

THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE  
STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM

Working Paper #2

Section I: OVERALL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- A. Material Basis for Racism Within the Working Class
  - 1. Incorrect Line on this Question
- B. Racism Within the Communist Movement and Methods of Combatting It
  - 1. Right Errors
  - 2. Left Errors
- C. Racism in Recruitment of Minorities -- The First and Major Obstacle
  - 1. Trivialization of the Contradiction
  - 2. The Racist Assumptions Which Underlie this Incorrect Line
  - 3. Contradictions Among Communists Aggravated by this Incorrect Line
  - 4. Summation
- D. The Quality of Minority Participation Once Inside the Communist Movement
  - 1. Introduction
  - 2. Cadre Work Must Reflect the Full Complexity and Diversity of the Problem
  - 3. The Inter-relationship of Racism and Petty Bourgeois Class Chauvinism
  - 4. The Inter-relationship of Racism and Sexism
  - 5. Political and Organizational Requirements for Seriously Combatting Racism Within the Communist Movement
  - 6. Summation
- E. Major Deviations in Mishandling the Struggle Against Racism Within the Communist Movement
  - 1. Blatant Tokenism
  - 2. Tokenism -- Minorities as "Minority Affairs" Experts
  - 3. Opportunist Manipulation of the Struggle Against Racism
- F. Conclusion

## I. OVERALL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Material Basis for Racism Within the Working Class.

Racism has proven to be one of the most persistent and complex phenomena of modern history, integrally linked to the rise of capitalism and intensified in the era of imperialism. The fact that it has managed to reproduce itself in various forms, in different countries, from generation to generation is proof that it is firmly rooted in material class relations of the modern era. Essentially racism has emerged as an oppressive system of unequal social relationships based upon race, in particular the forced subjugation and discrimination of non-white peoples.

Historically, the system of racial inequality can be ultimately traced to the class interests and activities of the rising bourgeoisie--from the ravages of the African slave trade beginning in the 15th century, to the plantation systems of the New World, to the colonial plunder of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In addition, in the 20th century, the system of racism has come to mark one of the major stratifications within the proleteriat, especially in advanced capitalist countries. Racism is certainly a prominent feature of U.S. society, where it functions principally along a white/black axis, rooted deeply in the country's history of racial slavery. In addition to the U.S., the racial stratification of the working class is conspicuous in countries like South Africa, England, Canada, France, West Germany and Israel.

In the U.S. the 20th century has also seen the steady and increased interpenetration of national oppression and racism. Of course, there has been a long tradition of effectively stratifying the U.S. proletariat along national lines (i.e. the discriminatory division between American-born workers and foreign-born workers). However, today, the most conspicuous discrimination and oppression of immigrants has become almost completely restricted to foreign-born workers from the Carribbean, Latin America and Asia.

Although the system of racial inequality principally benefits the bourgeoisie and is ultimately sustained by their economic and political power, it is not identical to the class contradiction. Racism is an oppressive social relation which cuts across class lines and can therefore often successfully blur them. This is because racism super-imposes a white supremacist polarization over the more fundamental class polarizations. In doing so, the system of racism extends the promise of racial preveledge to all whites, as well as the material substance of racial preveledge to many. Whether or not whites can actually achieve any relatively protected positions due to their race is, however, basically bound up, determined and restricted by their class positions.

In the U.S., whites in the petty-bourgeoisie and the upper strata of the working class achieve actual material advantages due to the

system of racial inequality. Although this does not alleviate their respective class contradictions with the bourgeoisie, it serves to buffer the class antagonism substantially. Whites located in the lower, less protected strata of the working class gain far less, if any, material benefit from the system of racism; they are left with little more than blind prejudice and the illusive promise of racial privilege to sustain their racism. Unfortunately, often the bitterness of a "birth right" unfulfilled can produce some of the most virulent racists.

However, it is the working class section of the white population which has the most favorable objective basis to break with the system of racial inequality and take up the struggle against racism as part and parcel of the struggle for their own class interests. However, it is a well-known and persistent feature of U.S. political life that such anti-racist consciousness does not flow spontaneously from objectively shared proletarian conditions. False consciousness, in this instance, the ideology of white supremacy, has become a powerful material force within the U.S. working class and severely restricts the overall development of the class struggle. For this reason, it is no exaggeration to say that the struggle against racism within the U.S. working class is central and decisive to its unification and its development as a truly revolutionary class.

1. Incorrect Line on this Question.

This line is in contrast to another prevailing line common among communists, which tends to underplay the material basis for the stubborn reproduction of racism within the working class. The most extreme position is to deny altogether the material basis for the existence of racism among workers and attempt to reduce it merely to the ideological manipulations of the bourgeoisie. Far more prevalent is the attempt to fudge this knotty problem through highlighting the overall material benefits which accrue to the bourgeoisie through the system of racial inequality, which glossing over the immediate and concrete inequalities between white and minority workers manifested in the course of their day-to-day competition for survival at the hands of capital.

However, this is the political arena, within the working class, where the ideological drama in the struggle against racism must first be fought out and resolved before the working class can begin to conduct a united defense (and later an assault) against the bourgeoisie. Consequently, any attempts on the part of the communist movement to oversimplify or side-step the actual material basis for the reproduction of racism within the U.S. working class is ultimately self-defeating. In fact, such a line represents a form of vacillation and opportunism in carrying through this protracted and difficult struggle against racism as an indispensable aspect of forging a revolutionary proletariat in the U.S.

This opportunist line is often couched in the stated concern that the "white worker" not be unduly villainized as a racist, or that the strategic role of the "white worker" in accomplishing the revolution not be minimized or overlooked. This however is a misdirected (and often racist) concern. Obviously, there will be no socialist revolution in the U.S. without a substantial section of white workers constituting an integral part of the revolutionary vanguard of the working class. However, the real question facing the communist movement is how to begin to transform this class into a revolutionary one if racism within the working class is conciliated in the slightest degree? Communists must be prepared to polarize the situation and confront backward sectors of the working class on this crucial question (risking the fact that this sector will be overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, composed of white workers); while at the same time remaining confident that the advanced/revolutionary sector of the class forged through such a struggle will undoubtedly include substantial numbers of white workers.

#### B. Racism Within the Communist Movement and Methods of Combatting It.

Just as racism is a social force materially and ideologically dividing the working class, similarly, racist ideology and practices penetrate into the revolutionary ranks. The communist movement is not cordoned off from the broader society. The communists are, on the one hand, an integral part of the working class, sharing the same experiences, reflecting the strengths and shortcomings of their particular working class. On the other hand, communists are distinct from the broader class, not in that they constitute the core of the revolutionary sector, but more importantly because they grasp the science of proletarian revolution--Marxism-Leninism. Consequently they grasp the underlying laws and direction of the class struggle--they grasp the future. In short, communists embody the contradiction of remaining the products of the very society they are historically mandated to consciously change.

In this context, it is important to recognize that the existence of racism among communists has this particularity which must be reflected in the methods of combatting it. The marked tendency to lose sight of this particularity has resulted in incorrect analyses and mishandling of racism within the U.S. communist movement.

This erroneous tendency has expressed itself generally in two opposing extremes. One is to essentially deny that racism can become a serious contradiction among communists (or even among workers), resulting in the conspicuous neglect of the problem altogether. The other is to essentially hold that racist contradictions among communists manifest themselves with the same degree of antagonism as in the broader society and should be handled accordingly. Both of these tendencies are incorrect and serve ultimately to disorient the struggle against

racism within the communist ranks, thereby aggravating the problem of racism and weakening the communist movement in the process.

1. Right Errors.

By far the predominant error has been to neglect or belittle the struggle against racism. Problems of racism among communists are all too often swept under the rug. The communist movement has displayed a marked, "natural" and spontaneous tendency toward insensitivity concerning the reproduction of racism within its own ranks. This lack of consciousness does not stem from the fact that the majority of communist cadre may happen to be white. (Although it is certainly a significant factor, it is not the principal factor.) Rather, it can be traced to the more basic fact that racism is a central feature of U.S. capitalism and the dominant bourgeois ideology. Consequently, it penetrates deeply into every aspect of the social life of this country; is reproduced continually in the broader society; thereby envelopes and penetrates the communist movement daily. (A spontaneous phenomenon which thus far has failed to be checked by a correct and coherent Marxist-Leninist line on racism.)

From the point of view of minority communists, racism is often tolerated "for the sake of unity", considering a particular racist remark or incident too minor when compared against the long-range commitment they share with white comrades to advance the revolution. However, such liberalism on the part of minority comrades is usually encouraged by the fact that the movement as a whole displays an overall lack of consciousness concerning the concrete manifestations of racism, and how important it is that racism be consistently identified and militantly checked among communists. Therefore, the principal onus for such liberalism should not be laid at the doorstep of minority activists for failing to take it upon themselves to continually raise this struggle, but rather upon the movement as a whole.

Despite the fact that the day-to-day dynamics of racism in the communist movement are often subtle, the overall effects are certainly not. The net result is often the conspicuous absence of minority cadre altogether, or the tendency for minority cadre to remain peripheral to the center of the communist movement, loyal and hardworking, but relatively undeveloped politically. In addition, unhealthy racial dynamics in the political work will also inevitably seep into the more informal social interaction among comrades, further aggravating the situation. If the line of the movement belittles the importance of this struggle in the slightest, it only serves to perpetuate the racist inertia of the broader society. Minority cadre can tend to both personalize the problem to themselves, as well as build up substantial resentments, thus creating a highly volatile contradiction. In short, this type of right error in the struggle against racism can negatively impact the all-sided participation of minority comrades and thereby weaken the whole communist movement.

Communist cadre bring with them all their previous life experiences and training into the revolutionary movement. Therefore it should be no surprise that a strong inertia will exist reproducing racial inequality and separation in taking up the tasks of the communist movement. Just as with the struggle against racism within the working class, the struggle to push the U.S. communist movement off its spontaneous path of reproducing racism within its own ranks will also require a correct political line and its concerted and consistent implementation.

## 2. Left Errors.

It is usually the sin of neglecting the problem of racism which builds up tensions and in turn fuels the opposite error. The "left" error on this question tends to inject antagonism into the struggle against racism among communists, deemphasizing the strategic political and ideological unity shared among the activists, thereby splitting and weakening the communist ranks.

What gets obscured in this type of mishandling is that communists, more than any other sector of the population, have an excellent basis to make substantial headway in the struggle against racism within their own ranks even prior to the victory of the revolution and the fundamental restructuring of society.

The "left" error implicitly calls into question the correct general assumption that white and minority communists are in fact united in a common commitment to overthrow imperialism. This is an important starting point in conducting any struggle against racism. White communists have neither any material nor ideological stake in the perpetuation of racism in society as a whole, within the working class nor within the communist ranks. In addition, the dialectical materialist methodology of Marxism provides an excellent basis to unravel the subtle manifestations of racism among communists as well as their roots in the broader class structure of society. Therefore, the communist movement has both the commitment and capacity to develop a correct line and marshal the necessary forces to successfully combat and check racism within its own ranks.

To lose sight of this orientation usually results in the rapid degeneration of the struggle against racism, where racist contradictions are dealt with as though it made little if any difference that they emerged in the context of the communist movement, providing a heyday for demagogues and agent provocateurs of every variety.

In conclusion, a correct line and practice on the struggle against racism within the communist movement must recognize, on the one hand, the insidiousness and pervasiveness of racism even within the ranks of the revolutionaries and the importance of actively combatting it, and on the other hand it must recognize that the unity of the communists provides an excellent basis to conduct such a struggle successfully and non-antagonistically. Thereby the communist movement can provide a good example for the rest of the working class.

C. Racism in Recruitment of Minorities -- The First and Major Obstacle

It has long been recognized that an indispensable condition for carrying out a protracted revolutionary struggle is for the communist movement to have a consolidated base among the politically advanced sectors of the working class. The extent of such a mass base is one of the indications of the strength and maturity of the communist movement. Given the particularities of the political and class structure of the U.S., it is no exaggeration to say that there can be no qualitative breakthroughs in developing a working class base without, hand in hand, breaking down the racist barriers which serve to discourage the active and all-sided participation of minorities in the communist movement.

Probably the single most important racist contradiction characterizing the communist movement currently is its relatively poor capacity to recruit minority revolutionaries in substantial numbers into its ranks.

If this initial barrier is not decisively overcome, it creates a built-in one-sidedness which in turn aggravates all the other problems of racism encountered by the communist movement. Obviously when there are relatively few minorities active within the communist movement, the basis is extremely weak to even spotlight many of the racist dynamics having to do with training, assignments, promotions, etc. -- much less resolve them. A profound racist atmosphere is established captured in the saying, "out of sight, out of mind." In such cases, even where the line recognizing the importance of the struggle against racism is maintained, it can too easily become reduced to empty lip service in an overwhelmingly white movement or organization. Consequently, the problem of racism in the recruitment of minority activists, the entry level problem, is the first obstacle to address in the struggle against racism.

In tackling this problem, the communist movement's relationship to the mass movement is key. Consequently, the question of recruitment is first and foremost a question of political line, in particular the line of the communist movement concerning the struggle against racism in the broader society, and its centrality to advancing the overall class struggle. This is not simply a question of the movement's formal line on racism, which can, and has been, stated and restated ad nauseum with the ease of a well-worn platitude. Rather, it must be the operative line, infusing the political orientation and practice of the communist movement -- moving it central to actual anti-racist movement, concentrating it in the areas and struggles of the minority communities and workers. If this contradiction is not targeted squarely and overcome, the material basis will not exist to qualitatively resolve the problem of racism in recruitment on a scale that would make it at all meaningful.

## 1. Trivialization of the Contradiction

This orientation is in contrast to the incorrect line, which enjoys some influence within our trend, and tends to reduce the problem of recruitment of minorities principally to an individual level of correcting racist attitudes on the part of white communists. The logic of this position maintains that individual white chauvinism negatively affects the style of work of white activists in their dealings with minority people and thereby blocks possible recruitment of minorities into the communist ranks.

Certainly, while it is important to confront individual racist attitudes and styles of work among communists, in a period when the communist movement has failed to advance a leading line and practice in the anti-racist struggle, such contradictions are secondary in the failure to recruit minorities into communist ranks. Certainly in no way should such struggles be advanced as a substitute or prerequisite to the pressing task of basic line development. The folly of such an incorrect line has been illustrated time and again where individual white communists with excellent styles of work still cannot resolve single-handedly the problem of minority recruitment if shackled with an incorrect political line which keeps them peripheral or isolated from key areas of the class struggle.

Conversely, when communists have succeeded in taking a leading line into the midst of working class and anti-racist struggles, advanced elements among minority people gravitate toward Marxism in substantial numbers, and in so doing, begin to move into the periphery and ranks of the communist movement. It is in this manner that the contradiction of recruitment will be qualitatively resolved. In addition, as minority activists move into the communist ranks in substantial numbers, the awareness of racist errors and styles of work on the part of individual white comrades will be increased, as well as the basis strengthened to correct such errors through criticism-self criticism.

## 2. The Racist Assumptions Which Underlie this Incorrect Line

This incorrect line, while appearing to address the problem of minority recruitment in a very concrete and immediate fashion, rests upon some subtle racist foundations which often serve to compound the problem of racism in the long run.

To begin with, it can foster the worst kind of racist paternalism. White comrades are alerted to "take a minority to lunch," to take "special care" to introduce the ideas of communism to them, to be exceptionally careful not to "alienate them" through racist slips of the tongue, etc. A very despicable style of work ensues in which white activists fawn over minorities as though they were "prizes" of some sort. The insidious racist assumption behind this incorrect approach is that minority people require some special handicapped program to bring them to communism.



This turns reality and history on its head. The political dynamic among minority people is qualitatively no different than among whites. They display the same interest and gravitate towards Marxism as they achieve revolutionary consciousness. The question has always been whether the communist movement is positioned correctly, receptive and capable of capturing the revolutionary element from among minority people, integrating them into the communist ranks, consolidating them as Marxist-Leninists. Unfortunately, the answer has all too often been no.

The 20th century has decisively proven that the colored peoples of the world show no conspicuous hesitation nor disability in grasping Marxism-Leninism. In the U.S., the overall problem has been more accurately that advanced revolutionary elements from among minority people have often been barred or discouraged from participating in the communist movement, have been open to Marxism-Leninism but unable to find any coherent communist movement, or have been drawn into a movement wracked with opportunism and sectarianism -- withdrawing from it or getting disoriented and corrupted in the process.

### 3. Contradictions Among Communists Aggravated by this Incorrect Line

Reducing the contradiction of winning advanced minorities to communism to the level of combatting the racism of individual white communists often aggravates rather than improves the racial dynamics between white and minority communists. This is because such an incorrect line tends to thoroughly depoliticize the contradiction of racism and narrowly restrict it to the realm of subjective and interpersonal contradictions.

The general associated phenomenon is that white comrades "walk on eggshells" based on the dubious assumption that every minority comrade is hypersensitive about any individual racist error committed. This is both misleading and generally a distortion of the facts. Considering how pervasive racism and national chauvinism are in U.S. society, it is a safe generalization to say that minorities who have already come to grasp the political and historical imperative to participate seriously in the communist movement are usually relatively broad-minded and patient in dealing with individual racist incidents among the people.

The flip side of the same coin is that backward lines held by minority communists can also get needlessly conciliated if the movement labors under this incorrect line. Minority communists can attempt to justify a variety of backward and incorrect lines by the fact that the movement is racist. Of course, the fact that racism exists within the communist movement can hardly be denied, and there will be no shortage of new racist incidents to continue to prove this point. However, with an atmosphere of subjectivism surrounding the struggle against racism, the communist movement can surrender its capacity to pursue ideological and political ine struggle with minority communists. This liberal situation does serious harm to the development of the minority communists and to the movement as a whole.

#### 4. Summation

The problem of drawing substantial numbers of minority people into the communist ranks is first and foremost a problem of the political line and practice of the communist movement vis-a-vis the class struggle and the anti-racist struggle in particular. Correcting this shortcoming is bound up with the thoroughgoing rectification and development of the U.S. communist movement. Any attempt to oversimplify this contradiction does our movement a great disservice. In particular, the line which tends to create the illusion that improvements in individual styles of work will qualitatively solve this problem is seriously misleading. The onus for the failure of the communist movement to recruit minorities must be principally placed upon our movement's present political inadequacies and not on individual white communists. To reduce the problem to this level is to thoroughly trivialize it and thereby postpone any serious attempts to overcome it.

#### D. The Quality of Minority Participation Once Inside the Communist Movement

##### 1. Introduction

Once the initial problem of recruitment has been resolved, a new set of contradictions emerge in terms of the quality of participation of minority activists.

It is a common and understandable phenomenon for many minority activists to display a degree of hesitancy and role distance from assuming responsibility for the communist movement (similar and overlapping phenomena can also be witnessed among women activists and comrades from working class origins). This easily results in the tendency for minority activists to be overlooked when opportunities emerge for training, promotions, assignments, etc. This is especially true when the communist movement attempts to maintain an ostensibly liberal policy of "color blindness" in such matters. Often minority cadre, in superficial comparison to their white counterparts, will lack an assumed self-confidence and assertiveness. However a racist and class stratified society serves to obscure the fact that all too often "self confidence" does not necessarily coincide with ability, and when it does, it is not the result of some innate capacity, but rather principally the result of social opportunities stemming from one's race and class experiences. Meanwhile, the hesitancy of minority cadre often hides their potential. Although this racist dynamic is more blatant and vulgar in the broader society, it seeps into the revolutionary ranks as well.

If this set of contradictions are mishandled it results in the conspicuous absence of minority comrades from the center of the communist movement, from leading positions of responsibility, from the center of the theoretical work, etc. And when and where minority activists are so placed, all too often they are merely "tokens," which only serves to aggravate the problem of racism further.

2. Cadre Work Must Reflect the Full Complexity and Diversity of the Problem

If the material problems stemming from racism are oversimplified it inevitably results in some of the grossest generalizations, as well as a racist cadre policy.

The social and class dynamics in U.S. society are extremely complex and diverse -- naturally this holds true for racism. The experience of racism and national oppression is thoroughly bound up with class and has fundamentally framed the life experience of the vast majority of minority activists. This experience has often entailed (depending alot on the activist's class origins) substantial material inequalities in terms of education, extent and scope of cultural experiences, etc. This has a cumulative effect which is not easily overcome merely by virtue of entering the communist movement.

If such concrete factors are not taken into consideration, a profound racist dynamic gets set up. A moral atmosphere gets established with sweeping generalizations concerning "minority experience", "internalized oppression", etc. -- all of which has a decidedly racist undercurrent. For example, the insidious (and usually unspoken) assumption can gain sway that all minority activists have had a relatively poor education and are ill-trained academically and theoretically, which is far from the truth. On the other hand, minority activists who may be functionally illiterate find very little consolation in mere moral outrage over the inferiority of ghetto and barrio schools if, at the same time, the communist movement fails to provide any concrete assistance on how to begin to overcome this handicap step by step. Unfortunately, such inconsistent and shoddy practices have thus far generally characterized the manner in which the communist movement has handled the contradiction of racism in the course of cadre development.

It is in a subtle manner that racism often penetrates into the cadre policy of the communist movement today. A correct policy for cadre care and development is by its very nature principally individual. The whole point is for each cadre to be examined, tasked and trained in light of the work at hand and their particular strengths, shortcomings and experiences. Generalizations concerning the social dynamics of class, race and sex should be utilized to inform and highlight the assessment -- and not as a substitute for the inquiry into the particular life and political history of the activist in question. All too often however, superficial generalizations concerning race are used as a substitute for detailed cadre care of minority activists, whereas seldom, if ever, are white comrades dealt with as "a type". Being "white" is considered far too little to know about a cadre, whereas being colored is too often considered sufficient information.

3. The Inter-relationship of Racism and Petty Bourgeois Class Chauvinism

In the struggle against racism within the communist movement it is important to keep in mind the fact that contradictions stemming from distinct forms of oppression thoroughly interpenetrate the contradiction of racism, and particularly important is the intersection with class and sex.

Since the working class is by far the majority class in the U.S., it is not surprising that most minority people are from working class origins and maintain working class conditions throughout life. Consequently many of the potential strengths minorities bring into the communist movement stem from this fact. Significantly noteworthy, given the racially stratified condition of the U.S. working class, is the fact that minority activists often come from the least protected, more unstable strata of the working class, which provides much poorer soil for the cultivation of many of the bourgeois illusions which have taken firm grip on the more stable, predominantly white strata of the class.

However, in the same light, many of the insecurities and shortcomings of minority communists are also often a reflection of their working class origins and oppression. In many instances the hesitation and uncertainty which minority activists experience in taking up the work of the communist movement stems largely from their working class origins as well as their racial experiences in life. Consequently, they can be discouraged in their development and progress as communists when confronted with racism intertwined with the insidiousness of petty bourgeois chauvinism, with all its smug assumptions about the division of the human race between the intelligent, assertive "bright lights" and the slow, dull-witted "ordinaries".

Of noteworthy importance is the fact that since racism is such a deep and predominating social division in U.S. society, often contradictions stemming alot from petty bourgeois chauvinism are interpreted by minority comrades as racism -- pure and simple. In fact however, white chauvinism and petty bourgeois chauvinism are usually so thoroughly intertwined, that short of taking note of their interpenetration, it becomes a senseless academic activity to even attempt to separate these different elements of chauvinism out from each other.

Efforts to do so are held highly suspect because they have usually been associated with attempts to obscure the contradiction of racism altogether. White comrades display much more ease in accepting criticism of class chauvinism than criticisms of racism. This is due in part to the fact that one's class origins tend to be viewed (correctly) as an objective social factor which people have no control over in their early life -- the negative aspects of which can be overcome in the course of communist practice and criticism-self criticism. Racist errors, on the other hand, tend more to be viewed in a moral/metaphysical fashion (rather than as a socially conditioned phenomenon). Consequently there is often an incorrect moral onus placed upon racist errors which produces an extremely defensive posture on the part of white comrades, who feel threatened that a racist error on their part may call into question their capacity to even become communists. The fact that no comparable emotional dynamic surrounds contradictions of class and male chauvinism testifies to the depth of the social contradiction of racism and how thoroughly racialized U.S. society is. Ideologically,

the morally and emotionally charged atmosphere surrounding contradictions of racism stems from the orientation that one's class origins can be transcended; that male chauvinism can be separated from being male; but that somehow being white and being racist are mysteriously and inevitably linked together.

#### 4. The Inter-relationship of Racism and Sexism.

In at least half the instances, the negative experiences and struggles of minority activists to become communists are bound up with the contradiction of women's oppression and the spontaneous reproduction of patterns of discrimination discouraging women's fullest and all-sided participation in the communist movement.

This sexist dynamic has a distinct character of its own. It entails, on one hand, the persistence of male chauvinist prejudices and practices among men communists. On the other hand, it includes the more complex phenomena that women have often been deprived of the opportunities for certain types of experiences and training in the broader society, resulting in a lopsided development which they confront in attempting to take up the political and theoretical tasks of the communist movement. (Once again, mere verbal recognition of the problem devoid of any concrete opportunities to remedy the situation step by step only adds insult to injury.)

Contradictions of racism and sexism often intersect. However, unlike the relationship of race and class, contradictions stemming principally from sexism can often be more precisely identified and targeted distinct from racism. Many times this distinction can prove important and useful in determining the principal aspect of a contradiction involving the participation and development of minority women comrades in the communist movement.

#### 5. Political and Organizational Requirements for Seriously Combating Racism Within the Communist Movement

The struggle against racism (as well as against anti-working class bias and sexism) in the communist movement can easily reduce itself to shallow moralism and empty lip service if not combined with efforts to provide systematic and concrete opportunities for appropriate political assignments, training, etc. of minority cadre. In short, the racist inertia of the broader society is incredibly powerful and cannot and will not begin to be counteracted and reversed in a communist movement which is still characterized by political primitiveness and organizational amateurishness.

The responsibilities and standards of the communist movement are objectively determined by history and the needs of the class struggle, therefore they cannot and should not be watered down. Despite the fact that many of the shortcomings and difficulties faced by minority activists are principally the result of systematic racial inequality and national oppression in the broader society, they

must nonetheless be overcome. This struggle will often require many years of protracted and difficult struggle. However, it is thoroughly racist not to assume that most minority (working class and women) communists are prepared to face their shortcomings squarely and struggle to overcome them provided the means exists to do so and not merely superficial verbal encouragement.

Cadre care can easily degenerate into a question of minority comrades' subjective will power and determination if no real opportunities exist to actually tackle and overcome shortcomings. Consequently, it is safe to generalize that any campaign against racism which conspicuously avoids an examination and upgrading of the actual training capacity of the communist movement is most likely hypocrisy and sham.

## 6. Summation

The foundations of a correct policy on checking the reproduction of racism within the communist movement should include: a firm grasp of the scope and complexity of the contradiction of racism and national oppression; its interpenetration and distinction with working class oppression and sexism; an appreciation that ultimately cadre care with minorities (as with whites) is an individual/particular question, and that the communist movement can not seriously address the problem of racism if it remains complacent about its present state of political and organizational primitiveness.

It is in this context then, that it becomes particularly important and meaningful to insist that considerations of race (as well as class origin and sex) become prominent in determining assignments to positions of responsibility which will facilitate and accelerate political development, as well as, opportunities for systematic theoretical training and advanced work. If such considerations are not given special weight in the selection and promotion of activists, the social inertia of U.S. society will inevitably overconcentrate white, male comrades from petty bourgeois origins in the leading and central positions of the communist movement--seriously compromising its long range strength and development.

## E. MAJOR DEVIATIONS IN MISHANDLING THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM WITHIN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

### 1. Blatant Tokenism

On occasions when the struggle against racism is long on rhetoric but short on substance, the most common deviation is probably that of tokenism. Here we usually find a situation where the line has been popularized about the importance of minority participation as the central question in the movement, yet the means to accomplish this on any substantial scale are thoroughly lacking. Left with little more than "good intentions," the racist results are an all too familiar and painful phenomenon.

Minority activists are promoted into positions of responsibility for which they are not yet sufficiently developed. In fact, the minority comrade involved often gets "carried along" by a collective composed usually of more developed white communists. The racist dynamic is such that stifling liberalism pervades the political work of the collective, blocking any thorough practice of criticism-self-criticism and frank evaluation of the minority comrade's work. It becomes painfully apparent to everyone that the minority activist has been mistasked, but the paternalism and tokenism is so deep that an embarrassed racist silence is usually maintained. The opportunism becomes aggravated when the situation goes unchanged due to the fact that the minority activist involved is one of the few (or sometimes the only) minority person active in the group. This racist scenario has been repeated so often that it constitutes one of the main material bases for the hesitation of minority activists to enter into an all white collective or political formation.

In the grossest instances of tokenism, the minority comrade is callously manipulated and used as "window dressing" and consciously thrust into the limelight while enjoying very little actual influence day to day in determining policy and political line.

More commonly, however, the error of tokenism is usually the result of sincere intentions based upon the metaphysical hope that somehow the promotion of "a minority activist" might create the conditions for their development. Nevertheless, such primitive notions are objectively racist. They tend to objectify "minorities" and justify their process of their development, obscuring the fact that, as with white communists, one's development into a leading cadre is a protracted and complex synthesis of experience, training, study and struggle.

To promote a minority activist as though they principally represent "a type" is to engage in a form of tokenism, thus losing sight of the objective process of development and failing to take sufficiently detailed account of the particular political history and training of the minority comrade involved.

## 2. Tokenism--Minorities as "Minority Affairs" Experts

Another form of racist tokenism concerns the areas of minority leadership and specialization. Minority activists are often shifted off into "minority affairs" as though it was the "natural area" of their leadership potential. This tendency is racist on two counts: a crucially important policy for minority activists to be encouraged to take all-sided responsibility for the communist movement. They must be encouraged to struggle to take up any area of work or responsibility posed by the needs of the class struggle and not to narrowly restrict themselves to any one area of work or type of activity. It is only with such a broad orientation and experience that communists are steeled. Consequently, a policy which restricts, in the slightest degree, the area of operation for minority activists creates a situation where the majority of minority activists will remain ill equipped to move central to a movement as complex and diverse as the communist movement.

Secondly, it does not follow that one is necessarily expert

in scientifically analyzing racism and national oppression or in leading the mass struggle against racism simply by nature of being a minority person. What is true is that minority communists have qualitatively experienced racism in a manner which white communists have not and cannot. However, among Marxist-Leninists it should be recognized that any individual's experience can be extremely scattered and varied, as well as unscientifically summarized. Among the masses we see vividly that racist oppression is responded to in the most varied ideological prisms--leading some to insanity, many to individual destruction, and others to communism. Similarly, among communists, it should not be assumed that one's life experience as a minority person automatically equips activists with a scientific, theoretical grasp of racism and national oppression. Nor is it true that every minority activist is particularly skillful in handling racial contradictions or in leading the struggle against racism.

In short, minority activists are not born experts on minority affairs. In addition, they should not be automatically shuttled off and restricted in this area of work.

### 3. Opportunist Manipulation of the Struggle Against Racism

The other major deviation in handling the struggle against racism within the communist ranks is the tendency to separate the ideological struggle to correct the racist attitudes and practices among communists from the broader responsibility of the communist movement to advance the mass struggle against racism and national oppression. In short, the tendency to take the ideological struggle out of its political context.

Most often this is an honest mistake of comrades with praiseworthy intentions, but a shallow political and theoretical grasp of the problem of racism and the correct methods of handling it. Consequently the struggle often degenerates into subjectivism, moralism and guilt. Unfortunately, this usually only aggravates the problem of racist dynamics in the movement and does not remedy them.

However, due to the highly volatile nature of racist contradictions, the struggle against racism can also be easily manipulated in the service of an opportunist line. Demagogic appeals concerning racism, by both whites and minorities alike, can evoke an atmosphere of intimidation and anger faster than most other issue. In the midst of the ensuing confusion, the ideological and political bearings of the movement can be seriously jeopardized or completely lost. This provides an open field day for opportunists and agent provocateurs of every variety and it has, on more than one occasion, severely damaged the political work of the revolutionary movement.

This, of course, is the absolutely worst possible scenario which can develop off the manipulation of the struggle against racism. However, it should serve as a warning, as well as a stimulus for the communist to take up the struggle against racism in an on-going and serious fashion. In a fashion that the deviations of paternalism,



tokenism and opportunist demogogy can be easily identified and thoroughly and rapidly isolated.

## F. CONCLUSION

Racism is an oppressive social relation central to the class structure of the U.S.; central to the maintenance of bourgeois rule. It is the paramount contradiction which in the immediate sense, materially and ideologically, divides the white from the minority sectors of the working class. As Marx commented earlier, the British proletariat could not be revolutionary class until it took up the Irish question as a burning issue of its own class--so to, the U.S. proletarian cannot be revolutionary if the struggle against racism is not indelibly inscribed on its banner.

Racism also seeps into the revolutionary movement, creating one of the most profound and volatile contradictions among communists. It is a contradiction which must be carefully analyzed and successfully handled in the course of the development and maturation of the communist movement.

First and foremost, the contradiction of the recruitment of revolutionary elements into the communist ranks must be resolved. The solution to this problem is qualitatively bound up with the rectification and development of a correct theory and practice on the part of the communist movement vis-a-vis the class struggle and the anti-racist struggle in particular.

Internal to the communist movement, a correct policy on handling racist contradictions must recognize racism as a distinct dynamic, studied in its own right and taken up accordingly. While at the same time recognizing its intersection with other social contradictions such as sexism and petty-bourgeois chauvinism.

To counteract the powerful inertia of racism, the communist movement must be committed to developing itself sufficiently to be able to provide the actual institutions and concrete opportunities to overcome the disadvantages faced by many minority (women and working class) cadre in taking up the central responsibilities of the communist movement. Without evidence of such a commitment, all the fancy talk about "combating racism" amounts to racist humbug.

Only with a correct line and policy, a policy which is consistently implemented and struggle for, can the common deviations of tokenism, and opportunist manipulation of the struggle against racism be avoided.

With this general framework, we will review the history of the socialist/communist movements in terms of their successes and failures in handling the struggle against racism in their mass practice and within their own ranks.