

THE SLOGAN OF SELF-DETERMINATION

The Workers (Communist) Party of America puts forward correctly as its central slogan: *Abolition of the whole system of race discrimination. Full racial, social and political equality for the Negro people.* But it is necessary to supplement the struggle for the full racial, social and political equality of the Negroes with a struggle for their right of national self-determination. Self-determination means the right to establish their own state, to erect their own government, if they choose to do so. *In the economic and social conditions and class relations of the Negro people there are increasing forces which serve as a basis for the development of a Negro nation (a compact mass of farmers on a contiguous territory, semi-feudal conditions, complete segregation, common traditions of slavery, the development of distinct classes and economic ties, etc., etc.).* It is true, the Negro people in the United States have not their own language as distinct from the language of the oppressing white nation; but there is a certain amount of special Negro culture; there is still alive the common, deep-rooted tradition of the bitter centuries of slavery; there is developing a new Negro literature and press.

First of all, we must consider the compact Negro farming masses of the "black belt" as the potential basis for a national liberation movement of the Negroes and as the basis for the realization of the right of self-determination of a Negro state. Despite growing migration to the north, in 1920 there were still over 3,000,000 Negroes who constituted a majority of the population in 219 counties over a contiguous area in the "black belt." There are many national movements of the Negro city petit-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. The fact that the most important mass movement of this kind, the Garvey movement, was a sort of Negro Zionism and had such reactionary, extremely harmful slogans as leaving the United States and back to Africa, should not blind us to the revolutionary possibilities of the Negro national liberation movements of the future. It is unquestionable that first of all the Negro farmers can be the basis of a Negro national liberation movement of the future, despite the fact that today the Negro farming masses of the south are so oppressed that they do not yet show any signs of national awakening.

The Negro national liberation movement has tremendous revolutionary potentialities, despite the fact that at the outset its bearer will likely be the rural and urban petit-bourgeoisie. Lenin has stated: "There can be no doubt that all nationalist movements cannot be but bourgeois-democratic movements." But the knowledge of this fact did not prevent Lenin and the C. I. from recognizing the tremendous unexhausted revolutionary possibilities of the national liberation movement of the colonies and oppressed nations and races generally. As the national liberation movement grows, the Negro proletariat will play an increasing role in it and will struggle for the hegemony over it. There is a certain amount of assimilation going on among the Negro industrial workers in the north and east. The Negro worker works shoulder to shoulder with the white worker in the factories and plants, but at the same time it is necessary to recognize that there is practically no social contact between these workers. *The social and residential segregation of the Negro workers in the north is complete and manifests an increasing tendency.* Veritable Negro cities are being created in Harlem, New York, and on the south side of Chicago. This segregation of the Negro working class creates an economic basis for the development of a Negro petit-bourgeoisie even in the north and east, which loads additional exploitation onto the backs of the Negro workers and as a result of this distinct development, strengthens the basis of the Negro national movement in the north and east.

The Workers (Communist) Party of America must come out openly and unreservedly for the right of national self-determination for the Negroes, but at the same time the Communist Party must state sharply that the realization of this self-determination cannot be secured under the present relations of power under capitalism. National self-determination for the Negro is a bourgeois-democratic demand but it can be realized only in the course of the proletarian revolution. The abolition of the half-feudal, half-slave remnants in the south will also be only "a by-product" (Lenin) of the general proletarian revolution. It would be a major mistake to believe that there can be any other revolution in imperialist America, in the country of the most powerful, most centralized and concentrated industry, than a proletarian revolution.