harder by those few middle class elements who opportunistically try to divert the struggle of Black people away from its working class roots, and set up some phoney theory of revolution (decolonization, two stages, let's go to Africa and fight, we can't win so give in, etc.). The essential point here is that Black people must fight as Black people against the problems that we face. In doing so, we don't negate our working class character, but raise it up and recruit from all strata to join in based on every problem that puts us in contradiction to the ruling class. To the extent that anyone fights for the privileges of Blacks at someone else's expense (some sector of the masses), then we have to fight that view as reactionary. If a force attempts to negate the basis for or the need to unify the entire working class, Blacks, whites, and whoever else is in it, then we have to fight that view as reactionary. Whatever fights against the rule of capital, to that extent, is a friend of the people, is in the United Front, and is making a contribution to the destruction of the common enemy of mankind - the USA capitalist class.

We have tried to clearly draw out the key issues and sharply contrast dependency theory and dialectical materialism. We have laid out this analysis as a polemic designed to win you over to this view. But this is only a brief sketch, only a start. The fight is to be carried out in the political

debates and struggles of your daily lives. Indeed, the main thing is to fight and win yourself and others over to the correct scientific formulation of the problem, and to join the fight of the masses bringing this revolutionary theory to their struggles. We are driven by Lenin's observation that there can be no revolutionary struggle without revolutionary theory. We presented this paper toward this end.

Thank you.