

want to emulate the errors that have crippled the Marxist-Leninist forces, particularly in the last half of the decade. We believe that the CPML and other organizations share this sentiment. Indeed, the CPML, more than some other comrades, has shown a willingness to face facts, a readiness to take a long, hard look at the '70s so that we can see our way clearly in the '80s.

It took the emergence of the splittist PLA and new developments in the CPC's analysis of the "gang of four" for many comrades to start analyzing our own situation in this country. It took some hard knocks to shake the dust from some comrades' eyes. But the direction of the communist movement's current rectification efforts, changes and adjustment in line is unmistakable. The days of ultra-leftism's virtually unchallenged dominance in the communist movement are over.

The struggle against "left" opportunism has proven to be a just cause that has won considerable support and will win still more. Together we can carry the struggle against ultra-leftism through to the end and meet the challenge of the Soviet military and ideological offensive. Together we can win a big victory for Marxist-Leninist unity. Together we can march into the 1980s confident that communism will one day have a mass following in our country.

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On the National Question: The Struggle for a Scientific Materialist Approach to Black Liberation in the U.S.

**By Muhammad Ahmad
(Max Stanford)**

Muhammad Ahmad is a longtime activist in the Black liberation struggle. He was a founder and leader of the Revolutionary Action Movement and is presently a leading member of the African Peoples Party. He frequently contributes to Black journals such as the *Black Scholar*.

A major weakness in the Black liberation movement in the United States for the last 100 years is the disunity of Black people on the question of whether they are a colonized nation. The struggle for ideological clarity on the national question is key to developing a scientific approach to national liberation. In 1855, Martin R. Delaney in *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, described Black people in North America as a "nation within a nation." During the 1830s freedmen organized Colored People's Conventions at which the plight of Black people was discussed and analyzed. Three political

trends emerged during those conventions. The debate over which trend was correct represents a 150-year struggle for ideological clarity. The trends were: integration into a culturally pluralist society, emigration through some form of "back to Africa" nationalism, and revolutionary nationalism usually represented by armed struggle and attempts to establish national independence against the slave-holding state.

In dealing with the national question it is important to determine which political trend has a dialectical and historical materialist foundation in terms of Black people's relationship to the means and modes of production in the United States. We will thereby determine the scientifically correct position to take in the path to Black liberation.

Before we investigate whether Blacks in the United States are a nation within a nation or not, we must ask ourselves, what is a nation?

Nations as we know them today, with the form of central government or state, arose during the birth or rise of capitalism. Nations are a historical, cultural, economic and political phenomenon whose appearance coincided with the development of capitalism. Nations are a historically constituted, stable community of people with a common language and national character which manifests itself through a community of culture. There are many definitions for a nation. Five basic definitions of a nation are:

1. A historically constituted, stable community of people.
2. A community with a common language.
3. A community that occupies a common territory.
4. A community that has economic life (economic cohesion).
5. A community that has a particular psychological make-up or spiritual complexion which manifests itself in peculiarities of national culture.

A nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, as a result of the fact that people live together for lengthy period unless they have a common territory. . . .¹

There are two kinds of nations. One is a nation that has not achieved self-determination and independence from another nation which controls it politically, economically and/or militarily. This is considered an oppressed nation. It is a historically and culturally distinct group of people that has a history of consistent struggle and the will to become an independent nation. The other is a political nation that has formed a central government and has become a self-governing state.

Has the question of an independent Black republic in the South

been consistent since the slave revolts? The answer is yes. The Colored Farmers Alliance in Texas during the Populist movement in the 1880s and the Nationalist Education Association in the 1890s called for a Black republic. In the early 1900s one million Afro-Americans demanded the U.S. to pay them reparations in the form of 40 acres and a mule. In 1912, Arthur Anderson called for an independent Black republic in the South and in the 1920s during the height of the Garvey movement the African Blood Brotherhood proposed an independent Black government in the South. During the 1930s, the Nation of Islam called for the same and in the 1960s, RAM, RNA, APP, and the Nation of Islam called for an independent Black republic in the South. So we can see that in the Black liberation movement in the U.S. there has been a consistent and recurring will for self-determination of the internal Black colony in the South.

As we approach the 1980s we see from the present raging debates on the national question in movement ranks that our movement is slowly evolving into a national liberation revolution:

National liberation revolutions are revolutions stemming from national liberation movements aimed to do away with foreign political, economic, and ideological domination and oppression (including colonial subjugation), and to set up sovereign states. (Considering the question of the national uprising) Lenin said: "It is an uprising aimed at the achievement of political independence of the oppressed nation, i.e., the establishment of a separate national state."²

Black people in America are an oppressed nation of a new type having unique or special features to their colonial oppression. Black people are not only a nation within a nation, but are a "captive" nation which was originally kidnapped and transplanted by force to America from their original homeland, Africa. As a result they are within the geographical boundaries of the colonial mother country, the United States, the world's most powerful imperialist country.

The evolution of American Blacks as an oppressed nation was begun in slavery. In the final analysis, however, it was the result of the unfinished bourgeois democratic revolution of the Civil War and the betrayal of Reconstruction through the Hayes-Tilden (Gentlemen's) Agreement of 1877.³

During slavery, the post-reconstruction period, and to the present, as a result of racist oppression Black people in the South developed attributes of an oppressed nation. Black people are discriminated against because of their common African ethnic origin. In the Black Belt South (an area encompassing 150 counties

from Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Alabama) Black people have traditionally had a common economic relationship to the land; are united by a common historical experience and have a special culture and psychological makeup based on these historical experiences. As a result of slavery and racism, African people in the United States were molded into a unique nation. African people developed a "new culture" in America; one having the combination or synthesis of European culture blended with African survivals which they brought with them from Africa and transmitted to their offspring. The culture of Black people in America is neither European, American nor traditional African but a synthesis of the slave and race/class oppression of 400 years in North America. This culture is New African or Neo-African. It has produced message gospel, blues, rhythm and blues, jazz music and other popular art forms as a means of expression of a people.

When dealing with the economic issue we must ask ourselves where is the land area which Afro-Americans have had a historical and dialectical materialist relationship to? When we define this land area from a historical and dialectical materialist outlook then scientifically we will define where the Afro-American's homeland is.

Africans were brought from Africa to the Americas to fulfill the need for an agriculturally-based labor force. The reason for slavery and the slave system was basically to fulfill the need for free (slave) labor. So from a historical materialist outlook, African-Americans' materialist relationship was first bound to the plantation system of the South as chattel slaves and then after the Civil War and the reconstruction period (from 1877-1914), to the plantation system in the South as tenant farmers (peasants or serfs) until the first imperialist war.

Black agriculturists were important to the economic development of the South and the nation. Raw cotton production tripled between 1870 and 1910. Consumption of cotton by domestic manufacturers increased sixfold from 800,000 bales in 1870 to 4,800,000 bales in 1910. Cotton continued to be the United States' leading export commodity in global trade, still accounting for a quarter of the value of all merchandise exports on the eve of World War I. . . . Between 1890 and 1910 the number of Black men in agriculture increased by over half a million or 31%. During this entire period three out of five Black men were employed in agriculture.⁴

After World War I Afro-Americans were incorporated into the industrial sector of capitalism as an industrial reserve army and a marginal sector of the working class. Still today the greatest extraction of surplus value that is reaped from Afro-American labor as

workers is extracted from Afro-Americans' labor in the South. In the southern areas of the United States we work in industry for the same labor time but for less pay than we receive in other parts of the country for the same amount of labor. Economically this leaves the Black worker in the South with less money to meet his/her basic means of human existence and survival. In the South Afro-Americans are maintained as an economically *underdeveloped nation*.

The profits reaped from the greater extraction of surplus value from the southern Black worker's labor time is a means of profit to the capitalist class in the form of *economic domestic colonialism*. The majority of Afro-Americans are Black workers and underclass (marginally, seasonally employed, permanently underemployed, and unemployed). Therefore the dialectical materialist economic relationship of Afro-Americans is tied to U.S. capital as a racially (national) oppressed working/underclass. Afro-American economic oppression as a domestic colony is often hidden. National oppression is basically structured through the U.S. capitalist system which uses racism.

The United States capitalist ruling class keeps the majority of white workers in America supporting them by convincing white workers that the people they call niggers, spicks, gooks are an economic threat to them. By institutionalizing racism in the labor market the U.S. capitalist class has developed divisions among workers:

The lower stratum of the working class has become predominantly Afro-American, Mexican-American and Puerto Rican. Suffering high rates of unemployment and marginal employment, Third World workers fill Marx's conception of an industrial reserve army, which meets the system's need for an elastic labor pool. When working they tend to be concentrated in jobs that are insecure, dirty, unskilled, and at the bottom of the hierarchy of authority where there is little possibility for advancement.⁵

The capitalist class structured *dual labor markets* within the labor market which created an underclass within the working class in America. The *dual labor market* is a labor market in which clean, skilled, and better paying jobs go to white workers and the dirty, unskilled, low paying jobs go to Third World workers. Additionally, Third World workers constantly make up a large percentage of the permanently unemployed.

Economically, the difference is that sections of the working class in the oppressing nations receive crumbs of the super-profits which the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nations obtain by

the extra exploitation of the workers of the oppressed nations. Moreover, economic data shows that a larger percentage of the workers of oppressing nations become "skilled workers" than the workers of the oppressed nations, i.e., a larger percentage rise to the position of labor aristocracy. This is a fact, to a certain degree the workers of the oppressing nation share with their bourgeoisie in the plunder of the workers (and the masses of the population) of the oppressed nations.⁶

In the U.S., the extraction of super-profits from *national* (race) colonial and class oppression of Afro-Americans benefits all sectors of the oppressor nation in the imperialist state.

In the most careful analysis to date, based on 1960 census data, Lester Thurow calculates a figure of \$15.5 billion as the gain in overall white income that is derived from five areas of racial discrimination: more steady employment, higher wages, more lucrative occupations, greater investment in human capital (that is, education), and labor union monopoly. This averages out to a bonus of \$2,100 for each white worker or job seeker.⁷

Historically, Afro-Americans have never been granted the right of self-determination. Afrikans who were taken as slaves or were the descendants of slaves and pronounced "freedmen" by the Emancipation Proclamation were never given a chance to vote or to decide whether they wanted to become citizens of the U.S. were and are today unconstitutional until they are ratified or rejected by mass vote of those descendants of slaves or persons of Afrikan descent.

Our so-called second class citizenship is in fact citizenship slavery; having the responsibilities of a citizen and denied the rights of citizenship, first class; the other is called colonization.

When the capitalist ruling class decided upon our so-called emancipation, promising us forty acres and a mule if we would fight on the side of the union (Sherman's field order 15), they set a statute of limitations of 100 years in which we would become automatic citizens if no legal protest by the descendants of the former slaves was made. The statute was up in 1965, having been established in 1865. Brother Robert L. Brock, then chairman of the Self Determination Committee and a practicing lawyer, presented a legal protest, officially asking for reparations and a constitutional recall. In ordinary circumstances Brock's case—which went to the U.S. Supreme Court of Appeals—would have gone to the U.S. Supreme Court for a decision and would have been headline news. But this case is unheard of. Decision is yet to be passed on it. Why? Because within Brock's legal document rests the key to our enslavement and also our liberation. The question is a historical one which was never resolved after the Civil War and is the crucial question of the coming

second American Civil War.

During the reconstruction period, Thaddeus Stevens argued in Congress that the so-called freedmen, descendants of captive Afrikans, should be given 40 acres and a piece of the confiscated land of the southern plantation owners. This was his Homestead Act, which was defeated and never again dealt with.

Politically Afro-Americans some 15 years after the Civil Rights Movement are still politically subjugated, especially in the South.

Black elected officials in the South

In 1970, 665 Blacks held elective offices in 11 southern states. By 1974 this number rose to 1,307. This total includes 2 U.S. Congressmen, 60 state legislators, 622 municipal officials and 304 education officials. More Afro-Americans have been elected to public office in the South than any other regions of the United States. The biggest gains in recent elections of 1974 came in Alabama and South Carolina. Two New Africans are sitting in the Alabama Senate and the number of Blacks in the State House rose from 3 to 13.

Southern Black Elected Officials (1964-1974)⁸

STATE	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1974
Alabama	11	1	7	5	24	149
Arkansas	0	0	0	0	33	150
Florida	0	1	3	10	16	73
Georgia	2	10	6	3	21	137
Louisiana	0	3	7	27	37	149
Mississippi	0	0	1	28	29	191
N. Carolina	0	3	0	7	10	159
S. Caronina	0	0	7	4	11	116
Texas	1	4	7	3	15	124
Tennessee	1	6	16	3	26	87
Virginia	6	5	6	7	24	63

Reported voter registration for persons of age by region: 1968 and 1972⁹

SUBJECT	Black		White	
	1968	1972	1968	1972
All persons of voting age:				
United States	10,935	13,494	104,521	121,241
South	5,991	6,950	28,834	35,415
North and West	4,944	6,544	75,687	85,830
Number who reported they registered:				
United States	7,238	8,836	78,835	88,896
South	3,690	4,449	10,416	24,707
North and West	3,548	4,386	58,419	64,278
Percent of voting-age population:				
United States	66	65	75	73
South	62	64	71	70
North and West	72	67	77	75

While 49% of our people live in the North, primarily in ten major urban cities, the majority of our people still live in the South, many migrating to southern cities. According to analysts, one southerner in five is Black. The forced migration trend is from rural to southern urban centers. As the exodus from rural areas continues, southern cities are starting to attract a large share of the migrants. Atlanta is now 44% Black and Houston 23%. Between 1950 and 1968, 493,000 New Africans lost their jobs in southern agriculture. In 1950 some 492,000 New Africans in the South were classified as farm proprietors and managers. By 1960 only 167,000 remained in that category. There are fewer now. Despite continuing migration, some 7,100,000 New Africans of working age were living in the South in 1975, 12% more than in 1960. About 3,400,000 are in the labor force working or looking for work. The southern education system has left 33.5% of adult New Africans illiterate and thus almost unemployable.

The Black Belt South is the area that today has the largest concentration of Black people. Nearly five million Black people live in the Black Belt area today, comprising about 20% of the Black population of the entire South. There are about 4.5 million Black people in rural areas and small towns, and most of these are in the Black Belt. Also, on the average, Blacks are still a majority of the

rural population in the Black Belt and a 30% minority in the Black Belt's urban areas.

Under unique conditions of imperialist and racist oppression over the years Black people in the South have acquired all the attributes of an oppressed nation. We are a people set apart by a common ethnic origin, economically interrelated in various classes, until the last 30 years had a common economic relationship to the land in the Black Belt, united by a common historical experience reflecting a special cultural and psychological makeup.

Population figures

(Approximations based on 1970 census figures)¹⁰

Total Black population:	25.5 million
Black southern population:	13.5 million
Black northern population:	12.0 million
Black rural population:	4.2 million

Negro population in the South

STATE	TOTAL NEGRO POPULATION				PERCENT NEGRO	
	1860	1910	1960	1970	1860	1970
Delaware	21,627	31,181	60,688	78,276	19.3	13.1
Maryland	171,131	232,250	518,410	701,341	24.9	17.1
D.C.	14,316	94,446	411,737	537,712	19.1	71.1
W. Virginia		74,173	89,317	73,931		4.2
Virginia	548,907	671,098	816,258	865,388	34.4	18.6
N. Carolina	361,522	697,843	1,116,021	1,137,664	36.4	20.5
S. Carolina	412,320	835,834	827,291	789,041	58.6	30.4
Georgia	465,698	1,176,987	1,122,569	1,190,779	44.1	25.8
Florida	62,677	308,669	880,136	1,049,578	44.6	15.4
Kentucky	236,167	261,656	215,949	241,292	20.2	7.4
Tennessee	283,019	473,088	588,876	631,696	25.5	16.0
Alabama	437,770	908,282	980,271	908,247	45.5	26.6
Miss.	437,404	1,009,487	915,713	815,770	55.3	36.7
Arkansas	171,259	442,891	388,787	357,225	25.6	18.5
Louisiana	350,373	813,824	1,030,734	1,088,734	45.9	29.8
Oklahoma		137,612	153,984	177,907		6.9
Texas	182,921	690,049	1,187,125	1,187,125	30.3	12.6
The South	4,079,000	8,749,000	11,311,607	12,064,258	36.8	19.2

(Note: The vast majority of the Black rural population is concentrated in the South. In 1970 rural Black families earned 46% less income than white farm families. In terms of per capita income Black farmers earned only 38% of the income of white farmers.)

Earnings

In 1970 Blacks as a whole earned only 54% the annual income of Whites. In their southern *homeland* they earned only 47% as much as White workers throughout the country. As we can see, the situation is bad for Blacks in all parts of the country, but no other region even comes close to that of the South for poverty conditions. For example, the per capita income for Blacks in Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina was \$1,069, while it was \$2,604 for Whites in those same states. We should note that the figures for both Black and White workers in these states are from \$1,000 to \$2,000 lower than per capita income figures for Whites in northern states, excluding the Southwest. Blacks as a whole in 1969 earned \$1,465 less per capita than Whites, and the situation is worst of all for Black women workers who earned only 47% of the yearly income of White male workers in 1972, (and much less than this in the South).

Per capita income of Blacks compared to whites (1970)

Blacks (North and South):	\$1818
Blacks (South):	\$1439
Whites (North and South):	\$3383
Whites (South):	\$3072

Annual earnings of full-time Black women workers (1972) (Compared to white men and women workers)

Black women:	\$5692
White men:	\$12,166
White women:	\$6625

Black housing conditions in the South

Fifty percent of New African families living in Mississippi, South Carolina, and Arkansas live in substandard housing. In Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana and Virginia the figure is 35%. In round figures, over 2.5 million Blacks live in housing which is dilapidated and/or without indoor plumbing of some type.

The heart of Black political powerlessness is concentrated in the South.

The exploited classes need political rule, in order to completely abolish all exploitation, i.e., in the interest of the vast majority of the people and against the insignificant minority consisting of the modern slave owners—the landlords and the capitalists.¹¹

Imperialist oppression in the South created the conditions which gave rise to the southern based Civil Rights/Black Power movements of the 1950s and 1960s.

The legacy of the movement of the 1960s is still with us. We continue to have, although, the unfulfilled potential of a southern based Black revolutionary political party organized on a county level.

Black people already have the voting potential to control the politics of entire southern counties. Given maximum registration of Blacks, there are more than 100 counties where Black people could out-vote the political parties and not waste time trying to reform or convert the racist parties.¹²

So politically and economically Blacks are exploited as an oppressed nation with the centrality of that oppression in the Black Belt South.

As the struggle for correctness on the national question continues serious Black liberation organizations that have a scientific dialectical and historical materialist point of view must address themselves to developing a program which considers where the great majority of our people live. So while the liberation organizations should have overall programs for all Africans in all areas of the country, its focus should be in the South particularly in those states where we are almost a majority of the population: Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina.

Self Determination and National Independence in our Lifetime!

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win!

Muhammad Ahmed

(Max Stanford)

10/30/79

FOOTNOTES:

1. Joseph V. Stalin, *Selected Works* (Cardinal Publishers, 1971), p. 51.
2. K.N. Brutents, *National Liberation Revolutions Today* (Moscow: Progress Publishers), pp. 25-26.

3. Harold Baron, "The Demand for Black Labor," *Radical America*, Vol. 5, No. 2, March-April 1971.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
5. Robert Blauner, *Radical Oppression in America* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1972), p. 23.
6. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism and the Right of Nations to Self Determination, Selected Works* (California: Cardinal Publishers, 1971), p. 291.
7. Blauner, *Op Cit.*, p. 25.
8. Ronald Walters, "The Black Politician," *Current History*, Vol. 67, #399, November, 1974.
9. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Social and Economic Statistic Administration Bureau of the Census*.
10. John F. David, ed., *The American Negro Reference Book*.
11. V.I. Lenin, *State and Revolution* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), pp. 28-29.
12. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 166.

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