THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WHITE CHAUVINISM

OUTLINE FOR DISCUSSION
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INTRODUCTION

White chauvinism must be mercilessly fought because it throttles democracy; because it is the instrument of reaction that aims to justify the super-exploitation and double oppression of the Negro people; because it is against the everyday and long-range economic, political, and social interests of the working class; because it aims to divide the working class, thus weakening the struggle against the common enemy, imperialism; because it retards the struggle for socialism; because in this period white chauvinism is a major instrument of fascism and imperialist war.

The most open attacks that the fascists of the United States have dared to make so far were the attacks on Paul Robeson's concert at Peekskill, N. Y., in September, 1949. These attacks, however, were beaten back by the magnificent Negro and white unity. Despite the brutal and cowardly rear guard attacks on buses and cars, assisted by police and troopers, the concert was held. Robeson did sing.

Fascism cannot come to power in any country against a united working class and people. To fail to fight the division of the working class of the United States along lines of Negro and white, is to invite fascism to take power. And a prime condition for cementing anti-fascist Negro and white unity is to destroy the influence of white chauvinism within the working class and among the people generally.
The Struggle Against
White Chauvinism

I. WHAT IS CHAUVINISM?

1. Chauvinism is the poisonous ideology of the ruling class. It is the term applied to those theories and practices which are based on the lie that any nation or people is superior to others, and therefore has the right to dominate and oppress other nations or peoples. For example, the American imperialists are today spreading national chauvinism (the idea of the superiority of the United States and the "American way of life") in its drive to rule the world. White chauvinism is the theory of the superiority of white over darker peoples, and is displayed in any ideas or practices, words or deeds, based consciously or unconsciously on this theory. In the United States, white chauvinism, the pernicious idea of white supremacy, is the white imperialist ruling class ideology to perpetuate the Wall Street-Bourbon national oppression of the Negro people.

2. Origin of the term chauvinism: Nicolas Chauvin was an officer in Napoleon's army, a sabre-rattling militarist who ranted about the superiority of the French and their destiny to rule the world.

3. Chauvinism is a powerful instrument of imperialist exploitation. The imperialists derive special advantages from the oppression of other nations and chauvinism serves as the ideological instrument to bolster national oppression. Such special advantages include:
   a) Amassing of wealth by the capitalists of one country through the seizure of the natural resources of another, beginning with the theft by the European mercantile nations in the 16th century, of the resources of Africa, North America, and South America, and continuing up the present day in the exploitation of the resources of the colonial and semi-colonial countries by imperialist countries;
   b) The oppressive extraction of superprofits derived by investment in countries less highly industrialized and with a lower standard of living, primarily in the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia and Africa, as is true also of the South in the United States;
   c) The division of the working class, through the typical imperialist divide-and-rule strategy.

4. Chauvinist theories and practices are indispensable to American imperialism. White chauvinism is a fundamental ideological instrument in the drive of American imperialism to world domination. The capitalist class of the United States intensifies the systematic use of chauvinism as it moves towards domination of the world. The growing volume of propaganda depicting the United States as the "savior" of "white, Western civilization" against "the Orient" is a crass chauvinist ideology which is of obvious service to the aggressive aims of American imperialism. (Note also Churchill's sneer at the Eastern European nations as
Mongols.) Particularly is the drive of the United States to penetrate and enslave Africa accompanied by the most fiendish use of white chauvinist theories. American imperialist chauvinism is vital to the Marshall Plan, the plan which subordinates the economic and political life of Marshallized countries to Wall Street profits and war preparations.

5. Genuine patriotism, pride in one's country is linked with internationalism; has nothing in common with, and repudiates chauvinism. Genuine patriotism is devotion and love for one's country, one's people, culture and the best traditions of the nation, while respecting and appreciating the culture and traditions of other peoples and nations. This is the exact opposite of bourgeois national arrogance, ideas of superiority over other nations, of national aloofness, etc. Genuine patriotism is intimately connected with proletarian internationalism which respects the equality of nations, recognizes the kinship of the toilers the world over while cherishing the hope of realizing the best ideals of mankind in one's own country.

II. THE ROLE OF WHITE CHAUVINISM TODAY

1. Fascism, in order to come to power, must ideologically poison and divide the workers by means of the most brutal cannibalistic chauvinist and racist ideology. The increase of chauvinist propaganda in the United States today is a major weapon of the monopolists in their drive to fascism.

2. The role of white chauvinism in the United States aims to maintain and facilitate the national oppression of the Negro people, to subject them to double exploitation, to deny them the most elementary human rights, to justify lynching, Jim-Crow and every form of discrimination and segregation. White chauvinist theories rationalize and thereby "justify" imperialist oppression, divide the working class into hostile groups to make possible exploitation of all workers, deprive the working class of its most powerful allies in the struggle against monopoly capital, namely, the Negro people of the United States and the colonial and semi-colonial peoples oppressed by U.S. imperialism; and, conversely, deprive the Negro people of the United States and the colonial peoples of their natural ally, the working class of the U.S.

3. The origin of national chauvinism is in the oppression of one nation or people by another. The origin of white chauvinism lies in the oppression of "darker" peoples. The bourgeois-liberal theory that people are "naturally chauvinistic" and therefore enslave and oppress others is utterly unscientific. Historically, it is not chauvinist ideas that gave birth to national oppression. Rather, it is oppression and slavery that breed chauvinism, the function of which is to rationalize and "justify" the oppression.

4. The origin of chauvinism is connected directly with the oppression of nations; the origin of white chauvinism arose in the first era of capitalist national oppression, the era of the slave trade. This trade was a method of primitive accumulation of capital (accumulation of the original capital used to exploit wage workers) for the emerging bourgeoisie, and was connected with the rise of this class. Ashley Montagu, in his book *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, says:

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"A study of the documents of the English slave-traders down to the eighteenth century [shows] that many of these men recorded their belief that their victims were often obviously their own mental equals. . . . It was only when voices began to make themselves heard against the inhuman traffic in slaves that, on the defensive, the supporters of slavery were forced to look about them for reasons of a new kind to contravert the dangerous arguments of their opponents." (p. 13)

4. Chauvinist theories were developed further to justify the slave economies of the United States and of the colonial possessions of the British, Dutch, and French.

"The abolitionists argued that those who were enslaved were as good human beings as those who had enslaved them. To this, by way of reply, the champions of slavery could only attempt to show that the slaves were most certainly not as good as their masters. And in this highly charged emotional atmosphere there began the recitation of the catalogues of differences which were alleged to prove the inferiority of the slave to his master." (Montagu, cited work, p. 13).

5. American capitalists played a decisive role in the development of white chauvinism. The origin of white chauvinism in the United States was in slavery. Because of the fact that it maintained slavery long after its abolition in all capitalist countries and because of the continuation of the plantation system and peonage up to the present, the United States has been in modern times and remains today, fertile soil for the general dissemination of white chauvinism. Ruling-class science—history, economics, biology, sociology, psychology, etc.—all were perverted and pressed into service to "prove" the superiority of the white and the inferiority of the Negro people.

6. Chauvinist theories developed still further to justify imperialist oppression after the abolition of slavery in most of the world. With the beginnings of modern imperialism, chauvinism became indispensable for ruling classes generally. Thus, H. S. Chamberlain published The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century in Berlin in 1899. This book was given special attention by Kaiser Wilhelm II and is the basis of the "Aryan" myth. In 1916, Madison Grant published in the United States The Passing of the Great Race. Lothrop Stoddard published The Rising Tide of Color in 1920 in the United States. These books furnished the theoretical basis of "the white man's burden," the lying apology for imperialism. In the course of the development of reactionary chauvinist theory, there appeared vicious, lying stereotypes—supposed set inferior traits or characteristics of this or that nation, national group or people.

7. Fascism further developed the myths of "superiority" and "inferiority" of nations in the form of fascist cannibalism and extermination of peoples (genocide) based upon the theory of "aryan" superiority.

8. The chauvinist lies and the imperialist oppression which they bolster, affect adversely not only the oppressed peoples but also the workers and farmers of the oppressing nation. An example is the Southern part of the United States, where the
imperialist oppression of the Negro nation results in an unfavorable differential for the whole South in wages, living standards, health, education, trade unions, civil liberties, and all fields of life.

III. THE VERDICT OF SCIENCE ON "RACE"

1. The verdict of science on so-called innate racial characteristics is that all nations are potentially equal in ability. Outstanding among scientific refutations of the theory of racial traits and of the inferiority of nations are the works of liberal (but non-Marxist) authors like Franz Boas, Otto Klineberg, Gene Weltfish, Ashley Montagu.

2. We summarize here the findings of some outstanding scientists:

   a) All peoples of the world are one family and have a common origin. This fact is proved first of all in human anatomy, which is extremely complex but virtually the same everywhere. The abilities of all nations for all kinds of mental and physical labor have been proved to be potentially the same. (Differences exist, of course, among individuals.)

   b) It is generally believed that early man arose in Asia and from there spread all over the world. Groups settling on various continents were isolated for tens of thousands of years and developed a few minor differences in physical appearance, which are inherited but have no bearing on abilities, either mental or physical, or on moral values or character traits. The physical differences are themselves the result of environment and thousands of years of inbreeding.

   c) The shape of the head and brain weight have been used to classify "superior" and "inferior" groups. In the first place, all different shapes of the head occur in all peoples and nations. In the second place, shape of head has nothing to do with ability, nor has the size of the brain any relation to intelligence.

   d) "Blood differences" are the basis of much chauvinist theory. But there are only four types of blood, A, B, AB, and O, and these same four types occur in all peoples and nations. Thus, B type blood is exactly alike for Europeans, Africans, Asiatics, Indians, etc. And the same holds for all blood types.

   e) Intelligence tests prove very little. In the first place, they are unscientific, completely ignoring environment, and testing knowledge and information rather than ability. In the second place, they show no difference between Negroes and whites brought up in the same area with approximately the same opportunities. Army tests show that Northern Negroes make higher grades than Southern whites, proving the decisive influence of environment and opportunity.

IV. THE RELATION OF WHITE CHAUVINISM TO OPPORTUNISM

1. To accept chauvinism, to adapt oneself to it, to compromise with it, to fail to fight it ruthlessly, is opportunism. It is an acceptance of the ideology of the ruling class. Chauvinism is alien to working-class ideology; it penetrates into it from outside, from the bourgeoisie; its special bearer among the workers is the labor aristocracy, which acts as a transmission belt for
this ideology from the capitalists to the working class. The capitalist class poisons the workers with chauvinism through all the means of propaganda: the press, radio, television, theater, movies, the pulpit, the schools and universities, and even nursery rhymes.

2. Adaptation to chauvinism is opportunism full-blown; it is a surrender to the imperialist infection of the working class. It means the open alliance of a section of the workers with the capitalists, and support by the workers of the "right" of the bourgeoisie to annex, oppress, wage war against, and enslave other nations. In the U.S. proper, it means the support by a section of the working class of the "right" of the white imperialist bourgeoisie to oppress the Negro people.

3. Chauvinism degrades and brutalizes the working class, diverts it from the struggle against the real enemy, dulls its class consciousness, makes sections of the working class pliant tools in the hands of their own class enemy.

4. The adoption of the pro-imperialist chauvinist policies of American imperialism by the reformist labor leaders has led to a growth of chauvinism in the ranks of the labor movement. In the recent period the struggles of the trade unions against white chauvinism have declined. The main reasons for this development are:

a) In its desperate drive for world domination American imperialism intensifies the wave of national and white chauvinism, its ideological influence penetrates the American working class through the labor reformists.

b) The labor-Negro alliance has deteriorated from the high point reached by the CIO in the 1930's, when, in order to organize the unorganized and unionize the mass production industries in which the Negro workers played a major role, found the struggle against Jim Crow indispensable.

c) The alliance has deteriorated further because the opportunist labor leaders support the Marshall Plan and war program of the monopolies. They cannot support the reactionary aims of their masters without accepting their ideology as well. This manifests itself in both the crass and the more subtle forms of chauvinism in the labor movement.

V. CRASS FORMS OF WHITE CHAUVINISM IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

1. "Operation Dixie" was a failure and was abandoned chiefly because of the CIO leaders' red-baiting and refusal to promote Negro and white unity in the South. Thus, the CIO in Georgia and Alabama supported open white supremacy candidates in the 1948 elections. An attorney of the Textile Workers Union defended the lynchers in Greenville, S. C., in 1947, giving the reason that some of the union members were married to members of the lynch mob. The same union in its national convention refused to pass resolutions on the struggle for Negro rights because it did not wish to antagonize Klansmen in its ranks; this was stated openly. Trade union officials have taken apartments in Levittown, where they signed a restrictive covenant.

2. In the National Maritime Union, the Curran leadership refuses to fight the policy of the shipowners not to honor wartime discharges. But it was during the war that Negroes were up-
graded on ships. Now Negroes are being downgraded and discharged en masse, and the Curran leadership goes along with this policy.

3. In the International Longshoremen’s Association, the Ryan leadership refuses employment to Negro longshoremen on piers where they have usually worked and resorts to brutal terror to crush their protests.

4. A classic example of chauvinism in the CIO was the raid on the Mine, Mill & Smelter Union in Bessemer, Ala. This was accomplished by an unholy alliance of the United Steel Workers’ leaders with the Tennessee Coal and Iron bosses, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Dixiecrats. Negro-baiting speeches by Dixiecrats were distributed among the white miners in Bessemer. The raiding campaign was carried out by appeals to the white miners to join a “white man’s union.” Murray’s representatives unleashed a campaign of terror against the workers in Mine, Mill, threatening them with bodily harm if they did not join the secession movement. Maurice Travis, international secretary-treasurer of the union, was partially blinded by Murray’s goons on the eve of the election.

VI. THE MORE SUBLIME FORMS OF WHITE CHAUVINISM IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

1. These involve, for example, the failure to recognize the Negro question as a special question, adopting instead the Social-Democratic position that the Negro question is a “pure-and-simple class question.” The result is the refusal to recognize the special oppression of the Negro people, and to conduct specific struggles against this oppression. Social Democrats and Trotskyites cover their chauvinism with the demagogic phrase, “Everyone must be treated alike.” This is a left-sounding, lying excuse for their failure in trade unions and other organizations to raise special demands for equal opportunity, such as advancement, promotion in the organization, community demands outside the shop, etc.; in their failure to fight for real, equal seniority for Negro and white, through modification of the seniority rules if necessary; refusal to promote Negroes to leadership on the ground that “you can’t promote Negroes simply because they are Negroes” (Philip Murray), etc.

2. An outstanding example of how “left” phrases can be used to cover up chauvinism is the advertisement placed in the Pittsburgh Courier on April 16, 1949, by the Executive Board of the United Auto Workers. The advertisement labels as “Jim Crow” the struggle to get Negroes elected to leading union posts. It says: “The Communist Party has consistently tried to get a Negro elected (as a Negro) to the Executive Board of the UAW-CIO.” This, the advertisement calls “a Jim Crow proposition, just as much so as if it were a segregated room in a hotel, a seat on a train, or a place to eat in a restaurant.” Thus Reuther yells “Jim Crow” when progressives fight Jim-Crow union policies, such as allowing the Negro workers to be the first fired through the rigid application of seniority rules and having lily-white executive boards in the unions.

3. Forms of chauvinism in the day-to-day relationships between whites and Negroes, against which the labor movement must be on guard. These include:
a) Lack of knowledge of Negro life, history, current developments, culture; b) failure to have Negro friends altogether; c) use of certain expressions (words and phrases); so-called humor (use of "humor" as a weapon against all oppressed groups, including Negroes, Irish, Jews, Scotch, women, WPA workers, servants, immigrant groups, etc.); d) failure to bring Negroes into leadership; patronage and paternalism in approach to Negroes; approach to Negroes on the basis of the Negro question alone; setting Negroes apart from other groups as being especially talented in certain things only; condescending familiarity; failure to use courtesy, especially to Negro women; insisting on higher standards for Negroes than for whites ("They must be even more quiet, more mannerly, etc., than the whites"); insisting that Negroes must be twice as good as whites to get to the same place; e) considering the success achieved by individual Negroes a substitute for all Negro people, for the Negro masses.

VII. OPEN AND SUBTLE EXPRESSIONS OF WHITE CHAUVINISM TOWARDS NEGRO WOMEN

1. Negro women are subjected to some of the worst forms of chauvinism, and the fight against these particular forms of chauvinism is therefore of decisive importance. There has been a crying failure to take up the special problems of Negro women. Too many progressives fail to see anything wrong in the fact that about one out of every seven employed Negro women are working as domestics and in personal service, or that Negro women have been almost completely eliminated from industry. These progressives do not grasp the necessity of fighting for the right of the Negro women to enter all fields of work, including trades, businesses, and professions. Nor has there been any serious effort to advance special demands for Negro women. There is a failure to integrate Negro women into the leadership of progressive organizations, which is the more reprehensible in view of the fact that Negro women have built so many organizations of their own (the National Association of Colored Women, the National Council of Negro Women, the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, and many more), and that Negro women play an outstanding role in so many Negro organizations made up of both men and women. It must be said that even in the Party there has been serious failure to adequately promote Negro women to leading work.

2. The Negro woman is the butt of special stereotypes (the "Mammy" characterization) in movies, novels, radio, etc. Other forms of chauvinism include failure to exercise elementary courtesy to Negro women; failure of white women to create and maintain good social relationships with Negro women; failure to integrate Negro women into social life (as at dances where white men, white women, and Negro men dance, but Negro women are neglected); acceptance of ruling-class standards of desirability for women; as light skin, opposing mixed marriages on the ground that "this is a personal question," failure to recognize the great role that Negro women have played in history, etc. In some cases white women who can afford household help—and this is true of even some progressive white women—underpay, pile on tasks, gossip about the "shortcomings" of their domestic
workers quite like any exploiter, and use the chauvinist term "girl" for Negro women.

The roots of these special forms of white chauvinism lie in the status and treatment of Negro women on the slave plantations before 1865, and in the treatment by the ruling class of Negro women in the oppressed Negro nation of the Black Belt today.

3. White men and women have a heavy responsibility for rooting out the special forms of chauvinism which oppress Negro women; white men have a special responsibility since their attitudes may combine male superiority ideas with white chauvinism, one reinforcing the other—a truly poisonous mixture. Negro men, also, must participate in the fight against the special chauvinism to which Negro women are subjected, and must, to this end, free themselves of any attitudes of male superiority, since such attitudes hinder the fight for complete equality for both Negro women and men.

4. Some of the most important struggles led by the CP have been waged around issues concerning the rights of Negro women like the Recy Taylor case, where the C.P. together with other organizations fought for the punishment of six hoodlums who had raped Mrs. Taylor in Alabama, and the present campaign to free the Ingram family, which revolves around the right of a Negro woman, Mrs. Rose Lee Ingram, to defend herself from the brutal attack of a plantation owner.

VIII. SPECIAL ARGUMENTS AND ATTITUDES WHICH FEED CHAUVINISM

1. There is the tendency to accept deceiving bourgeois statistics on crime, juvenile delinquency, etc. The best answer is the statement of the Niagara movement (predecessor to the N.A.A.C.P.) in 1906: "W are not more lawless than the white race; we are more often arrested, convicted, and mobbed." We may also add, "and framed."

2. The argument, "You can't legislate against prejudice and discrimination: we must leave this to the slow, sure process of education." This is a dangerous argument which has been used to stop many a fight against chauvinism and discrimination. "Education" seems to be the last refuge of many a chauvinist.

REFUTATION

a) It is the capitalist social order and its super-structure, including its laws, that gives rise to chauvinism, not vice-versa. Laws are but the codification of existing social conditions. It is necessary to destroy chauvinism in practice, in struggle for Negro rights and equality. The struggle for anti-discrimination legislation is part of the fight to change existing conditions. Education is certainly important, but is impotent without political and economic struggle to change social conditions that give rise to chauvinism and national oppression.

b) It is significant that the statement, "Don't pass laws until everyone is educated," is not used against laws forbidding murder, arson, theft, etc.; the argument is used only in connection with discrimination.

c) Further, bourgeois education is in itself corrupt and chau-
vinistic and intensifies chauvinism; witness the chauvinism in the textbooks in schools and universities.

d) Laws can do the following: prevent chauvinist theories from being put into practice; educate people against chauvinism by making chauvinist acts illegal and creating opportunities for ordinary contact without segregation. Everyday life is the best teacher. A person brought up where discrimination is prohibited by law, will have a different attitude from one brought up where chauvinism is not illegal or where it is mandatory.

3. However, there is a qualitative difference between the nature of such laws here and in the Soviet Union, and in the method of their enforcement. In the first place, the Soviet laws punishing chauvinism are based on a society in which capitalist oppression is a thing of the past, in which no one can profit from chauvinism, in which fraternal equality of nations is guaranteed. In the United States, such laws can be pushed through by mass pressure, despite the resistance of the ruling class which profits from chauvinism, and if passed, such laws under capitalism are never secure, but require constant vigilance and struggle to maintain.

4. Marxist education combined with the experiences gained in mass struggle play the decisive role in the fight against chauvinism. It is only through Marxist science and its application in the struggle that we obtain an understanding of the nature of chauvinism and learn how to fight it.

5. The fight against chauvinism is often minimized with the advice to “relax, take it easy, don’t be oversensitive, don’t exaggerate the issue.” Would the same attitude be taken on rent control, higher wages, class collaboration, socialism? The need is not for relaxation, but for a more consistent fight on chauvinism and much greater sensitivity to its manifestations.

6. The “don’t bend over backwards” argument. In an effort to discourage the special struggles needed to attain equality, some people say, “Don’t bend over backwards; don’t make a special issue of the Negro question because this would be patronage.”

The answer is: We ought to get rid of the phrase “bending over backwards” in the struggle for Negro rights. “Bending over backwards” means that it is possible to go too far in this struggle. But is such a thing possible? As to patronage: this is not the opposite of chauvinism; it is chauvinism. When people patronize other people they do so because of a feeling of superiority. This is altogether different from making a special point of including Negroes on committees, developing Negroes for leadership, etc.

7. An attitude which hinders the struggle for Negro rights is lack of confidence in the ability of the white workers to overcome chauvinism. This leads to a refusal to take this or that step in struggle, on the ground that “the white workers, tenants, customers, etc., won’t stand for it.” This is playing into the hands of the bosses, landlords, etc., making their arguments our own.

An example was the situation in the strike in Winston-Salem in 1947. The Food and Tobacco Workers Union worked only among the Negroes, and neglected to organize the white workers, fearing to tackle their chauvinist prejudices. The result was that when a strike was called, only the Negroes responded, making it possible for the employers to threaten the union as a whole. On the other hand, wherever the issue is boldly met and the preju-
dices of white workers are overcome, the result is unbreakable unity and victory.

8. Too often the struggle for Negro rights is conceived of as being confined to the Negro community. Actually no real struggle can be carried on in this field without being brought into the white community, the very existence of which constitutes Jim Crowism. Discrimination against Negroes is most severe in those shops, neighborhoods, unions, etc., where there are no Negroes, where no Negroes are allowed. Thus the progressive forces in New York fight for an end to Jim Crowism in Stuyvesant Town, erected in a lily-white neighborhood, and the American Labor Party is quite consistent when it fights for an end to discriminatory hiring in white as well as Negro neighborhoods.

9. Another attitude which hinders the struggle against chauvinism is that there will be chauvinism anyway as long as there is capitalism, and all white people will be chauvinistic until socialism is established and consolidated. This is like the attitude of some people towards sin: man is mortal, and is bound to sin, so let's go ahead and sin. In answering this kind of argument, Comrade Pettis Perry has stated (June, 1949, Political Affairs): “Two things must be said: First, ‘Chest-beating’—the recognition of the possibility of chauvinism in oneself—does not at all mean that a serious warfare has been carried on against white chauvinism. Secondly, while it is true that there will be white chauvinism so long as we have capitalism, it is likewise true that unless we wage a merciless struggle against white chauvinism we will always have capitalism.”

IX. THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CHAUVINISM

1. The Party has played a vanguard role in this regard. With the emergence of the Communist Party in the United States, white workers and the labor movement have been involved to a much greater degree in the struggle for Negro rights. Among the manifestations of a many-sided struggle for Negro rights by the Communists, were the struggle for the Scottsboro boys; the fights of the Share-Croppers Union in Alabama in the 'thirties; the fight for the freedom of Angelo Herndon, for the Trenton Six, for the Virginia Seven, for Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram of Georgia, the struggles against lynching, etc. It was the C.P. that led the fight for organization of Negro and white workers which laid the foundations for the CIO, the organization of the unemployed along lines of Negro-white equality, thousands of local struggles for jobs, against restrictive covenants, against police brutality, against Jim Crow in public places, against discrimination in education and in sports, for representation of the Negro people in office, etc. The fight for such demands as industrial unionism and unemployment insurance involved the Negro question in such a degree that success would have been impossible without a high level of struggle for Negro rights as part and parcel of these campaigns. At Gastonia, North Carolina, in 1929, Negro and white textile workers led by Communists successfully organized into a textile workers union, and, for the first time in the South, white and Negro workers jointly waged a struggle in a major industry in the South.

2. The development of progressive organizations such as the National Negro Congress, in which left and progressive forces
worked together with appreciable sections of the Negro people, initiated important struggles for Negro rights, trained Negro cadres, stimulated the national liberation movement and promoted Negro and white unity.

3. In the course of all these struggles, the Communist Party placed the Negro question on a scientific theoretical basis and on a higher level than ever before in this country, and opened the fight against chauvinism. The public trial of August Yokinen, a Finnish-American member of the Communist Party, in 1931, was public notice to both Party and non-Party people that the Communist Party will fight against chauvinism, will not tolerate any manifestations of it in its own ranks.

4. Chauvinism is incompatible with membership in the Communist Party. The Party Constitution says the following on the question of chauvinism:

   Article IV, Section 11: "It shall be the obligation of all Party members to struggle against all forms of national oppression, national chauvinism, discrimination and segregation, against all ideological influences and practices of barbarous 'racial' theories, such as white chauvinism and anti-Semitism. It shall be the duty of all Party members to fight for the full social, political and economic equality of the Negro people and promote the unity of the Negro and white people as essential for the advancement of their common interests."

   Article VIII, Section 4, dealing with grounds for expulsion, states: "The practice or advocacy of any form of racial, national or religious discrimination shall be grounds for expulsion from membership."

5. While the Party fights chauvinism, individual members are subject to chauvinist influences, since the Party member does not live in a vacuum, insulated from the capitalist environment. This environment brings constant pressure, through segregation (which makes ordinary friendships and companionships more difficult between white and Negro), through the influence of the theater, movies, textbooks, novels, newspapers, radio, advertising, television, all of which reek of chauvinism. People from the middle class and labor aristocracy tend, more than others, to bring chauvinist ideas and practices into the Party, although others are not immune. This points to the need for constant vigilance by all members over themselves, and the need for constant vigilance by the Party over its members. Mao Tse-tung, in discussing the need for vigilance of members against bourgeois ideas, said that we must wash our hands several times daily, since the very atmosphere is full of filth. The length of one's membership in the Party, one's past and present services to the Negro liberation movement, are no guarantee against white chauvinist manifestations.

6. However, the fact that no white Communist can get away from chauvinist pressures, since these always exist under capitalism, does not mean that Communists cannot eradicate chauvinist tendencies, traits, expressions, moods, etc. Such an attitude amounts to defeatism and surrender. Chauvinism can be eradicated by constant struggle. In this struggle the individual changes, the working class changes, and the Party grows stronger. The results of industrial concentration will assist this healthy change.

7. Within the Party, chauvinism most often takes on "subtle"
forms. Stalin spoke of this type of chauvinism as "chauvinism which creeps along without face or form, insinuating itself drop by drop into the eyes and ears, drop by drop changing the mind and soul of our political workers, so that one can hardly recognize them." (Marxism and the National Question, "Report on the National Factors in Party and State," p. 143.)

8. The Party member's personal life cannot be divorced from his or her political life. Some members give lip service to the fight against chauvinism and excuse chauvinist actions on their own part on the ground that "this is my personal life, my own affairs."


a) Whereas in the 1930's the Party was the undisputed leader of struggle for Negro rights (Scottsboro, Herndon, Camp Hill, etc.), in the 40's Browder maintained that "intelligent" capitalists would voluntarily extend democratic and equal rights without struggle.

b) The spurious theory advanced by Browder to cover his betrayal of the struggle for Negro rights was that the Negro people had already exercised the right of self-determination in favor of so-called integration. This revisionist position in effect denied the existence of the Negro question, and liquidated the struggle for Negro rights. The theoretical disarming of the Party as a whole, and especially the absence of mass struggle for Negro rights resulted in the accumulation of white chauvinist practices and tendencies in the Party. It must be emphasized that it is in the first place the lack of struggle for Negro rights in the recent period that made it possible for the Party to live with and tolerate even crass expressions of white chauvinism in its ranks.

10. Roused by the extent of the permeation of the vile enemy ideology in its ranks, the Party in the last few months has, under the leadership of the National Committee, been waging an irreconcilable struggle against white chauvinism. This ideological struggle has involved every party district in an examination of the expressions and roots of white chauvinism in the party organization. This campaign is regarded by the National Committee as but the beginning of a consistent, sustained, day-to-day struggle against white chauvinism, not only in the ranks of the Party but in the trade unions, mass organizations, shops and communities, closely linked with promoting the struggle against expressions of Jim Crow and discrimination in every phase of life.

11. The Party emphasizes that it is the special duty of whites to come forward as leaders in the fight against chauvinism. The white workers as part of the oppressing nation bear a special responsibility in the struggle against national oppression by its bourgeoisie; and the white Communists must be in the very forefront of this struggle as the vanguard of the working class. The working class of the oppressing nation must fight its "own" imperialist bourgeoisie. The oppressed nation fights the same enemy. They are therefore natural allies. Communists are guided by the internationalist Marxist motto, "A nation that oppresses another cannot itself be free."
X. RELATION OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST WHITE CHAUVINISM TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST PETTY-BOURGEOIS NEGRO NATIONALISM

1. Petty-bourgeois Negro nationalism is a current in the national movement of the Negro people which advocates narrowness, separation and aloofness of the Negro people. It rejects the alliance of the Negro people with the labor movement, with white workers; it means a distrust of all whites; it means insistence on the Negro people going it alone. Petty-bourgeois nationalist tendencies are basically the other side of the coin of white chauvinism. The absence of struggle for Negro rights and against white chauvinism breeds, and every act and expression of white chauvinism stimulates, petty-bourgeois Negro nationalism. Both white chauvinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism serve the imperialist ruling class strategy to divide Negro from white in order to rule and oppress both. The main responsibility for fighting white chauvinism rests with whites; the main responsibility for fighting petty-bourgeois Negro nationalism lies with the Negro people, particularly Negro Communists. To the extent that the white labor movement rides itself of chauvinism and stands in the forefront of the struggle for Negro rights, to that extent will the influence of petty-bourgeois nationalism be undermined.

2. There is serious danger in the Party and labor movement in equating the fight against white chauvinism with the fight against petty-bourgeois Negro nationalism, because the main danger is white chauvinism.

XI. STRUGGLE AGAINST WHITE CHAUVINISM AND FORGING THE LABOR-NEGRO ALLIANCE

1. The struggle against chauvinism is an absolute pre-condition to rebuilding the labor-Negro alliance on a new basis, and this in turn is a pre-condition for a successful struggle against fascism, against imperialism, and for eventual socialism. The working class and progressive movements must learn to regard any act of chauvinism with the same loathing as any act of scabbing or informing—that is, as treachery to the working class, which, in fact, it is.

2. The wiping out of chauvinism is an indispensable part of the struggle of the working class to free itself from exploitation. This is stated by Karl Marx in a letter written on April 9, 1870. The letter stresses particularly the fact that the struggle against chauvinism is no act of humanitarianism, but a condition for the emancipation of the workers of the oppressing nation. A part of this letter follows:

"Every industrial and commercial center in England now possesses a working-class population divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he [the English worker] feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of
the aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. . . .

"This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. It is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite their organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. . . .

"Hence the task of the 'International' is everywhere to put the conflict between England and Ireland in the foreground, and everywhere to side openly with Ireland. The special task of the Central Council in London is to awaken a consciousness in the English workers that for them the national emancipation of Ireland is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the first condition of their own emancipation." (Selected Correspondence, p. 289-290.)

XII. SUMMARY

Today it is the camp of imperialism, led by Wall Street, that is poisoning the air with chauvinism, and the camp of democracy, headed by the Soviet Union, that is waging a relentless war on chauvinism and national oppression. The Soviet Union, in a part of the world which was formerly, in Czarist times, a "prison-house of nations," a classic land of pogroms, has wiped out national oppression and chauvinism, has made chauvinism a crime. Article 123 of the Soviet Constitution states: "Equality of rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social, and political life, is an indefeasible law.

"Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or, conversely, any establishment of direct or indirect privileges for, citizens on account of their race or nationality, as well as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law."

The Soviet Union acts as a bulwark against national oppression and chauvinism. The achievement of socialism in the United States will open the way for the fullest and highest democracy for the Negro people, for the complete and final eradication of all national oppression.

Stalin says: "It was formerly the 'accepted idea' that the world has been divided from time immemorial into inferior and superior races, into black peoples and white peoples, the former of which are unfit for civilization and are doomed to be objects of exploitation, while the latter are the sole vehicles of civilization, whose mission it is to exploit the former. This legend must now be regarded as shattered and discarded. One of the most important results of the October Revolution is that it dealt this legend a mortal blow, by showing in practice that the liberated non-European nations, once having been drawn into the channel of Soviet development, are no less capable than the European nations of promoting a truly progressive culture and a truly progressive civilization." (Stalin, Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, p. 254.)
XIII. IMMEDIATE TASKS

1. An ideological campaign against white chauvinism in every Party branch, in trade unions and other mass organizations, in communities, in housing projects, in plants and offices, in camps and all places of recreation. This must include discussion, reading, distribution of literature, public forums, with special attention to criticism and self-criticism, laying bare the roots and manifestations of white chauvinism.

2. The ideological campaign must not be an end in itself, but must result in a systematic, sustained day-to-day organized struggle against every expression of white chauvinism in word or deed, wherever it manifests itself.

3. This should go hand in hand with a sustained day-to-day planned activity to promote Negro and white unity by involving white workers, trade unionists and progressives in the struggle for full social, economic and political equality for the Negro people by reacting to each concrete expression of discrimination wherever it is manifested.

4. A systematic policy of promotion of Negroes in the Party, a systematic struggle for such promotion in all mass organizations.

5. Serious and sustained study of the Leninist classics on the National Question and mastery of the theoretical basis of the Party’s characterization of the Negro Question as the question of an oppressed nation.

6. Familiarization with Negro history and contributions.

7. Establishment of comradesly and proletarian social relations with Negro comrades and setting by all party members of personal examples of true social equality and unity between Negro and white.

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